Board of Management

Performance & Nominations Committee

Date of Meeting	**Monday 26 April 2021**
Paper No.	**PNC5-E**
Agenda Item	**5.2**
Subject of Paper	**SPSO Annual Complaint Handling Report 2019/20**
FOISA Status	**Disclosable**
Primary Contact	**Jon Gray, Director of Excellence**
Date of production	**20 April 2021**
Action	**For Noting**

1. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

2. Purpose

This report presents an overview of College complaints for academic year 2019/20.

3. Content

In accordance with the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) Further Education Complaint Handling Procedure the College is required to publish its performance in the resolution of complaints against 8 Performance Indicators, as defined by the SPSO.

Each complaint received is assigned a Complaint Investigation Manager to identify the cause and to provide a resolution to the complainant. Lessons learned are captured to inform improvements to the process.

In 2019/20 the College received 111 complaints, 50 fewer from the previous year. This further improves on the 2017/18, when 188 complaints were received.

The majority of complaints related to the customer experience (37%). This is something we are seeking to further improve through the establishment of new SLAs with Directorates.

Applications to Progression (21%), and Course Related matters (22%) were the next highest areas. The Committee should be reassured that course related complaints almost halved this year. Supporting continuous improvement at Faculty level is part of our work to establish more regular performance reporting and better coordinate and review progression to higher level of study.

In accordance with the procedure, complaints are assigned a handling timeframe, determining whether they can be resolved within five days (Stage 1) or within 20 days (stage 2).

This year the number of complaints received at stage 1 dropped by over 40% and more complaints were closed within 5 days.

Key Observations	Key	wd. = working days
Overall number of complaints received decreased by 31%, from 161 to 111.		
Complaints received and handled at Stage 1 decreased by 38.7%.		
Significant decrease of 41.6% in the number of complaints upheld at Stage 1.		
The average response times for escalated complaints has improved significantly by 62.9%.		
Fewer Stage 1 complaints have taken longer to close than the set timescale of 5 wds – down from 24 to 9 or a decrease of 62.5%.		
Fewer complaints have required an extension to the set timescales with a decrease of 58.1% in the number of complaints closed where an extension has been authorised.		

There remain challenges with the effectiveness of the current system. It is hoped that from August this year we will introduce a renewed process and a new on-line automated complaints handling system. Both are dependent on IT support in order to be delivered on time.

We continue to publish information on complaints as required by SPSO and a full version of this report is available on the College's website.

4. Impact and Implications

Each complaint has an outcome, upholding or rejecting the complaint. The outcome identified informs the lessons learnt which we use to inform and enhance the student experience. A high volume of complaints tells us something about the effectiveness of our services and the student experience. Handling complaints quickly and consistently is important to the continued cohesion of the college.

Mindful of the improving picture and the plans for further enhancements to the system, there are no material risks to note at this time.

1   PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: P1-P6

	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	2019/20		2018/19	
1.0	**Total number of complaints received & complaints received per 100 population**				
	Number of complaints Received	111		161	
	College Population and Number of Complaints received per 100 population	25000	0.44	25000	0.64
2.0	**Number of complaints closed at each stage and as a % of all complaints closed**				
	Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed	76	71.0%	124	77.5%
	Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed	26	24.3%	26	16.25%
	Number of Complaints closed after Escalation and % of total closed	5	4.7%	10	6.25%
*	Open	4	0.0%	1	0.0%
3.0	**Number of Complaints upheld and not upheld at each stage as a % of complaints closed at that stage**				
	Stage 1				
	Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 1	45	59.2%	77	62.1%
	Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 1	31	40.8%	47	37.9%
	Stage 2				
	Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 2	8	30.8%	8	30.8%
	Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 2	18	69.2%	18	69.2%
	Escalated				
	Number and % of complaints upheld after Escalation	2	40.0%	5	50.0%
	Number and % of complaints not upheld after Escalation	3	60.0%	5	50.0%
4.0	**Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at each stage**				
	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1	289	3.8	522	4.2
	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 2	541	20.8	449	17.3
	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints after Escalation	43	8.6	232	23.2

* Of the 4 open complaints, 3 have been suspended due to continued staff absence and 1 is suspended to allow for the conclusion of a data breach/HR investigation.

5.0	**Number and % of complaints closed within set timescales** **(S1=5 working days; S2=20 working days ; Escalated = 20 working days)**				
	Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days	67	88.2%	100	80.6%
	Number and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed within 5 working days	9	11.8%	24	19.4%
	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days	22	84.6%	21	80.8%
	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days	5	19.2%	5	19.2%
	Number and % of Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days	5	100%	8	80.0%
	Number and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 20 working days	0	0.0%	2	20.0%
6.0	**Number and % of complaints closed at each stage where extensions have been authorised**				
	Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (extension)	9	100%	21	87.5%
	Number and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed within 10 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	3	12.5%
	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)	4	80.0%	5	100%
	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)	1	20.0%	0	0%
	Number and % of Escalated complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	1	50.0%
	Number and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	1	50.0%

PI	**Key Observations**	**Key**	**wd. = working days**
1.0	Overall number of complaints received decreased by 31%, from 161 to 111.		
2.0	Complaints received and handled at Stage 1 decreased by 38.7%.		
3.0	Significant decrease of 41.6% in the number of complaints upheld at Stage 1.		
4.0	The average response times for escalated complaints has decreased significantly by 62.9%.		
5.0	Fewer Stage 1 complaints have taken longer to close than the set timescale of 5 wds – down from 24 to 9 or a decrease of 62.5%.		
6.0	Fewer complaints have required an extension to the set timescales with a decrease of 58.1% in the number of complaints closed where an extension has been authorised.		

2   PERFORMANCE INDICATOR P7: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

2.1 ACCESS TO COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

Complaint Portal	Complaint@e-mail	Complaint Form by e-mail	Complaint Form by post	e-mail to staff	Letter	Phone	In Person	Enquiry	Other
32	5	8	14	36	2	5	5	3	1
29%	5%	7%	13%	32%	2%	5%	5%	3%	1%

Almost a third of all complaints (32%) in 2019/20 were received in a direct email to staff, compared with 18% for 2018/19. The online complaint portal was the second most popular route of access to the Complaint Handling Procedure with 29%.

2.2 FEEDBACK

Satisfied	No Feedback	Dissatisfied	Open
13	77	17	4

In 2019/20, feedback was received for 30 of 99 closed complaints, and last year feedback was received for 50 of 160 closed complaints. In terms of satisfaction, this year 13 complainants were satisfied compared to 44 complainants expressing satisfaction last year

3 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR P8: LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

3.1 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY CATEGORY 2019/20 vs 2018/19

2019/20	Customer Care	41 (37%)	Applications to Progression	23 (21%)	Course Related	24 (22%)	Services	19 (17%)	Facilities	4 (3%)	Others	0 (0%)
2018/19	Customer Care	52 (32%)	Applications to Progression	25 (15%)	Course Related	56 (35%)	Services	20 (12%)	Facilities	4 (3%)	Others	4 (3%)

In 2019/20 the College received 111 complaints, which is 50 complaints less than the previous year. This positively follows and improves upon the decrease from the total number of complaints received in 2017/18 (188 complaints).

The complaints received in 2019/20 are spread across all categories with the exception of Others, which received zero complaints this year: Customer Care (37%), Applications to Progression (21%), Course Related (22%), Services (17%), Facilities (3%). With fewer complaints received in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19, the number of complaints has decreased for all categories, except for Facilities which remained the same with 4 complaints received. The category with the greatest decrease is Course Related, which received 24 complaints down from 56.

3.2 COMPLAINT OUTCOMES BY CATEGORY AND ANALYSIS

Category	Upheld	Not Upheld	Open
C1: Customer Care	23	15	3
C2: Applications to Progression	11	12	0
C3: Course Related	12	12	0
C4: Services	9	10	0
C5: Facilities	2	2	0
C6: Others	0	0	0
Total	57	51	3

Customer Care: A total of 41 Customer Care complaints were received in 2019/20 compared with 52 the previous year representing a decrease of 11 complaints. The decrease was consistent across Health & Safety and Data Protection (both receiving 1 compared to 5 complaints), and Diversity & Equality (receiving 6 compared to 10 complaints). Whilst Staff Conduct was the only sub-category which seen an increase in complaints, receiving 28 compared to 24.

Applications to Progression: A total of 23 Application to Progression complaints were received in 2019/20 compared with 25 the previous year representing an 8% decrease. The decrease was apparent in sub-categories Marketing (0 complaints received this year compared to 1) and Progression, Articulation & Withdrawal (10 received this year compared to 13). The only increase was in sub-category Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment & Induction with 13 complaints received this year compared to 11.

Course Related: A total of 24 Course Related complaints were received in 2019/20, 58% less than the 56 complaints received in 2018/19. The most significant decrease was in the following sub-categories: Learning and Teaching (-9 complaints) and Course Management (-15 complaints); and small decreases for Facilitated Learning Support and Assessment, Exams & Certification (both -4 complaints).

Services: For Services, 19 complaints were received in 2019/20 and 20 the year prior, representing a small 5% decrease. Differences can be seen in Finance that received 4 complaints this year compared to 8 previous, as well as Student Records (-1 complaint), Quality (-1 complaint) and Other (-2 complaints). In contrast, Library/Learning Technology had the greatest increase, from 2 to 8 complaints.

Facilities: A total of 4 Facilities complaints were received in 2019/20, the same as 2018/2019. Whereas complaints were received across all four sub-categories last year, this year all four complaints were related to Maintenance, Lists, Car Parking.

Others: Zero complaints were received under 'Others' this year compared to 4 in the previous.