

**COUNCIL OF MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEES
OF THE UNIVERSITIES OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**



COMECC CONSPECTUS





FOREWORD



‘War is inherently a human activity, whose character is determined by politics, strategy, society and technology. Few would dispute that the character of conflict is changing... and the West’s technological advantage is reducing. The physical dimension is becoming less important than the cognitive and moral dimensions.’ Ministry of Defence, Global Strategic Trends 2018.

Britain’s ongoing security challenges call for a collaborative effort across Government and the private sector which depends upon knowledge and understanding of the highest order, provided by education and research. The interdependence of Britain’s Armed Forces and the Higher Education sector has grown over the past century and is developing faster than ever before. Intellectual rigour has never been so much in demand in our officers and professional servicemen and women. The joint efforts across the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force, coupled with the Civil Service, must seek greater convergence and synergy with industry and civil society in the round for the defence of our nation, the strength of our alliances and our contribution to the security of the world in general.

Our universities and academic institutions are increasingly involved in development and support of our Defence capability in both science and the humanities. They are teaching Service personnel, working in military establishments and validating their education up to higher degree level. In parallel strategy and security, conflict studies and international relations have become major academic disciplines for universities, with members of the Services contributing to degree courses, research and publications of every sort.

The substantial privatisation of Defence research and development has increasingly involved an expanding university sector which provides cutting edge expertise in the new generation of battle-winning technologies: artificial intelligence, robotics, cyber, information operations, advanced medicine and human sciences.

There is therefore a growing dependency between our nation’s security and our academic institutions at a time when our locus in a fast-changing world will be defined by both. COMEC provides an invaluable bridge between these two axes.

I welcome this new Conspectus which explains the context and activities of the Military Education Committees, its Council and the University Service Units in promoting essential relationships between Defence and academia.

General Sir Peter Wall GCB CBE DL

President, Council of Military Education Committees



INTRODUCTION



Our President has reminded us in his Foreword of the 'human activity' which is Defence. In the same MoD document he quotes, Defence is forecast to 'become ever more personalised'. Much of this Conspectus is about 'people'.

The universities have a long association with the Armed Forces; from the Middle Ages when numbers of graduates chose a career as an officer in the army, either at home or overseas. In times of peril universities would raise militia, and later volunteer companies, in defence of the realm. These would form the basis of the Officers' Training Corps in the Army reforms of Richard Haldane, who was also instrumental in the reform and creation of some of our civic universities.

It is a statutory requirement that host universities must have a Committee responsible for Military Education to oversee the operation of the University Service Units, with particular regard to the balance between Cadets' military and academic activities. COMEC was established to advise, coordinate and represent the interests of our MECs, and to promote co-operation of the universities with Defence. COMEC and the MECs are, therefore, the continuing presence in universities championing collaboration with Defence and support for the Forces community.

The universities and Defence face similar strategic challenges and share values and standards, common allies and aligned interests. Our close and vital links sustain Defence's talent pool and influence through access to our young people: the mission and utility of the USUs go beyond officer recruitment to broadening the understanding of future leaders of society. While COMEC's focus is with the USUs, our remit goes farther to encompass teaching, in-service degrees, and research and consultancy with Defence, and its suppliers, and collaboration on issues such as cyber resilience.

The COMEC Executive Committee is charged with maintaining the network of contacts. We have working relationships with MEC Chairmen to improve engagement, enhance communications and exchange ideas, receiving regular reports on their activities and inviting them occasionally to host one of our meetings to meet some of their members and students and get an appreciation of what is important to them. We see value in maintaining relationships with the Armed Forces and our network of strategic alliances and related organizations, aspiring to work effectively in concert with MECs to assist delivery of the needs of our partners in Defence.

We will continue to review our partnerships with our strategic allies, and use our deliberations to inform our direction.

Chairman: Roderick G Livingston BSc FCIS FRSA



MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEES

‘The chief role and function of MECs was, and remains today, the civil and academic direction and supervision of those students engaged in military activities for whom MECs are responsible.’

The MECs recognize and maintain that the ‘status of USU membership is of the nature of a quasi-professional free association, with strictly limited liability for military duty’.

In 1908 the then War Office established the University Officers Training Corps (UOTC) as part of the Haldane reforms, it was agreed that any university willing to furnish an OTC must have a Committee of Military Education appointed by that university to act with the War Office.

Since then, Military Education Committees (MECs) have extended their remit in two ways. Firstly, they have added the University Air Squadrons (from the 1930s) and University Royal Naval Units (from the 1960s). **These are known collectively as University Service Units (USUs).** MECs now deal with the Single Service Chains of Command and Ministry of Defence.

Secondly, as most individual USUs draw student members from a number of nearby universities, the MECs have extended their representational role regionally. Some MEC names remain as before, others are named as regionally-grouped MECs. Their number has varied over the years.

It is a matter for each MEC to determine its membership and terms of reference in conjunction with their constituent universities. MECs are independent bodies, subscribing to and supporting the Council of Military Education Committees (COMEC), which in turn is dependent on MECs, albeit with a different and wider remit.

COUNCIL OF MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEES



The relationship between Academia and the Armed Forces has a long history and has been both practical and symbiotic. The understandings between these powerful sectors of public life in the UK are maintained by engagement and effort by both parties. COMEC does much to fulfil this purpose as a channel actively joining Defence and Academia.

Starting with COMEC's Constitution, COMEC's formal Terms of Reference and derived functions are as follows

- To co-ordinate and represent the views of MECs to the Ministry of Defence; Directorates for University Service Units; UK Universities and Executive and Representative bodies of Higher Education
- To consider and deliberate upon matters of policy emanating from the Directors for USUs and to advise the MoD, Directors of Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations and UK Universities thereon
- To promote co-operation between the MoD, the UK universities and MECs
- To advise and support the UK Universities and their MECs on matters relating to educational and training needs of the Armed Services and Ministry of Defence Civil Service
- To encourage and support initiatives aimed at promoting the concept of the Armed Services in Society within the broader, UK University community
- To liaise with other appropriate bodies concerned with Defence Studies and other relevant issues.

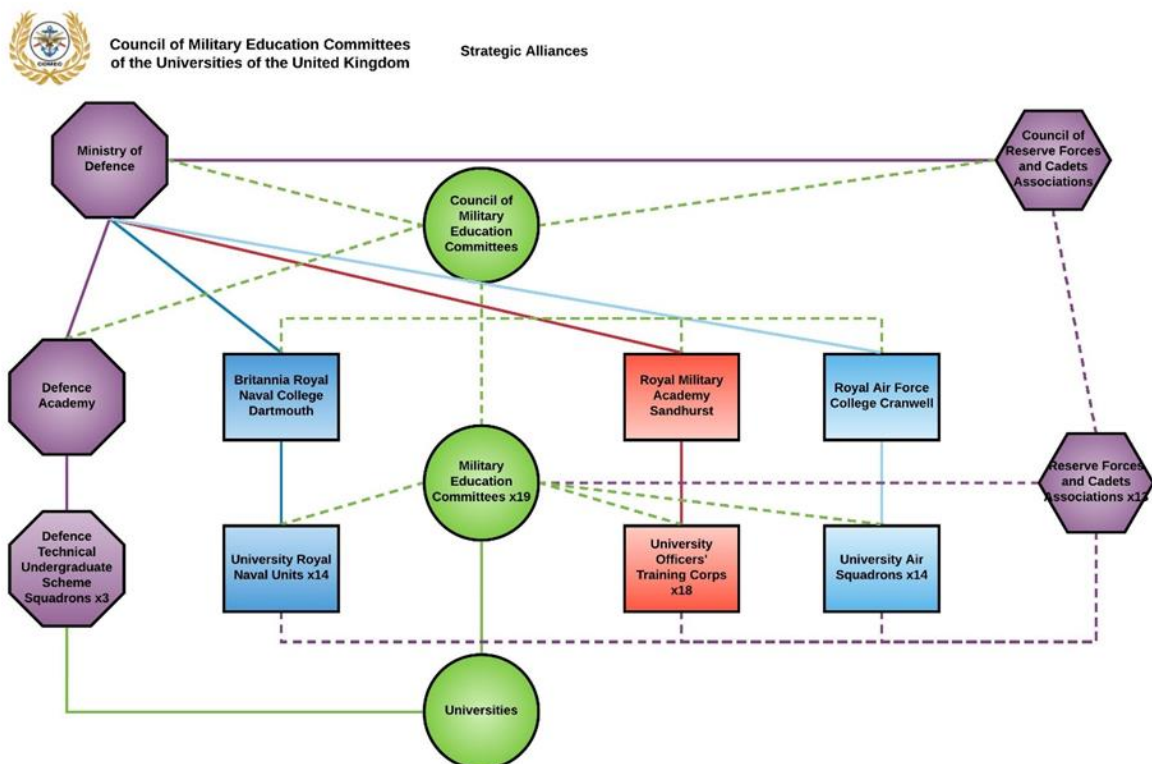
COMEC seeks personal contact and institutional 'engagement', and constantly renews and maintains what can be termed 'strategic alliances' with other bodies, and conducts work with 'corresponding partnerships' within universities, as well as independent, commercial and other institutional bodies, connected with the USUs and Defence.

COMEC's routine activities, coordinated by its elected Executive Committee, are

- To conduct studies and research, when appropriate, and encourage means of exchange of research and development between Defence and universities
- To publish, print and communicate appropriate documents (e.g. Memorandums and Occasional Papers), including electronically via the COMEC website, particularly to spread 'good practice'
- To stage events on behalf of strategic alliance partners, including conferences, lectures and the COMEC AGM
- To support USUs directly (e.g. COMEC Prize)
- To promote and act as the corporate memory for the USUs, MECs and in regard to the civil and academic nature of universities.



COMEC STRATEGIC ALLIANCES





UNIVERSITY ROYAL NAVAL UNITS

When National Service ended, the Royal Navy had to find new ways to preserve its vital profile in the Public Eye. In 1967 the Navy established a student-based naval society in Aberdeen University entitled the 'University Royal Naval Unit' or 'URNU', aiming to encourage undergraduates to learn something about the Royal Navy and its role in maritime affairs. It was so successful that over the years, the idea gradually extended to other universities.



By the early 1980s, 7 further units had been established at Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, London, Southampton and Brighton. In 1994, as the majority of the Navy faced cuts, the URNU expanded again with 6 further units at Newcastle, Hull, Birmingham, Oxford, Cambridge and Cardiff. Today,

there are 15 URNUs established across the UK - the 15th being Devon URNU established in Plymouth in late 2016 - drawing members from 64 universities - with the URNU HQ based at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth (BRNC).

The organisation's mission is:

'To develop an understanding of the Naval Service in undergraduates, so that those who go into civilian employment are positive advocates thereof, and to facilitate a Naval Career for those who choose one.'





While the URNUs work to this common Mission, each unit is tailored to the particular circumstances and nature of its location. Nevertheless, each is a small, but formal Royal Naval training establishment, situated on or near a university campus and equipped with offices, classrooms and social facilities. In 2014 the command arrangements for the URNU changed so that the associated P2000 Patrol Boats and units

became separate commands. The P2000s retain their close links with the URNUs and are still tasked to provide embarked training throughout the year.

The permanent URNU staff is relatively small with a Lieutenant RN, Chief Petty Officer and a part-time civilian Secretary to run the unit. Student membership of each unit is capped at 51 undergraduates plus any others who are being sponsored by the RN in the area. Additional staff for unit activities, both ashore and afloat, is provided by up to 5 part-time Training Officers. The students are ranked as Officer Cadets or Midshipmen depending on training progression, and the Training Officers as Sub Lieutenants or Lieutenants RNR.

Several types of vessels have been used for URNU training over the years. These have included Seaward Defence Boats (DEE and DROXFORD), Ham Class minesweepers, the Attacker Class vessels and some Fleet Tenders. The current P2000 Archer Class ships are 20M, 25 knot Fast Inshore Patrol craft which can accommodate 12 students at a time in addition to the Ship's Company and any other staff. They are ideally suited to their primary role as navigation and sea awareness training platforms.



The URNU syllabus is based around the BRNC Initial Naval Training (Officers) syllabus, including an appreciation of the Royal Navy, its values and ethos enhanced with practical leadership training. This practical experience is to the fore, both in the



unit and whilst embarked in the P2000. Each ship deploys for up to 10 weeks a year in 2-week sessions, to consolidate the URNU experience. Over the years they have visited ports in the Baltic, Northern Europe, Ireland and around the shores of UK. Additional visits to RN ships, submarines, Air Squadrons and the Royal Marines are also arranged, whilst other opportunities for adventurous

training, flying 'acquaints', sports, leadership development and social functions are frequently exploited to the full. The URNUs are increasingly called upon to perform representational roles for the RN at many events around the country both on land and at sea.

The URNUs continue to prove their worth, **particularly providing opportunities for developing in individuals vital leadership and team-work skills**, promoting Naval advocacy in undergraduates around the UK whilst providing a significant number of the entrants for officer training at BRNC.





UNIVERSITY OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS



To address a shortage of officers in the Militia, the Volunteer Force, the Yeomanry, and the Reserve of Officers in 1906, the Secretary of State for War recommended the establishment of the University Officer Training Corps (UOTC), which in some cases meant formalising existing Corps. This became a fundamental part of the 1908 Haldane Reforms of the Territorial Force.

Today there are nineteen UOTCs which serve Higher Education establishments across the United Kingdom. Four are in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland, one in Wales and thirteen across England. Of the nineteen, four form two Officer Training Regiments (OTRs) which respectively combine two UOTCs under a single headquarter command. The UOTC sits under the command of Headquarters Sandhurst Group at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, home of the British Army Officer.

The UOTC mission is to: ***‘Develop the leadership potential of selected students and Army Reserve potential officers and promote the Army’s ethos and career opportunities in order to secure commitment to the Army, first as officers, but also as future leaders in their chosen profession who will champion the Army in society.’***

The UOTC delivers a broad syllabus of military training, leadership, adventure training, sport and personal development opportunities to its student Officer Cadets whilst providing an insight into the role, ethos and opportunities of the British Army. As an organisation the UOTC is about much more than its original purpose of recruiting potential officers; it is about developing people as individuals, as team members and as future leaders and offers life skills and experiences that will be valued in all





employment spheres. Whether or not the cadets are planning to undertake a military career their time at a UOTC will grow them both personally and professionally. Officer Cadets are paid for the training they undertake and, subject to attending an annual camp, receive an annual incremental bounty.

The UOTC is established for 2864 officer cadets and is affiliated to approximately 150 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A significant part of the UOTC training

syllabus reflects the initial training undertaken by Reserve potential Officers at RMAS (Commissioning Course Short Modules A and B). Completion of this training, which generally takes place over two years of weekends and exercises at the UOTC enables student officer cadets the opportunity to commission as a Reserve Officer once they have completed a further four weeks of training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst (Commissioning Course Short Modules C and D). Every year approximately 38 percent of Regular Army officers commissioning into the British Army are former members of the UOTC, and approximately 60 percent of Army Reserve officers.

During vacations, attachments are available to both the Regular and Reserve Army as well as the Army Cadet Force, offering exciting opportunities to build upon on the experience gained during term time. All UOTCs have an extensive programme of adventurous training (AT) expeditions in the UK and further afield. AT offers participants challenging training which leads to recognised AT qualifications, and senior students are encouraged to organise subsequent expeditions under the expert eye of the UOTC qualified permanent staff. From skiing in France, and trekking in Morocco to sailing in the Solent, Officer Cadets can extend themselves, and discover their true capabilities and potential.

Annual Deployment Exercises (ADX) are the culmination of the training year. Most UOTCs exercise in the UK, but all are regularly able to conduct overseas camps in Gibraltar and Cyprus. Smaller teams have recently competed in military competitions and events in France, Germany and Chile. The Nijmegen Marches and Cambrian Patrol represent particular challenges but are increasingly popular as testing grounds for skills and endurance.

The variety of training develops practical and personal skills which complement the intellectual development, technical



knowledge and skills gained as part of their university degrees as students. **The emphasis throughout is to enable Officer Cadets opportunities to develop their personal leadership and team-working skills.** This is recognised with the award of a Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Level 5 Award in Management and leadership to those who complete Modules A and B, with an option to upgrade to a CMI Certificate.

To maintain the link between historical campaigns and contemporary military operations, many UOTCs organise battlefield tours. Recent visits to France, Belgium and South Africa have proven popular and intellectually stimulating, whilst offering sobering acts of Remembrance of past wars. UOTCs invariably have a full sports programme in events as diverse as rugby, netball, shooting and orienteering. The annual Queen's Challenge Cup and Exercise Northern Lights offer the chance for the UOTCs to come together collectively and take each other's measure upon the sports field, and with the Celtic Pipes and Drums, the dance floor!



This huge range of activity is actively supported by the Military Education Committees (MECs) and their national parent body – COMEC – both of which provide official linkage into the respective universities. The UOTC is flourishing and the Army is grateful for the support and involvement of the individual MECs and of their associated universities' hierarchies



UNIVERSITY AIR SQUADRONS



The University Air Squadron (UAS) organisation was established in 1925 by the then Chief of the Air Staff Lord Trenchard. The original idea was to create a Royal Air Force Reserve force based on Auxiliary Squadrons and UASs, as a means of enabling the spirit and skills of aviation to spread. The main aim of the organisation then, and now, is to promote amongst the brightest minds at universities an interest in the Royal Air

Force (RAF) and to attract talent to RAF service. The first units were formed at Oxford and Cambridge, followed shortly by London. They became an important source of pilots for the RAF during the Battle of Britain and, by 1941, the number of squadrons had grown to its peak of 23. Flying is, and will always remain, its own 'unique selling point' with today's focus on recruitment.

The mission statement, although refined over the years, has essentially remained the same in spirit, and that is to ***'Attract talent to Regular and Reserve service and to educate selected undergraduates on the role of Air Power in delivering the nation's defence'***.

Today the UAS organisation comprises 15 squadrons located throughout the UK, operating from 12 airfields and drawing their members from affiliated universities. Each squadron is commanded by a regular RAF Squadron Leader who is an ex officio member of his supporting Military Education Committee. A further 2 or 3 Flight Lieutenant Qualified Flying Instructors, a Ground Training Instructor from the Physical Training Instructional branch and 3 civilian administrative personnel, complete the staff.

Established for 1,000 students nationally, membership is initially for 2 years, subject to meeting the required training objectives and continuing eligibility. UAS students join the RAF Volunteer Reserve and are expected to attend one training evening per week during university term





time and undertake 15 days continuous training throughout the remainder of the year. Officer Cadets receive attendance pay and an annual bounty on successful completion of the year's training targets.

A study by Newcastle University found that 84 percent of undergraduates who expressed a desire to join the UAS were attracted by the opportunity to learn to fly, irrespective of their career aspirations.

The fully-aerobatic Tutor light aircraft

remains the platform on which the students will learn to fly. Undergraduates are allocated up to 8 flying hours per year, which allows for syllabus completion over 3 years and completion of the basic programme leads to the award of the UAS Preliminary Flying Badge. Those undergraduates who complete the basic syllabus may go on to fly the advanced course, which covers aerobatics, enhanced navigation and formation flying.

The ground training syllabus seeks to deliver Personal Development and Leadership Training programmes to develop knowledge of air power and the RAF, **and confidence, teamwork and leadership in an environment that is both challenging and enjoyable.** UK-based adventurous training is available at no cost to the individual and every student has the opportunity to take part in at least one of the more than 160 short exercises held each year. Major exercises overseas require some degree of personal contribution and students can travel as far afield as Ascension Island (diving), Guyana (jungle trekking) and South Africa (sea kayaking), as well as to many of the more usual European destinations for various activities including canoeing, rock climbing, mountaineering and skiing.

While the vast majority of applicants still aspire to be pilots, the greater challenge is to meet the need for engineers, medical staff, cyber specialists, intelligence officers and Air Operations Officers. UAS students can get a 'taster' for all of those career opportunities through targeted vacation assignments and 'town night' briefings. Furthermore, the opportunity to undertake, without commitment, the RAF Aptitude Test enables expectations to be managed from an early stage. Those with potential in other areas can be nurtured towards a particular field they may not have previously considered.

Throughout the history of the UAS it has been recognised that not every UAS Cadet wants, or can commit to, a regular career in the RAF. A number may wish to maintain their involvement as a Reservist, but some are not able to pursue any form of military career. Nevertheless, their influence and worth to





Defence on society should not be underestimated and can be harnessed as their life-long personal careers progress. Whatever career path undergraduates down the ages have chosen, to follow the UAS has provided a platform and experience through educating students on the role of air power, space and cyber warfare to Defence generally; enabled students to experience the RAF life style to make an informed choice about commissioning options; and to develop and acquire life skills, particularly as leaders, which are transferable to any future career or employer.

The UAS continues to develop and flourish and it is through the enduring support of the MECs from universities and the students themselves that the organisation will continue to go from strength to strength.



DEFENCE ACADEMY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

‘Developing the intellectual edge for success on operations and leadership in government.’

At the Defence Academy the purpose is to develop the ‘intellectual edge’ needed both to run successful government departments and military operations. Our courses are designed to unlock the cognitive skills of our students and expand their intellectual capacity.

The education we offer goes beyond the boundaries of Defence and is transferable to other organisations, including partners across government, industry, charities and non-government departments.

Our full or part-time postgraduate Masters of Arts and Science Degrees, Diploma and Certificate qualifications are accredited by our academic partners, namely Cranfield University and King’s College London.

Our portfolio of courses covers five themes (see www.da.mod.uk for details), namely

- Technology, including cyber, simulation and explosives
- Command, including tactical and strategic thinking
- Leadership, including strategic leadership, stress and resilience
- Business skills, including finance, commercial, portfolio, programme and project management
- International engagement, including diplomacy and languages

We offer awareness, practitioner- and expert-level long and short courses, which are accredited by professional bodies.





DEFENCE TECHNICAL UNDERGRADUATE SCHEME

Defence reviewed the Defence Technical Officer and Engineer Entry Scheme's value for money and its STEM graduate requirement, and announced the closure of DTOEES. The final intake to the Defence Sixth Form College at Welbeck was in September 2019, and the final entry of Defence bursars at eleven universities in the four DTUS Squadrons will be in 2021.

Defence needs to increase STEM numbers and be more responsive and agile to compete for graduates. The replacement STEM Graduate Inflow Scheme will be targeted to increase significantly the recruitment of STEM graduates and will be open to undergraduates across all UK universities.

DEFENCE PEOPLE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



Defence People is a Joint directorate of the MOD, and Chief of Defence People sets the strategy for developing a capable and motivated military and civilian workforce. The role was given even greater responsibility in the 2017 Strategic Defence and Security Review, which pledged to enable our Armed Forces to work more flexibly, help more personnel live in private accommodation and buy their own homes, and develop a new joiner offer which both attracts the right recruits and better meets their expectations.

Defence People oversees the development of a 'military offer' which attracts, develops and retains military personnel, from the most junior ranks to the most senior, and take responsibility for the 'whole force' - including 140,000 full time and 30,000 part time servicemen and women, 60,000 civil servants, about 200,000 military dependants, and around 2.8 million veterans.

The University Royal Naval Units, Officer Training Corps and University Air Squadrons are of course directly under command each of the three Single Services, and provide candidates for service in the Regular and Reserves Forces. In addition, Chief of Defence People has a particular interest in the Reserves – of which the University Services Units take their place - under ministerial direction in the medium- to long-term development of policy and implementation across the whole spectrum of the needs of the Single Services for delivering Defence.

Defence People monitors the manning and recruitment of Reserve personnel against targets, particularly those of Future Force 2020. Reserves continue to operate in every theatre alongside their Regular counterparts.

Together with the regional Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs), and the Council of RFCAs the directorate of Defence People also sponsor and deliver the Armed Forces' Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme (see sections following).



RESERVE FORCES' AND CADETS' ASSOCIATIONS

Established in 1908 (as Territorial Force Associations) the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs) were established to provide local administrative support to the Territorial Force in every county. Over 100 years later the number of associations has reduced; however, the RFCA dependency has grown to encompass support of Reserves and Cadets of all three Services. For all intents and purposes the University Service Units are regarded as Reserve units, and are given the full range of support by the RFCAs.

The RFCA is comprised of 13 individual associations which cover the United Kingdom. They are central government bodies with Crown status. The RFCAs are established by Act of Parliament, each with its own Scheme of Association, drawn up by the Defence Council under the Reserve Forces Act 1996, therefore the RFCAs are 'arm's length bodies' of the MOD.

The **Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations** (CRFCA) was established as a 'joint committee' to provide a strategic interface between Defence customers and the 13 Associations, as well as providing guidance and advice to the Council Board. With the centralisation of the allocated funds through the Chief Executive, as the Accounting Officer, it now has responsibilities for governance, and exercises central direction, coordination and oversight of all the key business outputs and financial responsibilities of the 13 RFCAs. The Chairman has direct access to Ministers on any matter concerning major policy considerations. This may occasionally include some aspects of policy about the University Service Units.

RFCA business is publicly funded, delivered regionally and reported upon against a range of Service Level Agreements which lay out the support that is required by the single services of the MOD. The association areas are broadly comparable with regional government boundaries. Each association comprises a cohort of professional staff (Crown Servants) to deliver the services required, and a body of volunteer members that is drawn from all strata of society that assists in promoting the interests of the Armed Forces and building relationships with the local community and employees.

The 13 RFCAs are:

- Highlands RFCA
- Lowlands RFCA
- North of England RFCA
- Yorkshire and The Humber RFCA
- Northwest of England RFCA
- Wales RFCA
- West Midland RFCA

- East Midlands RFCA
- Wessex RFCA
- East Anglia RFCA
- Greater London RFCA
- South East RFCA
- Northern Ireland RFCA

RFCAs' responsibilities

The 1996 Reserve Forces Act requires the RFCAs to provide two general duties:

- to give advice and assistance to the Defence Council;
- to conform to the Defence Plan - namely deliver required support to reserve and cadet units.

In essence, the RFCAs are responsible for:

- **Advice** - provide a source of advice to the Defence Council and to the single Service Chains of Command on Reserve Forces and Cadet matters.
- **Estate** - maintain, sustain and develop a cost-effective, fit for purpose Volunteer and Cadet Estate, in accordance with Defence Strategy and as directed through the Service Level Agreements with Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the single Services.
- **Engagement** - support Defence and single Service national, regional and local plans for the development and sustainment of the Firm Base (Community Engagement) and effective relationships between the Armed Forces and local communities (Civil Engagement).
- **Employers** - develop and sustain mutually-beneficial relationships between employers (and employer stakeholders) and the MOD on military personnel matters in accordance with Defence priorities. This includes advice and support to employers during periods of reserve mobilisation.
- **Cadets and Youth** - support and sustain the Cadet Forces as directed through Service Level Agreements at the national and regional level and to assist with the wider development of MOD youth initiatives.

The Associations

The RFCAs, through professionally qualified staff, are responsible on behalf of the Ministry of Defence for the upkeep of some 5000 tri-service Reserve Forces' and Cadet buildings spread over 2,500 sites. New buildings are commissioned, designed and maintained in accordance with the requirements of Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the single services. Through their estate expertise and local knowledge RFCAs aim to provide an attractive environment in which to recruit, train

and 'refresh the spirit' of our volunteers. This impressive portfolio of properties provides the vital footprint and hub for all reserve and cadet activity.

The RFCAs provide the support requirements for the delivery of the 'Service Cadet experience'. They manage and maintain the estate for Army cadets and Air cadets, including supporting gliding training schools and adventurous training centres. They provide administrative and logistic support to the Army Cadet Force. They promote the Cadet Organisations - national voluntary youth organisations - and the highly tangible benefits of the Cadet Experience to education, business, employers and society at large.

The RFCAs also provide support to Reservists of all services through the **Defence Relationship Management** organisation (see section below) which provides the interface between the military and those employers who have Reserves on their staff, those who seek more information or those who are supporting Reserves whilst on operational deployment.

The RFCAs use the irreducible spare capacity on the Volunteer Estate, and Wider Market Initiatives, to generate additional incomes. This Regionally Generated Income is used to best effect by the regional RFCA management board to support and enable a range of retention-positive activities and initiatives across that region's Reserve and Cadet units. This significant added-value enables a range of University Service Unit additional activity, reducing the personal financial contribution that would otherwise fall on the students.

The Defence Reform Act 2014 placed a statutory requirement on RFCAs to provide to UK Parliament an annual report on the well-being of the Reserve Forces through the auspices of the External Scrutiny Team. It is a 'critical friend' to Defence and consults widely, with Service headquarters and units, in order to provide comment, suggestion and encouragement on the recruitment, training and retention and the overall state of the volunteer Reserve Forces.

RFCAs are enabling and support organisations. They have a heart-felt interest in the health, well-being and capability of all units in their respective region. There is much to be gained from MEC routine interaction with its RFCA.

The Ministry of Defence conducted a review of the RFCAs in 2019 to examine whether there was a continuing need for all the functions performed; the appropriate delivery model; and any potential new tasks. The report was published in March 2020. It was agreed that the functions of the RFCAs should be retained and it was decided that the CRFCA and RFCAs should be regularised and streamlined into a single Executive Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Reserves and Cadets) to provide tri-Service direction and oversight.

ARMED FORCES COVENANT / RECOGNITION SCHEMES



Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant in essence sets out a view of the desired relationship between the government, the military and broader society. It is a promise from the Nation that those who serve, or have served, in the Armed Forces and their families are treated fairly. The Armed Forces Covenant is a three-way arrangement, founded on the premise that, in addition to the government, the nation as a whole has a deep 'moral obligation' to members of the Armed Forces, past present and future, and to their families.

At the time of publication, over 4000 employers' organisations and companies across the UK have pledged their support to the Armed Forces community, which includes the promise to support the 'employment of veterans, young and old'. The rate of signing is currently growing at a rate of at least 30 new organisations every week (November 2019).

Defence Relationship Management

The Defence Relationship Management (DRM) department partners with organisations throughout the UK to support civilian employment for the Armed Forces community including Reservists, families and those who are no longer in service. It advises organisations on how to improve fairness for the Armed Forces community in the consumer market and encourages Forces-friendly HR policies. It supports employers across the UK to recruit and retain members of the Armed Forces Community so that businesses can access the transferable skills which ex-Forces personnel bring to the civilian workplace. This includes contact with universities tangential to the Armed Forces Covenant scheme, the Military Education Committees being obvious points of first contact.

Defence is keen to establish and maintain open, strategic relationships with employers, tailoring partnering opportunities to mutual needs and business goals.

The ways it offers support include:

- employment of Reservists and support through flexible HR policies;
- employment of Regular Service personnel at the end of their engagements, in collaboration with the Career Transition Partnership;
- employment opportunities for Service leavers with more challenging transitions including the wounded, injured and sick;

- employment of spouses/civil partners of Service personnel;
- joint development of skills in areas such as engineering, medical, communications and cyber security;
- career opportunities and support for Cadet adult instructors;
- tackling disadvantages faced by Service personnel in the consumer market;
- facilitating short-term working secondments in civilian organisations for serving Armed Forces personnel; and
- connecting Defence and civilian employers around shared challenges, like critical skills and cyber security.

Employer Recognition Scheme

Also delivered by the Defence Relationship Management department, the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support Defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employer organisations which pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to Defence and the Armed Forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Employer Recognition Scheme is designed primarily to recognise private sector support although public sector organisations, such as the emergency services, local authorities, NHS trusts and universities are also eligible to be recognised. Bronze, Silver and Gold awards are achieved.

Universities that have achieved Gold award include: Brunel University London; Edinburgh Napier University; London South Bank University; University of Central Lancashire; University of Lincoln; University of South Wales.

Those that have achieved Silver include: Abertay University; Bradford University; Cardiff University; Cranfield University; Glasgow Caledonian University; Heriot-Watt University; Keele University; Leeds Beckett University; Loughborough University; Northumbria University Newcastle; Plymouth University; Teesside University; University Centre Shrewsbury; University of Aberdeen; University of Bedfordshire; University of Birmingham; University of Bolton; University of Chichester; University of Derby; University of Dundee; University of Essex; University of Glasgow; University of Leicester; University of Nottingham; University of St Mark and St John; University of Sunderland; University of Winchester; University of Wolverhampton; York St John University.



ARMED FORCES' PARLIAMENTARY SCHEME

The Civil-military relationship in Britain is of huge significance and is facilitated by numerous means and channels.

A former Reserve officer and Commanding officer of London University Officers Training Corps, Colonel Sir Neil Thorne, MP for Ilford South 1979-92, set up the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme in the 1980s. The best description of what they do is taken from Hansard, the Parliamentary record during 2013.

'It is often said that the first duty of Government is the defence of the realm, and that is absolutely true. The first duty of Parliament is to examine what the Government are doing in defending the realm. Over 25 years, the Armed Forces Parliamentary scheme has played a significant part in helping Members of Parliament from all parties to examine what the Government are doing. I emphasise 'from all parties', because it is important for the Opposition to have the opportunity to find out more about the Armed Forces through the scheme. Frankly, however, Government Back Benchers do not have easy access to the Armed Forces, so using the scheme as a way of finding out what our people are doing on the ground and finding out a little more about Defence, is an extraordinarily important thing for Back Benchers of all colours to do.

'For 25 years, the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme has done a fantastic job in enabling Back Benchers—and, indeed, on many occasions, Front Benchers—from both sides of the House to embed themselves with our Armed Forces in the Army, Navy and Air Force, and to find out what is happening on the ground. For 25 years, the scheme has enabled an enormous number of people to find out what happens to airmen, and soldiers and sailors of both sexes. None of that would be possible were it not for the imagination, initiative and management over 25 years of Sir Neil Thorne, ably supported by his excellent wife. [Hon. Members: 'Hear, hear.'] The approbation around the Chamber confirms that everyone this morning wants me to thank him extremely sincerely for all the magnificent work that he has done in setting up the scheme and making it work. It has been a magnificent scheme for 25 years.'

James Gray MP for North Wiltshire, quoted 11 September 2013, Volume 567 Hansard.

The URNUs, UOTC contingents and UASs are open for attachments by Peers and MPs, to learn not only of the professional training and personal development functions the University Services Units perform, but also of their deep-seated civil-military relations, inter-generational and inter-professional role, a scheme so uniquely British.

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Finally, COMEC occasionally has recourse to two bodies, outside government, in order to understand how the Higher Education sector is developing, maybe with consequences to the University Service Units.



UUK is the membership body, independent of government, whose mission is to 'speak out in support of universities and the higher education sector, seeking to influence and create policy, and to provide an environment in which our member institutions can flourish'.

'Formerly the Council of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), Universities UK provide the essential voice of our universities – supporting their autonomy and celebrating their diversity.'



The Office for Students (OfS, instituted in 2017) is the independent regulator of Higher Education in England.

Their statutory aim is 'to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers'.

Their work 'covers all students whether undergraduate or postgraduate, national or international, young or mature, full-time or part-time, studying on a campus or by distance learning'.

CONCLUSION



The MOD, University Service Units, MECs, COMEC and all agencies involved need to recognize that University Service Units' Officer Cadets, while being Reservists, are also students of their universities. They have the prime purpose of gaining their degrees and developing their knowledge and understanding for a life-time of contribution to society. This is enhanced by the USU offer, and works for Defence simultaneously.

To this end all agencies described above work tangibly and symbiotically for the good of thousands of individuals currently at UK universities and, by extension, for the security of the Nation and World.

