

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland: Annual Complaints Report 2021-22

Background

The Conservatoire's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is operated in line with the statutory requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and is available at <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/complaints/>

Stage 1 Frontline Resolution seeks to resolve straightforward complaints swiftly and effectively at the point at which the complaint is made, or as close to that point as possible.

Stage 2 Investigation is appropriate where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a frontline resolution, or where this is not an appropriate route due to the complexity or seriousness of the individual case.

Recording and Reporting

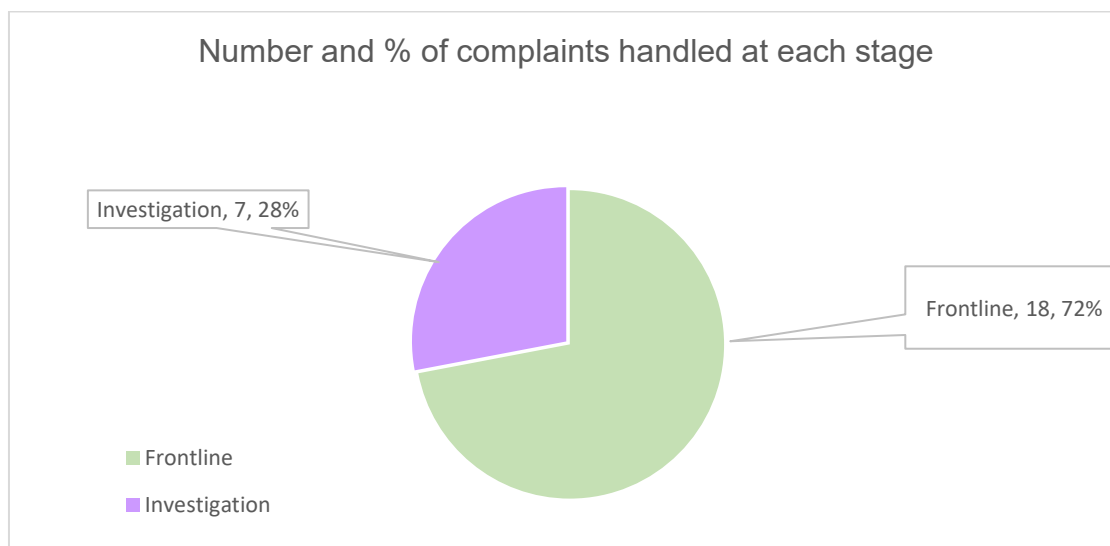
The Conservatoire records all complaints and reports quarterly to senior management and annually to the Academic Board and Board of Governors on key performance information, in accordance with SPSO requirements.

Analysis

A total of 25 complaints were recorded across all departments in RCS during the period 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022. Of this number, 14 were resolved (where the institution and complainant agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld) 0.9 upheld, 0.9 partially upheld and 7.9 were not upheld and 1 was withdrawn.

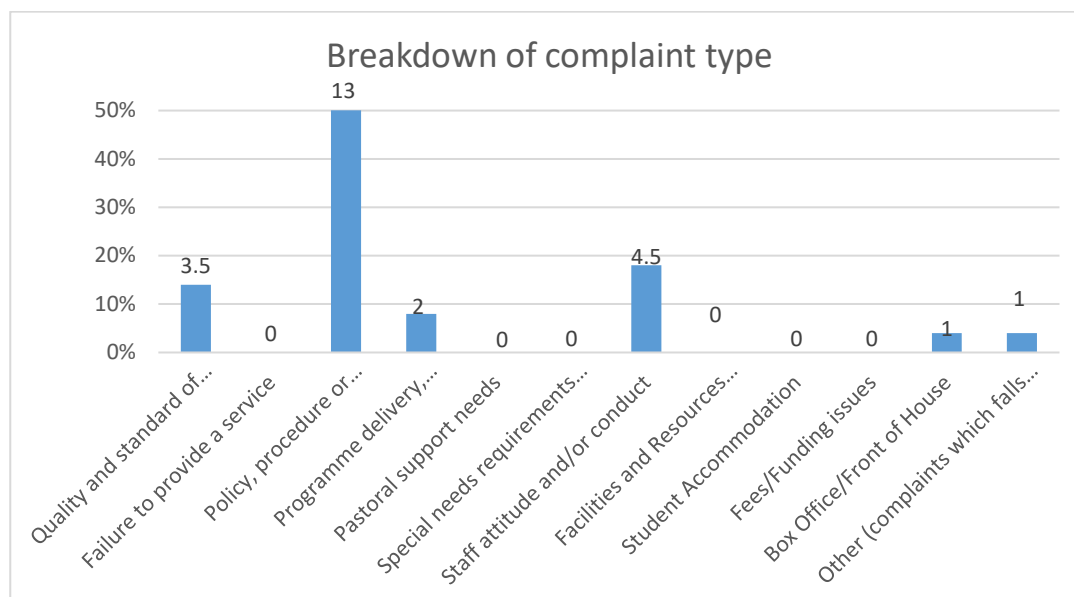
Total number of complaints received	25
Stage 1: Frontline	18
Number of complaints resolved at Stage 1	18
Number of complaints resolved within the 5 working days timeline	9
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	9
Number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 Investigation	0
Number of complaints resolved	13
Number of complaints upheld	0
Number of complaints not upheld	5
Number of complaints partially upheld	0
Number of complaints withdrawn	0
Stage 2: Investigation	7
Number of complaints resolved at Stage 2	5
Number of complaints resolved within the 20 working days timeline	3
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	3
Number of complaints resolved	1
Number of complaints upheld	0.9
Number of complaints not upheld	2.9
Number of complaints partially upheld	0.9
Number of complaints withdrawn	1

Number of complaints considered at Stage 1 and Stage 2:



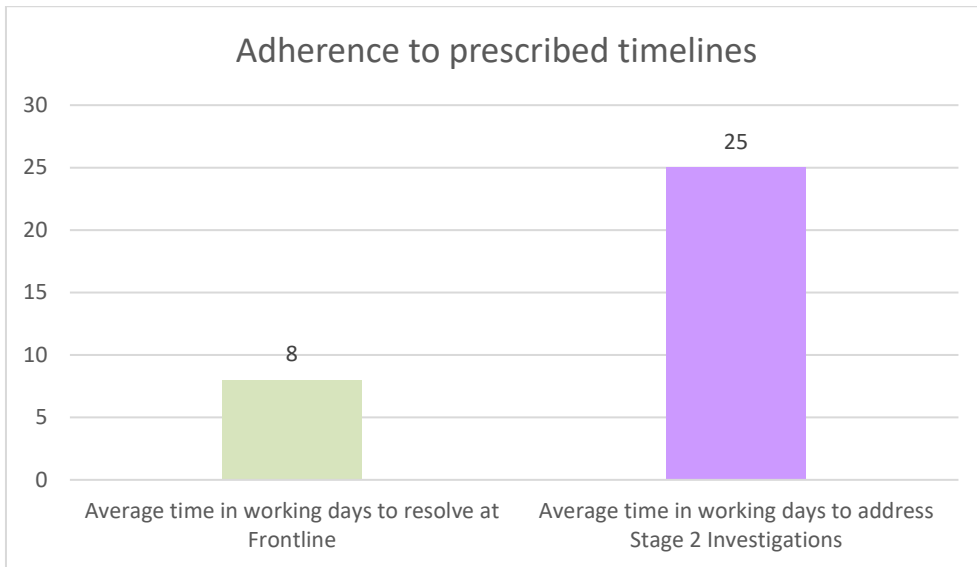
There was a decline in the total number of Frontline complaints recorded last session with 18 received in comparison to 23 in AY2020-21 and, as in the previous year, the majority (72%) were either resolved or not upheld. The number of Stage 2 investigations undertaken increased from just 1 in 2020-21 to 7 last session and it is worth noting that where these were conducted as part of a disciplinary procedure the outcomes contained elements which were upheld, partially upheld and not upheld. One Stage 2 complaint was withdrawn.

The following bar chart provides a summary of complaints for the reporting period by category type:



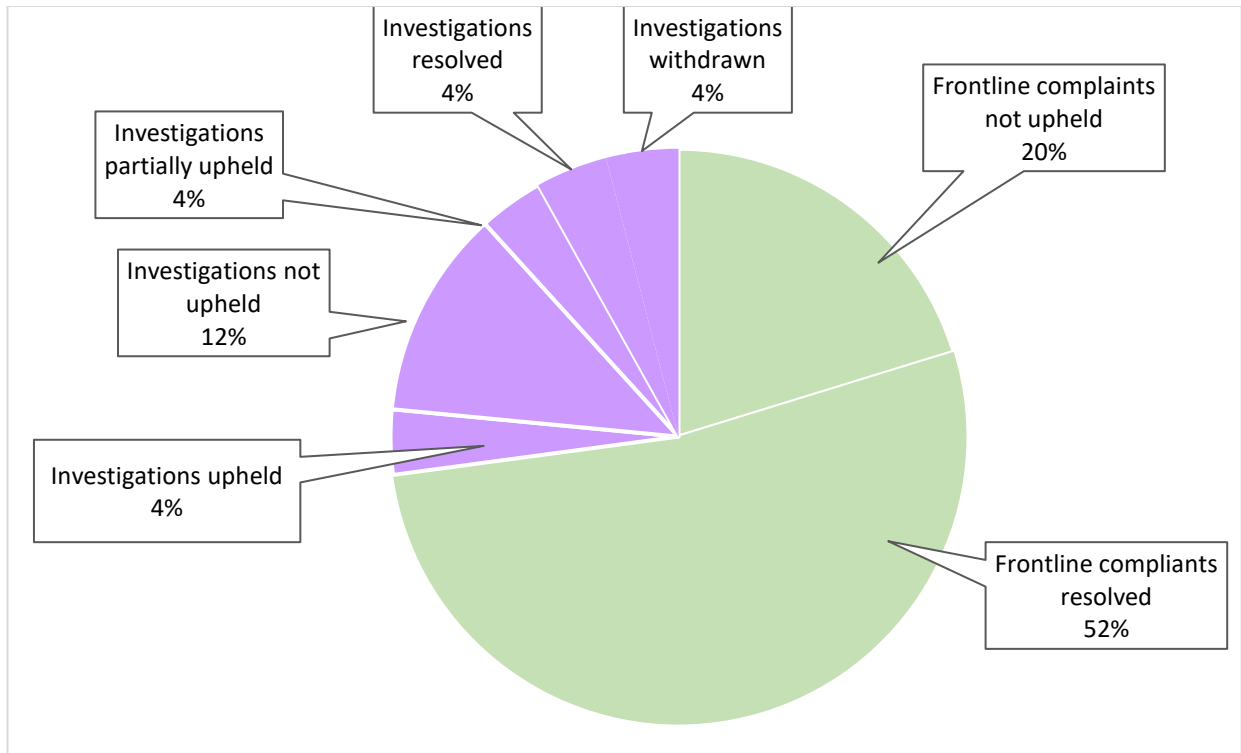
Complaint Response Times and Adherence to timelines:

50% of complaints at Frontline and 43% of Stage 2 investigations were completed within the prescribed timelines.



The CHP allows for extension, in consultation with the complainant, where it is deemed necessary to increase the possibility of resolving the matter. Where extensions were applied, predominantly to accommodate staff availability, leave entitlement or because complaints were received during vacation periods, this afforded the additional time necessary to give due attention to the concerns raised and in the interests of reaching a satisfactory resolution for both parties.

Summary of complaint outcomes:

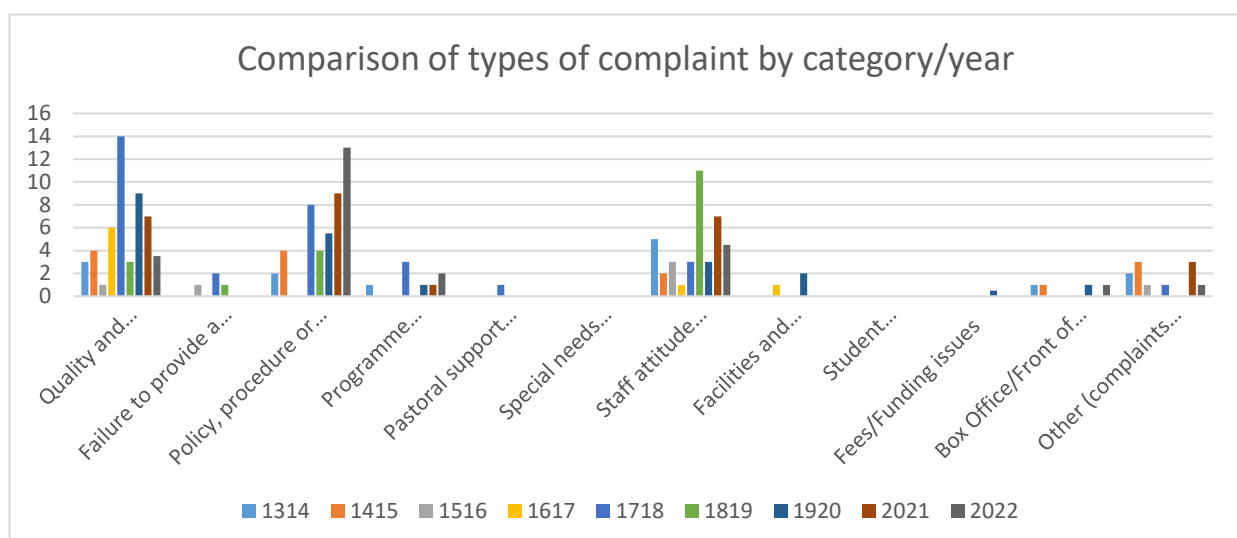
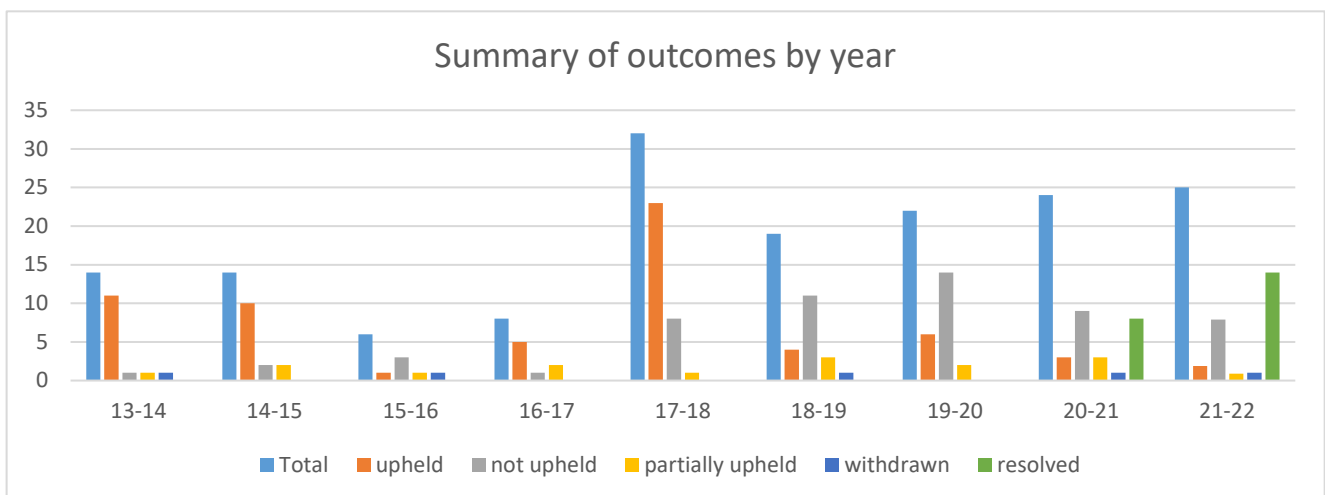


Trends

The majority of complaints received during the past year were resolved by staff at the Frontline stage as we continue to focus on trying to address issues as quickly as possible whenever

possible and use any resulting learning points to make service improvement. We continue to promote the view that all complaint investigations provide an opportunity for valuable reflection. The actions taken in response to complaint handling this year and learning points and recommendations for improvement are listed below.

	Total	Frontline (Stage 1)	Investigation (Stage 2)
2013-14	14	10	4
2014-15	14	12	2
2015-16	6	4	2
2016-17	8	7	1
2017-18	32	31	1
2018-19	19	12	7
2019-20	22	18	4
2020-21	24	23	1
2022-23	25	18	7



The majority of complaints this year concerned policy, procedure and administrative processes and quality and standard of service provision (52% and 18% respectively) and across these two categories outcomes were either resolved or not upheld. Two complaints were related to programme delivery, teaching and assessment arrangements and both were resolved. Complaints about staff attitude and/or conduct (4.5) was up very slightly on last year (4). One was withdrawn, one was resolved, one not upheld and one and a half had an outcome which had elements which were upheld, partially upheld and not upheld.

Two complaints from parents of Juniors students were related to Trans & Gender Diversity and colleagues have committed to setting up a Working Group to review early years activity and ascertain if an expansion on existing guidelines and/or develop of a specific policy in relation to early years practice was required. A further update provided to one of the complainants confirmed a change to the RCS sharing pronouns guidance with reference to children under secondary school age.

Only two (8%) of the complaints received during this reporting period were related to delivery arrangement changes in response to pandemic. One was reassured that arrangements were in step with the sector and another was due to legacy documents on the induction portal not having been updated.

Actions taken/Lessons learned

Service improvements made and action taken as a result of dealing with issues raised through the complaints process during AY2021-22 included:

- Staff teaching 'juniors' students may benefit from further age-related guidance
- RCS should continue to keep abreast of Trans and Gender Diversity guidance i to ensure policies remain up to date and responsive to the different needs of junior and senior students.
- It was recommended that guidance on sharing pronouns was finalised and widely disseminated, and if Programme leaders (including Juniors) consider making the approaches it advocated the subject of staff training.
- It was recommended that the Junior Conservatoire find sensitive ways to seek student feedback on its approach to introducing gender identity as part of induction process.
- The Director of Music was asked to consider creating an appropriate parent/pupil feedback forum.
- It was recommended that further training should be provided for HoDs, Programme Heads and Directors in the frontline on procedural handling of disciplinary allegations and complaints, especially re: RCS 'zero tolerance' of racism.
- Medical exemption template letter produced to accommodate anyone unable to provide LFT test results due to a chemical sensitivity
- Recommendations made as result of staff attitude and/conduct complaints dealt with through the Staff Disciplinary procedure would be addressed by the relevant managers.
- Recommendations from the Stage 2 group complaint from Musical Theatre would be addressed by the relevant managers.
- Ushers would be reminded to check doors were clear via radio and get final clearance from the Duty Supervisor before allowing a candidate to begin their performance.
- A formal meeting would be held with Playrights' Studio Scotland (PSS) to clarify expectations for behaviour in student engagement and articulate where those expectations were not met. The meeting would also consider whether the partnership should continue.
- SoM would explore ways to increase coaching hours, to restructure and refocus language classes and how the opera workshops are scheduled
- Colleagues would review the critique received in their evaluation of the Musical theatre summer school course.
- Formation of a Trans & Gender Diversity Working Group