

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING

SESSION 2014/15: FOURTH QUARTER DATA (1 June – 30 August 2015)

---

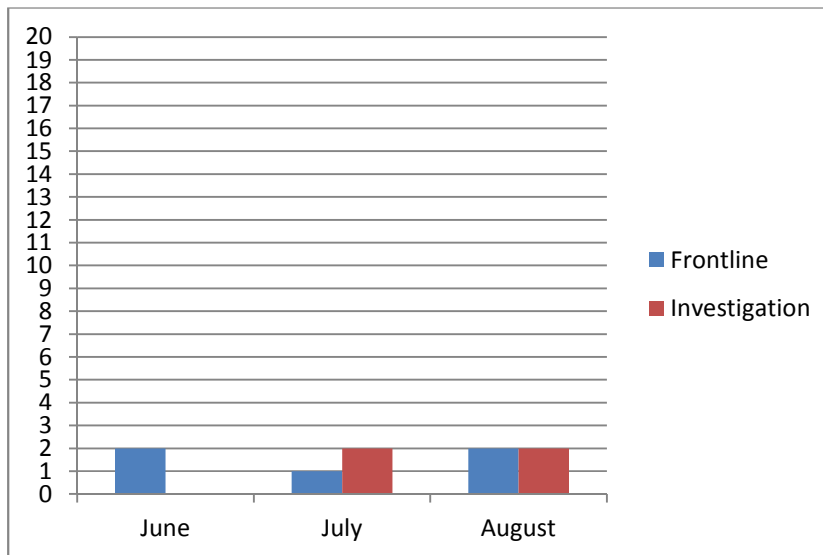
### A. BACKGROUND

The Ombudsman requires the University to report on the numbers of complaints for each quarter arising under the Complaints Handling Procedure (“CHP”), including those under both the Frontline and the Investigation parts of this procedure; average duration; trends; case studies; and changes/improvements made. This information is presented below.

### B. COMPLAINTS DATA FOR QUARTER

#### 1. Number of Complaints

Total numbers of complaints for the current quarter is shown in the chart below.



The total number and percentage of complaints for this quarter by type of procedure is shown in the table below.

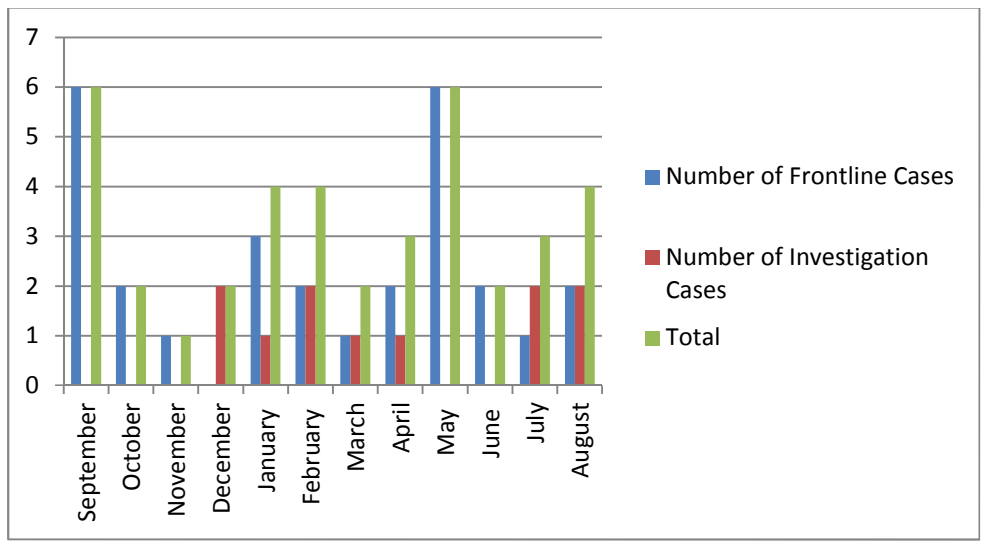
Number of frontline resolution complaints received for current quarter	5
Number of complaint investigations received for current quarter	4
Total number of complaints received for current quarter	9
Number of complaints received from public	0

Number of complaints received from students <sup>1</sup>	7
Frontline complaints as a percentage of total	55.5%

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman’s view is that Universities should address as many complaints as possible at stage 1 frontline resolution (this is the reason why the above percentage is provided). Frontline resolution is therefore performed wherever possible; this involves the complaint being addressed at the point in the University nearest to where it arose.

However, some complaints are too complex and/or lengthy to be considered as frontline resolution ones within the Ombudsman’s strict 5 working day time-limit for frontline complaints. Any breach of this deadline is required by the Ombudsman to be authorised, and recorded, even if the subject matter of the complaint is too lengthy and/or complex to be completed within that time-limit. Such cases are normally considered initially as complaint investigations (stage 2), for which a 20 working day time limit applies. The University’s CHP envisages that a complaint may commence at stage 2 as an investigation.

Comparison of relative numbers of Frontline and Investigation Cases respectively by month for whole year

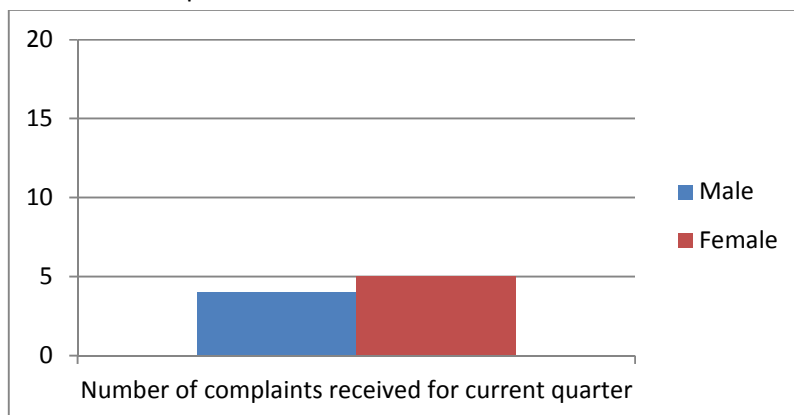


The number of stage 1 frontline complaints generally exceeds those for stage 2 investigations: the CHP lays emphasis upon the quick resolution of complaints at the point nearest to wherever they arise within the University, in preference to lengthy investigations, although some complaints may either start at the Investigation stage (if complex, time-consuming, or sensitive) or alternatively may proceed to stage 2 investigation after stage 1 frontline resolution if the complainant is still dissatisfied, in effect as an internal appeal. Under the CHP, there is no automatic progression from stage 1 frontline resolution to stage

<sup>1</sup> Includes Applicants

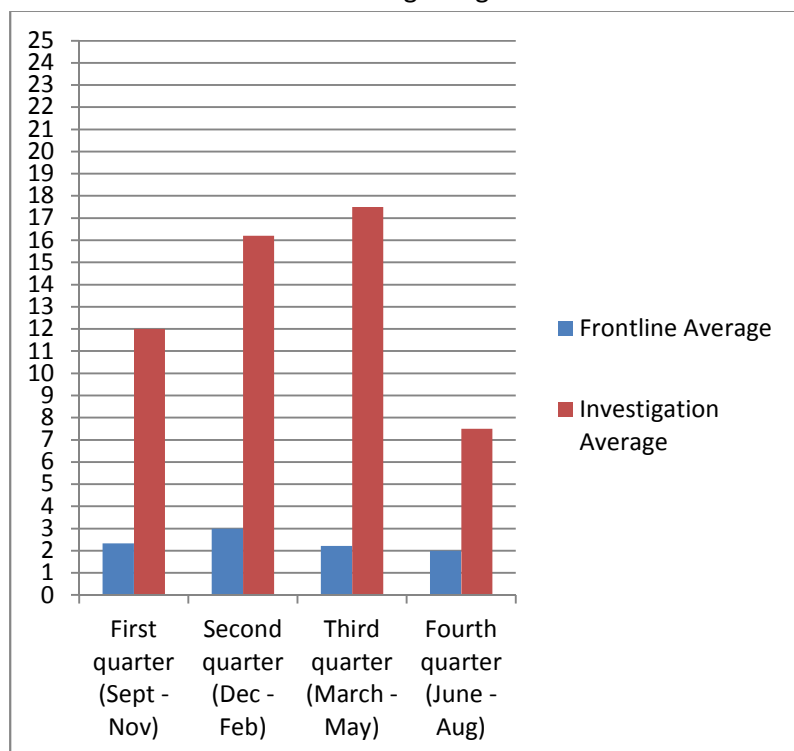
2 investigation, although this is possible if a complaint is dissatisfied after completion of stage 1 frontline resolution.

### Gender of complainants



### 2. Time taken to resolve

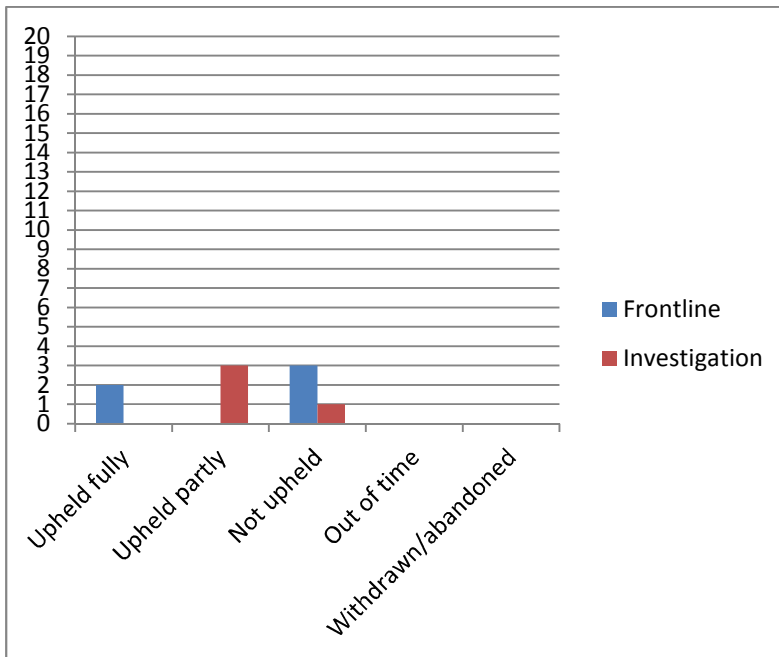
The chart below shows the average length of time to deal with complaints in working days.



The deadlines for dealing with complaints, set down by the SPSO, are 5 working days for stage 1 frontline resolution, and 20 working days for stage 2 complaint investigation cases, which by nature are more complex. The figures for frontline resolution cases are well within the SPSO's targets, whilst those for investigation cases are generally much nearer their target maximum duration. However, these figures are exactly as one would expect.

### 3. Complaint Decisions

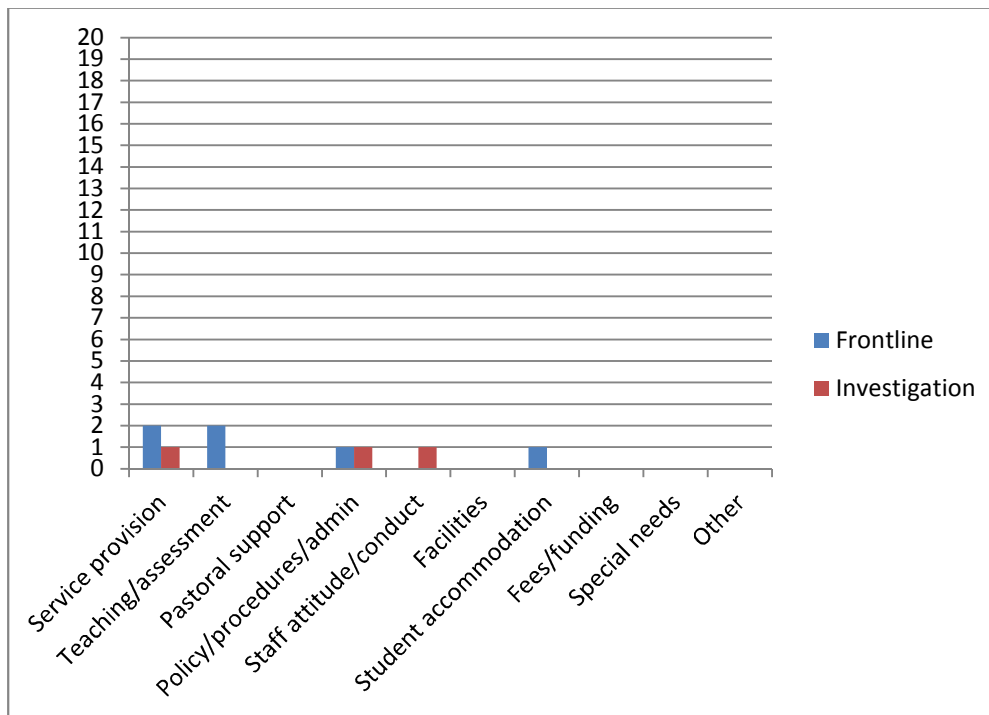
The chart below shows the complaint decisions reached for this quarter.



There is a reasonable distribution of outcome across upheld fully; partly, and not upheld. These numbers are generally too low to draw meaningful conclusions, but no particular causes for concern have emerged.

#### 4. Nature of Complaints

The chart below shows the nature of the complaints made in the current quarter.



The figures above show a wide variation across categories, with no particular category greatly over-represented in this quarter.

#### C. TRENDS AND ACTION TAKEN

No significant trends or causes for concern are displayed by the above figures. A number of improvements have been suggested by investigators arising from specific complaints, in a spirit of organisational learning and continuous improvement.