



University
of Dundee

Complaints Handling Procedure

Annual Report to the SPSO

2023/2024

Date approved:

Student Governance Oversight Group – 11 September 2024
Senate – 27 November 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Dundee is committed to providing an excellent education and high quality service to our students and the wider University community.

Sometimes it will transpire that a service user will be 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 involves up to two internal stages:

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

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

Following stages 1 and 2, if a complainant remains dissatisfied they have the option to take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration.

Our CHP can be found at: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/discipline-complaints-appeals/complaints>

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 2023 – 31 July 2024. 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.

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

2. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

In 2023/24, the University received a total of 161 complaints. Of these, 137 were considered at stage 1, 23 were considered at stage 2 and 1 was considered under our alternative complaints resolution route.

Charts 1 and 2 below highlight the number of complaints dealt with each quarter. As in previous years, the majority of complaints were received during the first semester of 2023/24.

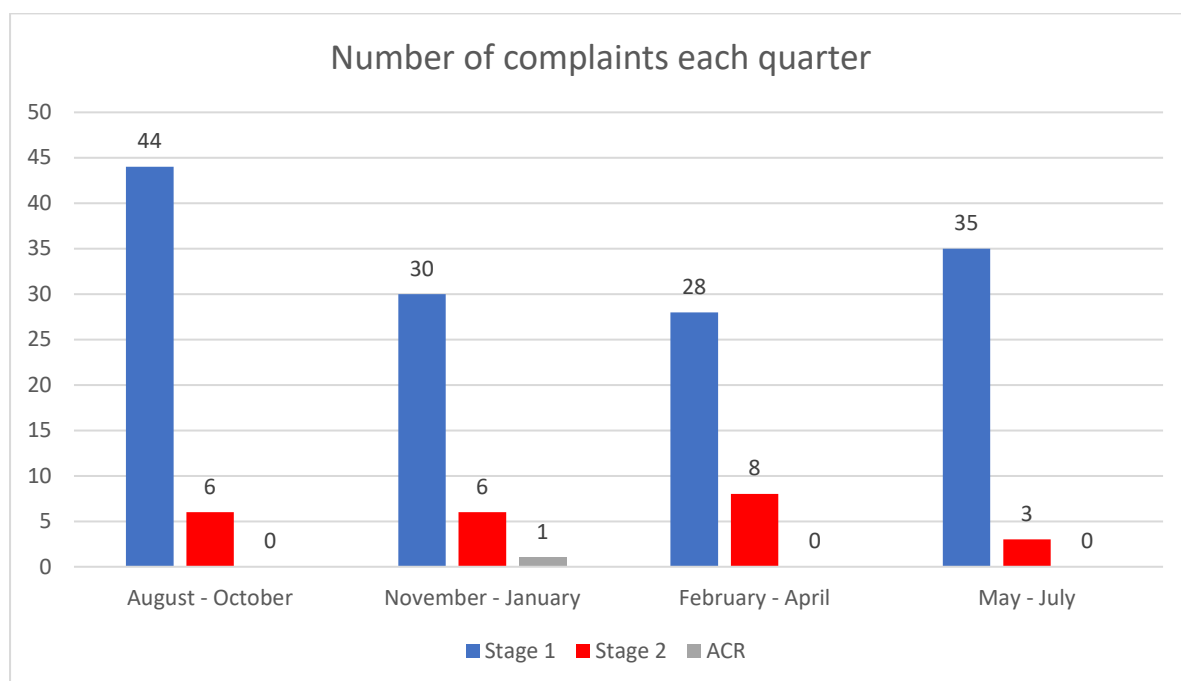


Chart 1 - Quarterly numbers of complaints received

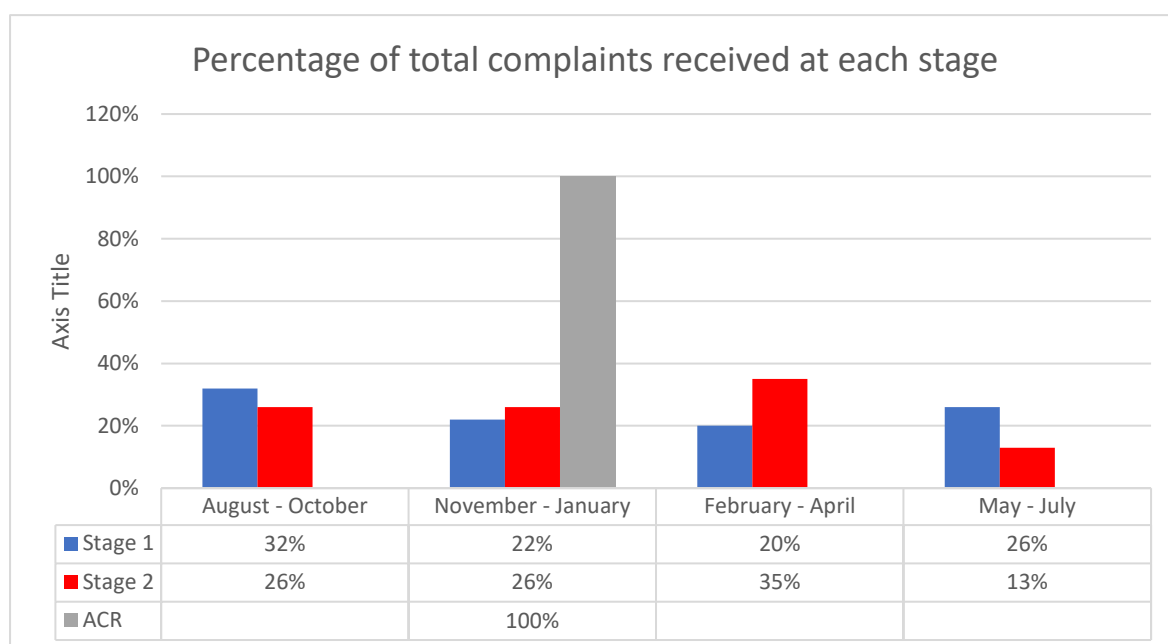


Chart 2 - Percentage of all complaints received at each stage

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 41 complaints closed within 10 working days. Therefore there was a total of 111 stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (84%).

Stage	Total complaints	Number closed within SPSO time limits	Percentage closed within SPSO time limits
Stage 1	137	74	54% of all stage 1 complaints
Stage 2	23	15	65% 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 in previous years, not all stage 1 complaints were completed within the 5 working days. However it is encouraging to see that at each quarter the average time for dealing with a stage 1 complaint was below the extended 10 working days timescale. At stage 2, the average time to complete a complaint each quarter was within the 20 working days timescale.

However, on some occasions an extension to the timescales was approved. The main reasons for some of the longer times included:

- Unavailability of relevant staff members; and
- Complainants not engaging fully with the process.

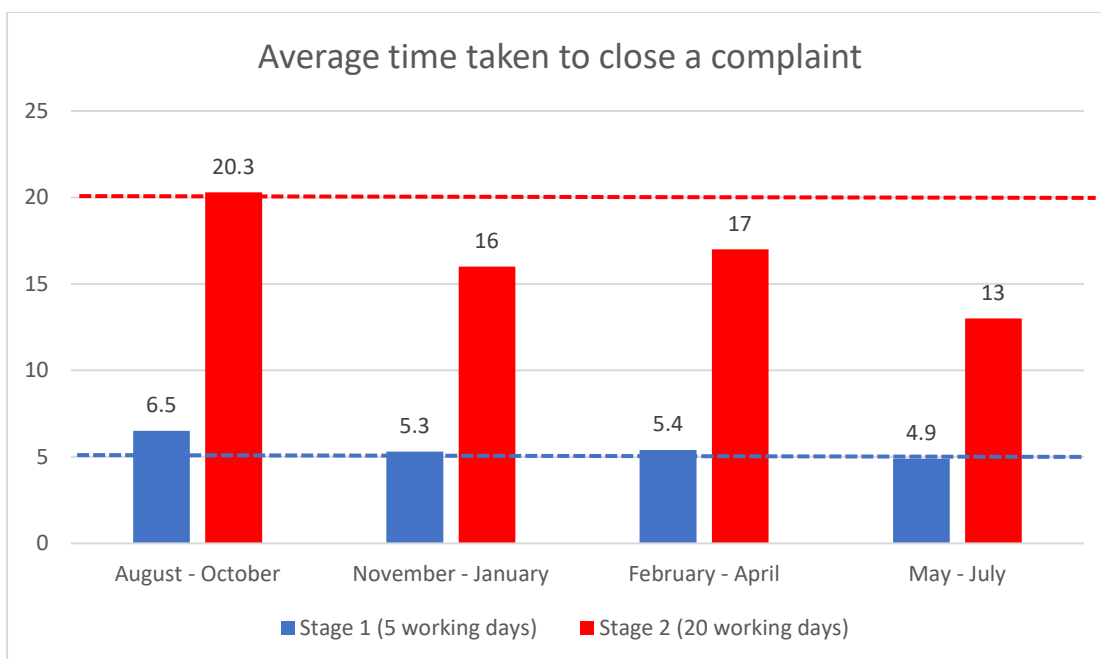


Chart 3 – Average time taken at each stage to close a complaint each reporting quarter

4. NATURE OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Once again, the majority of complaints were concerning teaching/assessment, staff conduct and student support. However, it should be noted that this year saw an increase in complaints regarding our policies and procedures.

Last year saw a rise in complaints regarding finance. With less strike action this year, the number of complainants looking for partial refund of fees has reduced and therefore the number of complaints regarding finance have also decreased.

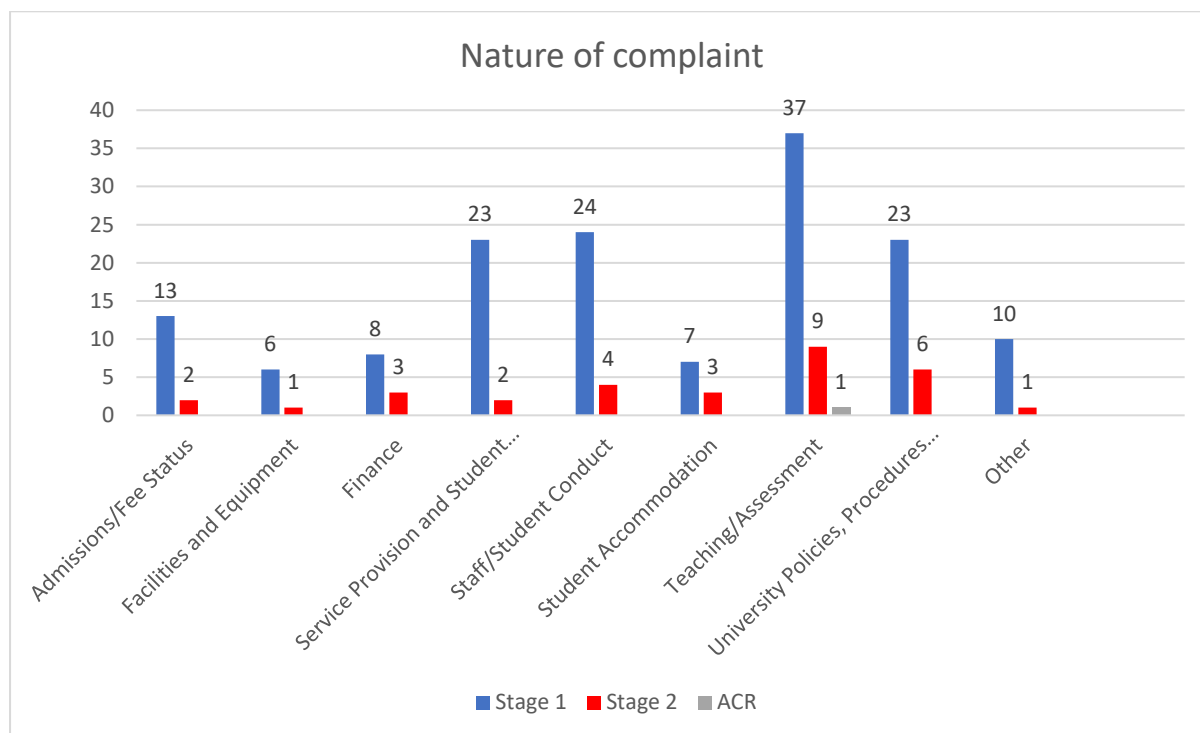


Chart 4 - Nature of complaints received

5. OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

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

As highlighted in previous reports, a significant number of complaints received were unable to be taken forward under the CHP. The reasons for these can be seen in chart 6.

In chart 6, it should be noted that under the heading "other", this included complaints:

- Which were seen as feedback
- Where another policy or procedure would be more relevant such as our Safeguarding policy or Tuition Fee Refund policy
- Which were regarding another HE institution, our Students' Association, the NHS or our overseas partners.

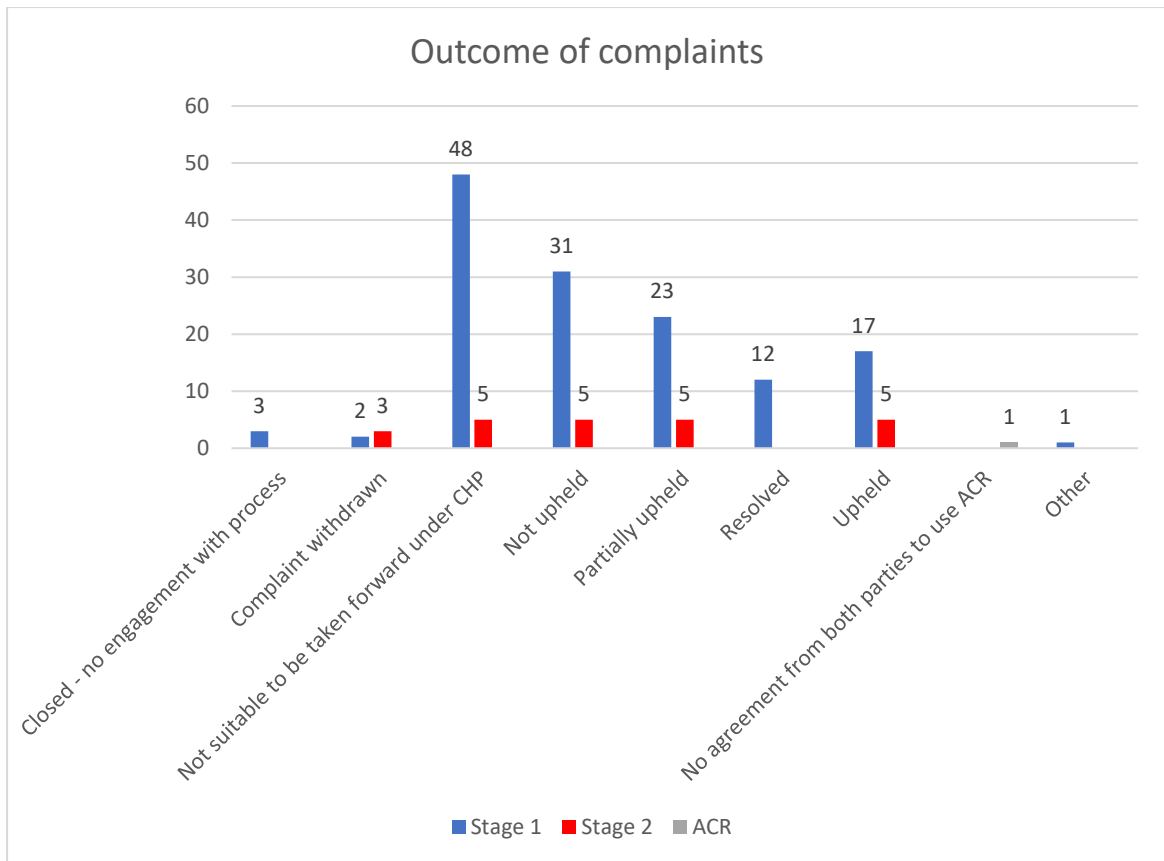


Chart 5 - Outcome of complaints

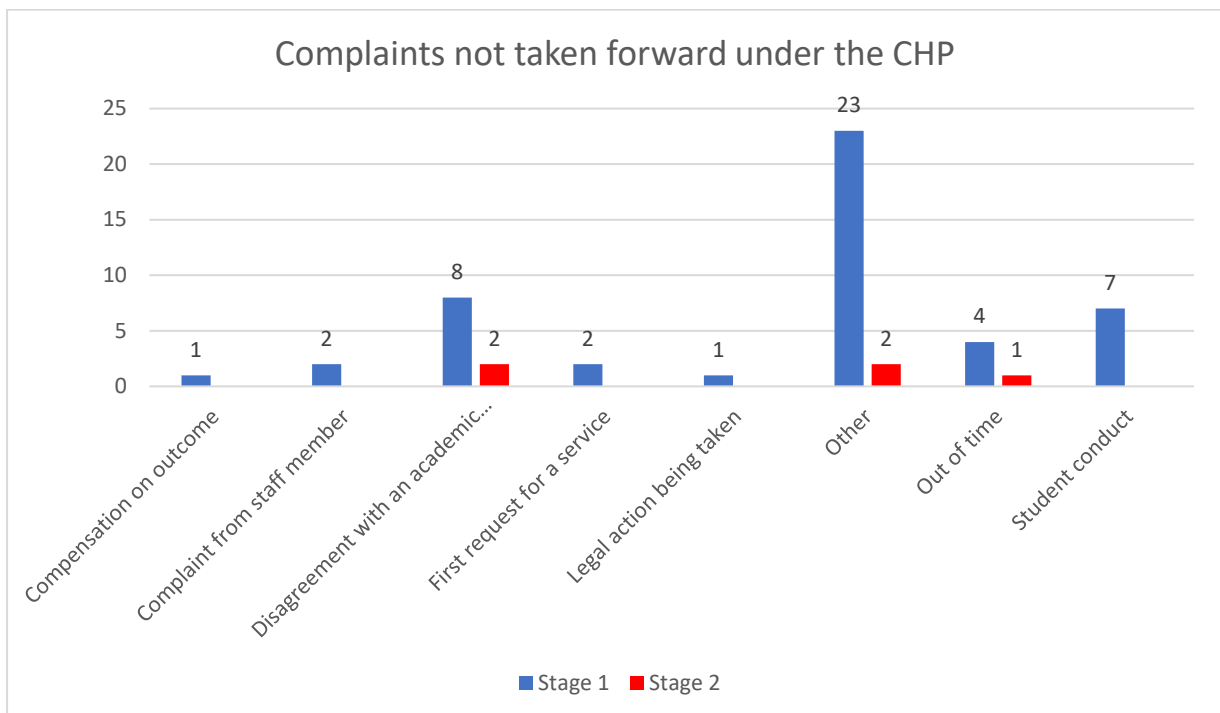


Chart 6 - stage 1 complaints which were not taken forward under the CHP

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

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

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

	Stage 1 - 89 complaints - excluding	Stage 1 - 137 complaints - including	Stage 2 - 18 complaints - excluding	Stage 2 - 23 complaints - including
Upheld Stage 1 - 17 Stage 2 - 5	20%	13%	28%	22%
Partially upheld Stage 1 - 23 Stage 2 - 5	26%	17%	28%	22%
Not upheld Stage 1 - 31 Stage 2 - 5	35%	23%	28%	22%
Resolved Stage 1 - 12	14%	9%	N/A	N/A
Complaint withdrawn Stage 1 - 2 Stage 2 - 3	2%	1%	16%	13%
Complaint closed (non engagement with process) Stage 1 - 3	3%	2%	N/A	N/A
Complaints not suitable to be taken forward under the CHP Stage 1 - 48 Stage 2 - 5	N/A	35%	N/A	22%

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
Issues raised regarding staff not following University procedures	Further training organised for staff who deal with University procedures
You wanted longer opening hours in specific buildings	We carried out a survey and considered health and safety issues along with promoting health working hours
Lack of communications, especially when trying to call the University on the telephone	Apology given for lack of telephone service due to staff shortages
Tone of language in communications	Apology given and staff reminded of their need to remain professional when corresponding

Language not inclusive in documentation	Review of all documentation on the ProfDoc Programme
Lack of captioning within Blackboard	School continues to look for a satisfactory solution. They have been working with external providers and looking at alternative options within the School
Lack of teaching on a specific module	Timetable was reviewed and shared with students
Concerns about an element of an IT session regarding stereotypes	That part of the session has now been changed
Module descriptor on website unclear	School to review this and update the website

7. TRENDS

Chart 7 shows trends in the number of complaints dealt with since session 2019/20. Some observations on this chart include:

- Over the last 5 years, complaints received have continued to steadily rise. Session 2023/24 saw another increase in the number of complaints received as compared to the previous year;
- Although the number of stage 2 complaints have remained steady over the past few years, session 2023/24 saw a significant rise with 23 complaints being considered. This is a significant increase of over 76%.

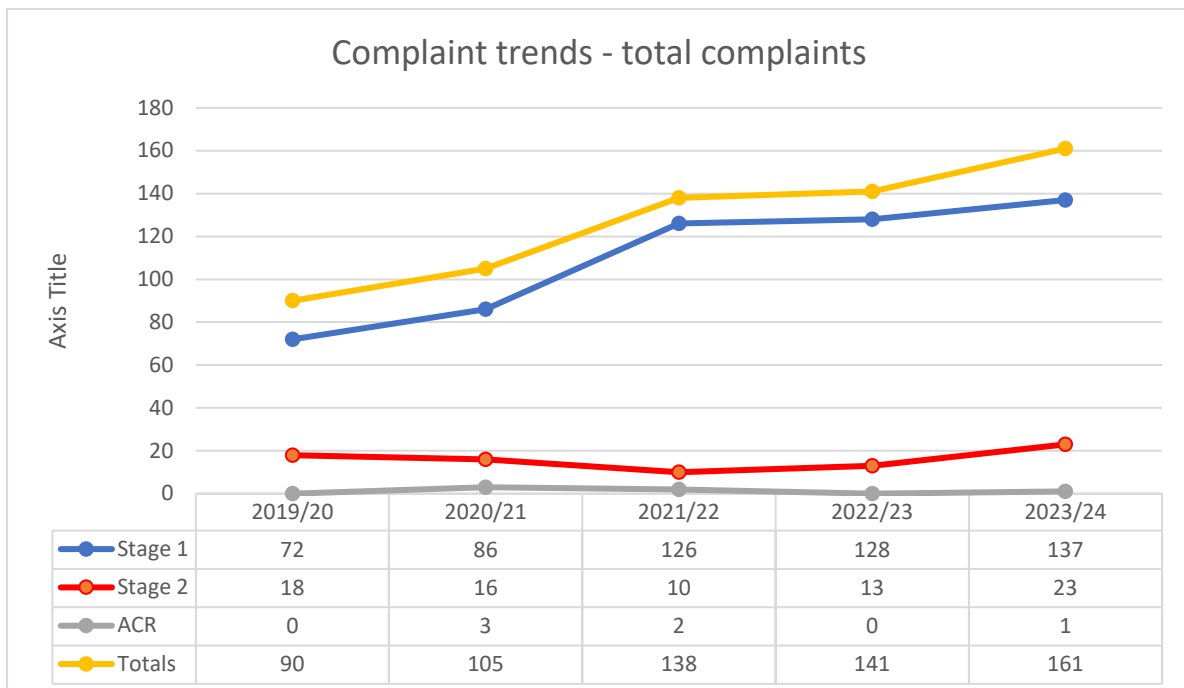


Chart 7 - Trends in number of complaints