

Annex D - Ombudsman's Queries Relating to Complaints against the FCO (Unaudited)

Ombudsman's (OPHSO) queries to the FCO (complaints)

OMBUDSMAN'S QUERIES RELATING TO COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE FCO	2009 - 2010	
General queries	37	
Queries requiring further investigation	5	Upheld in part
Serious complaints requiring PUS involvement	1	Upheld in full
Average number of monthly queries	3	*Queries require liaison between the Ministerial Correspondence Support Unit, Private Offices and Consular dept for resolve.

Complaints to the Ombudsman

The FCO Parliamentary Relations Team (PRT) coordinates handling of Ombudsman's queries. If the Ombudsman chooses to investigate a complaint, she may require the production of documents and even the attendance and examination of witnesses; we are expected to comply fully with this requirement.

The 2009-10 Ombudsman's Annual Report only includes figures for government departments and agencies which generate a significant number of complaints. The FCO does not feature in the 2009-10 Ombudsman Report as we receive only a relatively small number of complaints. The table above has been produced using data held by PRT; the Ombudsman's office has agreed the figures.

In 2009-10, the Ombudsman concluded in respect of the FCO:

- one investigation
- five complaints at the "further assessment" stage (of which two were closed without investigation and three were either out of remit or closed without the need for enquiries of the FCO), and
- 37 complaints at the "preliminary assessment" stage, either because they were premature (e.g. the complainant had not exhausted the FCO's internal complaints procedure) or for some other reason (e.g. out of remit or not properly made).
- Consular Directorate is recording and examining complaints more thoroughly, and its Customer and Stakeholder unit has been set up to provide more advice and support. They are working with colleagues including the FCO Parliamentary Relations Team and the Ministerial Support Unit, other Government departments, and the Ombudsman's office, to help ensure that the FCO learns from complaints and improves accordingly.