Royal Conservatoire of Scotland: Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

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.

To protect personal information and individual identification, this data is presented using rounding methodology, including:

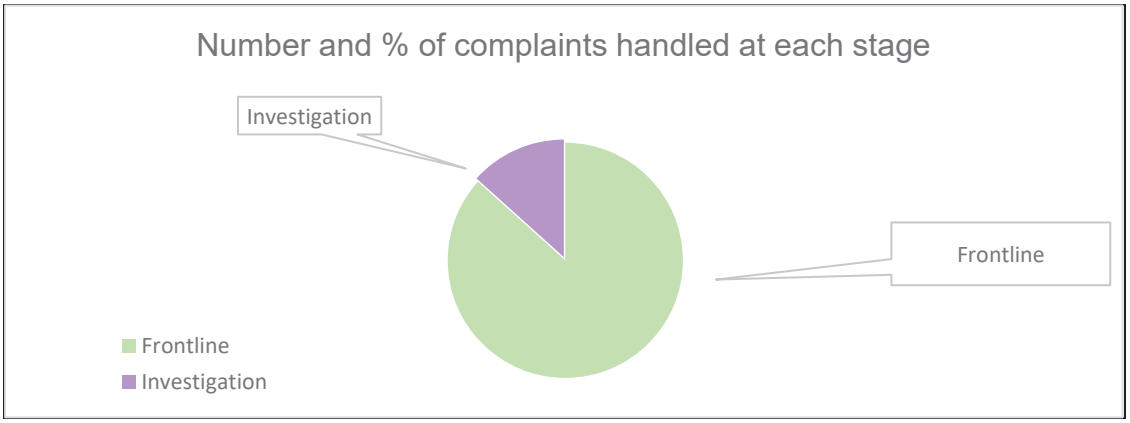
1. All numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5
2. Any number lower than 2.5 is rounded to 0
3. Halves are always rounded up (e.g. 2.5 is rounded to 5)
4. Percentages based on fewer than 5 individuals are suppressed
5. Averages based on 5 or fewer individuals are suppressed

Analysis

A total of 15 complaints were recorded across RCS during the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. Of this number, 33% 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), 21% upheld, 14% partially upheld and 31% were not upheld.

Total number of complaints received	**15**
Stage 1: Frontline	**15**
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1	15
Number of complaints closed within the 5 working days timeline	5
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	10
Number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 Investigation	0
Number of complaints resolved	5
Number of complaints upheld	5
Number of complaints not upheld	5
Number of complaints partially upheld	0
Number of complaints withdrawn	0
Stage 2: Investigation	**0**
Number of complaints resolved at Stage 2	0
Number of complaints resolved within the 20 working days timeline	0
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	0
Number of complaints resolved	0
Number of complaints upheld	0
Number of complaints not upheld	0
Number of complaints partially upheld	0
Number of complaints withdrawn	0

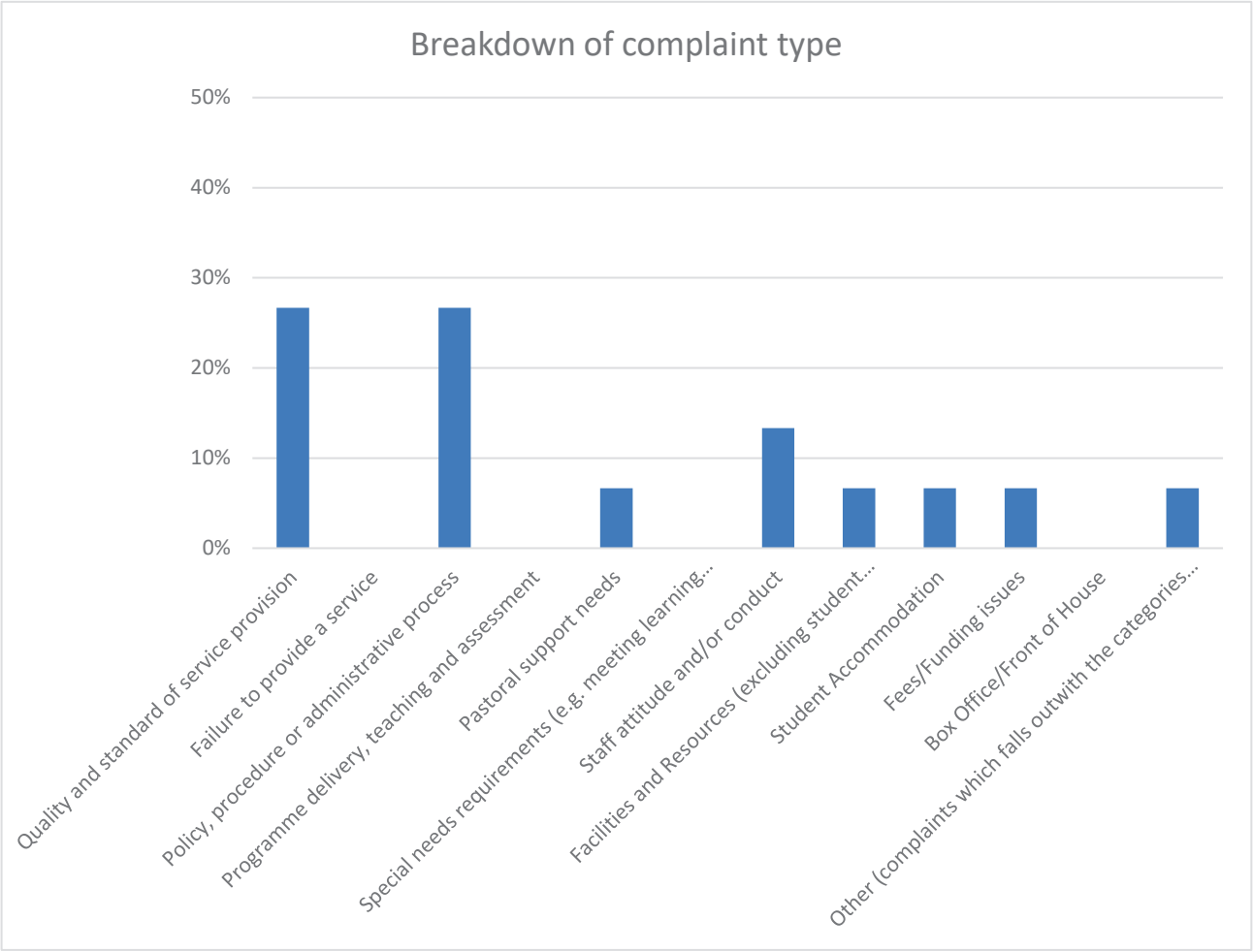
Number of complaints considered at Stage 1 and Stage 2:



There was an overall drop in the total number of complaints recorded last year with 15 received in comparison to 25 in AY2021-22. The majority of complaints were able to be dealt with at Frontline (Stage 1) and half of were either resolved or not upheld.

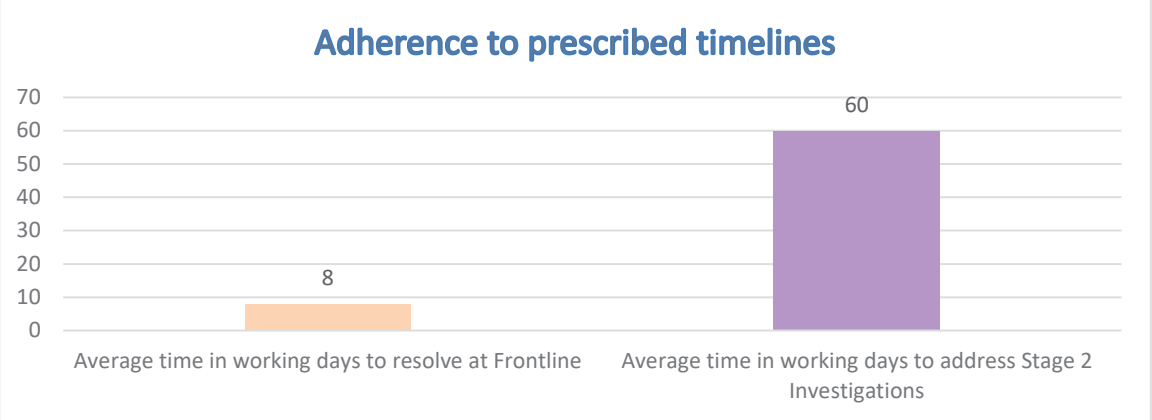
The number of Stage 2 investigations decreased from 5 in 2021-22 to 0 last session and perhaps worth noting that there were a further 5 over the course of the session, initially reported via the complaints process, which related to conduct matters and were referred to the disciplinary procedure.

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



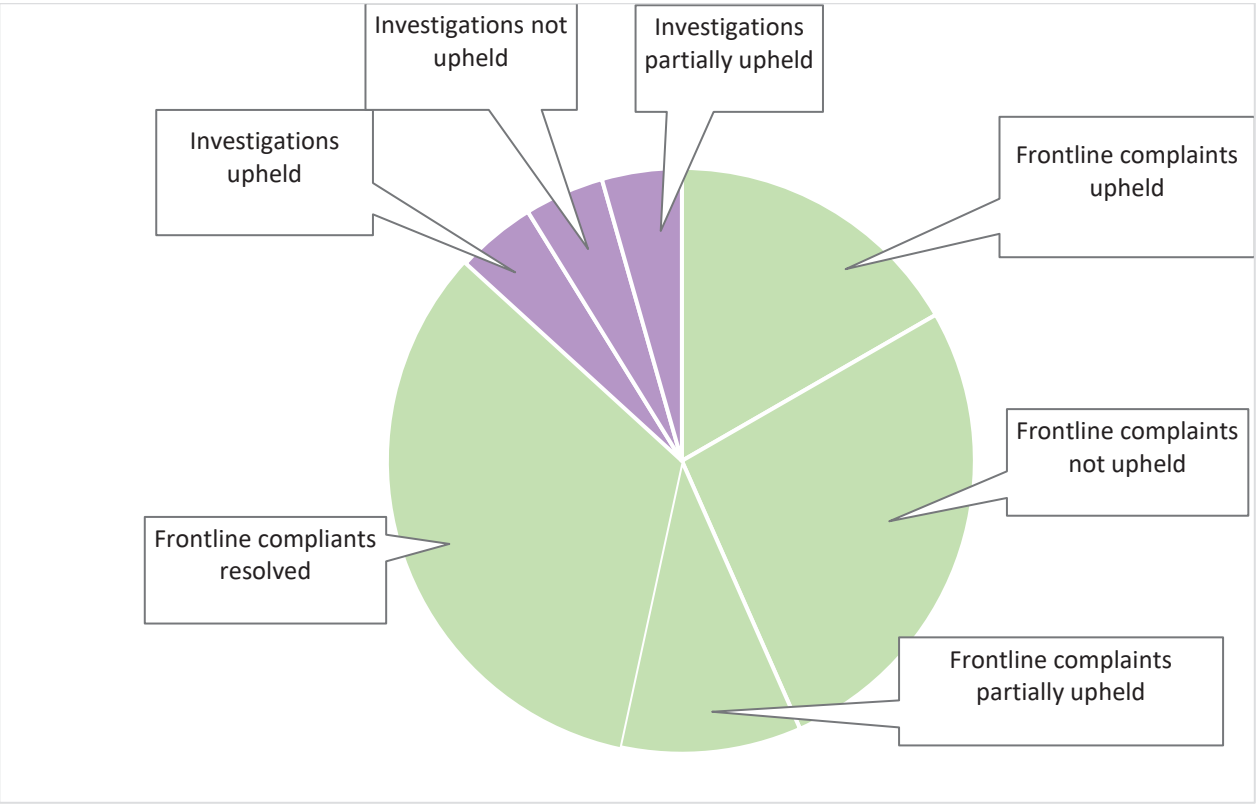
Complaint Response Times and Adherence to timelines:

38% of complaints at Frontline complaints were completed within the prescribed timelines but Stage 2 complaints involved complex investigations which required extensions.



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.

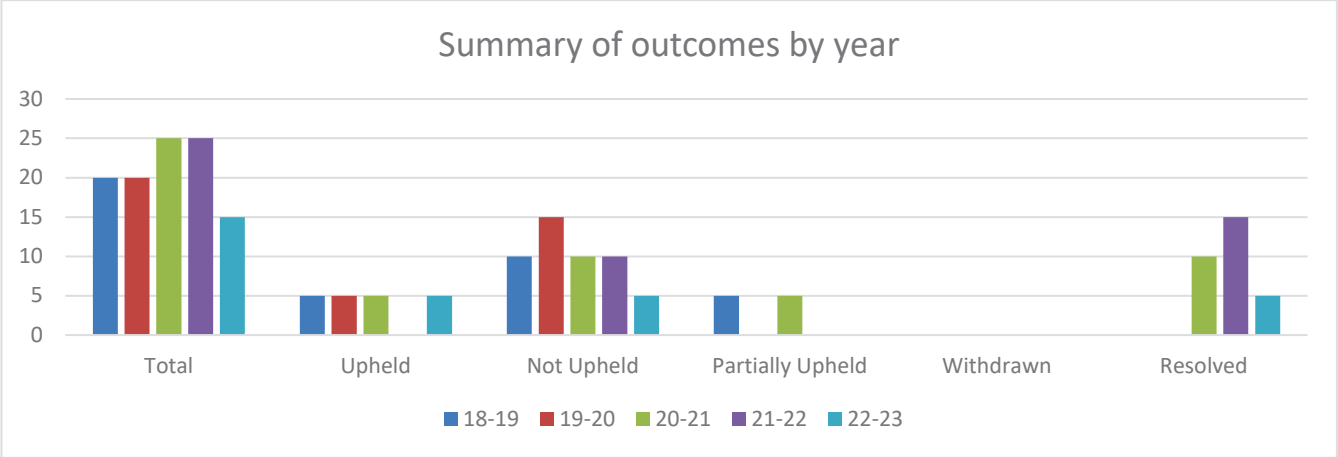
Summary of complaint outcomes:

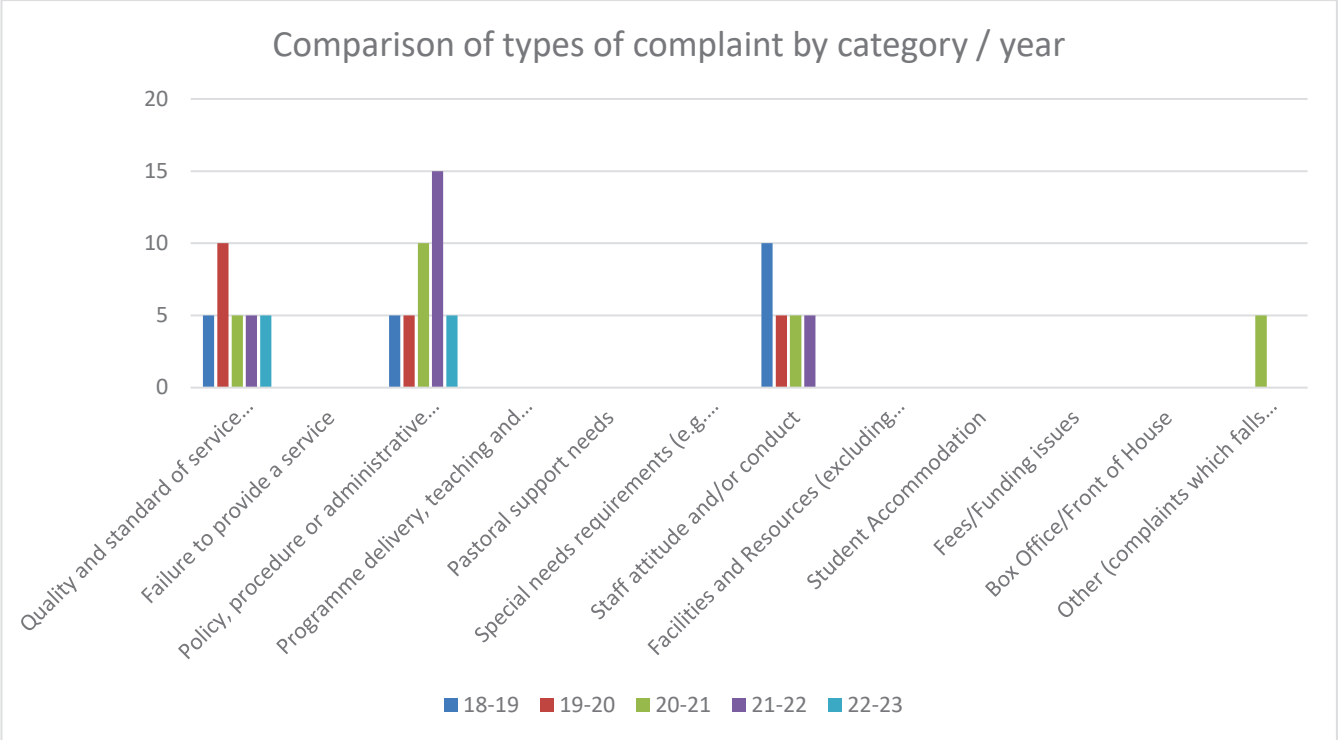


We continue to focus on trying to address issues as quickly as possible within the area(s) where problems are identified whenever possible and use any identified learning points to make service improvements. The appointment of a Student Community Conduct Officer to oversee this area will further enhance the process to ensure that service improvements are introduced when identified as a result of this process and communicated to all relevant parties.

We also 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)
2016-17	10	5	0
2017-18	30	30	0
2018-19	20	10	5
2019-20	20	20	5
2020-21	25	25	0
2021-22	25	20	5
2022-23	15	15	0





As last year, the majority of complaints concerned the quality and standard of service provision and policy, procedure and administration processes, 26% in each case. In other complaint resolutions this year, cases related to disappointment with bursary decisions and dissatisfaction with the level of support in the application process and general service provision.

Where there had been failings in procedural or administrative processes staff were able to respond quickly to apologise for the error and take action to rectify the mistake. The outcome of complaints identified misunderstandings. Outcomes were accompanied by recommendations with a view to reaching a resolution with the complainant, including in some cases a waiver or refund of fees as a gesture of goodwill.

Actions taken/Lessons learned

Service improvements made and action taken as a result of dealing with issues raised through the complaints process during AY2022-23 included:

- Juniors Music would review how email boxes are monitored, in order to speed up its response time
- It was recommended that a clear protocol is required that supports the BASE complaints process
- The full set of recommendations made in respect of the Vocal Studies Stage 2 investigation would be addressed by relevant staff to improve and enhance the overall student experience
- Additional quality checks would be introduced to the auditions to offers conversion process
- Juniors Music would review and publish updated eligibility criteria for competitions in advance of next session
- The BA PTM Stage 2 investigation report and recommendations therein to address the complaint received in the last quarter of this session was referred to the Interim Director of DDPF for action and consideration as appropriate.