

Scottish Funding Council

Annual Complaints Report: 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Purpose

1. This report provides a summary of complaints received and responded to during the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, including a summary of outcomes, actions and learning for SFC, to promote continuous improvement.

Background

2. SFC follows the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) which provides guidance, resources and training to support public service organisations to improve their complaints handling practices. The MCHP applies to all Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament and associated public authorities under the SPSO's jurisdiction in terms of schedule 2 of the SPSO Act 2002.
3. As part of this regulation, SFC is obliged to produce an annual report on the number of complaints received, the number and percentage of complaints which were responded to within the required timescales, the average time taken for a full response and the outcomes at each stage. This is a requirement even when there is a nil response. This report is published on the SFC website.
4. SFC values complaints and uses information from them to help improve the organisation. SFC is committed to being an open and transparent organisation that operates to the highest standards of public sector administration and management. Despite this, we recognise that occasionally things may go wrong and learn from this.
5. The number of complaints SFC receives is low in relation to the overall volume of engagement with higher and further education institutions and other stakeholders. However, upheld complaints (and in some cases, not upheld complaints) demonstrate that SFC takes these complaints seriously and acknowledges when something goes wrong. The outcomes of these complaints help us to learn and improve in the future.

Statistics: 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

6. Table 1 shows the number of complaints SFC received and their outcomes performance against the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman's indicators. In relation to one complaint which was handled at Stage 2, this was not closed within 20 working days as this was a complex case.

Table 1: Complaints received and performance against SPSO indicators.

SPSO Indicator	Response
Indicator one: total number of complaints received	2
Indicator two: the number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five (stage 1 complaints) or 20 working days (stage 2 complaints).	<p>The number of complaints closed in full at stage 1 within five working days as % of all stage 1 complaints responded to in full: one (100%)</p> <p>The number of complaints closed in full at stage 2 within 20 working days as % of all stage 2 complaints responded to in full: one (50%).</p>
Indicator three: the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.	<p>The average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1: 5 working days.</p> <p>The average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2: 22.5 working days.</p> <p>The average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation: 20 working days.</p>
Indicator four: the outcome of complaints at each stage. There are four outcome categories: resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.	<p>The number of complaints (a) upheld, (b) partially upheld, (c) not upheld and (d) resolved as a % of all complaints closed at stage 1: Upheld: 0%, Partially upheld: 0%, Not upheld: 0% and resolved: 100%.</p> <p>The number of complaints (a) upheld, (b) partially upheld, (c) not upheld and (d) resolved as a % of all complaints closed at stage 2. Upheld: 0%, Partially upheld: 50%, Not upheld: 50% and resolved: 0%.</p> <p>The number of complaints (a) upheld, (b) partially upheld, (c) not upheld and (d) resolved after escalation as a % of all complaints closed after escalation. Upheld: 0%, Partially upheld: 100%, Not upheld: 0% and resolved: 0%.</p>

Findings Learnings and Outcomes

7. Actions taken as a result of the complaints SFC has received and closed during the last year are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Findings, learning and outcomes

Stage	Complaint	Outcome	Learning
2	Dissatisfaction with how SFC established and implemented the Further Education (FE) Student Support Discretionary Fund. This included dissatisfaction with our guidance and how we had engaged with a College regarding assurances on their application of our guidance for the fund.	Partially upheld	FE Student Support Discretionary Fund publication and guidance: recommendation made to the relevant SFC team to make the guidance clearer and more transparent specifically in relation to eligibility for receipt of FE Student Support Discretionary Funding during the period between one course ending and another one starting (usually during the summer period).