

Taxpayer Services

The Department aims to provide high quality customer-oriented services. Particular emphasis is placed on making relevant information readily available to taxpayers, thereby promoting voluntary tax compliance. Various means are used, such as the Internet, electronic enquiry services and an interactive telephone answering system.

IRD Homepage

www.ird.gov.hk

The IRD Homepage is an important platform for the dissemination of tax information and provision of electronic services. With contents updated regularly, the homepage offers a ready tool for any person interested to know more about taxes in Hong Kong to do so any time, anywhere.



Taxpayers can rely on the homepage to

- get information on how to complete tax returns, fulfil tax obligations and find solutions to common tax issues;
- download IRD software and tax forms; and
- use the interactive application software to compute their salaries tax liability.

Other programmes introduced to the homepage include a Tax Representatives' Corner, as well as e-Seminars for employers, property owners and individual taxpayers.

To facilitate easy navigation, the pages on individual tax were revamped in 2005-06.

Electronic Enquiry Services

More and more electronic enquiry services are provided. Electronic enquiry services are not only available on the Internet to holders of digital certificates, they are also available on the telephone to holders of e-Tax Password. By using his Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) and password, a taxpayer can use a touch-tone phone to check his personal tax information, including tax return lodgement status, assessment status, charge payment status and tax reserve certificate account balances. He can also request duplicate returns or assessment notices, payment confirmations or tax reserve certificate account statements anytime, anywhere via the telephone. E-enquiry services are convenient alternatives to enquiries in person or by post.

With the same TIN and password, a taxpayer can enquire about his personal tax information on the Internet through the Interactive Tax Enquiry service under the Electronic Service Delivery Scheme too.

Telephone and Counter Enquiry Services

The Department's Enquiry Service Centre handles telephone and counter enquiries. The Centre, equipped with computer network, provides an immediate "one-stop" service as far as possible.

The Centre makes use of an Interactive Telephone Enquiry System with 120 telephone lines. Callers can, on a 24-hour basis, gain access to a wide range of tax information by listening to recorded messages or obtaining facsimile copies of the information and forms. Callers are able to speak to enquiry officers during office hours. A leave-and-call-back facility is also available.



Over 1.27 million telephone calls were answered by the Centre during the year. The number of calls answered by staff was over 0.70 million. (Figure 35 and Figure 36).

Figure 35 Number of telephone calls answered

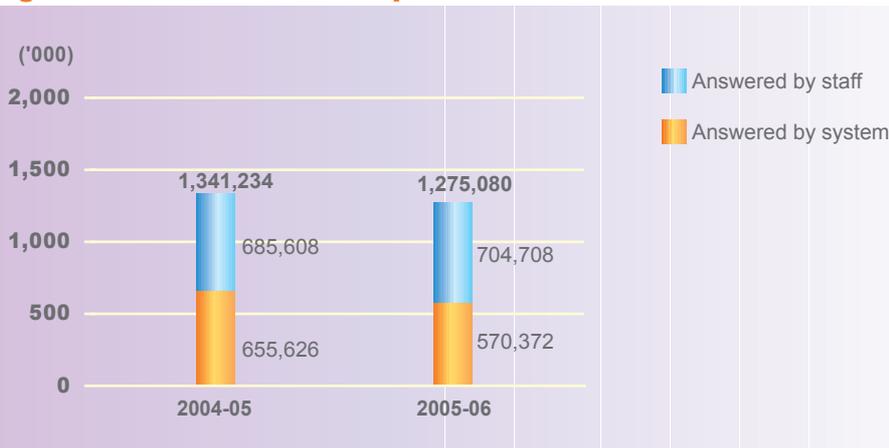


Figure 36 Telephone Enquiries

	2004-05	2005-06	Increase/Decrease
No. of calls answered by staff	685,608	704,708	+2.8%
No. of enquiries answered by staff	845,728	902,858	+6.8%
No. of calls answered by system	655,626	570,372	-13.0%
No. of leave-and-call back messages	62,552	67,118	+7.3%
No. of fax supplied by the system	12,905	8,481	-34.3%



Counter staff of the Centre are generally able to handle enquiries, collect mail and issue forms without the need to refer to other officers in the Department.

To facilitate the provision of quality counter enquiry service, the Centre has installed an electronic queuing system to enable taxpayers to be served according to tag numbers in sequence. The number of counter enquiries handled during the year was over 0.63 million (Figure 37).

Figure 37 Counter Enquiries

A taxpayer service team with professionally qualified staff is also stationed in the Centre. The members of this team handle more complex cases.

To make it easier for taxpayers to obtain tax information and forms, two form stands are installed; one on the ground floor and the other on the first floor of the Revenue Tower.

Tax-help Services for Completion of Tax Returns

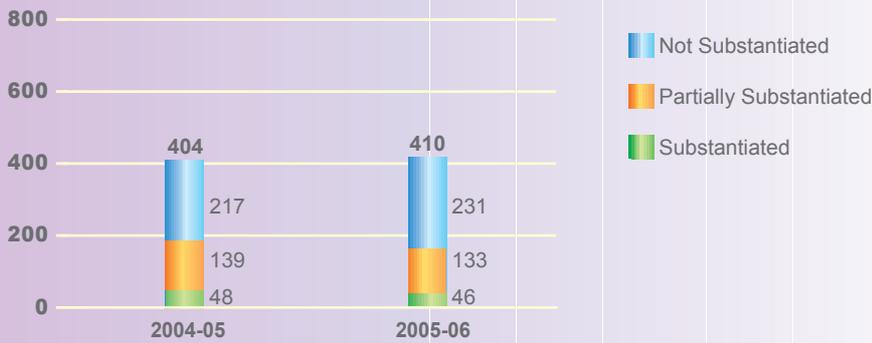
On the web we arranged e-Seminars for tax representatives, employers, property owners and individual taxpayers. Information on how to complete tax returns, fulfil tax obligations and overcome difficulties in compliance are uploaded onto the IRD homepage to facilitate unlimited access by interested parties via computer terminals installed at home, office, Home Affairs Department, community halls or public libraries. Enquiries can be raised electronically at the "Q&A Column" on the homepage and replies will be made on a regular basis.

To further facilitate taxpayers' enquiries, the Department extended hours during which the telephone enquiry service was manned in May, until 7 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays and 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

Complaints

If a taxpayer is dissatisfied with the services provided by the Department or cannot solve his or her problem satisfactorily through normal channels, the Complaints Officer may be approached for assistance. The complaint channel provides taxpayers with the means of having individual grievances dealt with independently at a senior level. This ensures that such cases are properly handled in a fair and unbiased manner. During 2005-06, 410 complaint cases were received (**Figure 38**). This represents an increase of 1%, as compared with the previous year.

Figure 38 Complaint cases



If a taxpayer is dissatisfied with any administrative action taken by the Department, the person concerned may refer the matter to the Ombudsman. During the year, the Ombudsman sought written comments from the Department in respect of 8 cases. In the light of these cases, the Department has reviewed relevant operations with a view to improving them.

There were 114 Letters of Compliments received during the year. Our positive and pragmatic attitudes to complaints have been well-commended by the Ombudsman. In the Ombudsman Award 2006, the Department was awarded a 10-year Grand Award. Two of our officers also won individual awards.



Performance Pledges

The service standards a taxpayer can expect from the Department are set out in the Performance Pledges. Attributable to the service spirit of IRD officers, the Department has achieved the targets in most of the pledges for the year. In some of the pledges, we have even excelled in the targeted performance.

