

# Protecting staff and students during complex casework involving troubling complaints

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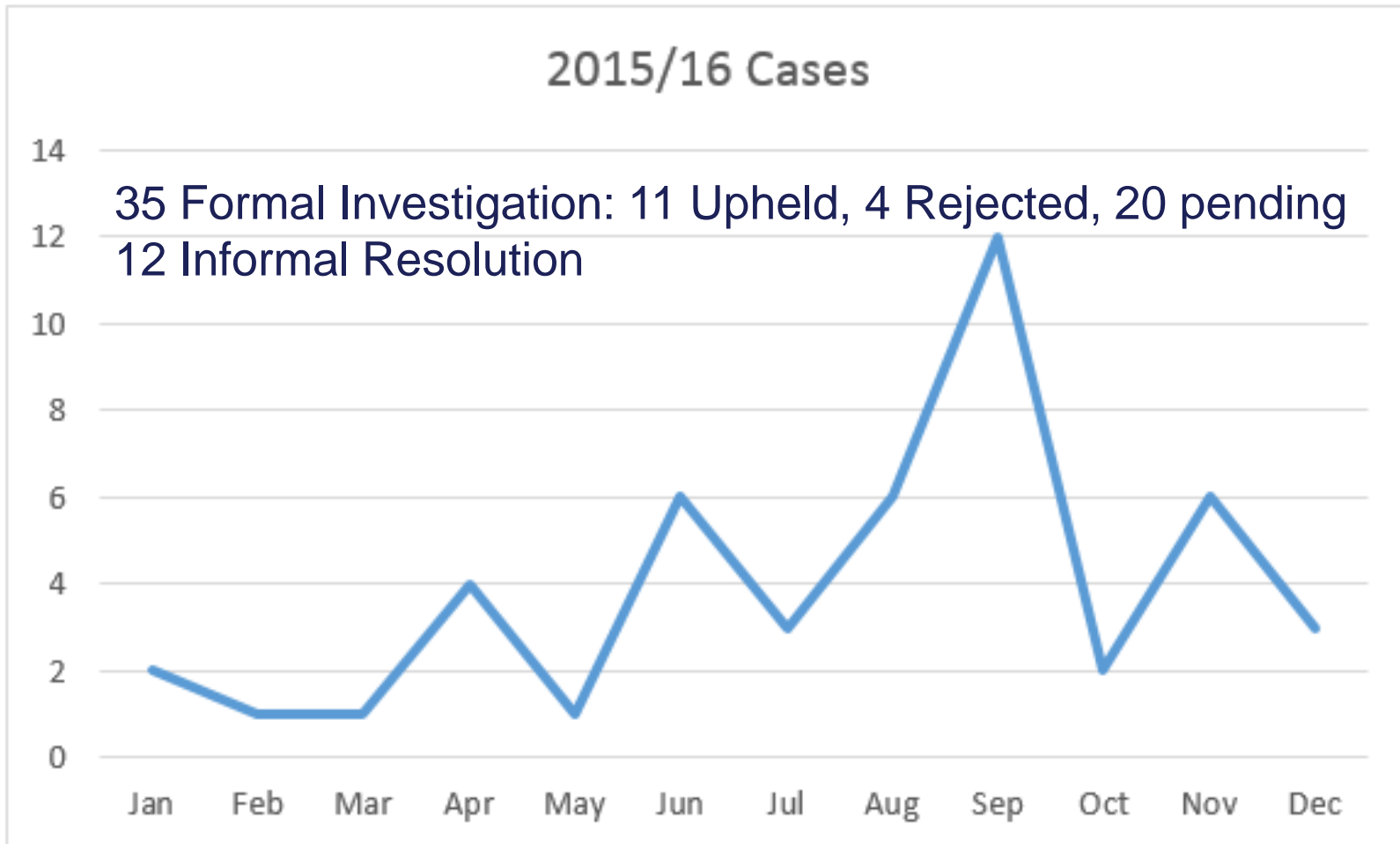
25<sup>th</sup> April, 2017 London

# Our Values

- the development of the whole person, respecting and nurturing the inherent dignity and potential of each individual
- the integration of excellent teaching, research and knowledge exchange
- the power of higher education to enrich individuals, communities and nations
- our friendly, inclusive and professional community of students and staff, preparing individuals to contribute to a just and sustainable future.

# Student Complaints

Figure 2 Distribution of Complaints across the year



# Complaints, 2015/16- key themes

- Assessment/exam administration
- Unsatisfactory supervision/teaching
- Fee/Bursary issue
- Insufficient advice/support

# Complaints, 2015/16- Recommendations

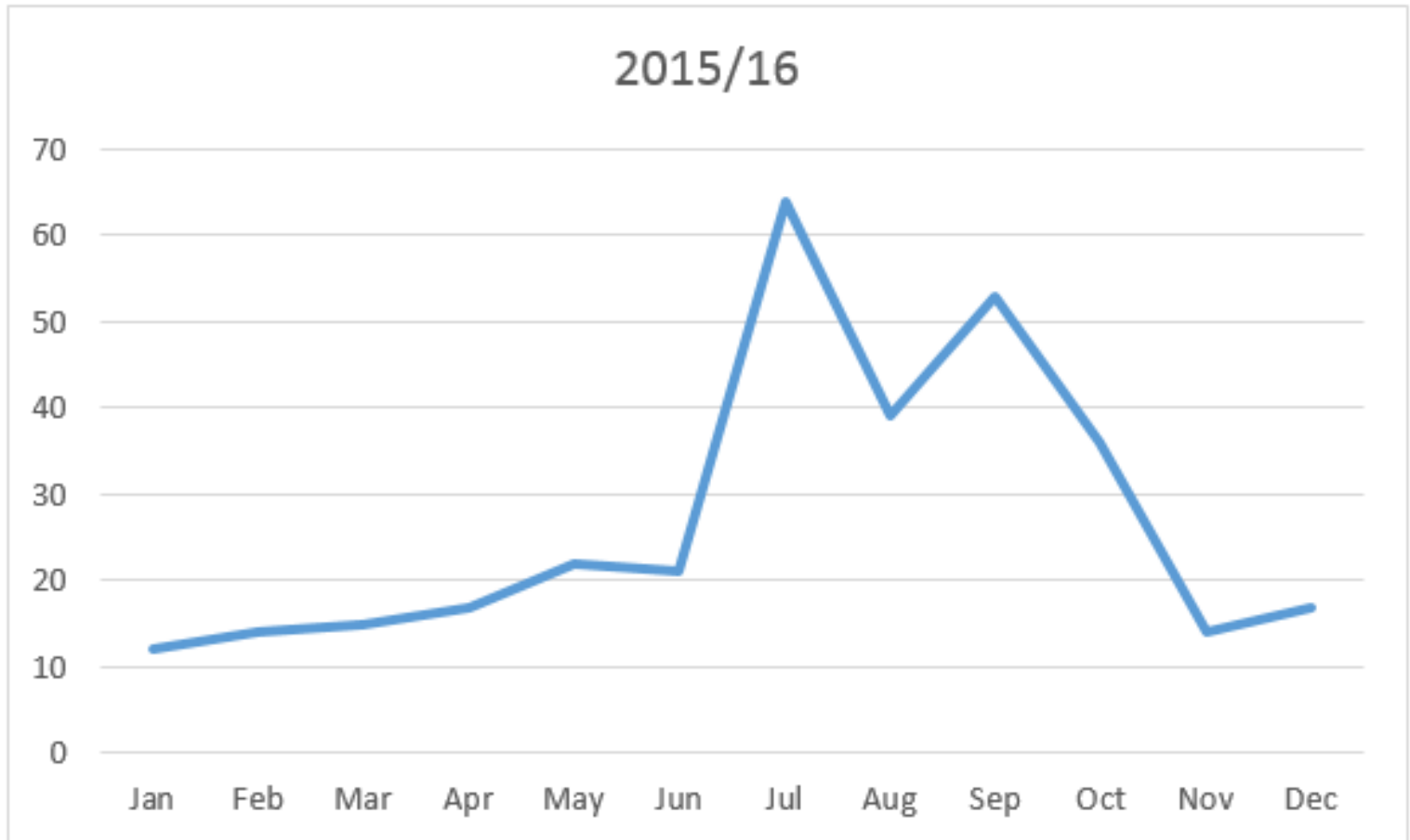
- Additional reporting of informal resolutions
- Additional reporting of reviews submitted to VC's office
- Process-enhance understanding of complaints and appeals procedures to reduce dual or incorrect submission
- Resolution- process through which financial resolutions are agreed are formalised and appropriately reported

# Appeals- Trend

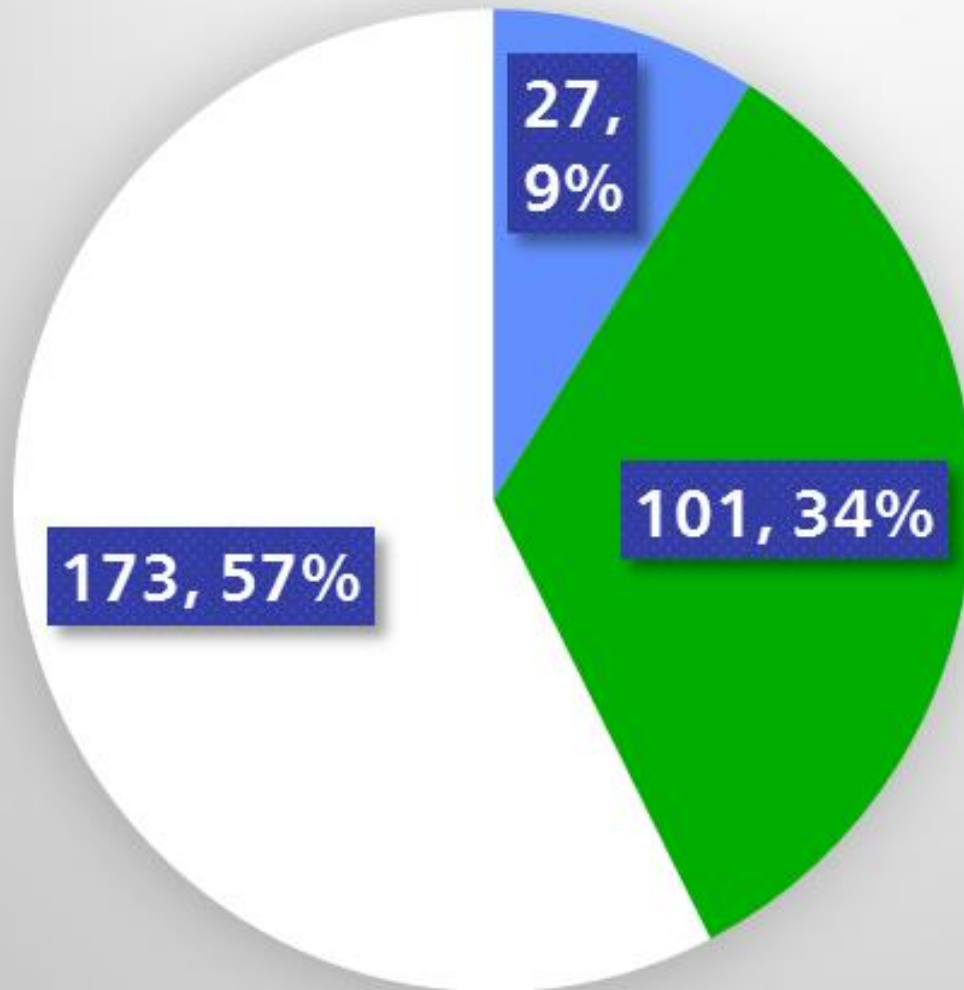
	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
No appeals lodged	115	127	137	149	175	318	297	262	313
No of panels convened	16	2	6	11	8	20	29		
No of Investigations								19	27

# Appeals

**Table 2 Distribution of requests for the year**



# Appeals, 2015/16



■ Formal Investigation

■ No grounds found

■ Informal resolution Reached



# Appeals, 2015/16

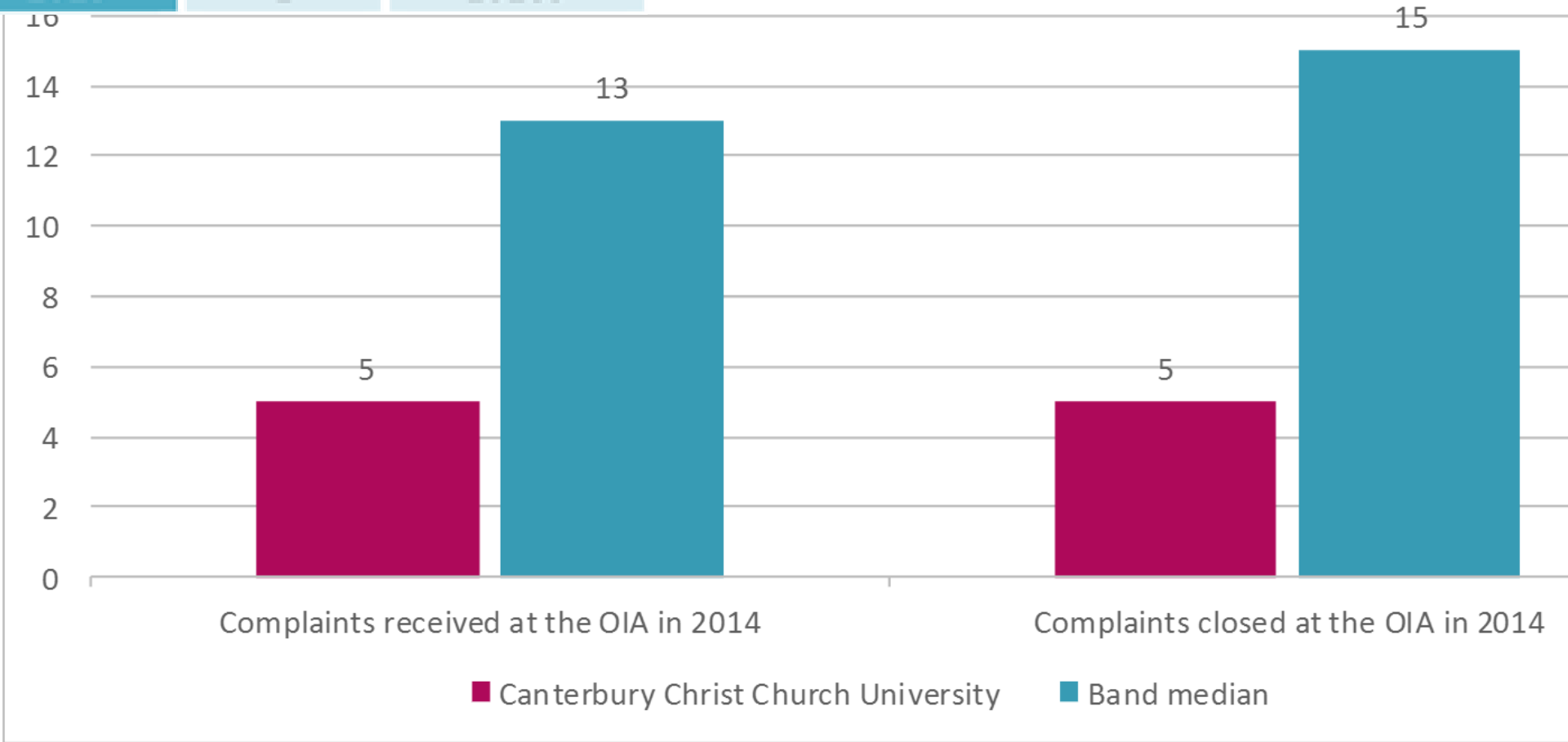
- Declared disability are over represented by 9% compared to HESA population
- Mental health (13) 4.2%; 1.7% HESA
- Learning difficulty (36) 11.4%; 7.7% HESA
- 2 or more impairments/or disabling medical conditions (5) 1.5%; 0.4% HESA
- No disability (241) 77%; 86.4% HESA
- Ethnicity, BME (124) 40%; 19% HESA



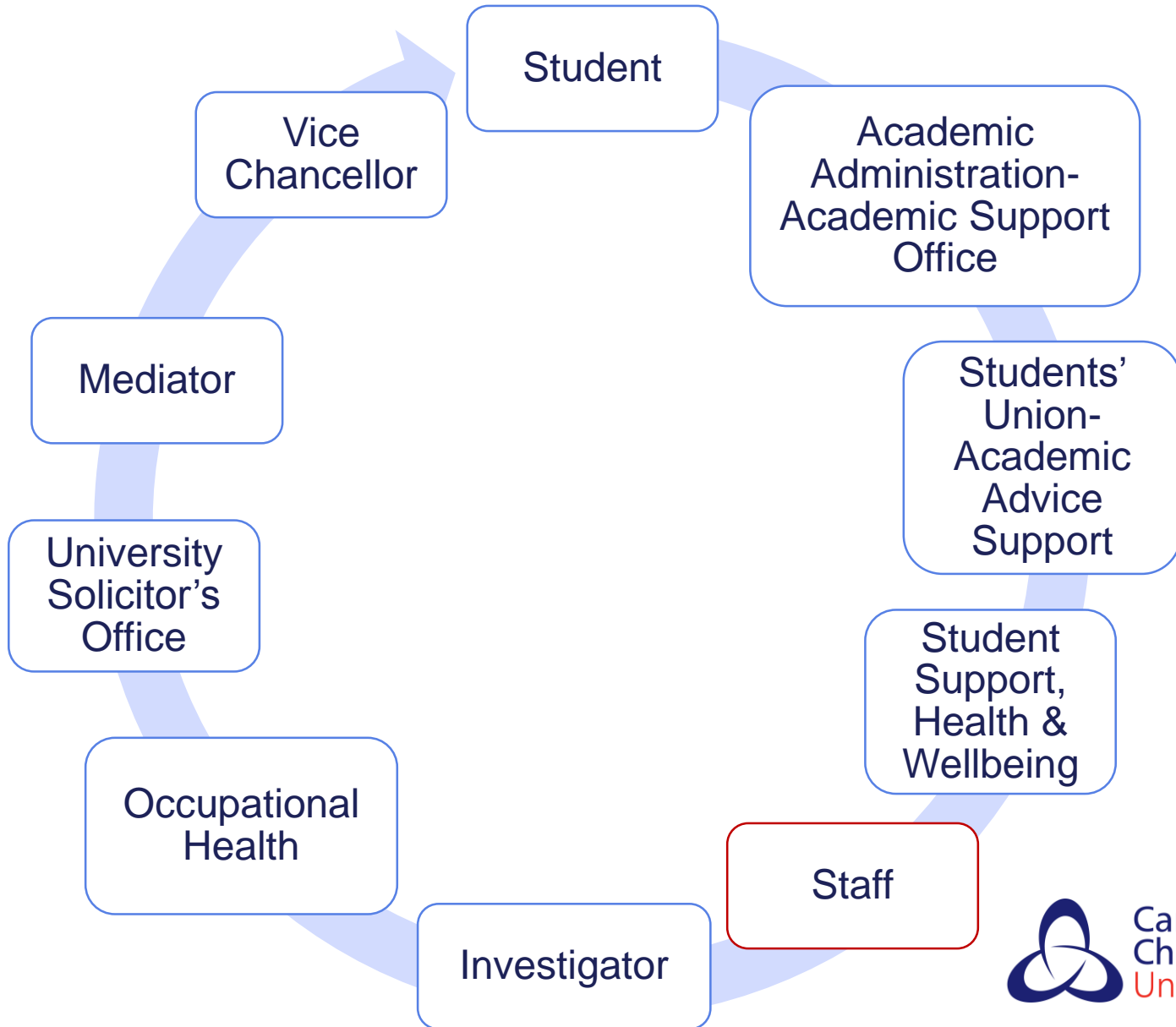
# Canterbury Christ Church University

Year	OIA Band	Number of students
2014	E	19105
2013	E	18185

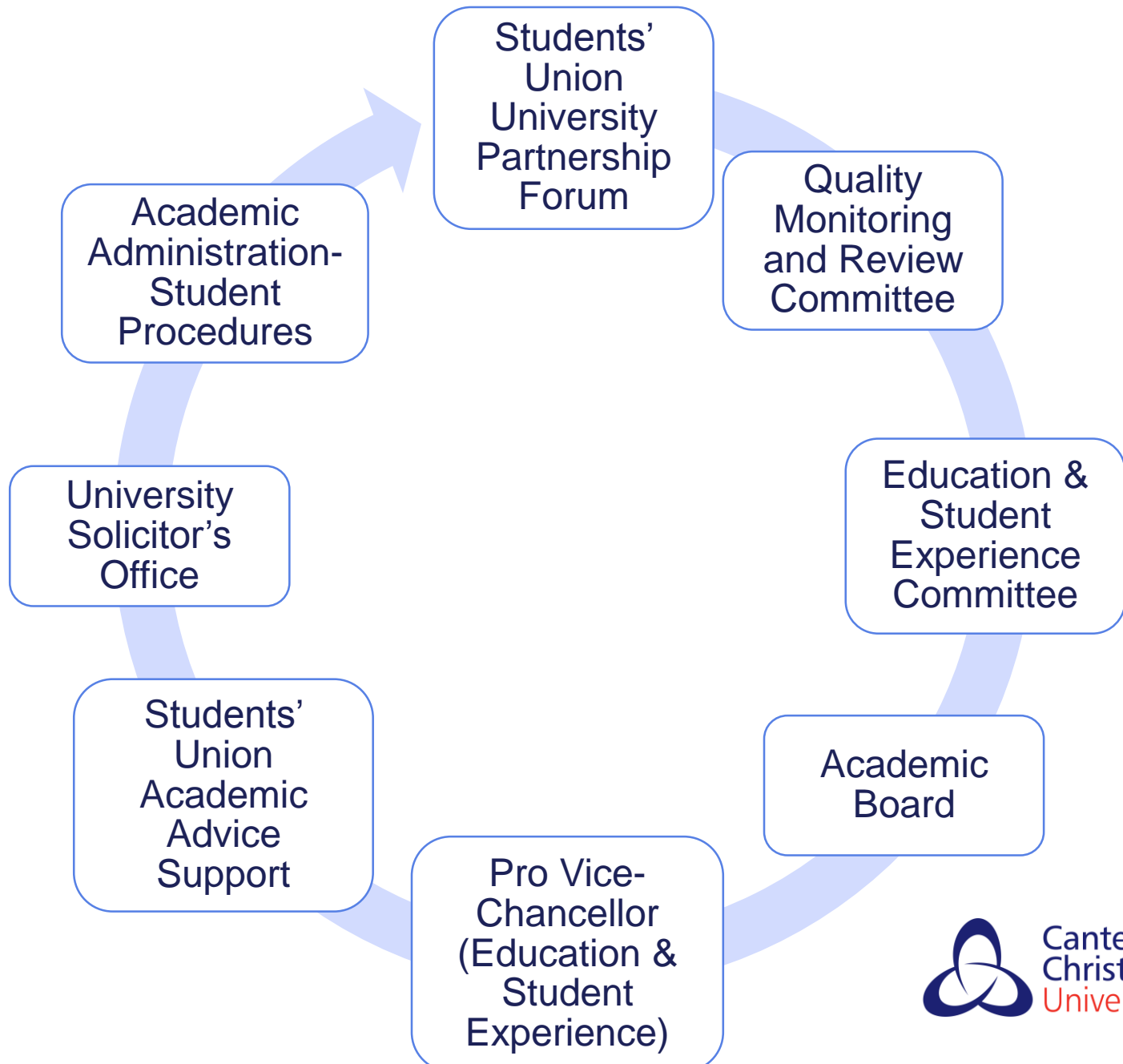
## complaints received and closed



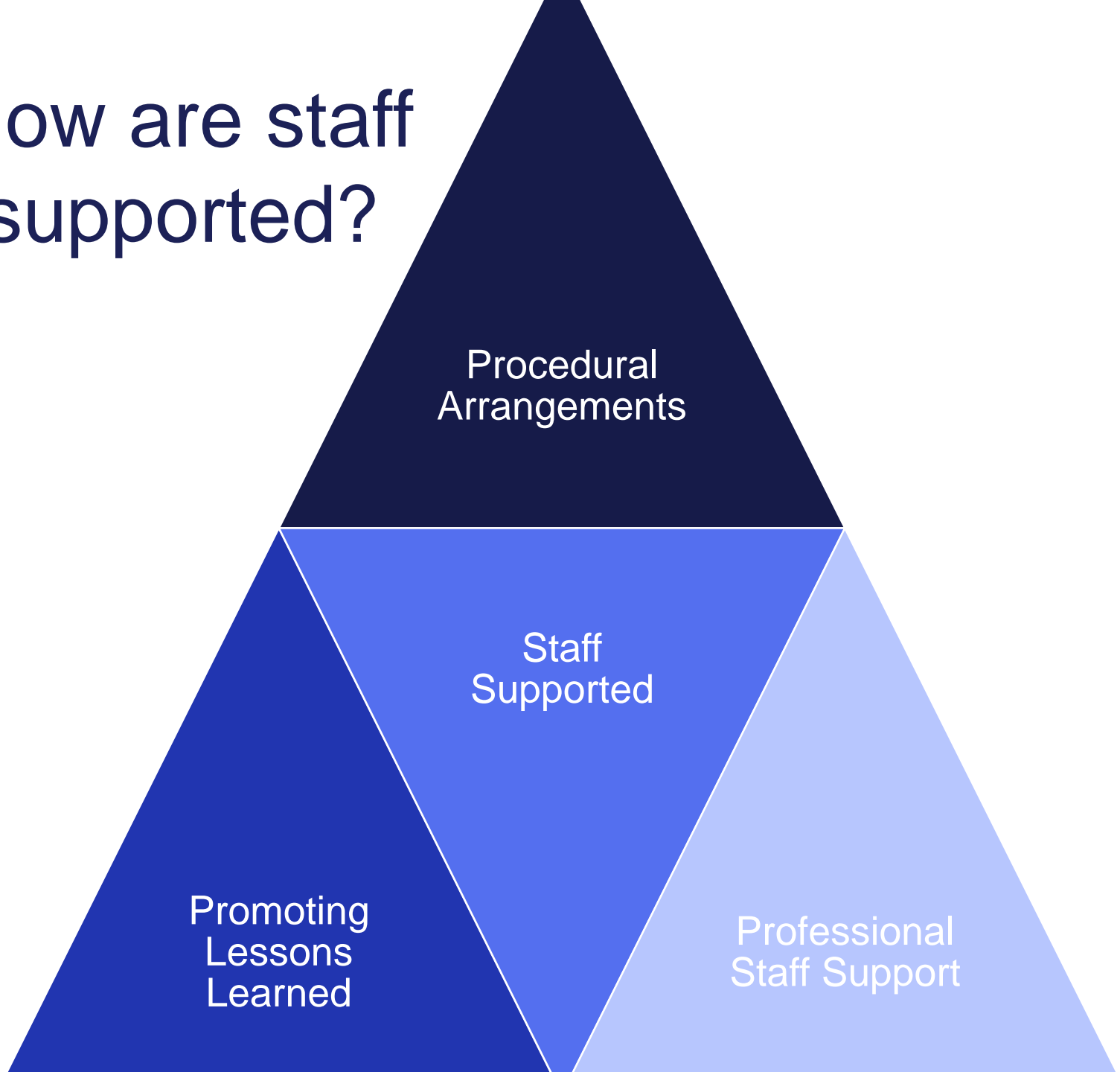
# Agents



# Enhancement



# How are staff supported?



# Interaction with HR

- The student procedures are separate from HR procedures
- Where on first review a complaint concerns staff misconduct that is a disciplinary matter, the investigation is undertaken through HR procedures, including Staff Union representation
- Communications maintained with the student, although there are challenges with what can be said

# Institutional Case Study

## 'Jeremy'

# Jeremy

- Jeremy had multiple disabilities, including mental health issues
- In his second year, he was offended by comments from a fellow student
- The University investigated and recommended a written apology from the other student, but this was not followed through by the University as the investigator did not address how it was to be done
- Jeremy was not happy with the investigation and asked for a review, which decided the investigation was done properly and was reasonable
- The OIA found the complaint partly justified
- Jeremy then submitted in the final year, eight further complaints and two appeals



# Resolving Jeremy's Complaints

- A bad experience led to Jeremy becoming critical of everything we did – and it led to complaints both about the School and the central services
- The root cause was that Jeremy did not think we were taking him seriously – and in some cases Jeremy was not being taken seriously
- It became hard to manage Jeremy's expectations – it required intervention by Jeremy's solicitor (one complaint), mediation (two complaints) and the OIA (two complaints, one appeal, three not justified), as well as several investigations
- What enabled a resolution (and Jeremy thinking well of the University in the end) was listening to Jeremy, talking to Jeremy as an equal, acknowledging and apologising for mistakes and offering (modest) compensation

# Implications of Jeremy for supporting staff

- This was an expensive case – in time rather than money
- However, the experiences led to the significant review of our procedures to place emphasis on talking through issues and making them resolution orientated
- It became complex – but was simplified to reach the final resolution
  - A case handler took over all discussions with Jeremy – and built trust
  - The case handler identified the key issues of dispute
  - The case handler used mediating principles to talk to staff and Jeremy, and work within the procedures to reach a resolution
- Complaints do not rise in a vacuum – an important part has to be understanding the nature of our students and act preventively – and this requires institutional learning and staff development

# Thank you for listening

I would now like to invite questions