

COMPLAINTS HANDLING

SESSION 2014/15: THIRD QUARTER DATA (1 March – 31 May 2015)

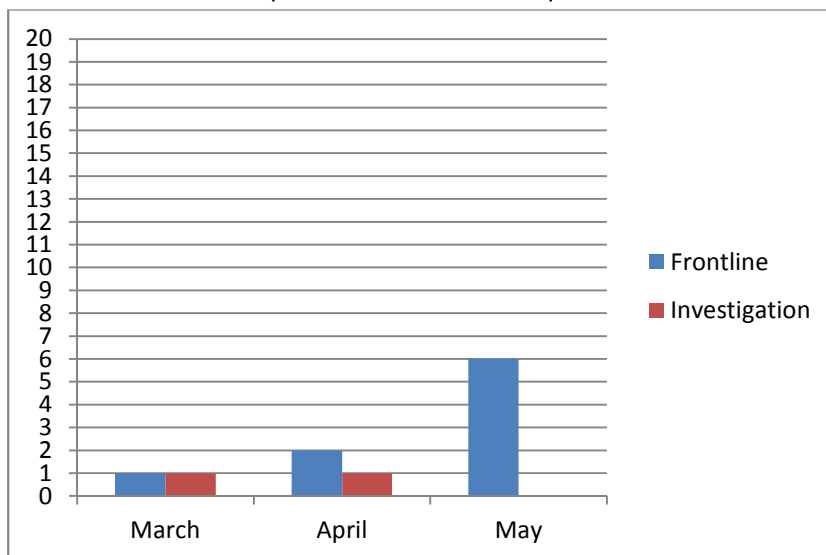
A. BACKGROUND

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.

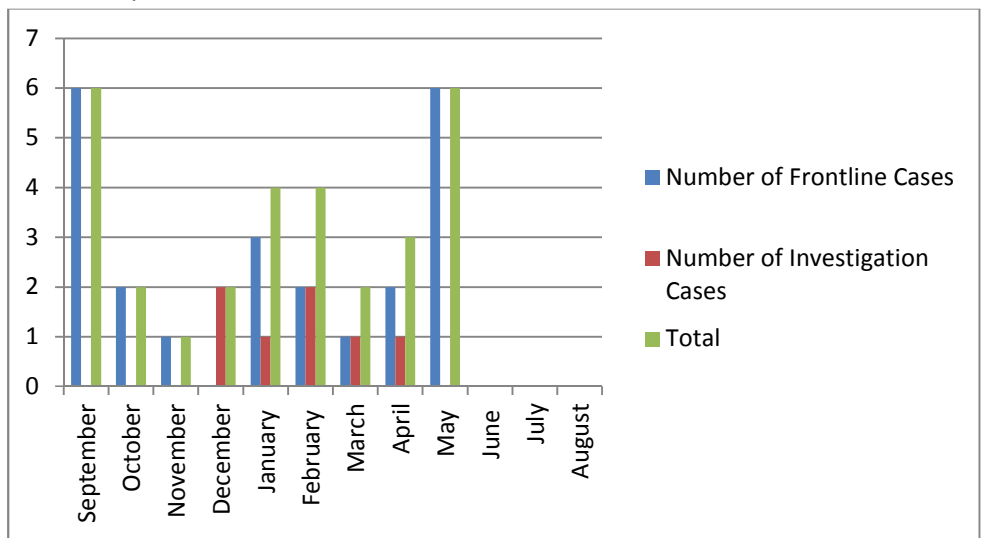
Number of frontline resolution complaints received for current quarter	9
Number of complaint investigations received for current quarter	2
Total number of complaints received for current quarter	11
Number of complaints received from public	2

Number of complaints received from students	9
Frontline complaints as a percentage of total	82%
Complaint investigations as a percentage of total	18%

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 percentages are 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.

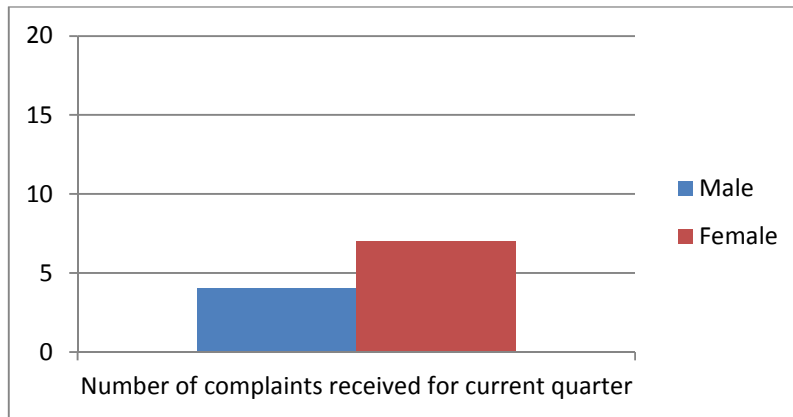
However, some complaints are too complex and/or lengthy to be considered as frontline resolution ones within the Ombudsman’s strict 5 working day time-limit for this category of complaint. Any breach of this deadline requires to be authorised, recorded and reported on, even if the subject matter of the complaint is too lengthy and/or complex to be completed within that time-limit. Such cases are normally considered 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



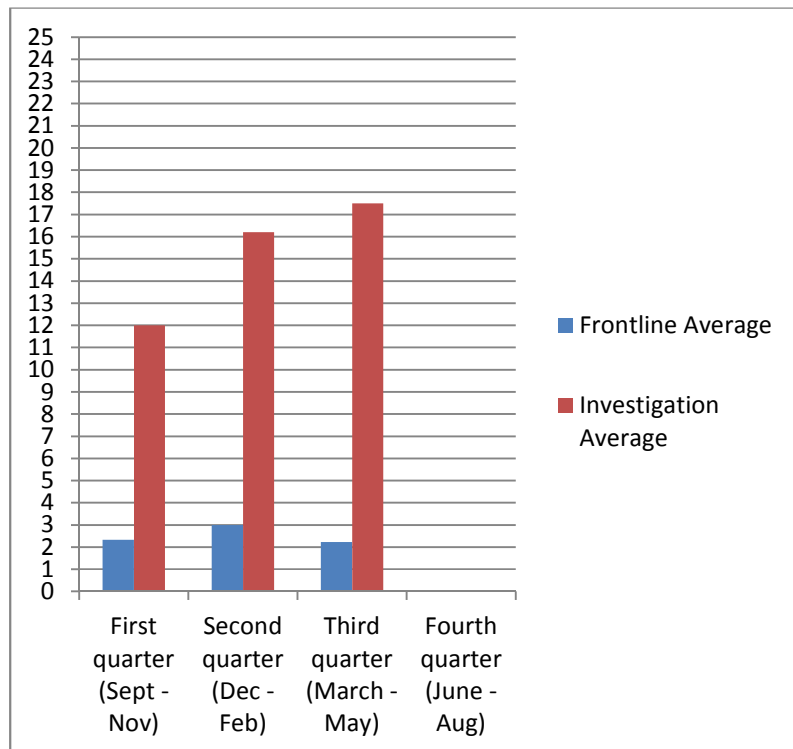
As expected for the reasons explained above, the number of stage 1 frontline complaints exceeds those for stage 2 investigations. The new CHP lays emphasis upon the quick resolution of complaints at the point nearest to wherever they arise within the University, in preference to lengthy investigations, 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 appeal. Under the CHP, there is no automatic progression from stage 1 frontline resolution to stage 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.

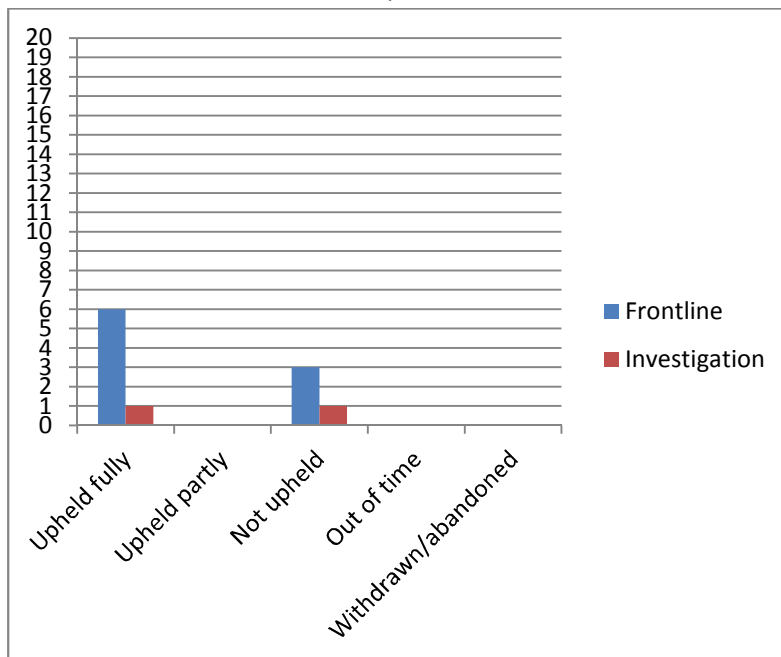


The deadlines for dealing with complaints, set down by the SPSO, are 5 working days for stage 1 frontline resolution, and 20 working days for stage 2 complaint investigation cases, which by nature are more complex. The figures for frontline resolution cases are well within the SPSO's targets, whilst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

Inevitably, investigation cases will take considerably longer, because investigating officers may have considerable amounts of University regulations, correspondence, records to review and staff interviews to undertake, for example.

3. Complaint Decisions

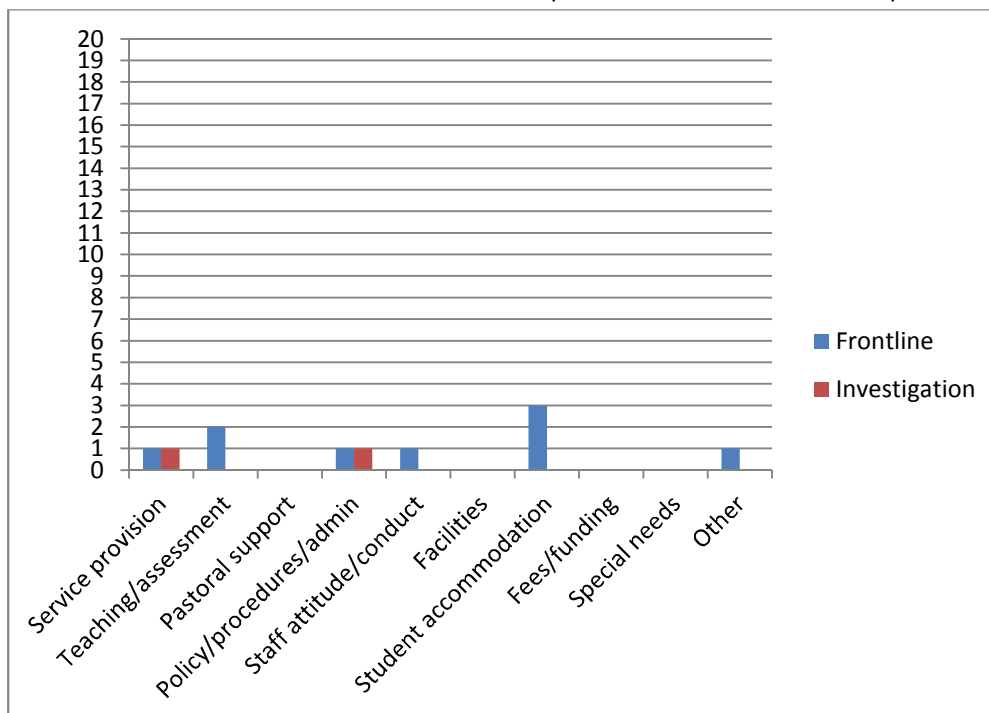
The chart below shows the complaint decisions reached for this quarter.



There is a reasonable distribution of outcome across upheld fully; partly, and not upheld. These numbers are 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 category over-represented and thus giving rise to any concern.

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.
