



University
of Dundee

Complaints Handling Procedure

Annual Report to the SPSO

2024/2025

Date approved: Student Governance Oversight Group – 11 September 2025
Senate – 26 November 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Dundee is recognised for its commitment to delivering exceptional education and high-quality services. With a focus on developing an inclusive and supportive learning environment, the university ensures that students receive a full educational experience.

In addition to its academic excellence, the University of Dundee prides itself on its excellent complaint service. This service is designed to address any concerns or issues a complainant may encounter, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are met promptly and effectively. By maintaining a transparent and fair process, the University demonstrates its dedication to continuous improvement and student satisfaction, reinforcing its commitment to providing an outstanding educational experience and first-class experience for all service users.

However, there may be occasions when a service user will find themselves dissatisfied with the service they have received from the University. In these cases, the University will handle such complaints under their Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) (<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/discipline-complaints-appeals/complaints>).

The CHP provides two internal stages to come to an outcome and an external stage:

Stage 1 (Frontline) to be handled within 5 working days; and

Stage 2 (Investigation) to be handled within 20 working days

Stage 3 (External) if a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome they receive from the University after stage 1 and stage 2, they have the option to take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration.

This annual report has been approved by the University's Student Governance Oversight Group and also the Senatus Academicus. It contains key performance indicators as set out by the SPSO for the period 1 August 2024 - 31 July 2025. These KPIs are:

1. The total number of complaints received
2. The number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days
3. The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage
4. The outcome of complaints at each stage.

The SPSO also require organisations to publish statistics on a quarterly basis, including information on outcomes and actions taken to improve services.

Previous annual reports along with quarterly statistical information on complaints dealt with by the University can be found on our website at:

<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/discipline-complaints-appeals/monitoring-statistics>

If you have any questions regarding this report, or any other complaint matter, please email the following address:

complaintsresolution@dundee.ac.uk

Alternatively, please contact Karen Stulka, Compliance Manager (Student), Legal, k.f.stulka@dundee.ac.uk.

2. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

During 2024/25, the University received a total of 173 complaints. Of these, 149 were considered at stage 1, 21 were considered at stage 2 and 13 were considered under the ACR route.

Chart 1 below highlights the number of complaints dealt with each quarter. As in previous years, most complaints were received during the period August - October. However, the largest increase in complaints received was during the period February - April. The number of stage 1 complaints had risen 46% from the same period in 2023/24.

Overall, 86% of all complaints were dealt with at stage 1, 12% at stage 2 and 2% through ACR (see chart 2).

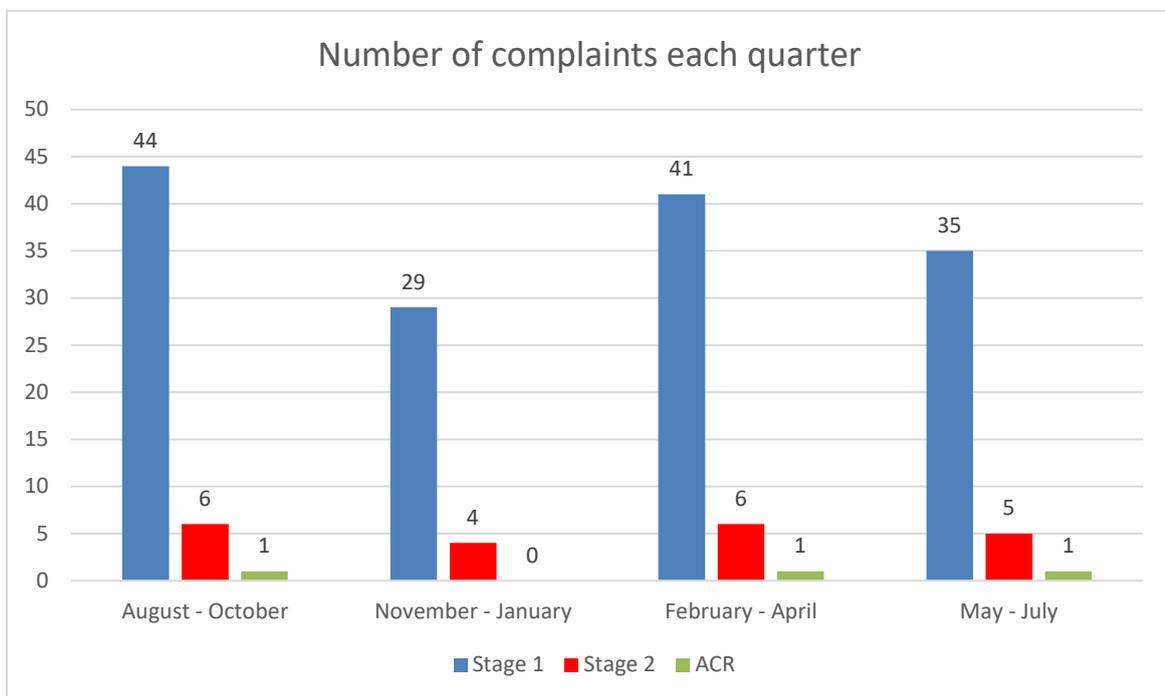


Chart 1 - Quarterly numbers of complaints received

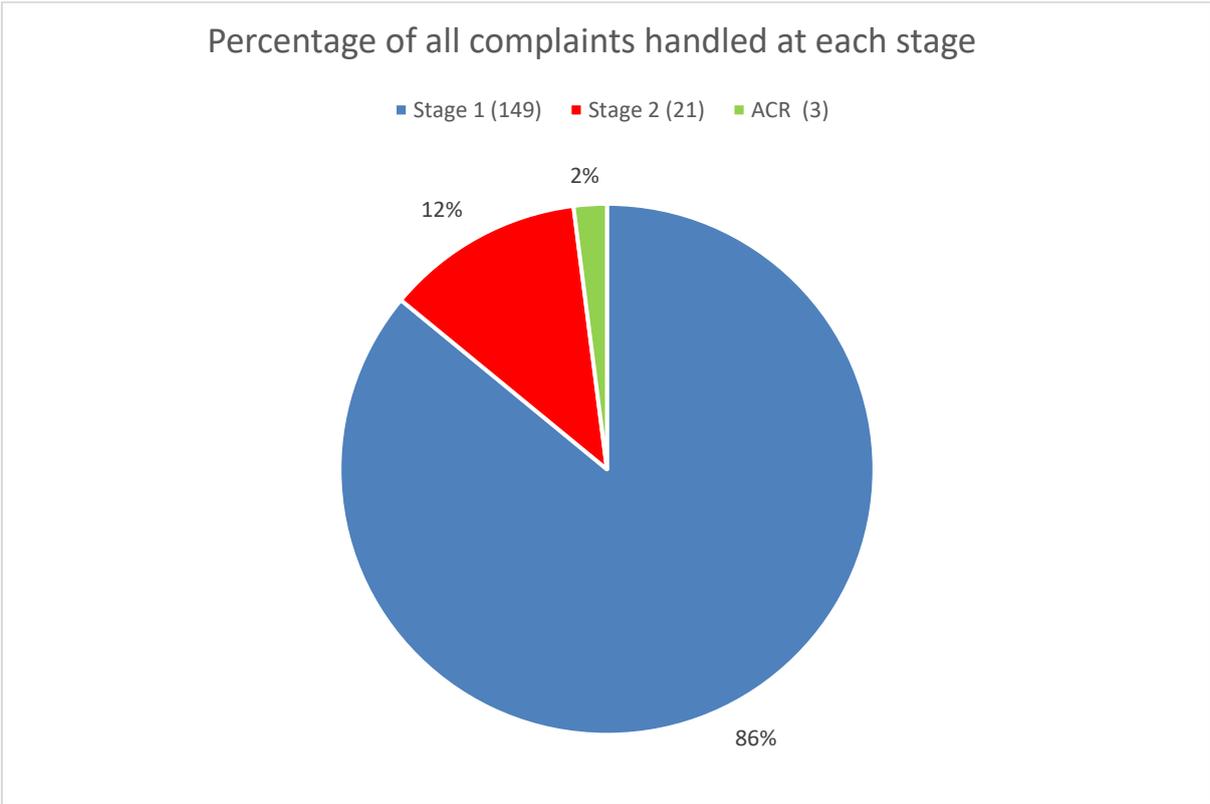


Chart 2 - Percentage of all complaints handled at each stager

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSED

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of complaints closed at stage 1 (within 5 working days timescale) and stage 2 (within 20 working days timescale)

At stage 1, there were an additional 28 complaints closed within 10 working days. Therefore there was a total of 129 stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (86.5% of all stage 1 complaints).

These figures are encouraging as the average percentage closed within SPSO time limits have increased since 2023/24. However, there is still room for improvement, especially at stage 1 and training will continue on timescales for dealing with complaints.

Stage	Total complaints	Number closed within SPSO time limits	Percentage closed within SPSO time limits
Stage 1	149	101	67.7% of all stage 1 complaints
Stage 2	21	18	85.7% of all stage 2 complaints

Table 1 - complaints closed as a percentage

Chart 3 indicates the number of complaints closed by average times at each stage of the CHP. As noted above, our average timescales have improved and almost all quarterly

reporting periods are coming in at below the recommended SPSO time limits of 5 working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2.

As in previous years, there were several cases at stage 1 where an extension to the timescales was approved. The main reasons for some of the longer times included:

- Unavailability of relevant staff members due to illness or annual leave;
- Matters required the approval of the University Executive Group
- Complainants were not available to meet within 5 working days.

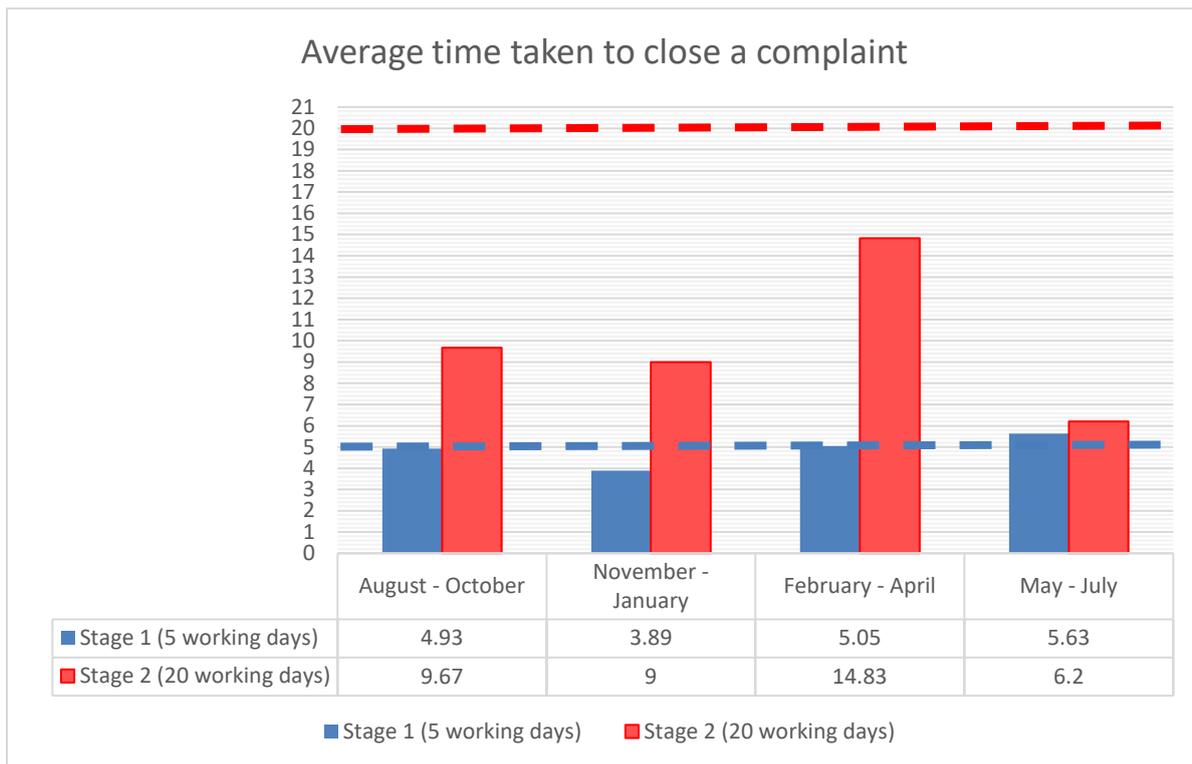


Chart 3 - Average time taken at each stage to close a complaint each reporting quarter

4. NATURE OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

This year saw the number of complaints regarding conduct increase by over 85% (28 in 2023/24 compared with 52 in 2024/25). However, it should be noted that a majority of these complaints were regarding the conduct of students rather than staff members. These complaints were therefore passed to Safeguarding to take forward as appropriate, ensuring support was provided to all students involved.

Again, the four areas with the most complaints were conduct, policies, regulations & procedures, teaching & assessment and service provision & student support. This year there was also an increase in finance complaints (over 80%). These were mainly due to students misunderstanding of the fee structure between International College Dundee fees and University of Dundee fees.

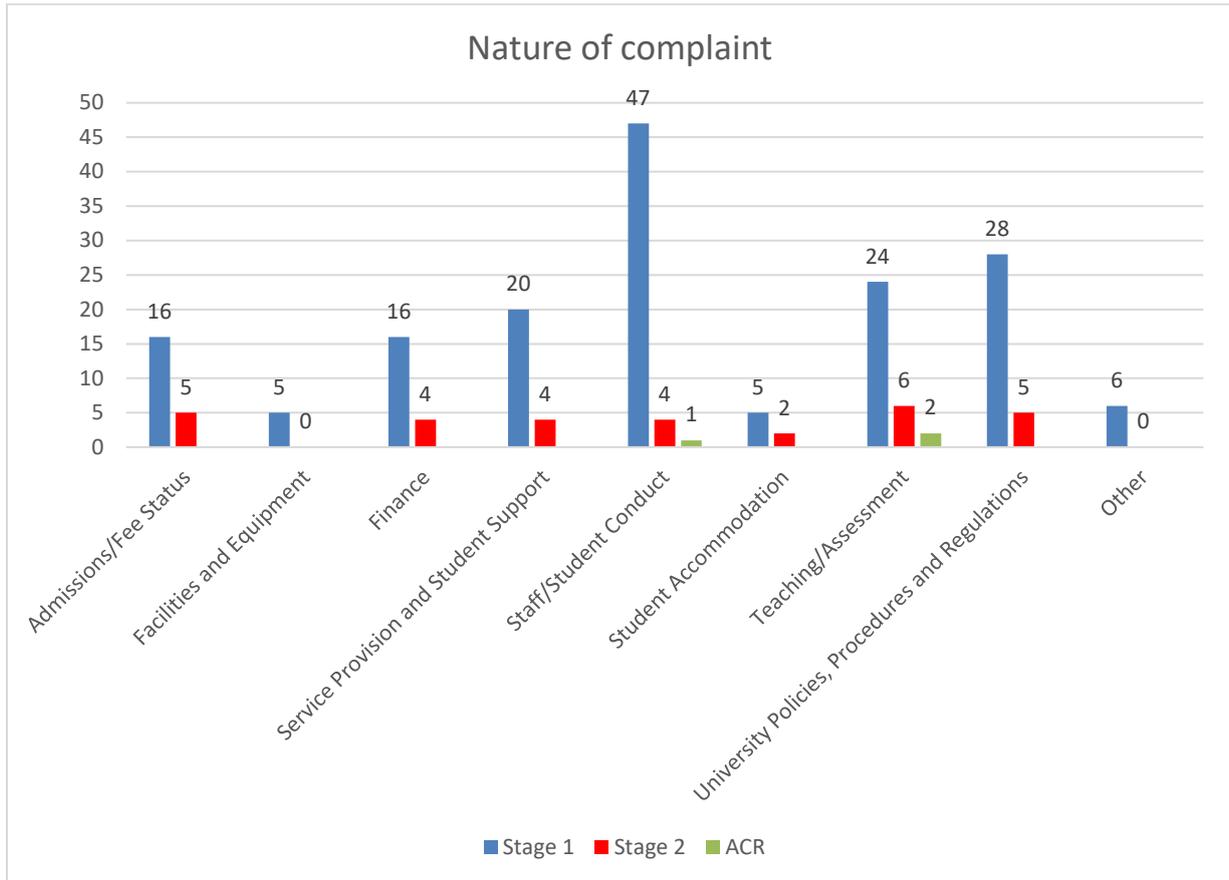


Chart 4 - Nature of complaints received

5. OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

Chart 5 below shows the outcome of complaints at each stage of the CHP.

Once again, there were a significant number of complaints considered, but then not taken forward under the CHP (see chart 6). There were a number of reasons for this including:

- Issue was regarding student conduct and therefore was considered via the Safeguarding group in the first instance.
- The complainant was seeking financial compensation.
- There were a number of complaints from staff. These were then passed to People to take forward.
- Complaint was made regarding an outside company who have their own complaints process.
- Complainant was seeking to change procedures, which were outwith the control of the University.

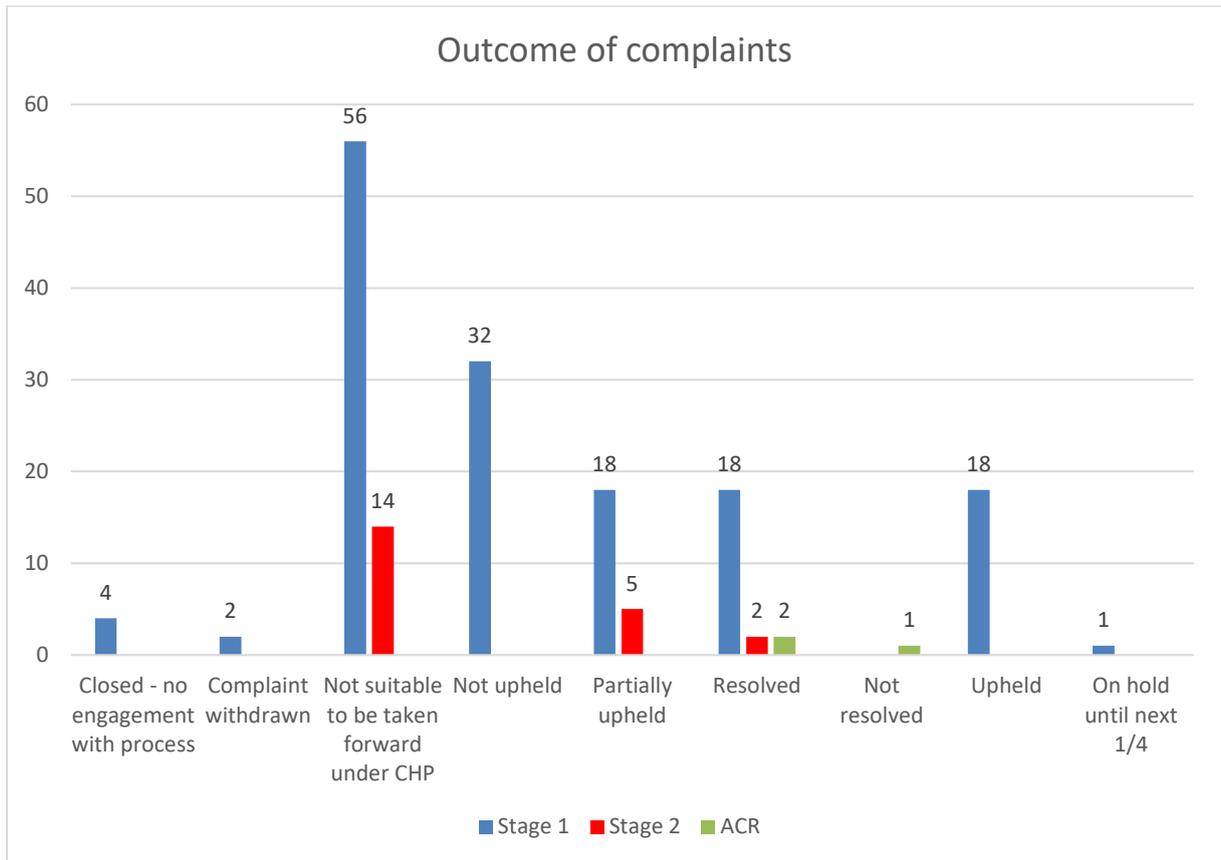


Chart 5 - Outcome of complaints

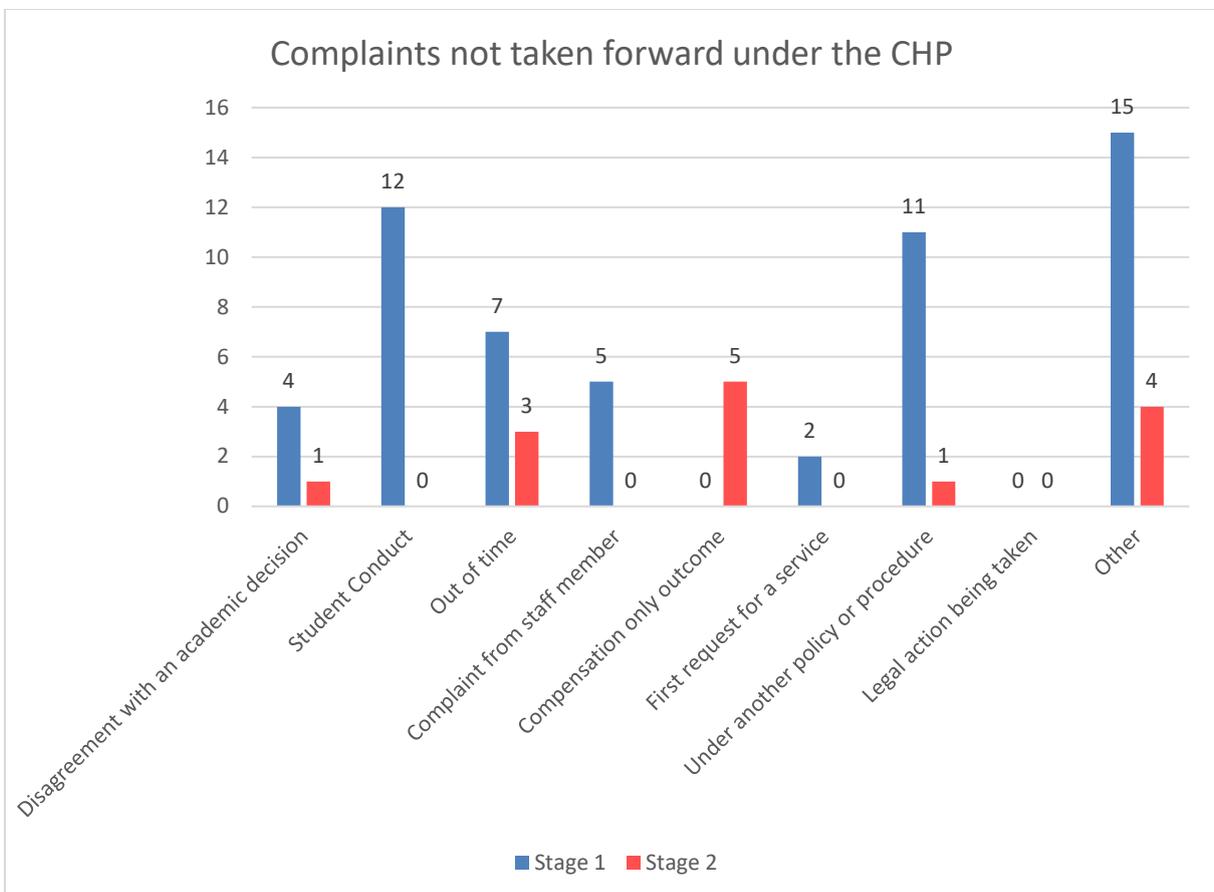


Chart 6 - Complaints which were not taken forward under the CHP

Table 2 indicates the data provided in chart 5 above as percentages of the total complaints closed at each stage.

103 Complaints - excluding those complaints not taken forward under the CHP

173 Complaints - including those complaints not taken forward under the CHP

	Stage 1 - 93 complaints - excluding	Stage 1 - 149 complaints - including	Stage 2 - 7 complaints - excluding	Stage 2 - 21 complaints - including	ACR - 3 complaints
Upheld Stage 1 - 178	18.2%	11.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Partially upheld Stage 1 - 18 Stage 2 - 5	19.3%	12%	71.4%	23.8%	N/A
Not upheld Stage 1 - 32	34.4%	21.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Resolved Stage 1 - 18 Stage 2 - 2 ACR - 2	19.3%	12%	28.5%	9.5%	66.6%
Not Resolved ACR - 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	33.3%
Complaint withdrawn Stage 1 - 2	2.1%	1.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Complaint closed (non engagement with process) Stage 1 - 4	4.3%	2.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Complaints not suitable to be taken forward under the CHP Stage 1 - 56 Stage 2 - 14	N/A	37.5%	N/A	66.6%	N/A
Complaint on hold Stage 1 - 1	1%	0.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 2 - outcomes as a percentage

6. LESSONS LEARNED

One of the purposes of the CHP is to give the University the opportunity to learn from any issues which are raised as complaints. This academic year, complaints assisted in changing the following:

You Said	We Did
Incorrect information was sent on a Friday afternoon regarding failing a course which then impacted on health as they were unable to contact staff easily	Apology given and staff reminded of university policy on issuing information on a Friday afternoon
Last minute information emailed regarding a course starting that same evening	Apology given and School reviewed processes to ensure communications are sent in a timely manner
Unprofessional approach and conduct from staff member	Appropriate training and professional development activity taken forward
Delay in processing requests for clarification of study from former students	University currently reviewing the process of retrieval of archived student files
Issue with dissertation supervisor not engaging with support to students and lack of communication	Staff reminded of their duties and the requirement for a quick turnaround when students contact them about their dissertations
Staff conduct when students arrived late for a class	School to review this and provide training and new guidance to staff on dealing with the late arrival of students at classes

7. TRENDS

Chart 7 shows trends in the number of complaints dealt with in the last 5 academic years. It can be noted that:

- The overall number of complaints has steadily risen over the past 5 years. From 2020/21 to 2024/25 there has been a 64% increase in complaints received by the University.
- This year saw a slight decrease in the number of complaints dealt with at stage 2 compared with 2023/24 (8%).
- However, this year there was an increase in the use of ACR to try and resolve complaints, which may explain the decrease in stage 2 complaints.

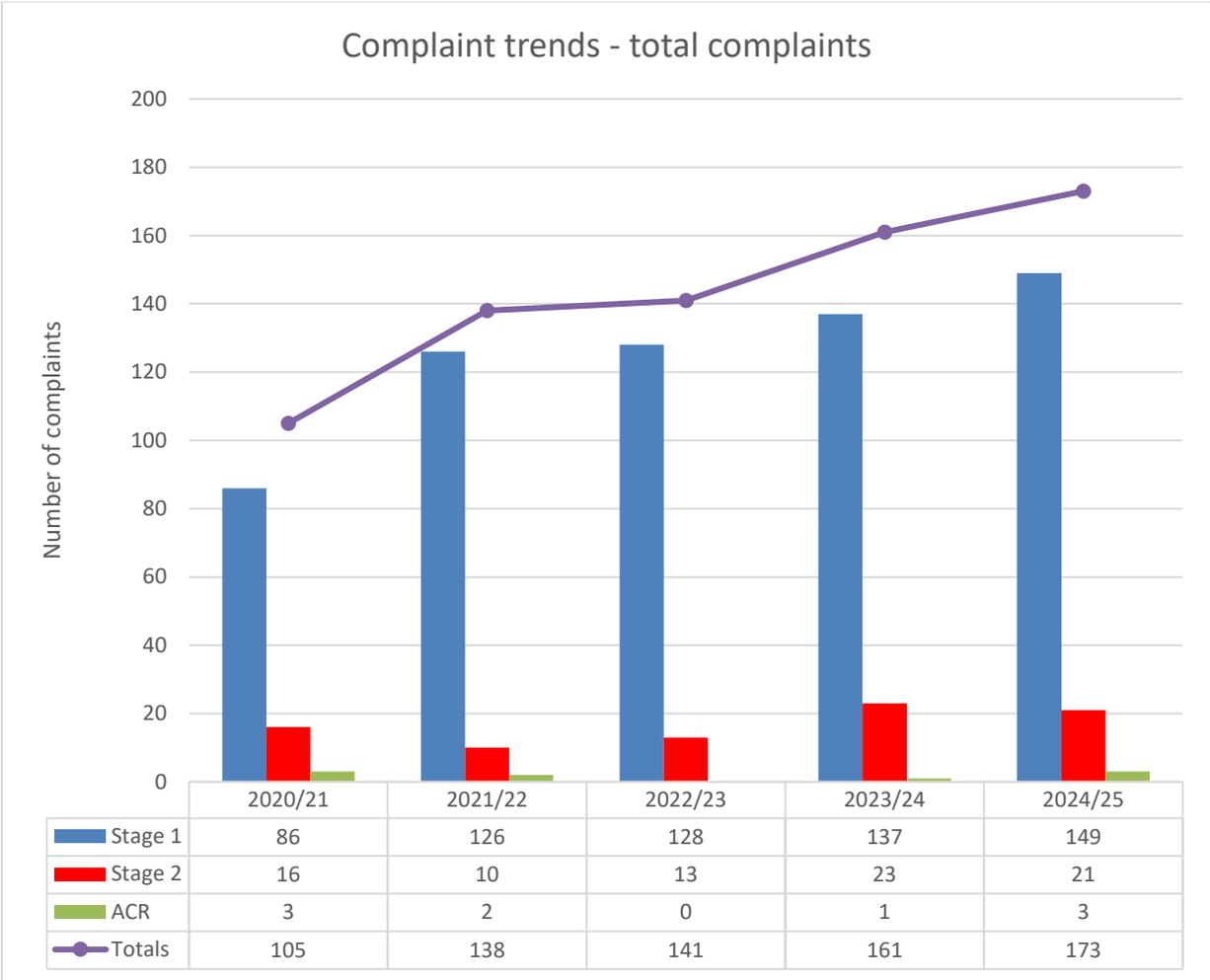


Chart 7 - Trends in number of complaints