

The Department aims to provide high quality customer-oriented services. Particular emphasis is placed on making relevant information readily available to taxpayers. 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 effective and important channel for disseminating tax information and providing electronic services to the public. With continuous expansion in the scope and updates on the contents, the homepage enables taxpayers to obtain the most current information about taxes in Hong Kong anytime, anywhere.

Through the homepage, members of the public can:

- obtain information on how to complete tax returns, fulfil tax obligations and solve common tax issues;
- download IRD software and tax forms;
- use the interactive application software to compute their liability under salaries tax and personal assessment; and
- access to the personalised on-line tax services under eTAX, a new taxpayer portal. Annual businesses with the Department, like receipt and filing of tax returns, the receipt and payment of tax bills, and also correspondences with IRD, can all be done on the Internet at all hours.

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

Electronic Enquiry Services

The Department offers a wide range of electronic enquiry services which serve as convenient alternatives to enquiries in person or by post. Electronic enquiry services are available through eTAX.

Telephone and Counter Enquiry Services

The Department's Enquiry Service Centre handles telephone and counter enquiries. The Centre is equipped with a computer network linked to the Department's Knowledge Database and aims to provide, as far as possible, an immediate "one-stop" service.

The Centre makes use of an Interactive Telephone Enquiry System, with 144 telephone lines to provide service. Callers can gain access on a 24-hour basis to a wide range of tax information by listening to recorded messages and obtaining facsimile copies of the information and forms. Callers can choose to speak to operators during office hours. A "Leave-and-call-back" facility, for recording information requests, and a "Fax-in enquiry" service are also available. An eTAX help desk hotline was added in January 2008 to support users of eTAX services at www.gov.hk/etax.



About 1.1 million telephone calls were answered by the Centre during the year. The number of calls answered by staff was 0.64 million (**Figures 35 and 36**).

Figure 35 Number of telephone calls answered

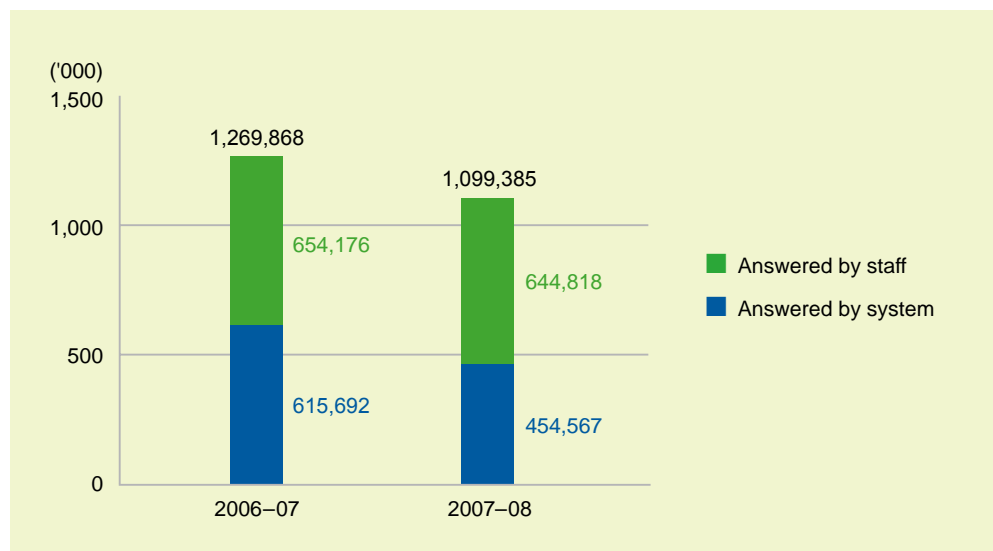


Figure 36 Telephone enquiries

| | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | Increase/Decrease |
|-------------------------------------|---------|----------------|-------------------|
| No. of calls answered by staff | 654,176 | 644,818 | - 1.4% |
| No. of enquiries answered by staff | 717,361 | 685,510 | - 4.4% |
| No. of calls answered by system | 615,692 | 454,567 | - 26.2% |
| No. of leave-and-call back messages | 58,055 | 12,541 | - 78.4% |
| No. of fax supplied by the system | 8,592 | 9,769 | +13.7% |

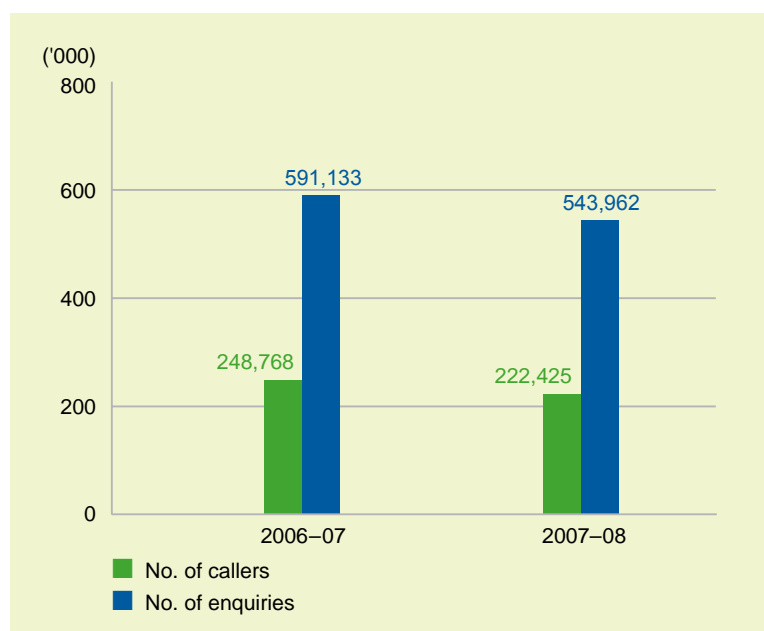


Counter staff of the Centre are generally able to handle enquiries, collect mail and issue forms without the need to refer to other officers in the Department.

Counter enquiries are attended within the shortest possible time. The Centre's electronic queuing system ensures that taxpayers are served in the order of their tag number. The number of counter enquiries handled during the year was 0.54 million (**Figure 37**).

Information leaflets on topics of general interest are available at the two form stands located on the ground and first floors of Revenue Tower. The public may also obtain tax information and download forms from the Department's web site <www.ird.gov.hk>.

Figure 37 Counter enquiries



Tax-help Services for Completion of Tax Returns

On the IRD Homepage we provide 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 to facilitate unlimited access. Enquiries can be raised electronically at the "Q&A Column" and replies will be made on a regular basis.

To answer taxpayers' enquiries on tax returns, the Department extended service hours of telephone operators from 2 May to 2 June, until 7 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays, and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

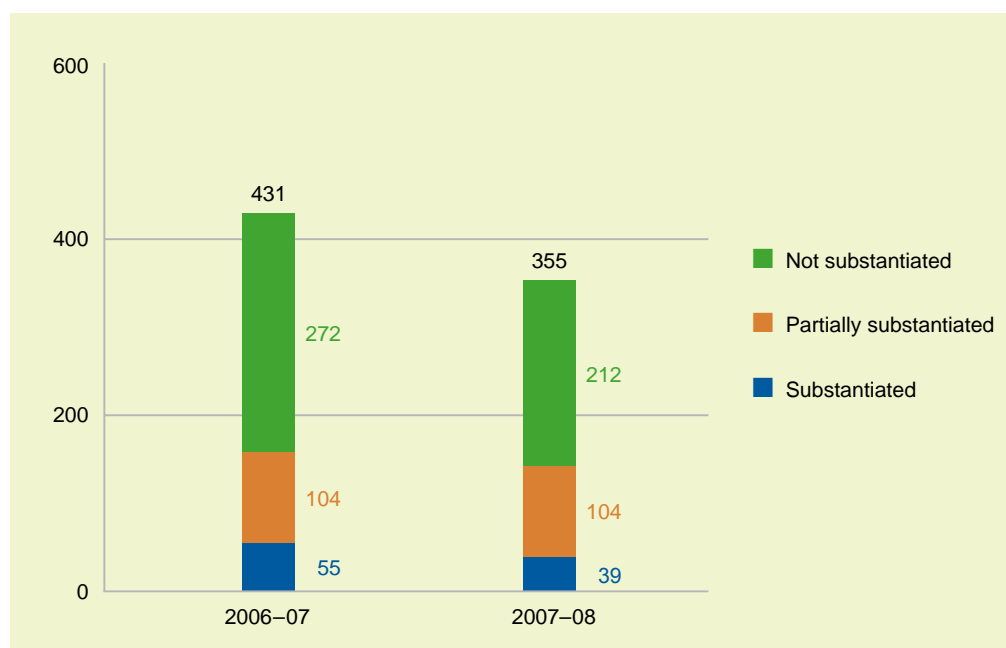
Complaints

If a taxpayer is dissatisfied with the Department's services 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, and ensures that their cases are handled in a fair and unbiased manner. During 2007-08, 355 complaints cases were received (**Figure 38**). This represents a decrease of 18%, as compared with the previous year.

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 14 cases. In the light of these cases, the Department has reviewed relevant operations with a view to improving them.

There were 111 Letters of Compliments received during the year.

Figure 38 Complaint cases



Performance Pledges

The service standards a taxpayer can expect from the Department are set out in the Performance Pledges. Through the performance pledge programme, a customer-oriented culture has taken a strong hold within the Department.

