

## **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland: Annual Complaints Report 2018-19**

### **Background**

The Conservatoire's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is available at <https://www.rcs.ac.uk/complaints/> and is conducted in line with the statutory requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The procedure provides a quick, simple and streamlined process with a strong focus on early resolution by empowered and trained staff and involves up to two stages:

**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**

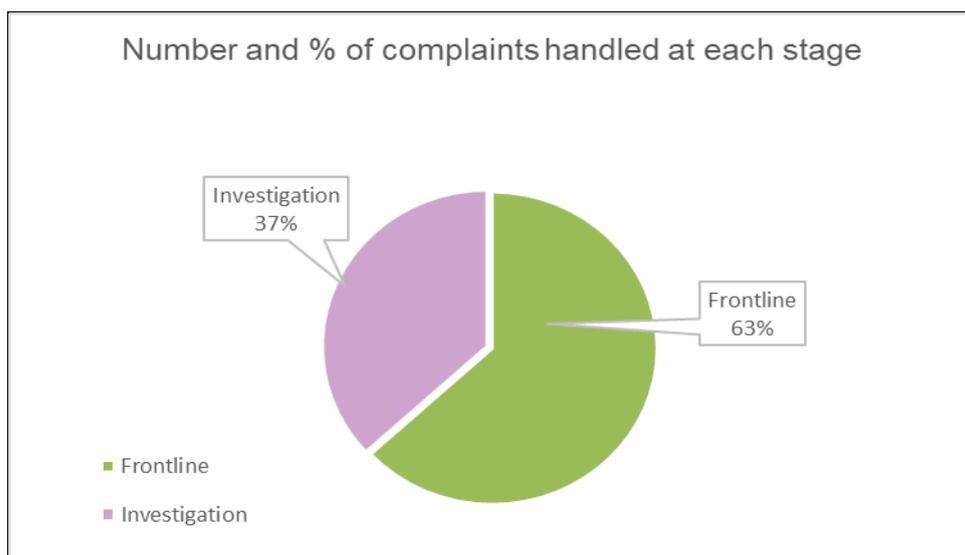
The Conservatoire records all complaints and reports quarterly to senior management and annually to the Board of Governors on key performance information, in accordance with SPSO requirements.

### **Analysis**

There was a total of 19 complaints recorded across all departments in RCS during the period 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019. Of this number, 4 were upheld, 3 were partially upheld, 11 were not upheld and 1 complaint was withdrawn.

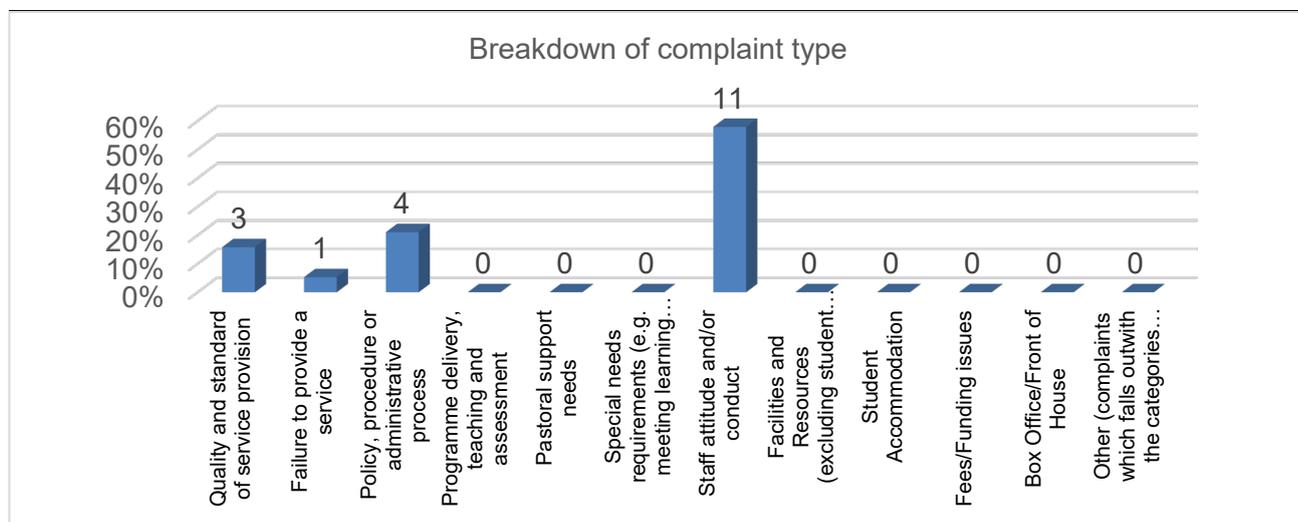
<b>Total number of complaints received</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Stage 1: Frontline</b>	<b>12</b>
Number of complaints resolved at Stage 1	12
Number of complaints resolved within the 5 working days timeline	5
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	7
Number of complaints upheld	2
Number of complaints not upheld	7
Number of complaints partially upheld	3
Number of complaints withdrawn	0
<b>Stage 2: Investigation</b>	<b>7</b>
Number of complaints resolved at Stage 2	6
Number of complaints resolved within the 20 working days timeline	3
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	4
Number of complaints upheld	2
Number of complaints not upheld	4
Number of complaints partially upheld	0
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 just 12 received in comparison to 31 in AY2017-18. Stage 2 investigations undertaken increased, from just 1 in 2017-18 to 7 last session though it is worth noting that only 2 of these complaints were upheld.

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

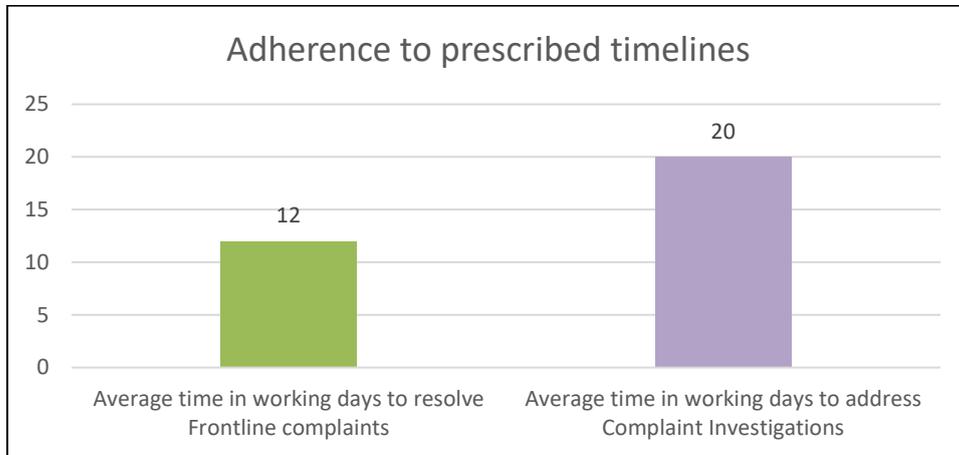


## Complaint Response Times:

<b>Stage 1: Frontline</b>		as %age
Number of complaints resolved within the 5 working days timeline	5	42%
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	7	58%
<b>Stage 2: Investigation</b>		
Number of complaints resolved within the 20 working days timeline	3	43%
Number of complaints where an extension to the timeline has been authorised	4	57%

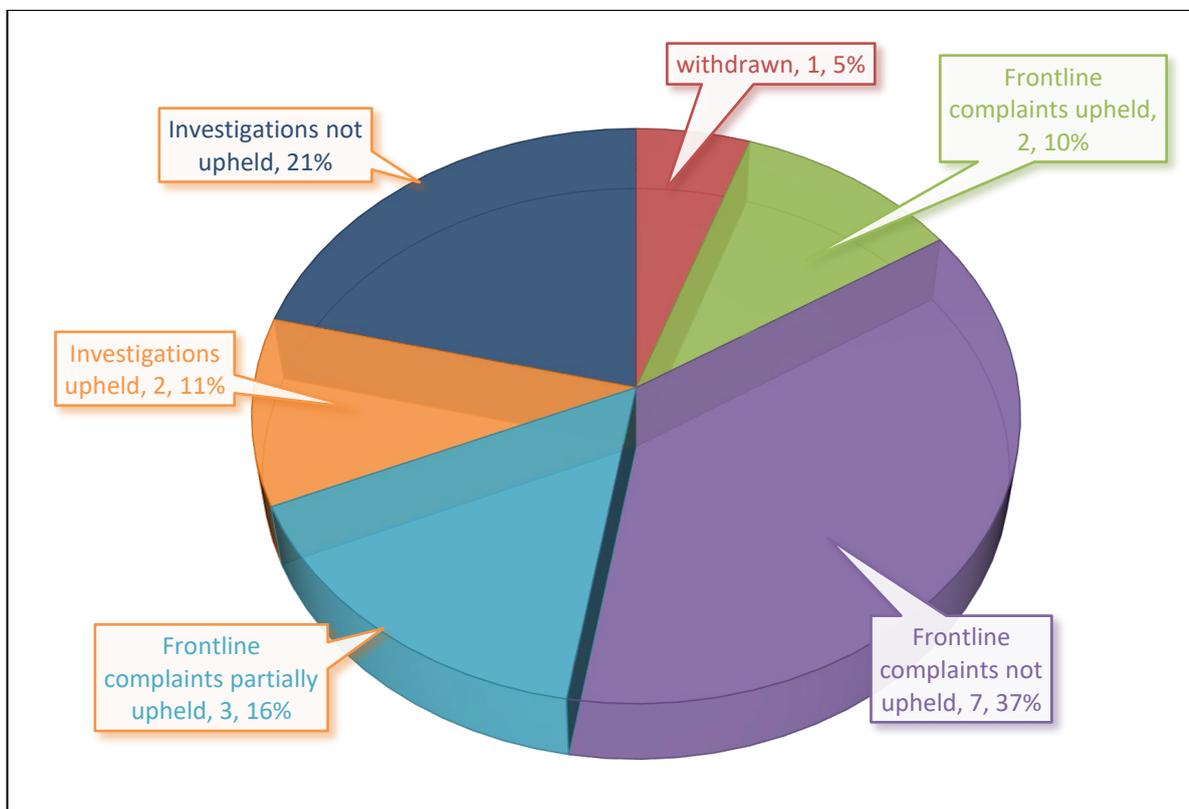
**Adherence to timelines:**

For the first time since the adoption of the CHP, the majority of complaints received in both stages of the process, required extensions to the prescribed timelines. Appropriate extensions were applied, with complainants consent, to accommodate staff workload and availability and in the interests of reaching a satisfactory resolution for both parties.



The CHP allows for an additional 5 working days extension where this may be necessary to increase the possibility of resolving the matter at the Frontline stage. This was successfully applied in 4 of the 12 Frontline complaints addressed in 2018-19. Frontline response times were skewed in this reporting period by two complaints received during the summer vacation period when investigation was delayed by staff leave entitlement.

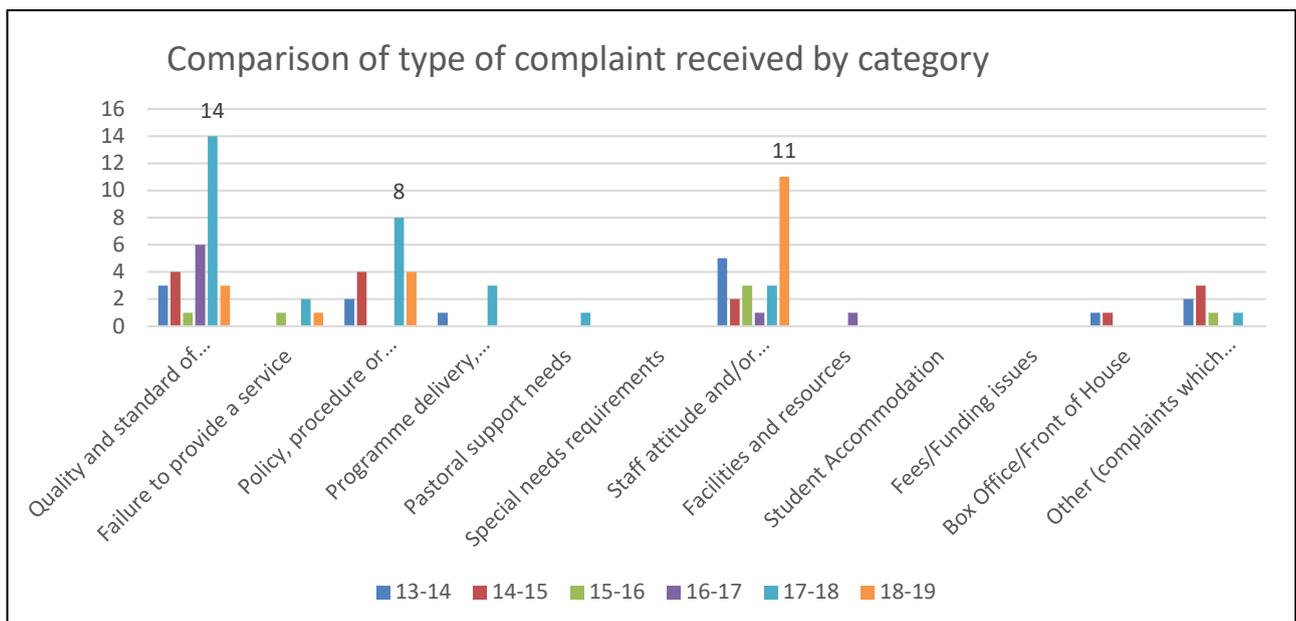
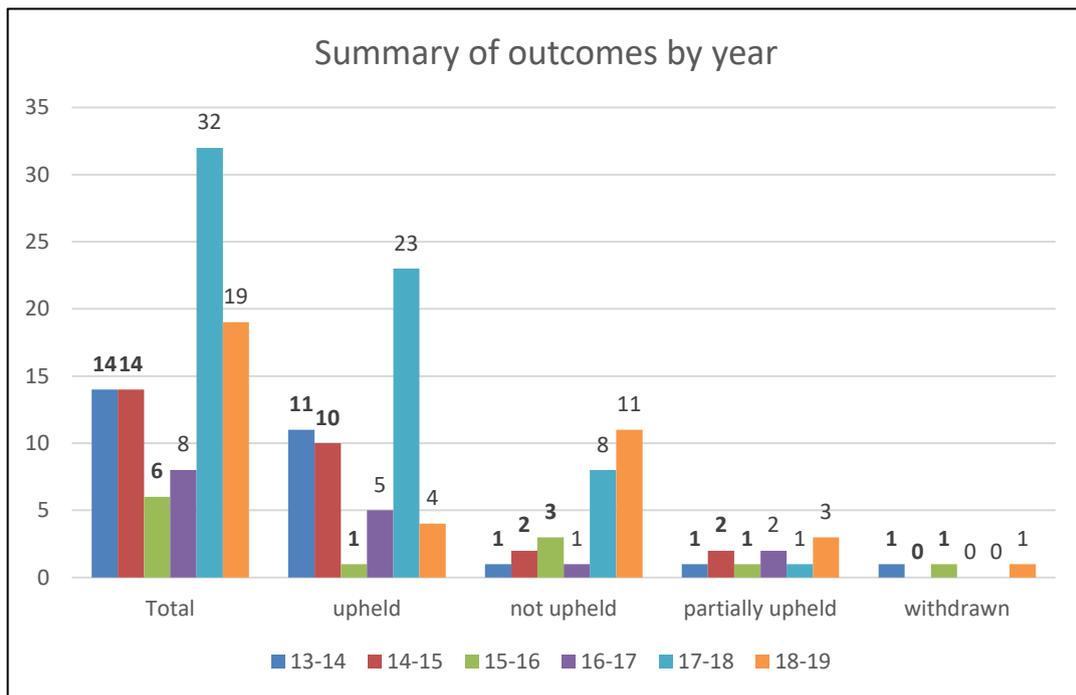
**Summary of complaint outcomes:**



## Trends

The number of complaints received in total has more than halved since last session. It is worth noting however that the number of Investigations has increased to its highest level since the introduction of the CHP.

AY 2013-14:	AY 2014-15:	AY 2015-16:	AY 2016-17:	AY 2017-18:	AY 2018-19
Total 14	Total 14	Total 6	Total 8	Total 32	Total 19
Frontline 10	Frontline 12	Frontline 4	Frontline 7	Frontline 31	Frontline 12
Investigation 4	Investigation 2	Investigation 2	Investigation 1	Investigation 1	Investigation 7



The majority of complaints received this year related to staff attitude and/or conduct (57%) and that this is the highest percentage of the total since the introduction of the CHP. It should be noted that 7 of the 11 complaints received in this category were not upheld. Complaints regarding quality and standard of service were reduced from 14 to 3 over last session.

### **Actions taken/Lessons learned**

Lessons that have been learned, and action that has been taken, as a result of issues raised through the complaints procedure during academic session 2018-19 included:

- recommendation was made that the School of Music review monitoring and support arrangements for Repetiteur students and ensure that the quality of the student experience can be maintained in line with the programme documentation and reasonable student expectations
- it was further recommended that, as part of the Postgraduate programmes review consultations, current and past Repetiteur students should be canvassed for their views of the efficacy and equitable delivery of the programme
- The Conservatoire continues to take active steps to safeguard the working practices of students. To that end, the Conservatoire has launched the Safe Space initiative which communicates the code of conduct in rehearsal, collaborative working and other classroom environments.
- Recommendation was made that mediated meetings should be utilised to help heal fractured relationships and re-establish trust between complainants and their department
- Audition and feedback processes would be reviewed and amended to address upset caused by the use of terminology like 'poor' and 'not of the required standard'. The department concerned provided greater context to the feedback in its explanation of the use of these terms to the complainant along with a reassurance that the upset caused had been taken on board and wording would be altered accordingly
- LLL staff would be briefed about appropriate arrangements for mediation meetings
- Junior Staff agreed to review its guest lecturing policy following a complaint which alleged that the volume of staff changes had impacted on the student's progress and learning experience