



University
of Dundee

Complaints Handling Procedure

Annual Report to the SPSO

2022/2023

Date approved:

Student Governance Oversight Group – 13 September 2023
Senate – 29 November 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

The University strives to provide an excellent service for its students, staff and wider Dundee community. However there are times when our service does not meet the standards we or our stakeholder expect.

Any person who is dissatisfied with the service they have received from the University of Dundee is entitled to make a complaint through the University's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP).

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 for the period 1 August 2022 - 31 July 2023.

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

In total, the University received 128 complaints at stage 1 and 13 complaints at stage 2.

Charts 1 and 2 below highlight the number of complaints dealt with each quarter. The majority of complaints were received during the first semester of 2022/23.

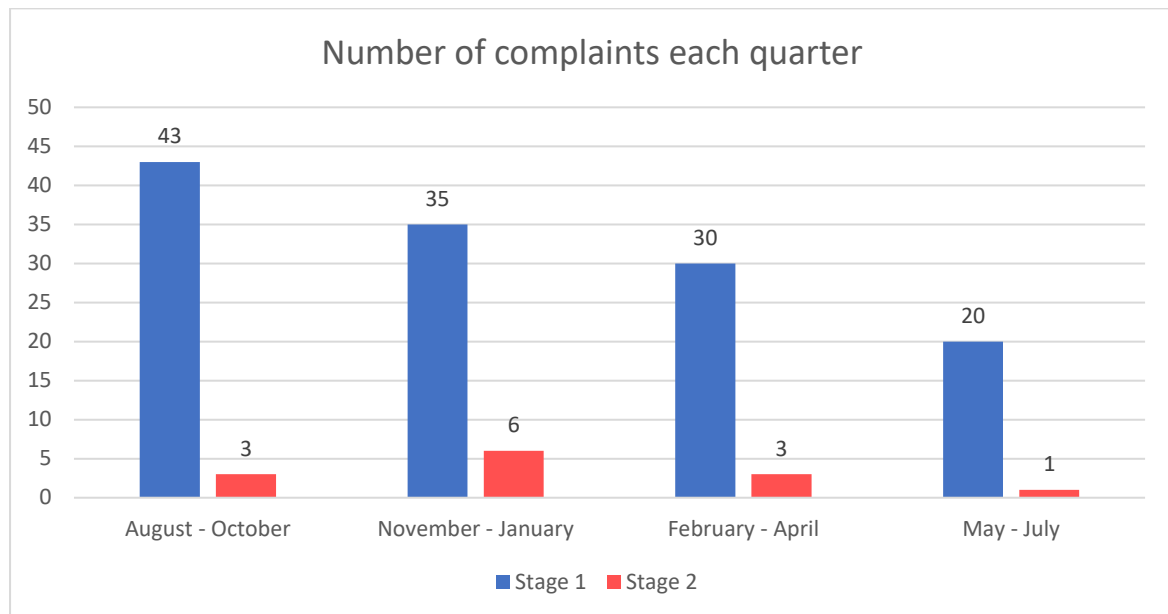


Chart 1 - Quarterly numbers of complaints received

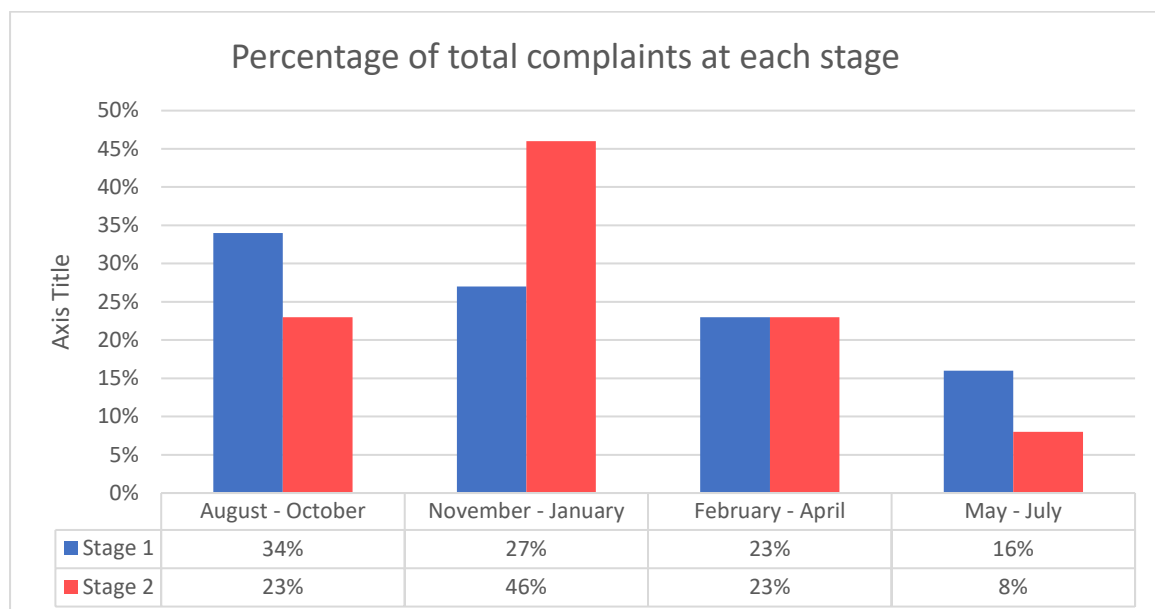


Chart 2 - Percentage of all complaints received at each stage

3. COMPLAINTS CLOSED

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

It should be noted that an additional 20 stage 1 complaints were closed within 10 working days. Therefore there was a total of 106 stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (83%).

Stage	Total complaints	Number closed within SPSO time limits	Percentage closed within SPSO time limits
Stage 1	128	86	67% of all stage 1 complaints
Stage 2	13	10	77% of all stage 2 complaints

Chart 3 below shows the average times for closing complaints at each stages of the CHP. It is reassuring to see that the average times for closing a stage 2 complaint in each quarter are below the SPSO recommended time limit of 20 working days. However, at stage 1, we are still not always hitting the target of 5 working days (although all averages are below the extended 10 working day timescale). As in previous years, we will look at this during regular training sessions.

The main reasons for some of the longer times included:

- The complainant not engaging with the process; and
- Staff members on annual leave or absent due to illness.

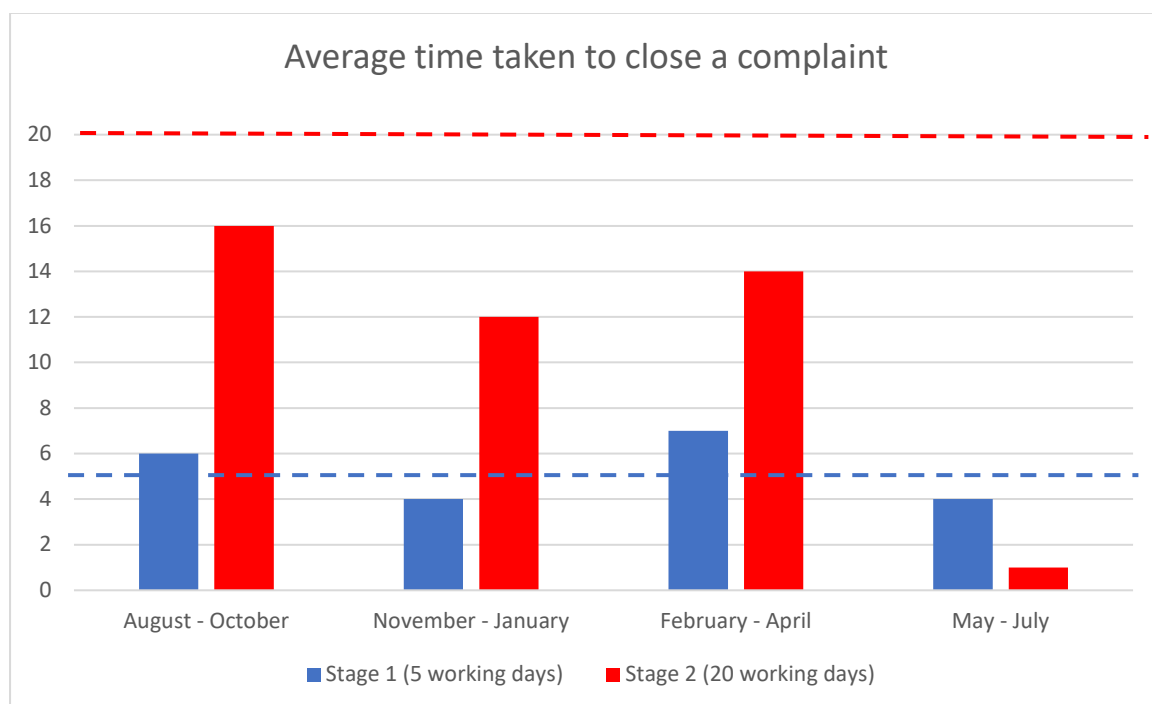


Chart 3 - Average time taken at each stage to close a complaint each reporting quarter

4. NATURE OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

As in previous years, the nature of complaints received have remained highest in the categories of staff/student conduct, teaching/assessment and service provision & student support (see chart 4 below). This year we have also seen a large increase in complaints regarding finance. This may be due to strike action during the year and students were requesting partial refund of fees. In these cases, the students were advised that the CHP cannot give out refunds and an explanation was given in the outcome letter.

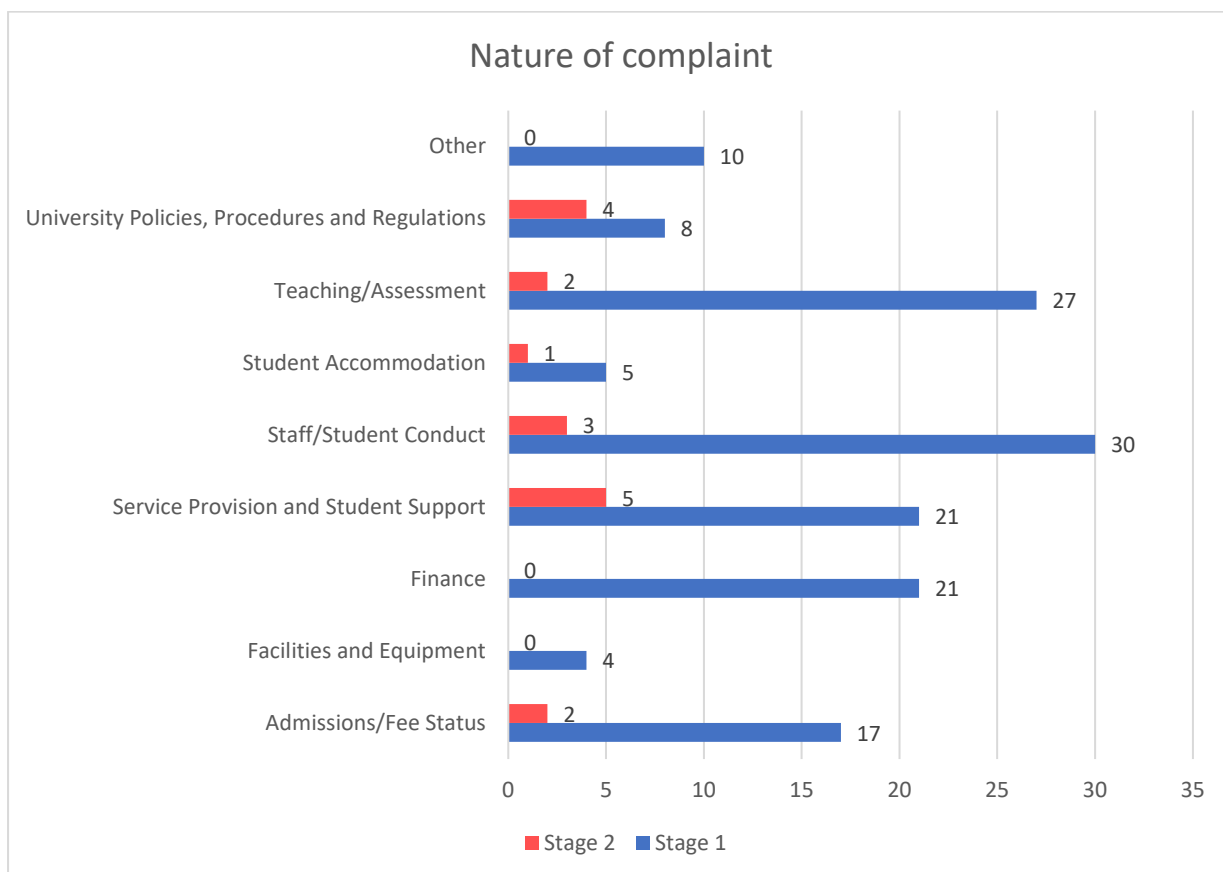


Chart 4 - Nature of complaints received

5. OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

Chart 5 below shows the outcome of complaints at each stage of the CHP. This year saw a large increase in the number of complaints not suitable to be taken forward under the CHP. The reasons for this can be seen in chart 6 below.

Almost 50% of complaints not taken forward came under the heading of “other”. Some of the reasons for this was due to complaints coming to the University instead of other Dundee companies, they were regarding student disputes (where they were not providing a service on behalf of the University) or, in the majority of cases, were referred to another University process.

This year there was an increase (66%) in the number of stage 2 complaints not being taken forward under the CHP. This was due to a number of factors including legal action being taken, any investigation would not change the outcome of the stage 1 complaint and the only outcome being sought was compensation.

In all cases, if we did not take the complaint forward under the CHP, feedback was provided and often the complainant was offered the opportunity to speak with the relevant person.

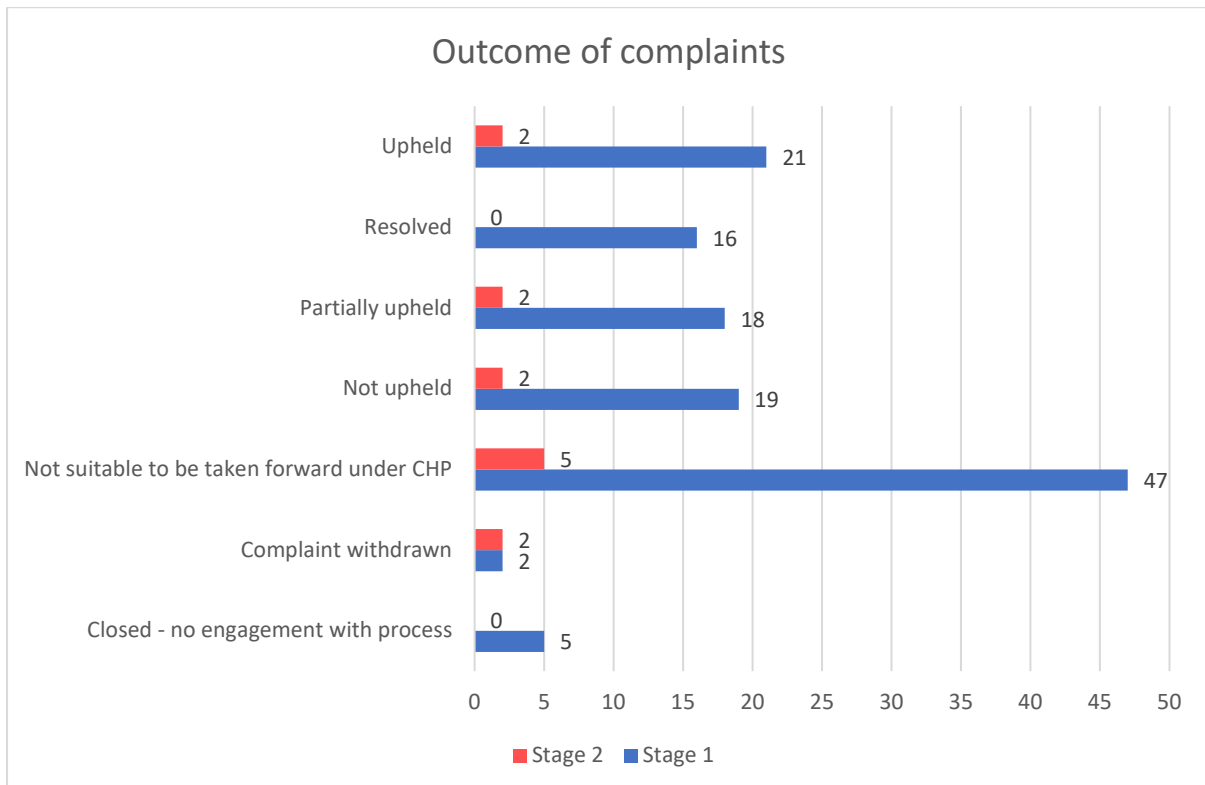


Chart 5 - Outcome of complaints

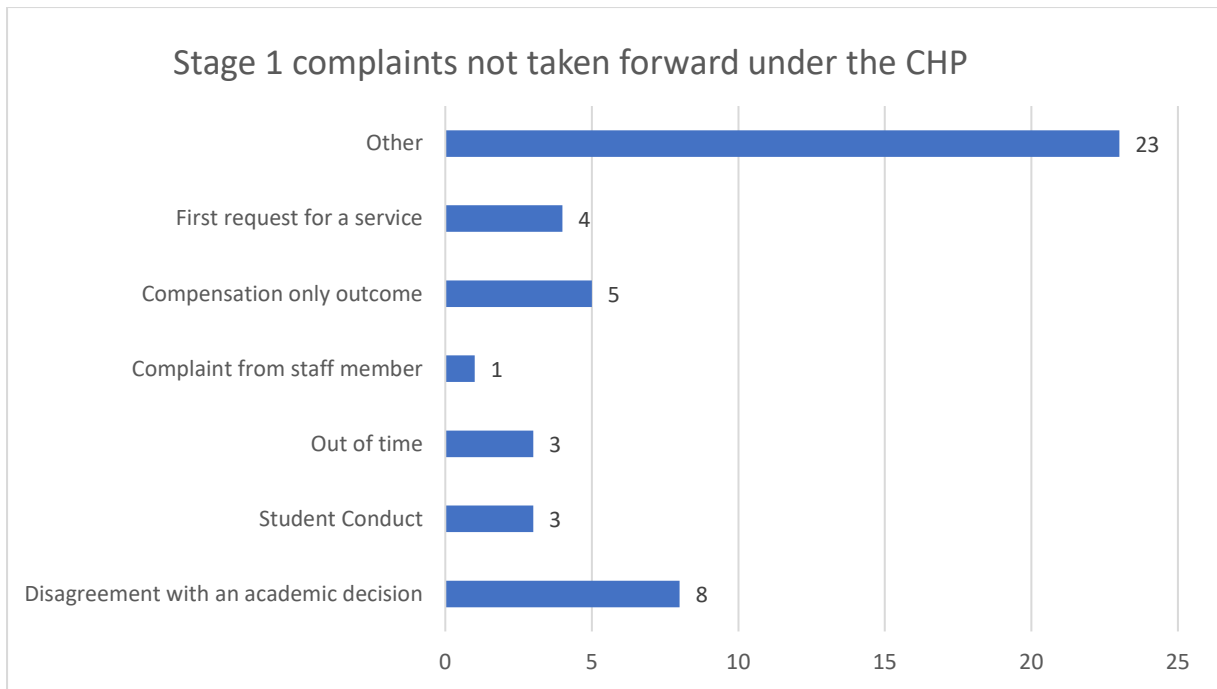


Chart 6 - stage 1 complaints which were not taken forward under the CHP

The following table shows the data provided in chart 5 above as percentages of the total complaints closed at each stage.

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

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

	Stage 1 – 81 complaints - excluding	Stage 1 – 128 complaints - including	Stage 2 – 8 complaints – excluding	Stage 2 – 13 complaints - including
Upheld Stage 1 – 21 Stage 2 - 2	26%	16%	25%	15%
Partially upheld Stage 1 – 18 Stage 2 - 2	22%	14%	25%	15%
Not upheld Stage 1 – 19 Stage 2 - 2	23%	15%	25%	15%
Resolved Stage 1 – 16	20%	13%	N/A	N/A
Complaint withdrawn Stage 1 – 2 Stage 2 - 2	2%	2%	25%	15%
Complaint closed (non engagement with process) Stage 1 – 5	6%	4%	N/A	N/A

Complaints not suitable to be taken forward under the CHP Stage 1 – 47 Stage 2 - 5	N/A	37%	N/A	38%
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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 with noise in the PG Suite of the Library	Reviewed use of areas following a survey sent to all staff and students
Staff rude to student who was unaware an area was reserved for a catered event	To ensure that signage is used in future to advise catering is for a specific event
Lack of information on methods of teaching for particular courses	School website to be updated and ensure going forward that students are communicated with about methods of teaching prior to applying
Slow response time to emails and calls when applying to study	Extra staff brought in to ensure emails are responded to in a timely manner
Last minute changes to timetables which mean students are sometimes unable to plan	A taskforce is looking at timetabling in order to create a more stable timetable and that they will be moved onto the University App and MyDundee
Staff abrupt in their responses to queries	Staff in relevant area reminded of the importance of listening to queries and responding in a respectful and supportive way
Unacceptable noise at event in an off-campus site and lack of communication about the event to nearby neighbours	Neighbours to be informed in advance of planned events
Issues with timing of communications from Examination Boards and the stress this places on students	Processes to be reviewed to look at timings of communications

7. TRENDS

Chart 7 below shows the number of complaints dealt with at frontline, investigation, ACR and overall since academic year 2018/19. Some notable observations are:

- Complaints received continue to increase year on year with 2022/23 seeing the highest amount of complaints received (141);
- The number of stage 2 complaints have started to increase once again (although these are still below the numbers considered between 2018/19 and 2020/21);
- 2022/23 saw no cases being referred to ACR. This is something to look at going

forward and to highlight this option at training sessions.

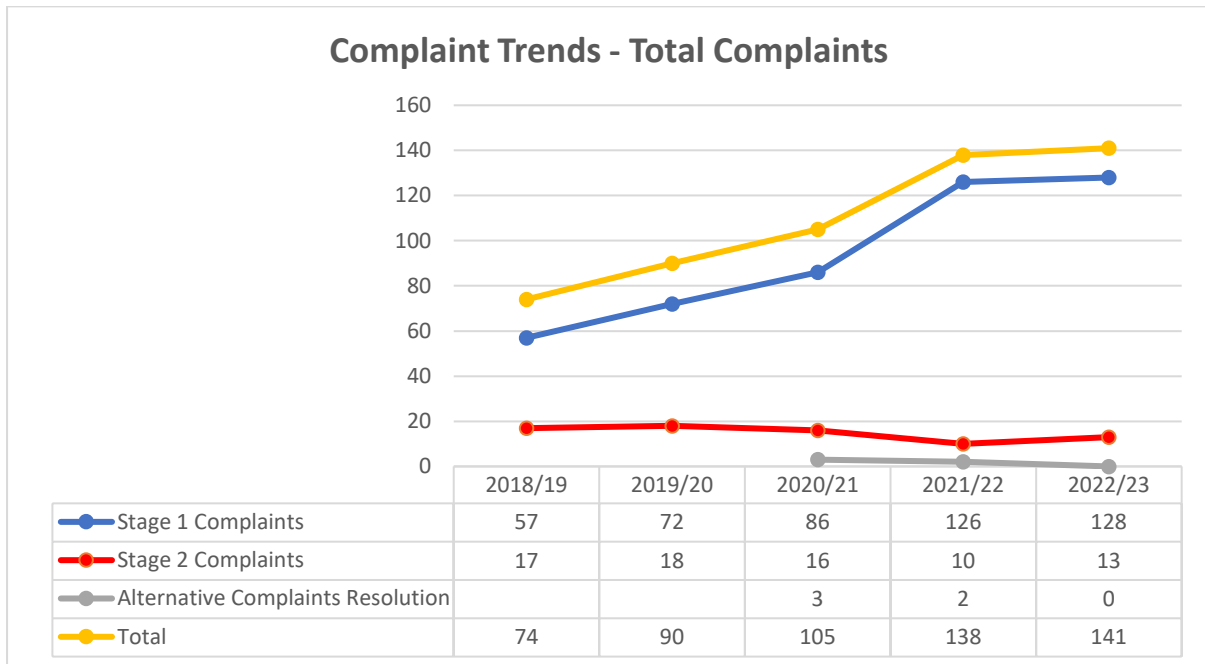


Chart 7 - Trends in number of complaints