



Council of Military Education Committees of the Universities of the United Kingdom

Executive Committee Meeting

Held on Wednesday 22nd November 2017 at 1100hrs

at ULOTC, Yeomanry House, Handel Street, London, WC1N 1NP

Minutes

Present

Mr R G Livingston (Chairman); Mr B Ritchie (Vice Chairman); Rev Professor J P Taylor (Treasurer); Professor E Archibald; Mr J Castle; Professor S Denny; Mr H Hamilton; Ms C Kinkead; Ms A Lyon; Col D Guinness; Col N C Tougher; Sqn Ldr A Hawes; Lt S Dodds

In Attendance;

Lt Col D M Bishop; Mr Jason Norris (Secretary)

Apologies

Professor W I Ball; Mr R Hall; Cdr A McLennan RN; Dr P J R Mileham

1. Minutes

APPROVED: The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2017 (COMEC_2017_11_A)

ACTION: It was agreed the minutes would be published on the website from 7th December allowing for a 2 week period to review for any redactions.

2. Matters Arising

Continuation-Recruiting Statistics (Min 445 b 12 Sept 2017)

RECEIVED: Figures for the previous academic year in order to inform deliberations (COMEC_2017_11_A2)

RESOLVED: It was agreed continuation recruiting statistics should be collected in the autumn for the previous academic year to inform discussions and have a single source of information to refer to.

ACTION: Service staff officers to email COMEC secretary with recruiting statistics in the autumn each year, down to unit level if available.

NOTED:

- a) There remain challenges in collating recruiting statistics across all the entrant channels. Given the current reviews of the return on investment of USUs it is important data are both understood and have high confidence.
- b) Col Tougher noted questions being asked of OTC's purpose and return on £44million investment. The army is meeting officer recruitment but struggling for soldiers. There was no desire to revise the OTC footprint, though the dynamics had changed. The intent remains of giving young men and women an experience they cannot buy or receive elsewhere, with the purpose of generating interest in the military. It was noted significant numbers of OTC alumni enter the reserves some years later which is difficult to track. Questionnaires have been sent to OTCs for cadets to complete upon leaving the unit to track their future activities better.
- c) Current Army recruiting numbers show for 16/17 (regular officer): 513 commissions of which 193 were OTC cadets. This compares to 464 commissions in previous year of which 176 were OTC cadets. Reserve officer stats for 2017 (as at 22nd November) were 118 commissions of which 60 were OTC cadets compared to 94 commissions in previous year of which 53 were OTC cadets.
- d) Prof Denny noted he is currently undertaking a research project on cadets under 18 who are 4 times more likely to enter the non-commissioned ranks.
- e) The Chairman noted at the COMEC conference 5 year averages had been used and it was useful to see year on year trends. The Chairman also highlighted the need to focus recruiting statistics on proportion of students that leave OTCs rather than total establishment as these double count students that progress from one year to the next.
- f) Sqn Ldr Hawes noted student establishment is 1000 across UASs. The numbers were reduced to 875 last year due to funding constraints. Of 265 commission last year, 98 were supplied by UASs. It was noted that UAS leavers may also join Army and Navy which were not tracked. There is no current target to recruit UAS students to the ranks but there is an objective to widen recruitment across branches e.g. engineering.

COMEC Prize (Min 448 12 Sept 2017)

CONSIDERED: Publication of the criteria, and review of their current pertinence

NOTED: The low number of overall COMEC prize applications was discussed, noting there were examples of significant engagement at some individual MECs, especially where they linked applications to their own prizes. It was thought that there was a lack in submissions due to COs not understanding the criteria or feeling their cadets would meet it.

NOTED: It was suggested that the Services could use prize-winners for marketing and publicity purposes.

ACTION: It was agreed that details of the COMEC prize criteria, example of a successful submission and notice of submission date be sent to all USU COs via the MEC Chairs, MEC Secretaries and Service staff officers.

ACTION: It was agreed that Ms A Lyon, with the other adjudicators, would review prize criteria in 2018 for 2019 prize.

ACTION: As Mr B Ritchie has stepped down as adjudicator, the Chairman would invite Mr R Hall to join the adjudication panel in view of his interest in the Prize.

Membership of the Executive Committee (Min 455 12 Sept 2017)

NOTED: The Committee had co-opted Prof. S Denny onto the Executive until September 2018

Other Matters Arising

NOTED: Mr J Castle referred to the AGM minute, item 9 regarding Freshers' fairs and USU interactions with student unions. It was suggested that close working with student union officers each year might achieve better results than trying to negotiate nationally with NUS.

3. Treasurer's Report

RECEIVED: A report from the Treasurer (COMEC_2017_11_B)

NOTED: Invoices had been sent out to MECs for subscription payments with one MEC paid already. Due to issues of payment in the past the Treasurer had asked MEC Chairs and Secretaries to support payment arrangements.

4. Reports from the Service Staff Officers

RECEIVED: A report from each of the Service Staff Officers:

- a. Royal Navy (COMEC 2017 11 C1)

Significant Events

1. The main activity for the period has been the start of the academic year and the associated recruiting phase. With a large number of leavers in many units the numbers required were high but most units have hit their targets. The organisation is now at >96% strength however, this is before they have been through the recruit medical process. Noting the previous problems with medicals we are operating to a revised process with the aim of having all medicals complete by the end of the year.

2. Following on from recruiting, BRNC has hosted two (out of three) New Entry Weekends for the latest cohort to provide a focussed induction process and introduction to RN Officer training. With the strong recent recruiting the numbers attending have been higher than in recent years and extra funding was achieved to enable the Northern units (Glasgow & Strathclyde, Edinburgh and Northumbrian URNUs) to attend for the first time.

Personnel

3. The new COs at Southampton, Cambridge, Birmingham and Yorkshire have settled into their commands and enjoyed productive recruiting rounds. The CO position at Bristol is gapped due to maternity leave but will be filled from mid-February as is a fill for the CO position in Glasgow. This should mean that from mid Q1 2018 the CO plot is filled and stable.

Recruiting Statistics

4. Whilst numbers into BRNC remain strong, there has been a decline in the entry from URNU and USUs.

	2015 (ex-members as % of total entry)	2016 (ex-members as % of total entry)	2017 (ex-members as % of total entry)
URNU	13	15	10
All USU	17	23	20

Of significance, the BRNC Sep course of each year is the main graduate entry and figures for these are:

	Sep 2015 (ex-members as % of total entry)	Sep 2016 (ex-members as % of total entry)	Sep 2016 (ex-members as % of total entry)
URNU	25	28	14
All USU	31	36	22

Feedback from the units has not highlighted any reason why numbers are down and it may simply be an indication of changes to the wider employment market making civilian employment more attractive for graduates.

Training

5. The URNU syllabus review continues and is still expected to deliver by the end of the year. This work is not expected to be a dramatic change; rather it will be a refinement of the training to ensure that it is achievable, relevant and engaging. A key element of this work will be managing version control and access; this will be achieved through use of the Defence learning Environment.

b. Army (COMEC 2017 11 C2)

1. **Annual Deployment Exercises (ADX).** The summer camp season concluded in July this year with successful piloting of centralised summer camps supported by shared training teams which covered key areas where there were skills gaps. Skills shortages included Range Control and weapon handling, PTIs, Drivers and Chefs. This centralised approach ensures a high quality training standard common across the OTCs. In addition, any skills gaps experienced by individual OTCs can be provided centrally, while also achieving efficiencies in travel and training. Planning is in progress for Annual Deployment Exercises for 2018 with exercises scheduled in Germany, Cyprus, Gibraltar and the UK.

2. **Selection.** The annual selection process is nearing its conclusion for the start of Academic Year 17/18. Numbers are down slightly on previous years in some areas; this is due to a more robust medical screening process and an increased focus on long term potential, designed to allow RMAS Gp to better focus development training and provide an enhanced experience.

3. **Common Commissioning Course Short (CCS).** There is a strong common curriculum in place across the OTCs, with an effective quality assurance

system run by Sandhurst. Delivery of the curriculum is very flexible, ranging from four 2-week core modules run at Sandhurst, to 7 weekends spread across 2 academic years run in the OTCs for MODs A and B, followed by two 2-week consolidated modules for MODs C and D at Sandhurst. Consolidated versions of MODs A and B are also available at several locations. Historically, Reserve Potential Officers were trained on courses separate from their Regular counterparts on short courses at RMAS. To achieve closer integration and standardise training, the Common Commissioning Course was designed which trains Reserve Potential Officers (including OTC OCdts), Gap Year Commissions, Reserve Professionally Qualified Officers (PQOs) and Regular PQOs on the same curriculum. The first course formed up at the end of September and is due to commission on 25th November. Analysis has been conducted at each stage of the course and results are looking extremely positive.

4. **OTC Review.** As briefed at the recent COMEC Conference, as part of the Individual Training and Transformation Project (ITTP), RMAS Gp was scrutinised to identify efficiencies in training, liability and output. As a subset of this work, the Army Advanced Development Programme (AADP) Team is currently examining the OTR model that was implemented in Yorks and North West OTR to determine if there are increased efficiencies to be achieved in the wider UOTC space. Work is currently in an exploratory phase with recommendations expected in the first quarter of 2018.

5. **Centralised Training Materials.** The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has a range of learning materials available for staff and students. O/Cdts in the OTCs cannot always access Defence Connect easily for a variety of reasons, so there is a need for hard copy learning materials. O/Cdts on the Regular courses are provided with a variety of these materials, but they need to be adapted and tailored to the needs of O/Cdts on the short courses. Hence, the Media Support Centre at Sandhurst is looking at how best to provide a range of learning materials tailored to the needs of all OTCs.

6. **OFSTED.** The Regular Sandhurst courses are already subject to OFSTED inspections, with the most recent, in October, resulting in an OUTSTANDING grade. OFSTED has announced its intention to inspect the OTCs wef September 2017. A comprehensive internal assurance programme is underway, focussed on preparation of the OTCs for an inspection regime. For the purposes of an OFSTED visit, OTCs will be treated as a reserve unit and subject to an advisory visit rather than a full inspection.

7. **Leadership and Resilience Training.** Adventure Training has been rebranded as Leadership and Resilience Training to more accurately reflect the characteristics we wish to develop. All OTCs engage in a wide range of LRT opportunities, organised at unit level throughout the year, as well as centralised activity. In line with the desire to maximise shared training opportunities this year we are piloting a centralised Ski Foundation training.

8. **Other military competitions.** In April 2018 the Queens Challenge Cup will bring sports teams from all OTC/Rs to Sandhurst, while the Celtic OTCs will run Ex Northern Lights. The OTC teams have done exceptionally well in this

year's Cambrian Patrol competition (with Glasgow winning a coveted Gold medal), Army level cross-country skiing and various international orienteering events. There are some national and international sportsmen and women in the OTCs.

9. **Staffing.** All OTCs are facing issues of staff gapping. The Regular PIDs are at a high level of manning although some key posts (Adjt and XO) are gapped in places. However, Reservist PIDs are heavily gapped; the risk is being managed through careful pairing with local Reserve units.

10. **Tracking Alumni.** The OTCs are active with their own alumni and are working with the Young Officer Development Adviser (YODA) network to ensure that we continue to engage with O/Cdts post graduation. Attracting sufficient Reserve Officers is an obvious priority, but a significant number of O/Cdts join Reserve Units as soldiers after leaving university, some commissioning at a later stage once they are properly settled into their career. The OTCs are looking at how to track individuals once they graduate.

c. Royal Air Force (COMEC 2017 11 C3)

1. **Recruitment.** In Sep it was envisaged that financial pressures within Air Command would result in the UAS student establishment being reduced for the next 2 years by 10%. Commandant RAFC Cranwell has found the financial 'head room' to defer this measure and the RAF are recruiting to establishment for this academic year. As with sister Services the management information system for recruitment is in the process of being replaced and data is currently being transferred to the new system, the Defence Recruiting System. It is anticipated that we will be unable to process sponsorship applications until the New Year. However, the RAF have a 100 sponsored students currently in the scheme and a further 11 within the system.

2. **Adventurous Training.** One thousand and thirty activity places were taken up in the UK, 194 overseas and 325 skiing overseas; total 1,559. UAS organised AT is specifically designed to deliver UAS training objectives within a safe environment for pre-Phase 1 trainees. It requires student engagement in every aspect of planning, delivery and recovery of an expedition. It builds team cohesion within individual UASs and tests individuals' suitability for military service by taking people outside of their comfort zone.

3. **Bristol UAS.** The plan to relocate BUAS to Kemble failed after the landlord signed a lease with a third party. The RAF are actively looking at alternative sites and it is anticipated that a decision will be made in Feb 18 on the new location. BUAS continues to fly from Boscombe Down, albeit at a restricted rate.

4. **RAF Woodvale.** There are 2 issues with Woodvale, namely the hangar doors and the runway surface. As a result all flying has ceased. As a temporary measure, the aircraft have been redistributed across 6 FTS. Funding has been secured for the hangar doors and the work is programmed to be completed by March 18. This will enable LUAS & MASUAS to continue to operate off the

short runway. The RAF are awaiting confirmation of funding to repair the main runway.

5. **Tutor Display.** Following this year's successful season, where UAS' displayed to over 400,000 people across the UK, planning has commenced for the 2018 season.

NOTED: The Chairman noted concern of fluctuating numbers in a squadron due to financial pressures e.g. number of senior students. It was noted there is some flexibility to keep on students where this is an issue.

d. Defence People

NOTED:

- a) The FR20 programme continues looking at how reserve forces can better be utilised at home and overseas.
- b) The SDSR15 national security capability review is also ongoing looking at both regular and reserve forces.
- c) Finances remain challenging and will continue to impact on activity.
- d) The Reserve Service Day has replaced the Manned Training Day – an instruction will come out on this shortly.
- e) Military recruiting numbers are increasing but still challenging for the Army in particular. The current overall target is 33,250 with current numbers at 32,020. Navy is over target, RAF just under target and Army short of target.
- f) Focus on employer engagement has been successful with expectation of 2000 armed forces covenants signed by end of December 2017.
- g) A review is underway on how defence can improve engagement with Higher Education and Further Education. Proposals include encouraging more staff to join reserve forces and become instructors and increasing coverage of the student population. COMEC will be key to this review and will be invited to participate.

ACTION: A request was made regarding the number of Universities that have signed the Covenant

ACTION: A written report would be sent to the Executive

5. **DTUS (COMEC 2017_11_C4)**

1) DTUS has received 136 students from Welbeck DSFC this autumn. Additionally, a small number of students continue to directly join DTUS in the second year of their university degree course. A total of 159 students entered DSFC this autumn: that is 36, 60, 47 and 16 for the RN, Army, RAF and DESG respectively.

2) Each DTUS squadron runs its own exercises for its students – for example, Taurus Squadron has a survival exercise. In addition, the squadrons come together for larger-scale exercises for each year group. The first-year exercise, which is Adventurous Training, is continuing in its current format, but the second and third year exercises are in the process of being revamped. The reason for this is that in their current format they are too similar to IOT and

consequently, there is a danger of putting students off military careers. In the case of the third-year exercise, there is a risk of injuring students just before they begin IOT, made more serious by the current low staffing levels. The plan is that Ex BRUNEL will replace Ex SPIRIT for the second years, taking place at the Technology School at Shrivenham during the period 9 – 13 April. It will primarily involve developing the student's awareness of technology in a Defence context. This year is a pilot. For the third years, Ex CONSOLIDATE will replace Ex REVIVAL, and will orientate the student towards the specific needs of IOT in his/her chosen Service. Students will therefore be organised in cohorts according to Service, but collocated on a single site.

3) Staffing continues to be a problem. Each of the squadrons either has a gapped post or is likely to have one shortly.

4) From autumn 2018, DTUS students will not be able to take Foundation degrees, but must go straight to Honours degrees. This creates a difficulty for Welbeck, as a small minority of students do not get the A level grades required for engineering degrees at any of the DTUS universities.

5) MoU between MOD and Loughborough University – renewed by the Director General Defence Academy, Vice Admiral Duncan Potts and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bob Allison, at a ceremony on the campus which took place on 17 October 2017.

6) Lt Col Jason Kennedy (RSigs) replaces Lt Col Richard Craig as CO Taurus Sqn for University of Birmingham and Aston University.

NOTED: The Chairman noted an issue of reducing numbers which was a concern and is meant to be addressed by strategic review report.

ACTION: Ms A Lyon will request recruiting statistics and circulate to the Executive

6. Academic-military Relationships

RECEIVED: The addresses by Generals Bashall and Nanson, and a note on the syndicate and open forum discussions, which will form part of the Conference Proceedings to be published next term. Meantime, they will be distributed to MECs for their information, together with any Committee observations thereon (COMEC_2017_11_D1, COMEC_2017_11_D2, COMEC_2017_11_D3)

NOTED: The Chairman noted the manifestation of the relationship between academic and military will come out in the new Conspectus due out later in 2018.

7. Development of COMEC and Relations with MECs

CONSIDERED: The Vice-Chairman's survey of MECs

NOTED:

- a) The Vice-Chairman reported the outcome of the survey sent to MECs was to reflect on COMEC's relationship with them and gather opinion on how best to take this relationship forward. A publication on the outcomes may follow. It was

emphasised that completion of the survey and any outcomes was not a directive from COMEC, as MECs govern themselves, it was a request for information to support MECs better.

- b) There had been wide ranging feedback from MEC Chairmen on the outline set of questions and possible outcomes. These included gathering further feedback at the conference; assessing the number of retired members on MECs who may no longer have a strong connection to the University or students; sharing of best practice and current inter-working between MECs; and a query on whether the survey should extend to University management, USUs and students?
- c) It was noted University management may engage more with their MECs if a research capability was introduced together with joint working on research projects. There were examples of this happening in some areas e.g. cybersecurity (over £300million is spent per year by defence on outside research). The Chairman noted a portal was initiated to share relevant research some years ago, but it was not engaged with. There may be other ways to pilot better engagement between the military and academia which will be explored once the survey responses are returned, if this can be linked with University performance indicators e.g. employability, it will likely generate more interest for vice-chancellors.

ACTION: Add as an agenda item for Feb 2018 meeting, with MEC responses, for full discussion.

8. Defence Conference and AGM

2017

RECEIVED: The Minutes of the AGM 2017 (COMEC_2017_11_E)

NOTED:

- a) It was felt there was good discussion at the conference and this should be continued, though there should be more time for interaction with the Service host and between members.
- b) It would enrich the conference to have cadets attend, and although they are invited, very few MECs bring them along. This needs to be encouraged for next conference, perhaps by making them part of the agenda e.g. have a cadet panel?
- c) It was suggested a session on sharing best practice between MECs would be of value and should be considered.
- d) Accommodation and subsistence were good at the conference.
- e) There was discussion on dates for the conference with a range of views on timing and length.

RESOLVED: The Chairman thanked Dr P J R Mileham for organising the conference and Sandhurst for hosting.

2018

CONSIDERED: The Royal Navy offer to host the 2018 Conference during the second week of September at BRNC Dartmouth, and to consider its duration and format.

RESOLVED: Although the second week of September was not the best timing for some colleagues, it was noted there were no other options, so it was agreed we should proceed with this date. A preference was noted for a 3 day conference, giving value for money, starting earlier in the week.

NOTED: The accommodation would be the same as for new officer recruits, shared cabins and communal (but not mixed sex) showers.

Subsequent Years

CONSIDERED: Whether a university should be added to the cycle in addition to our three Service hosts.

NOTED:

- a) A number of possible issues were noted should a University be introduced to the conference rotation including:
 - a. Would enough senior military personnel attend?
 - b. Is this an opportunity to look at locating in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales?
 - c. Would the University hosting charge corporate rates?
 - d. Would the University sector engage with the conference at senior level?

RESOLVED: To continue discussion following the outcome of the MEC survey

9. Filling the Ranks

CONSIDERED: A report on the state of recruiting into the Armed Forces and the issues applicable to officer recruiting (COMEC_2017_11_F)

NOTED:

- a) Universities are not mentioned in the report and concern was noted if this was a reflection of profile and importance of Universities in armed forces recruitment.
- b) Lateral recruitment was mentioned but a fast track option for students who attended a USU was not included.
- c) Opportunity for COMEC and Universities to support BAME students into military.
- d) Opportunity for COMEC and Universities to signpost opportunities for NCO ranks and technicians, particularly if fast tracking were to be made available.

RESOLVED: To continue discussion following the outcome of the MEC survey

10. RAF100

CONSIDERED: The offer to participate in the commemorative album was for a profile at a cost of £10,000, subsequently amended to double the exposure at a discount on £10,000 (COMEC_2017_11_G)

RESOLVED: The Executive agreed not to participate.

11. Any Other Business:

RESOLVED: No other business was discussed

12. Dates and Venues of Future Meetings:

To Note: The dates and venues of future meetings:

- 22 February 2018 (London)
- 17 May 2018 (London)
- September 2018 (Date and Venue to be confirmed)
- 22 November 2018 (London)