

Taxpayer Services



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. Steps are taken to review and enhance these services. In the light of the popularity in using the Internet and for the provision of a wider range of in-depth tax information, the Department has installed 4 IRD Internet Booths since 1 April 2003 to replace the information kiosks which have been used for years.

IRD Homepage

www.ird.gov.hk

Through its homepage, the Department continues to expand the scope of tax information and provide a wider range of electronic service, so that any person interested to know more about taxes in Hong Kong may do so any time, anywhere.

More and more taxpayers 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.

New 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 homepage was revamped in 2003-04 to adopt a common look and feel with other government websites.

Electronic Enquiry Services

Electronic enquiry services are not only available on the Internet to holders of digital certificates, they are also available on the telephone to the registered users of TeleTax. By using his Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) and password, a registered TeleTax user 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.

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, aims at providing 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. A leave-and-call-back facility is available. Callers are able to speak to enquiry officers during office hours.

Over 1.43 million telephone calls were answered by the Centre during the year (**Figure 35**). The number of calls answered by staff was over 0.71 million. This represented an increase of 3.3%, as compared with the previous year (**Figure 36**). The increase was attributable to the redeployment of staff to strengthen operator services when required.

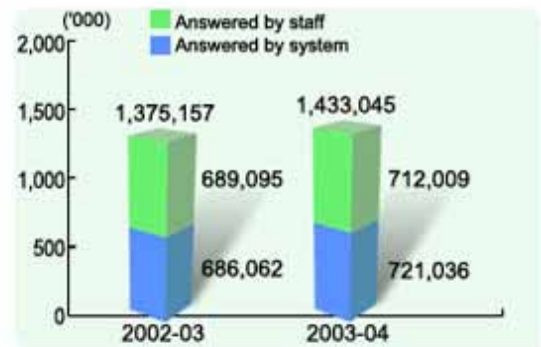


Figure 35 ▲
Number of telephone calls answered

Figure 36 ▼
Telephone Enquiries

	2002-03	2003-04	Increase/Decrease
No. of calls answered by staff	689,095	712,009	+3.3%
No. of enquiries answered by staff	789,163	831,093	+5.3%
No. of calls answered by system	686,062	721,036	+5.1%
No. of leave-and-call back messages	70,631	71,993	+1.9%
No. of fax supplied by the system	12,757	16,613	+30.2%

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.

A taxpayer service team with professionally qualified staff is also stationed in the Centre. The members of this team handle more complex cases. As the demand for services provided by the Kowloon and Tsuen Wan sub-offices had dropped, to better use our resources, the two sub-offices were closed on 1 August 2003. The number of counter enquiries has increased accordingly by 11%, as compared with the previous year (**Figure 37**).

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.

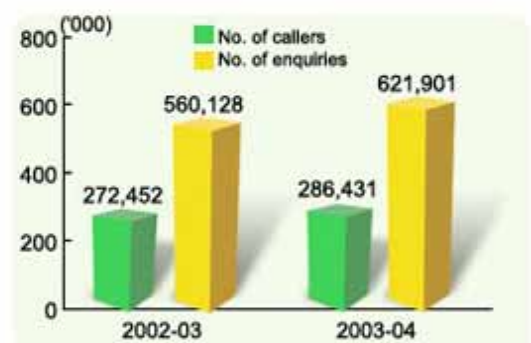


Figure 37 ▲
Counter Enquiries

Tax-help Services for Completion of Tax Returns

Introduced in April 2003 were the 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 2003-04, 461 complaint cases were received (**Figure 38**). This represents a decrease of 2%, 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. Two officers of the Department also won individual awards from the Ombudsman.

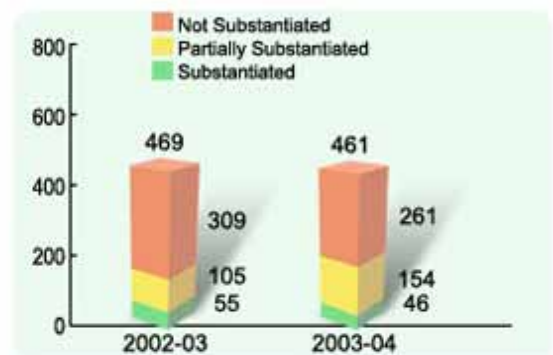


Figure 38
Complaint cases



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.

From April 2003 onwards, the Department has introduced 2 enhanced pledges in processing property tax return and tax return for individuals.

