



# Complaints Handling Report

Quarter 3 (February – April)

Academic Year 2025-26

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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).

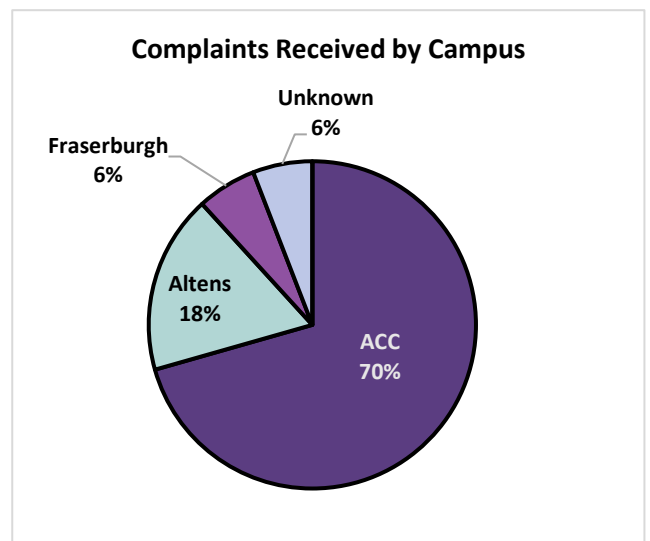
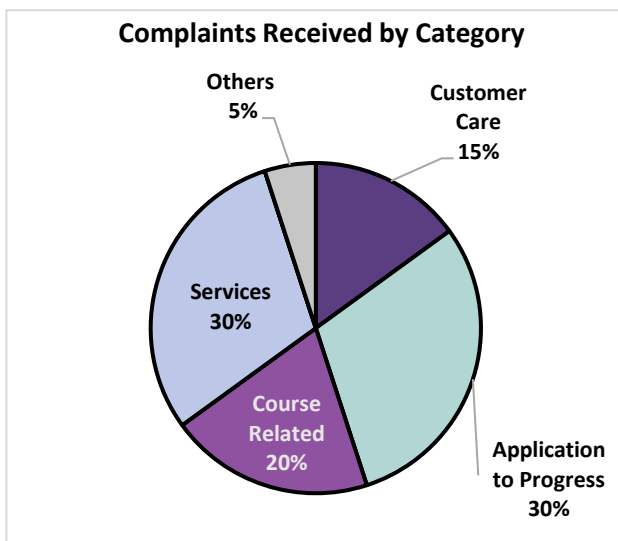
NESCol is an equal opportunities College therefore all complaints are administered in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

## 2. Quarterly Trends

For this quarter, NESCol received 17 complaints. The majority of complaints made are Applications to Progression (C2), Course Related (C3), and College Services (C4). Common themes regarding the cause of complaints are:

- Funding/Bursary
- Staff conduct
- Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment, Induction

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 12, Altens received 3, Fraserburgh received 1, and 1 complaint was from an unknown campus location.



### 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 customer satisfaction in relation to equality and diversity

A complaint was received in relation to discomfort felt wearing the tunic for their class. The complaint was looked into and the complainant was allowed to wear a long-sleeved shirt in order to reduce skin contact with the tunic. The complaint raised awareness of the importance of proactively identifying and responding to individual sensory needs related to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and an action was taken to ensure all staff are aware of the importance of discussing comfort and sensory considerations early where PPE is involved.

#### Improving communication regarding course applications

A complaint was received regarding dissatisfaction with a change in the advised course the complainant had applied for. Upon completing the complaints process, it was found that the academic rationale for the change of course was not hugely clear. Going forward the rationale must be clearly explained, and automatic communications must be issued with appropriate context where the change may cause concern.

#### Improving customer service and communication

Complaints were received in relation to student support grant payments being stopped due to a breakdown of communication within the curriculum. The issues were resolved with the Curriculum Manager confirming which students had been negatively impacted. It was recorded that going forward there be better visibility of the information regarding this week that caused the issues by posting on more platforms.

#### 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. These will however be reported separately below.

##### **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		Q1	
<b>Total no. of complaints received &amp; complaints received per 100 population</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	
Number of complaints Received	17	100.0	
College Population and Number of Complaints received per 100 population	15509	0.1	
<b>No. of complaints closed at each stage and as a % of all complaints closed</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed	14	82.4	
Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed	0	0.0	
Number of complaints closed after Escalation and % of total closed	2	11.8	
Open	1	5.9	
<b>No. upheld, partially upheld and not upheld at each stage and as a % of complaints closed at that stage</b>			
<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 1	4	28.6	
Number and % of complaints partially upheld at Stage 1	5	35.7	
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 1	5	35.7	
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage 1	0	0.0	
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 2	0	0.0	
Number and % of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2	0	0.0	
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 2	0	0.0	
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage 2	0	0	
<b>Escalated</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	
Number and % of complaints upheld after Escalation	1	50.0	
Number and % of complaints partially upheld after Escalation	0	0	
Number and % of complaints not upheld after Escalation	1	0.0	
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage Escalation	0	0	
<b>Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at each stage</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Av.</b>	
Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1	71	5.1	
Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 2	0	0	
Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints after Escalation	18	9.0	
<b>Number and % of complaints closed within set timescales ( S1=5 workings days; S2=20 working days ; Escalated = 20 working days)</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days	9	64.3	
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed with 5 working days	5	35.7	
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days	0	0.0	
No. and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days	0	0.0	
No. and % of Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days	2	100	
No. and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 20 working days	0	0.0	
<b>Number and % of complaints closed at each stage where extensions have been authorised</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	
No. and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (extension)	5	100	
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)	0	0	
No. and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0	

## 6. Escalation and Extension Rationale

In this quarter, three complaints were escalated to stage 2.

In this quarter, five frontline complaints were granted an extension as additional time was required to investigate fully and to accommodate the availability of relevant staff.

## 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 quality team review feedback received in relation to the handling process. This can influence future practice and alterations to the procedure followed.