



# Complaints Handling Report

Quarter 4 (May - July)

Academic Year 2022-23

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## 1. Introduction

North East Scotland College (NESCol) is committed to ensuring all clients and customers receive the best possible service. The College monitors stakeholder complaint feedback and ensures any lessons learned are actioned to improve its services. Reports measuring the College's complaints handling performance will be published online quarterly and issued to the Leadership Team.

NESCol complaints handling procedures are subject to regular review and alteration as required. This could be as a result of stakeholder experiences, internal changes or external initiatives. The College is a member of the sector Complaints Handling Advisory Group, operating with the College Development Network (CDN) and in association with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO).

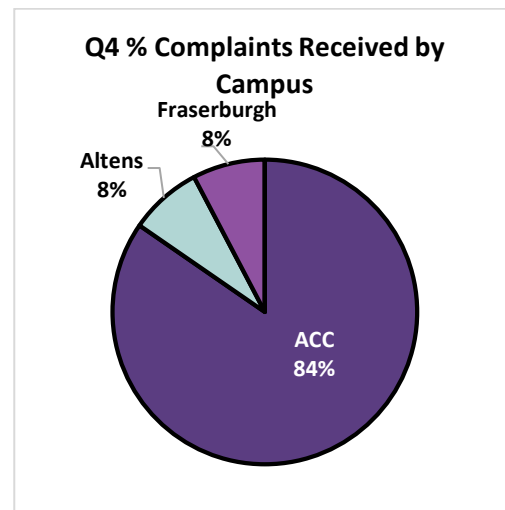
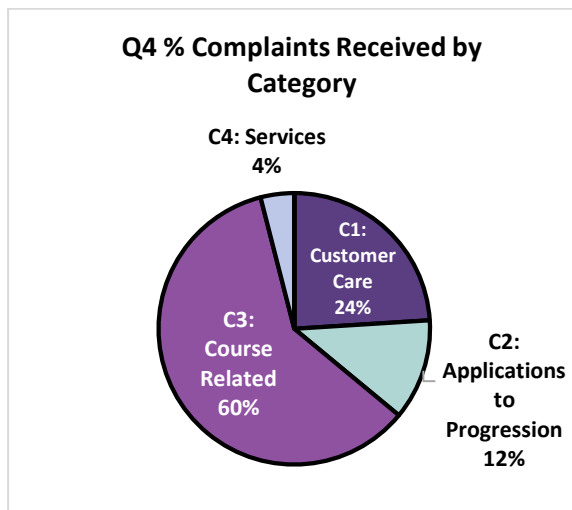
NESCol is an equal opportunities College therefore all complaints are administered in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

## 2. Quarterly Trends

For this quarter, NESCol received 13 complaints. The majority of complaints made were Customer Care Related (C1), Course Related (C3) and Applications to Progression (C2). Common themes regarding the cause of complaints were:

- Learning & Teaching;
- Course Management;
- Diversity & Equality;
- Assessment, Exams & Certification.

The pie chart to the left shows the percentage of complaints received for each complaint category. The pie chart to the right shows a breakdown of the percentage of complaints received this quarter for each campus. Of the complaints received this quarter, Aberdeen City received 11 complaints, and both Altens and Fraserburgh both received one complaint.



### 3. Impact on Service Delivery

Upon closing a complaint, the quality team request details of any lessons learned or actions for completion (where applicable) from the relevant departments. The feedback received from stakeholders through the complaints process can alter our service delivery and highlight areas for improvement in order to better our practices. The below example/s from this quarter highlights the value of stakeholder feedback.

#### Improving course delivery

A complaint was received from a class representative, claiming that there was no consistency in teaching due to many staff changes and absences leaving the class feeling ill prepared and uneducated in areas of the coursework required for assessment. Additional classes were arranged to support the students and it was agreed that staff changes will be handled more efficiently to ensure that there will be no repetition of coursework for the students.

#### Improving communication regarding course fees

A complaint was received from a student's Mother regarding her son being invoiced for what she called "Hidden fees". She felt that such costs should have been disclosed before her son started his course. It was agreed that these fees could have been better communicated and the College will look at changing process to ensure that students are aware in advance of commencing the course of all costs which may arise during the course delivery.

#### Improving communications to students with issues of mental health

A complaint was received by a student who felt that she had been treated unfairly by her tutors. The student explained that there were a number of circumstances at home which should have been taken into consideration when a third attempt at an assessment was requested. It was agreed that more compassion and consideration should have been given to the student. Staff will now be advised of how better to handle situations where students have some mental health issues, in a more sensitive and understanding manner.

#### **4. Further Education Complaints Performance Indicators – Definitions**

The following definitions for stage 1, stage 2, and escalated should be consistently applied throughout all indicators.

##### **Stage 1**

This means those responded to at stage 1 (frontline resolution). This does not include those escalated from stage 1 to stage 2. These will be counted in the escalated complaints. This includes those where the extended timeline (i.e. + additional 5 working days) was used.

##### **Stage 2**

This means those responded to at stage 2 (investigation). This includes those where the extended timeline (i.e. + additional 20 working days) was used.

This refers to those complaints considered directly at stage 2 for the following reasons:

- \* straight away by complainant (this refers to customers who did not wish to be dealt with at stage 1 and wished to go straight to stage 2)
- \* straight away by the College, or within a day or so after due consideration (i.e. College recognised complex, serious, high risk nature of the complaint and felt it was not suitable to be considered at stage 1)

##### **Escalated**

This means those escalated from stage 1 to stage 2.

This refers to those complaints where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the frontline resolution and have requested that their case be escalated to stage 2 for investigation.

This includes those complaints where escalation was required because frontline resolution timescales were not met (i.e. 11 working days or more). Therefore automatic escalation rules apply.

##### **Population**

This figure will represent the total student population. For example the number of matriculated students at an agreed date.

The College, when reporting on the complaints handling KPIs for each quarter adheres to the above definitions to ensure consistency and accuracy.

## 5. Complaints Handling Key Performance Indicators

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE INDICATORS		Q4	
Total no. of complaints received & complaints received per 100 population		No.	%
Number of complaints Received		13	100
College Population and Number of Complaints received per 100 population		25710	0.05
No. of complaints closed at each stage and as a % of all complaints closed		No.	%
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed		11	84.6
Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed		1	7.7
Number of complaints closed after Escalation and % of total closed		1	7.7
Open		0	0
No. upheld, partially upheld and not upheld at each stage and as a % of complaints closed at that stage			
Stage 1		No.	%
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 1		6	54.5
Number and % of complaints partially upheld at Stage 1		4	36.4
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 1		1	9.1
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage 1		0	0
Stage 2		No.	%
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 2		1	100
Number and % of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2		0	0
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 2		0	0
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage 2		0	0
Escalated		No.	%
Number and % of complaints upheld after Escalation		1	100
Number and % of complaints partially upheld after Escalation		0	0
Number and % of complaints not upheld after Escalation		0	0
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage Escalation		0	0
Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at each stage		No.	Av.
Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1		64	5.8
Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 2		20	20
Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints after Escalation		18	18
Number and % of complaints closed within set timescales ( S1=5 workings days; S2=20 working days ; Escalated = 20 working days)		No.	%
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days		8	72.7
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed with 5 working days		3	27.3
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days		1	100
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days		0	0
No. and % of Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days		1	100
No. and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 20 working days		0	0
Number and % of complaints closed at each stage where extensions have been authorised		No.	%
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (extension)		2	66.7
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed within 10 working days (extension)		0	0
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)		0	0
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)		0	0
No. and % of Escalated complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)		1	100
No. and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)		0	0

## 6. Escalation and Extension Rationale

In this quarter, one complaint was escalated due to the summer holidays and staff being on leave, therefore the matter needed more time to be appropriately investigated.

In this quarter, two complaints were given an extension. One complaint was extended because there was not enough time to arrange a meeting between the student and the lecturer. Another complaint was extended in order to allow the complaint handler to meet with the student as the student was only available during a part-time evening class.

## 7. Complaints Handling Feedback Questionnaire

Following the receipt of a response to their complaint, complainants are sent a complaints handling questionnaire so they can indicate their satisfaction with the different components of the complaints process.

This is monitored on a regular basis and the complaints handling team review feedback received in relation to the handling process. This can influence future practice and alterations to procedures applied.