

COMPLAINTS HANDLING ANNUAL REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR SEPTEMBER 2024 – AUGUST 2025

1. Background

In common with all other Scottish Higher and Further Education Institutions, SRUC introduced a Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in August 2013. The introduction and content of the CHP was driven by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). An updated Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) was introduced by SPSO and implemented by SRUC in April 2021. This report provides a summary and analysis of complaints handled by SRUC in the Academic Year 2024-2025.

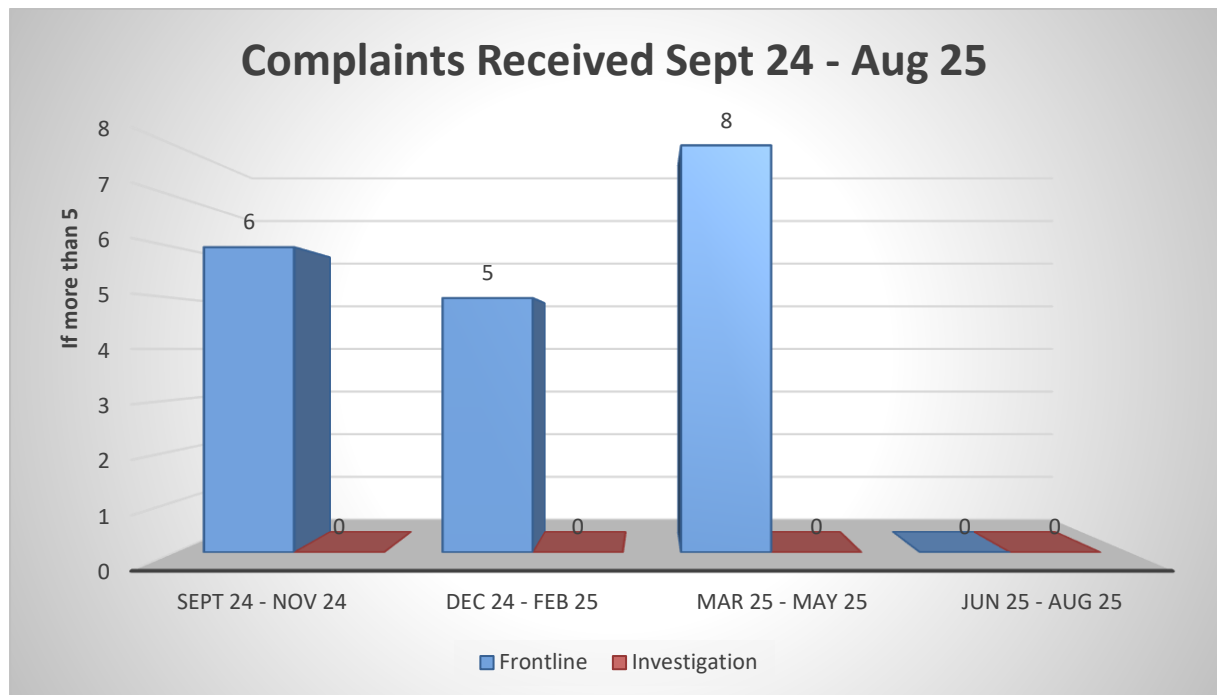
The updated MCHP procedure continues to use two internal stages, Frontline Resolution (Stage 1) by the service provider and Investigation (Stage 2) by a neutral independent investigation officer. The emphasis is on the prompt resolution of complaints at the point closest to their occurrence. After the Investigation stage has concluded a complainant, if still dissatisfied, can appeal externally to the SPSO.

Due to the requirement of publishing complaints data, in line with many other organisations, we are not publishing data less than 5 so that individual cases cannot be identified. Column titles indicate areas where complaints were received.

The number of complaints investigated at stage 2 are not shown in the graph due to there being less than 5 in each reporting period. However, a total of 5 stage 2 investigations occurred in the past year.

2. Annual Complaints Data

2.1 Number of Complaints received (if 5 or more)



Academic Year	Total number of complaints recorded	From members of the public	From or on behalf of students (includes applicants)
2024-2025	28	9	19

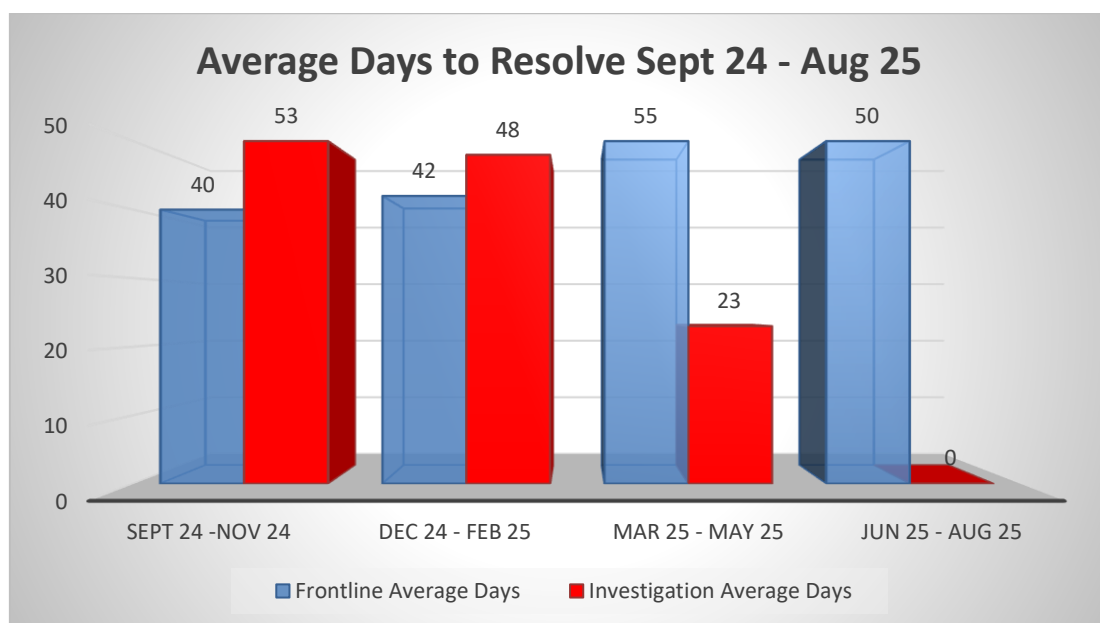
The above figures also reflect Stage 1 complaints recorded further as a Stage 2 complaint after escalation.

Complaints received regarding staff were referred for review under SRUC's HR policies and procedures. Complaints in respect of commercial services, for example, related to services offered by SAC Commercial are not recorded in the CHP but are subject to separate procedures.

2.2 Time taken to deal with complaints

The SPSO target timescales for resolving complaints are 5 working days for Frontline Resolution and 20 working days for Investigation cases. It is not always possible to deal with complaints within these time scales due to holidays, illness or occasionally because a complaint is complex and involves liaising with a number of individuals.

This chart sets out the average number of working days taken to resolve complaints.

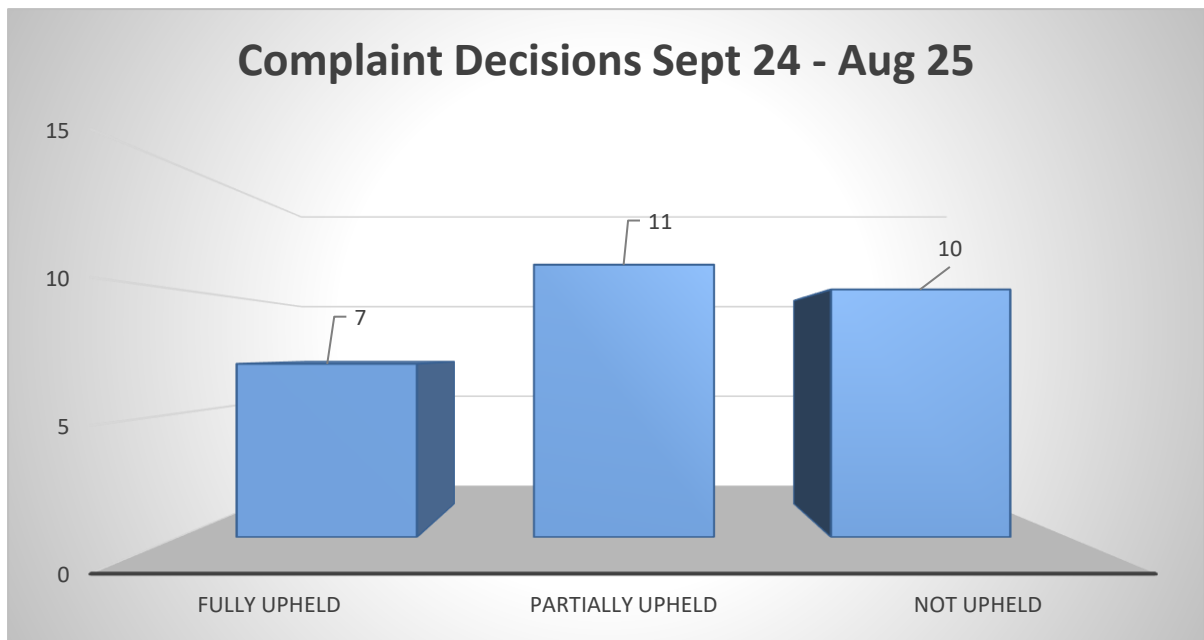


The target dates for dealing with Stage 2 complaints were not achieved in all but one of the Stage 2 complaints received. In all of the cases the reason for this was the need to collate the information required from various members of staff during the full investigations within the time limits imposed by the CHP for responding.

Half of the Stage 1 complaints met the required target dates, and holiday breaks and the complex nature of the cases were the main reasons for those frontline resolutions that did not meet the target of five days. Complainants did agree to extensions where required.

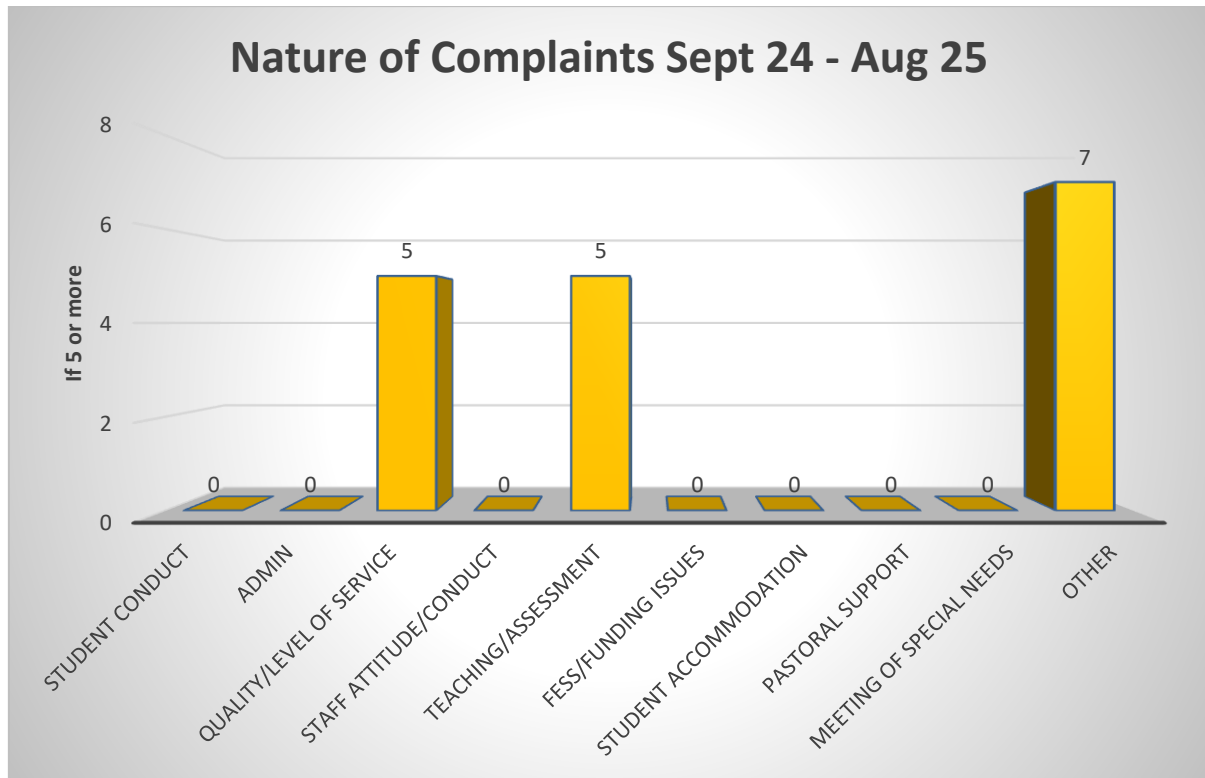
2.3 Complaint Decisions

The following chart summarises the decisions made during the year.



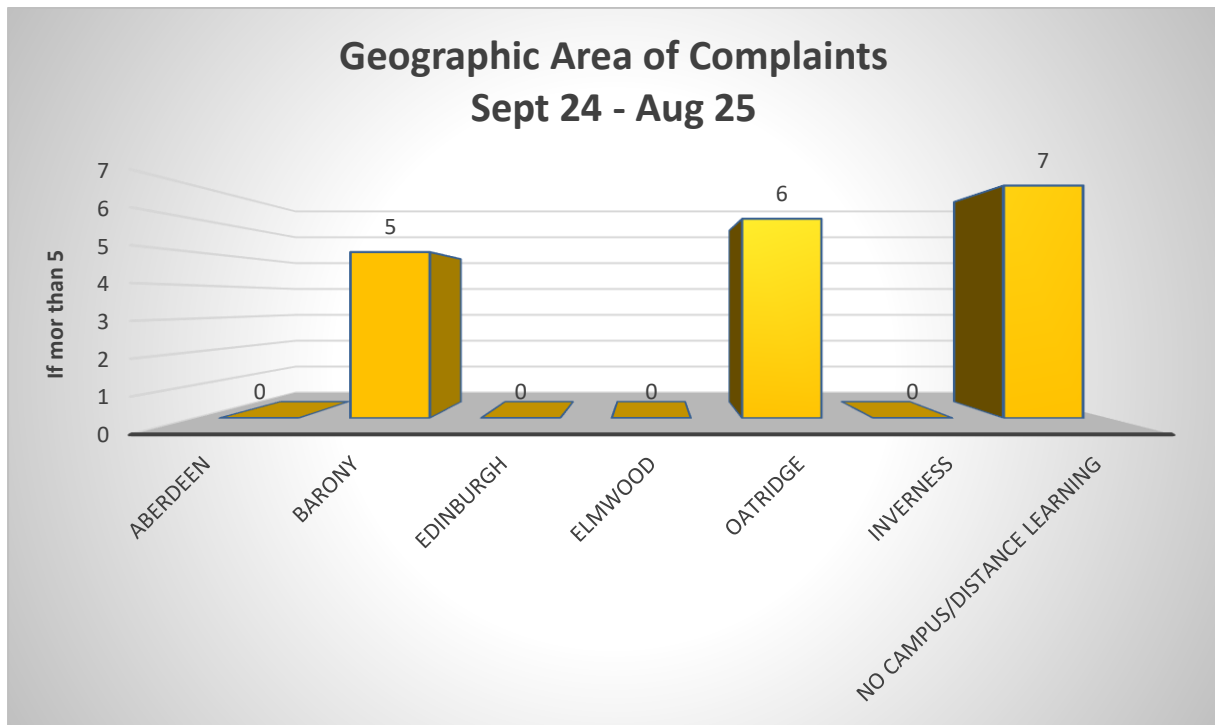
2.4 Nature of Complaints

Of the complaints received during the academic year 2024–2025 most have been made to the Academic Division. The following graph sets out the category of complaints received, where complaints received have numbers over 5. Due to the requirement of publishing complaints data, in line with many other organisations, we are not publishing data less than 5 so that individual cases cannot be identified. Column titles indicate areas where less than 5 complaints were received.



2.5 Geographical area of complaints received

SRUC currently deliver from six locations across Scotland and run No Campus/Distance Learning Courses. The graph below shows the geographic locations of where complaints originated from if known (if 5 or more).



3. Learning Points

The low level of complaints recorded makes it difficult to draw specific learning points from this year of operation of the CHP in respect of SRUC's service delivery. There were more complaints received than normal in terms of short course training –represented within the no campus/distance learning column – this is not an area that complaints are normally received in – they covered quality of delivery and response times, and have been taken on board by the teams responsible.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman have published (August 2025) updated complaints handling principles. These principles do not alter the model complaints handling process but rather set the environment in which complaints must be handled – around **accessibility; person centred; simple and timely; thorough and proportionate; objective, impartial and fair**; leading to **resolution and learning**. Further details are available at spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/standards/ComplaintsPrinciples.pdf

The low level of complaints recorded, and the geographic concentration of complaints indicates that there may be under-recording of complaints.

Going forward, we will start recording complaints by School as well as location.

October 2025