



University
of Dundee

Complaints Handling Procedure

Annual Report to the SPSO

2021/2022

Date approved:

Student Governance Oversight Group - 11 October 2022
Senate - 30 November 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

The University's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) involves up to two stages:

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

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

Any person who remains dissatisfied following stage 2 (Investigation) can take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration.

Our CHP can be found at: <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/dca/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 for the period 1 August 2021 - 31 July 2022.

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

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/dca/monitoringstatistics/>

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 2021/22, the University received 138 complaints. Of these, 126 complaints were dealt with at stage 1 (frontline), 10 complaints were dealt with at stage 2 (investigation) and 2 complaints were handled using an alternative complaints resolution approach.

From the 10 complaints dealt with at stage 2, 9 complaints had been dealt with initially at stage 1.

Chart 1 shows the number of complaints handled at each stage for each quarter. Chart 2 shows the percentage of total complaints received at each stage.

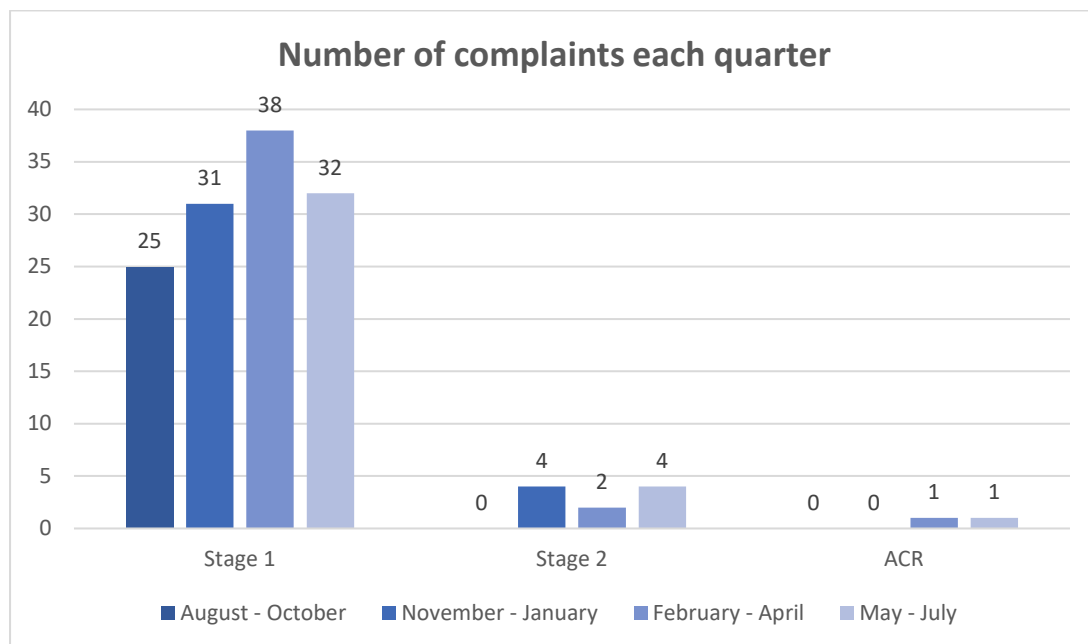


Chart 1 - Quarterly numbers of complaints received

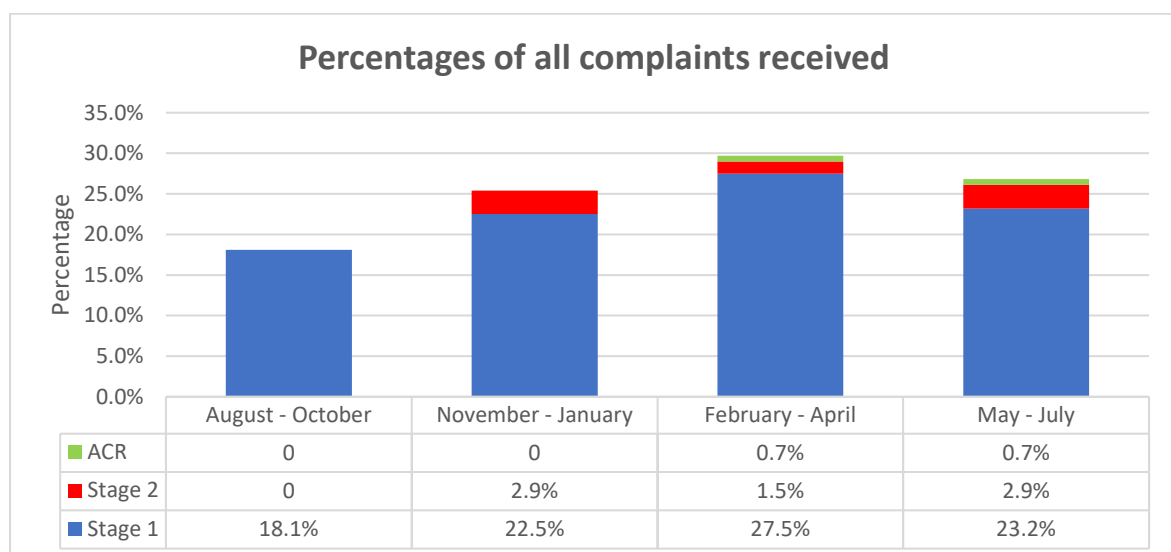


Chart 2 - Percentage of all complaints received

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSED

The following table shows the number and percentage of complaints closed at stage 1 (within 5 working days timescale), stage 2 (within 20 working days timescale) and through Alternative Complaints Resolution (within 20 working days timescale).

It should be noted that an additional 24 stage 1 complaints were closed within 10 working days. Therefore there was a total of 107 stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (84.9%).

Stage	Total complaints	Number closed within SPSO time limits	Percentage closed within SPSO time limits
Stage 1	126	83	65.9% of all stage 1 complaints
Stage 2	10	7	70% of all stage 2 complaints
Alternative Complaints Resolution	2	2	100% of all ACR

Chart 3 shows the average times for closing complaints at all stages of the CHP. Since the previous annual report, the average time periods for closing a stage 2 complaint have remained similar. However it is noted that the average times for dealing with a stage 1 complaint have risen slightly. This can be seen particularly in the first reporting quarter when the average time rose from 4 working days to 8 working days. This is something which shall be addressed at future training sessions.

The main reasons for some of the longer times included:

- non-engagement by the complainant or members of staff;
- annual leave or unavailability of relevant staff members;
- strike action taking place and relevant staff unavailable.

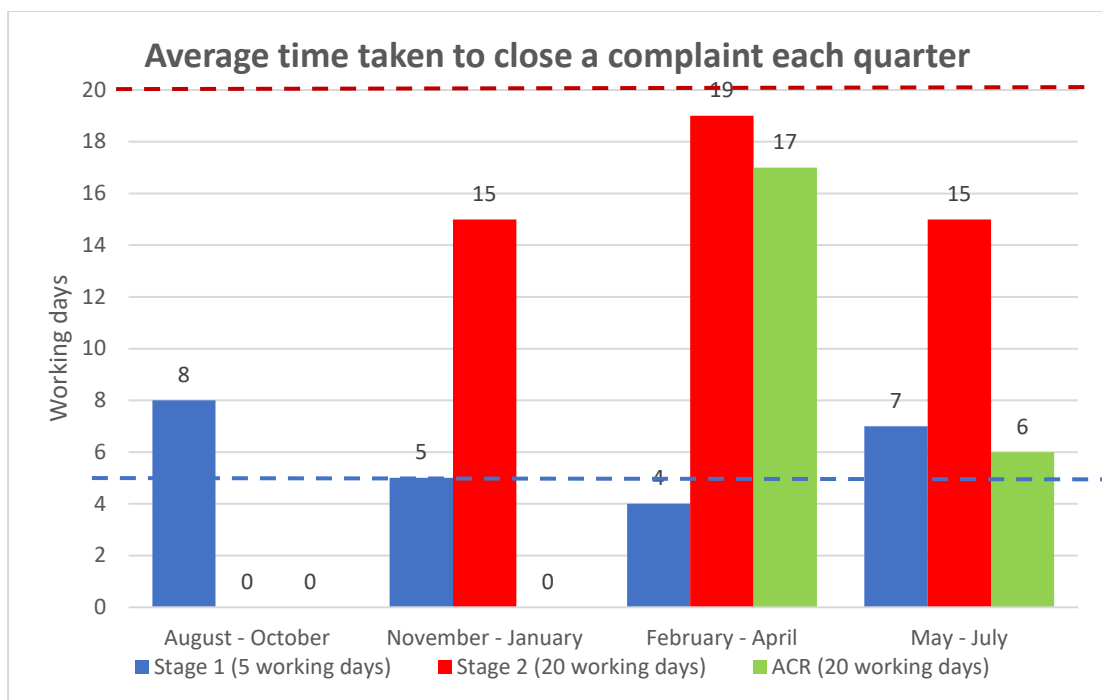


Chart 3 - Average time taken to close a complaint each quarter

4. NATURE OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Chart 4 shows the types of complaints received at each stage of the CHP. As in previous reports, teaching/assessment complaints remain the largest type of complaint received (an increase of 29.6% from 2020/21 in stage 1 complaints).

Once again, the effects of covid have impacted on this figure with much teaching in session 2021/22 remaining online. Chart 5 gives a breakdown of the number of complaints received which were with regards to covid or strike action in this reporting period. It should be noted that the majority of these complaints were about teaching/assessment.

It should also be noted that this year also saw a large increase in stage 1 complaints about the following:

- Admissions/fee status (130% increase from 2020/21),
- Staff/student conduct (80% increase from 2020/21);
- Service provision and student support (62.5% increase from 2020/21),
- University policies, procedures and regulations (366.7% increase from 2020/21).

The increase in complaints about student conduct can be partly attributed to a mis-categorisation of certain enquiries to the CHP. Once properly analysed, these enquiries were referred to other, more appropriate, University processes. This mis-categorisation can be partly blamed on the prominence of the CHP with the University community. Further details can be found in chart 7.

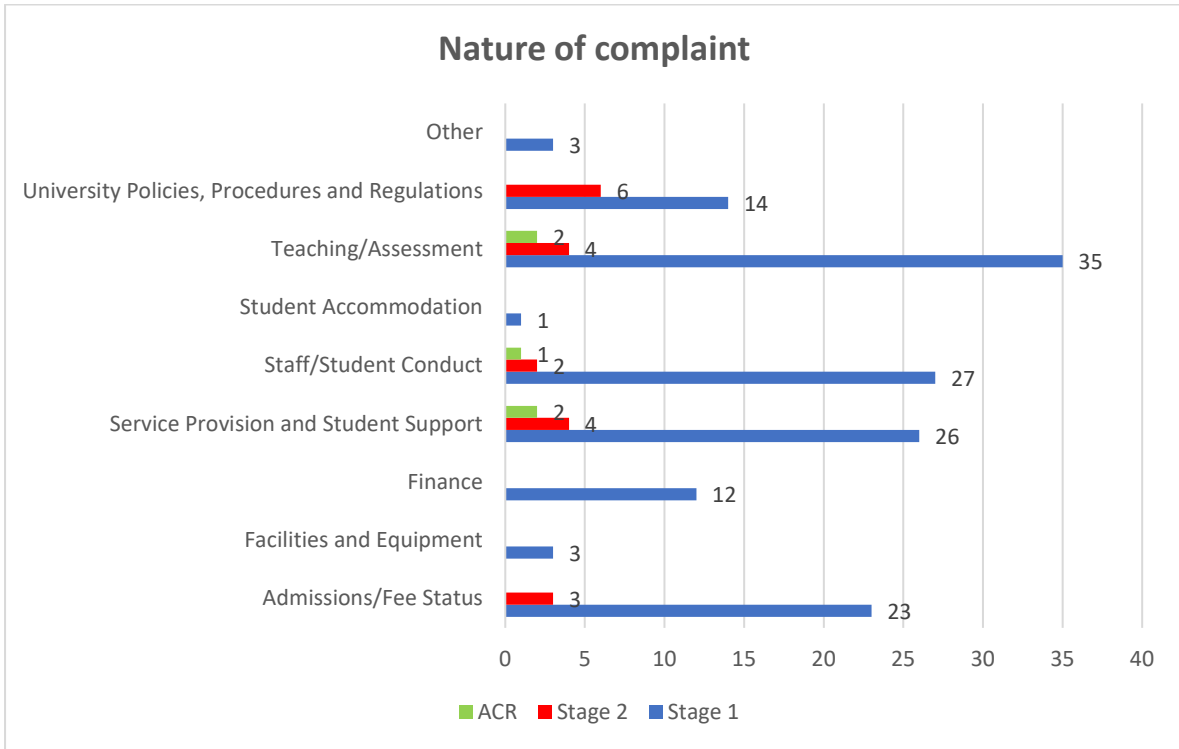


Chart 4 - Nature of complaints received

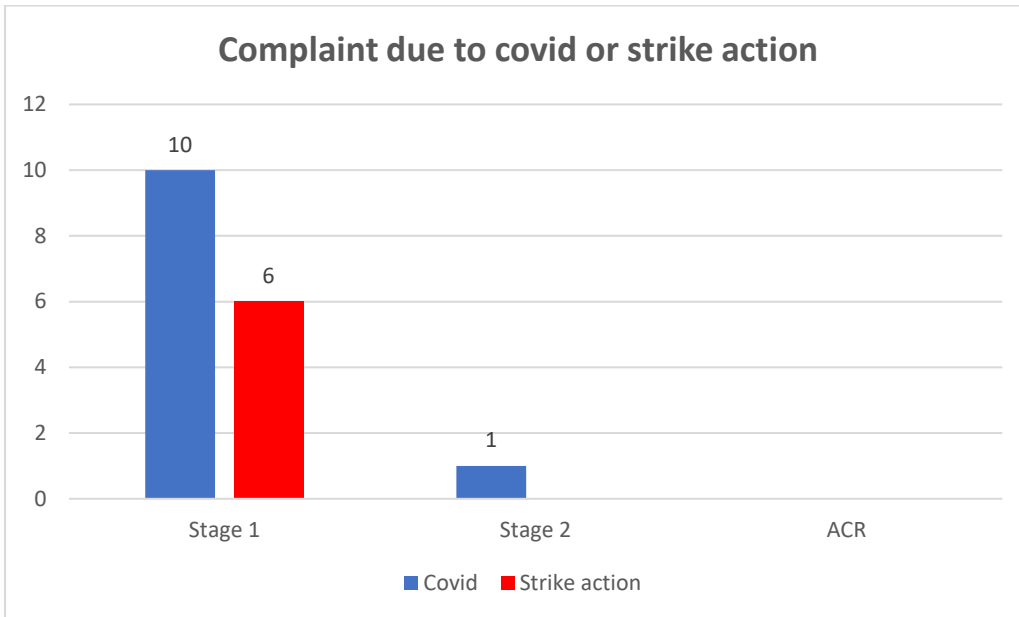


Chart 5 - Complaints received due to covid or strike action

5. OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

Chart 6 shows the outcome of complaints at each stage of the CHP. This year saw a decline in the number of complaints not upheld, whilst the complaints upheld/partially upheld had risen.

It is encouraging to see that the number of stage 1 complaints being resolved had increased (by 330%) since the introduction of this option last year.

It was also noted that once again we saw an increase in the number of complaints received which were not taken forward under the CHP (an increase of 21.4% from 2020/21).

Chart 7 gives a breakdown of the reasons why some complaints were not taken forward under the CHP. As explained in section 5 above, the number of complaints about student conduct were dealt with via other University policies and procedures such as Safeguarding or Dignity at Work and Study.

Another large area of complaints not taken forward under the CHP comes under the title of “other”. In the case of these complaints, often we had not received any authority for the complainant to act or it was with regards to an external policy or procedure outwith the control of the University.

Where the complaint was not taken forward under the CHP, an explanation was also given as to why and, in some cases, an opportunity to speak with someone about the complaint was offered.

For information, the stage 2 complaints which were not taken forward under the CHP were due to the following: that any investigation would not change the outcome of the stage 1 complaint, a disagreement with an academic decision or the only outcome sought was compensation.

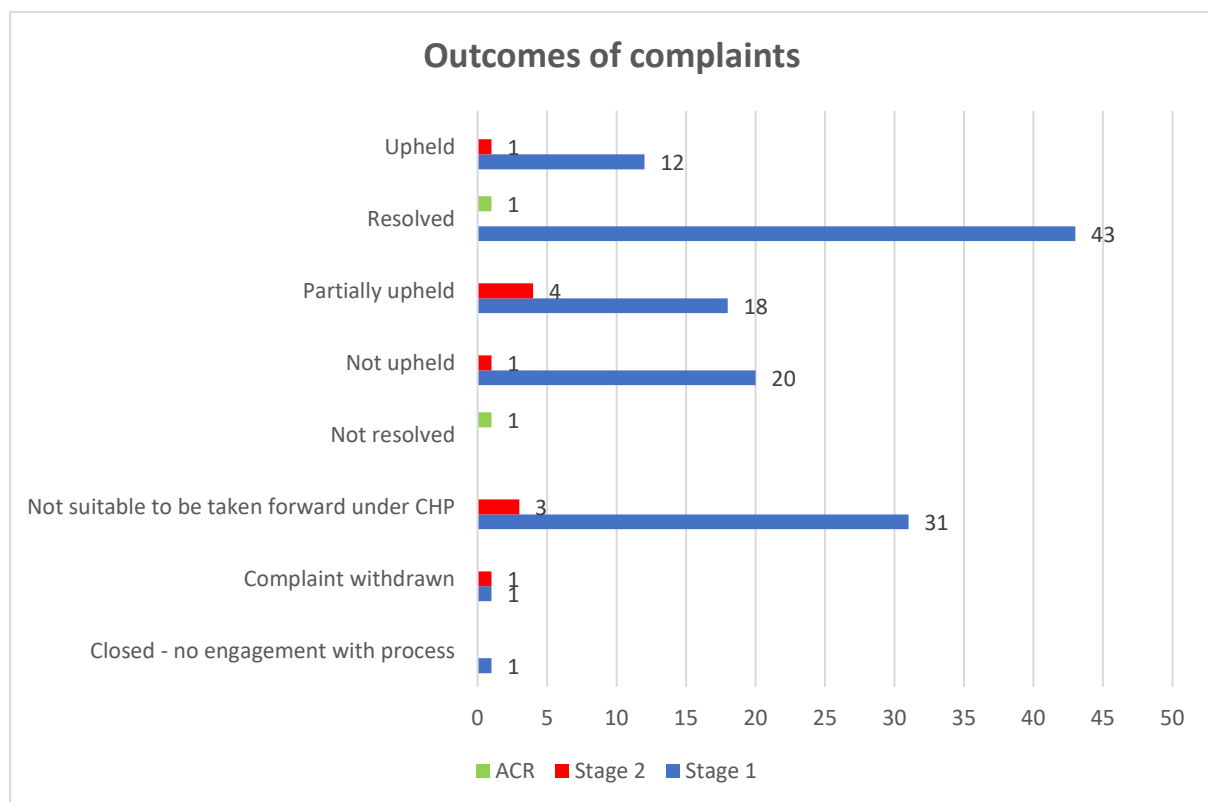


Chart 6 - Outcome of complaints

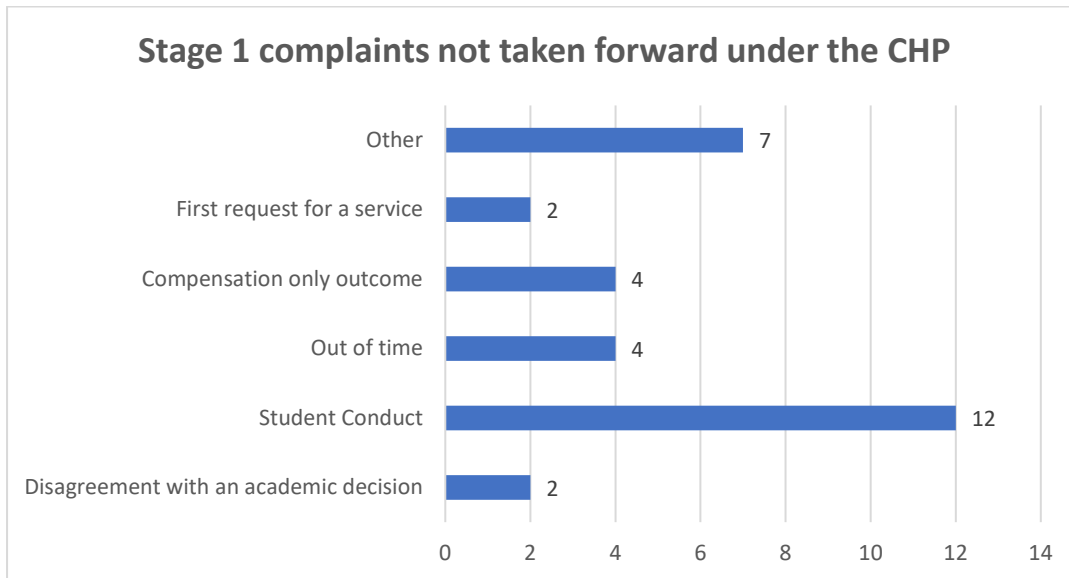


Chart 7 - stage 1 complaints which were not taken forward under the CHP

The following table shows the data provided in chart 6 as percentages of the total complaints closed at each stage. Due to rounding of figures the totals may not always add up to 100%.

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

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

	Stage 1 – 95 complaints - excluding	Stage 1 – 126 complaints - including	Stage 2 – 7 complaints – excluding	Stage 2 – 10 complaints - including	ACR – 2 complaints
Upheld Stage 1 – 12 Stage 2 - 1	12.6%	9.5%	14.3%	10%	N/A
Partially upheld Stage 1 – 18 Stage 2 - 4	18.9%	14.3%	57.1%	40%	N/A
Not upheld Stage 1 – 20 Stage 2 - 1	21.1%	15.9%	14.3%	10%	N/A
Resolved Stage 1 – 43 ACR - 1	45.3%	34.1%	N/A	N/A	50%
Not resolved ACR - 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	50%
Complaint withdrawn Stage 1 – 1 Stage 2 -1	1.1%	0.8%	14.3%	10%	N/A

Complaint closed (non engagement with process) Stage 1 – 1	1.1%	0.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Complaints not suitable to be taken forward under the CHP Stage 1 – 31 Stage 2 - 3	N/A	24.6%	N/A	30%	N/A

6. LESSONS LEARNED

In terms of the University's Strategy we continue to transform lives, locally and globally, working together as a community to deliver positive change. This is critical to our complaints handling process.

During 2021/22 a number of complaints resulted in the University looking at lessons which could be learned. Many of these issues were with regards to communication styles. Some examples included:

You Said	We Did
Communication timings not appropriate	Created new guidance for staff on communicating bad news to students
Inaccurate or lack of clarity in information on our website	Relevant webpages updated and wording made clear
Issues with inaccurate information in communications to applicants	Review processes, update templates and provide training to staff on attention to detail
Concerns about staff behaviour	Emails sent to staff in that department reminding them of the importance of politeness and behaving in a courteous and respectful manner towards others
Issues of with technology and applications	Looked at alternative options to assist students who are having issues
Delays in issue of CAS refunds	Admissions to look at making this a more efficient process
Delay in release of module and therefore a shortened amount of time to submit assessment	Apology given to cohort of students and submission date for the assessment extended
Did not follow due process with regards to raising a concern	Review of how concerns are raised and ensure the process is reiterated to all staff in the area

7. TRENDS

Chart 8 shows the number of complaints dealt with at frontline, investigation, ACR and overall since academic year 2017/18. Headlines this year are:

- 2021/22 once again saw our highest number of recorded complaints since the CHP was implemented in 2013 with 138 in total.
- As a percentage, the difference between the total complaints recorded in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is a 31.4% increase.
- As can be seen from chart 8, there has been a year on year rise in total complaints received, with 2021/22 showing the steepest rise since 2013.
- However, in contrast, the number of complaints being dealt with at stage 2 declined in 2021/22 - with the lowest recorded number since 2017/18 (and a 37.5% decrease since 2020/21).
- It is reassuring to see that stage 2 complaints have fallen as this then indicates that complaints are being dealt with well at stage 1.
- The overall increase in complaints in 2021/22 may be partly due to the continuing covid pandemic and also strike action. However, it may also be due to the fact that School and Directorates are more aware of what is and is not a complaint and have become better at recording complaints they have dealt with through the online recording form.

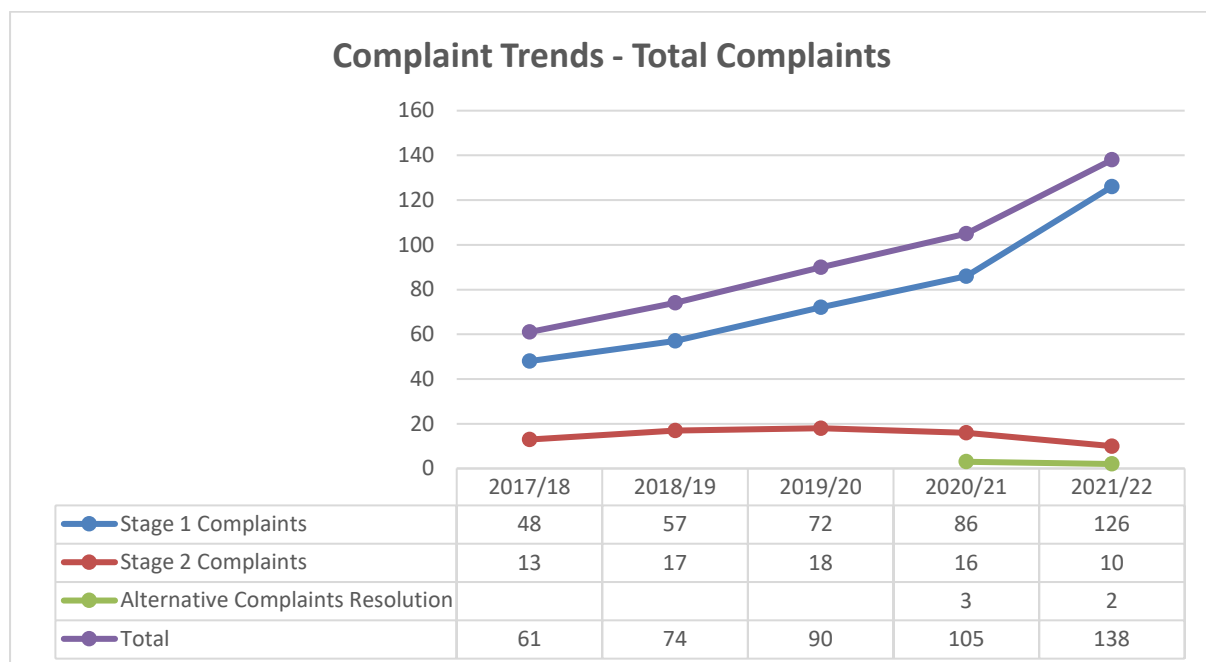


Chart 8 - Trends in number of complaints