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**COMEC REJOINDER. THE VALUE OF THE
UNIVERSITY ARMED SERVICE UNITS**

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COMEC REJOINDER. THE VALUE OF THE UNIVERSITY ARMED SERVICE UNITS

“Degree-level education has become normalized, routine, expected and unexceptional. The Universities Services Units’ experience stands out in contrast...”

Newcastle University

“The officer is endowed with powers of coercion. In a society of free men this power cannot safely be bestowed on those who do not possess sufficient detachment and liberality of mind to use it wisely”.

General Sir John Hackett



**FOREWORD BY
RODDY LIVINGSTON
CHAIRMAN COMEC**

The University Service Units are our raison d'être, so it was appropriate that we should encourage Newcastle University in its research exploring the value the USUs, and that we should have views on the outcomes. This Rejoinder is a response to the University's findings.

In this paper Patrick Mileham and the COMEC Working Group provide observations on the project and elicit further pertinent insights on the USU experience, drawing on the contributions and benefits of the USUs to students, the universities and Defence. A focal issue is the USUs' contribution to the civil-military relationship in the context of extensive change in universities and Defence, heightening the responsibility of MECs and COMEC to play critical roles at the interface.

The paper also explores where improvements might be made, promoting greater understanding between the parties. The USUs' opportunities for students' self-development have profound long-term benefits for all the stakeholders. A matter of contention has been the lack of evidence for the differential proportions commissioning into the Regulars and Reserves. This is further developed in the 2017 COMEC Report, 'Is the USU Offer Right?' which investigates whether what we have termed the 'continuation-recruitment' rate might be improved.

This paper and the complementary 'Offer' Report are cogent preparatory reading for the COMEC Defence Conference 2017 'Dynamics and Strategy in Universities and Defence?' Both papers however are worth recording as valuable archive material and as starting points of future scrutiny of the USUs and their contribution to the nation.

Roddy Livingston

PART 1. INTRODUCTION

History

The Officer Training Corps was founded in 1908 specifically to provide potential officers for Britain's Territorial Force, which evolved into the Territorial Army, and now generically part of the Reserves. The Senior Division was established in twenty-three university/ college contingents¹ (abbreviated UOTCs). The first two University Air Squadrons (UASs) were formed in 1925² and the University Royal Naval Units (URNUs) were first established in 1967. Given specified roles and structures over the years, the three types of units collectively are now known as University Service Units (USUs).

They were joined by the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme squadrons (DTUS, part of the Defence Technical Officer and Engineer Entry Scheme, DTOEES) from 2001, being conceived, contracted and separately funded for sponsored, fully-committed undergraduates for the three Armed Forces and Defence Civil Services. The DTUS Squadrons were not investigated in the Newcastle University research detailed below, but can be viewed in parallel with the USUs in this Rejoinder.

From the start each UOTC contingent was supported by a formally appointed Military Education Committee (MEC), accepted as the authority within a university dealing with all military matters. The War Office, Air Ministry and later the Ministry of Defence (MOD) were thereby able to interact directly with MECs for purposes of policy, establishments, military activities and unit maintenance. Formal correspondence and memorandums of understanding of various dates are not readily to hand, but are likely to exist in institutional archives. MECs later extended their membership and authority to embrace office holders and staff members of other universities, as well as influential persons within the locality. Links were early established with county Territorial Force /Territorial Army Associations, now

1 Alan Haig-Brown *the OTC and the Great War*, 1915, reprints available on eBay; also Edward Spiers, *The University Officer's Training Corps and the First World War*, COMEC Occasional No 4, 2014. University contingents of the Canadian Officer's Training Corps were established in 1912 on similar lines. They were disbanded in 1968. In the USA contingents of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps date from 1862, partly as means of expressing the civil-military relationship, and also being a means of healing the nation during and after the Civil War. Today they are direct military recruiting agencies for each of the US Armed Forces, all enrolled persons being committed to military service after graduation, with about 80 percent actually being commissioned.

2 Clive Richards, *the University Air Squadrons' Early History*, COMEC Occasional No 7, 2016.

regional Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs). In some cases they became landlords for USU buildings and facilities, a position continuing today.

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 which they are responsible.

In 1919 the original MECs came together and formed a body which evolved into the Council of Military Education Committees (COMEC) of the Universities of the United Kingdom, to coordinate some activities, conduct discussions of mutual concern and reach consensus in the governance of USUs. Subsequently the Single Services and MOD established and maintained direct dialogue with COMEC as well as individual MECs. While representing MEC's collectively, COMEC has no executive powers over MECs, which still have direct access to the MOD and Single Service Chains of Command. COMEC's purpose, in common with other British institutions with similar responsibilities in public life, resides in the right to be informed, the right to encourage and the right to warn.

Purpose of USUs

Up to the present day (2017) COMEC and MECs have recognized that each type of USU has a specified mission and objectives as directed by the MOD and Single Service Chains of Command. COMEC's Constitution outlines the purpose, mission and tasks of the USUs taken together. It dwells chiefly on raising the 'positive profile', informing all parties about the 'ethos' and 'champion[ing] of the Armed Services in Society'. However it must be emphasized that, with full MOD endorsement, in none of the COMEC documents³ is continuation-recruiting overtly mentioned, except by euphemistic turns of phrase, although historically this factor has been well recognised and widely understood.

Broadly the USUs collectively have had three long-term, mutually reinforcing roles and functions, the priorities and emphasis of which tend to vary from time to time.

³ *Constitution, Organisation and Operating Procedures of the Council of Military Education Committees of the Universities of the United Kingdom*, 2008, endorsed, with a Foreword by Director General Training and Education, Ministry of Defence, 2004. An authoritative conspectus also exists, namely *Defence and the Universities in the 21st Century*, with a Foreword by Field Marshal Lord Vincent, President of COMEC, 2004. Both documents are due for revision and re-endorsement during 2017-18.

The USUs exist

- To promote the intellectual quality and leadership potential of selected university students with military status, whether or not they are committed to subsequent professional employment in the Armed Forces
- To provide specific developmental education and training for employability of those would-be individuals who might consider, or are already determined to make the Armed Forces their primary (Regular) or parallel (Reserve) employment and career as officers, after further selection and training
- To enable university students, who are not likely to remain in military service, to gain a substantial understanding of Defence and the military profession, being likely significant future civilian employers and well-informed members of the population. Such persons more or less personify the spirit and functioning of the long-established yet evolving civil-military relationship in Britain.

This last-mentioned USU role is currently undergoing development by association with Defence generally, and the Armed Forces' roles of 'military engagement with civil society' and 'national resilience' in times of danger, are deemed heightened factors of the civil-military relationship of today and tomorrow. The 'Military Covenant' and 'Armed Forces Covenant' have been articulated, if not deeply understood, in the Armed Forces and in MOD Doctrine, categorically drawing on the concept of 'covenanted relationships'⁴ – a moral understanding -in lieu of usual legally explicit employment contracts as in civil life. That having been said, the Armed Forces' Covenant scheme is a powerful and expanding project, useful in many contexts, and now extending into the USUs and universities.

4 A covenant comprises the recognition of '...obligations which transcend those [people] are consciously undertaking'. See Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, Princetown, 2014, 79. The first use of the term covenant in a military context was in the MOD (Army)'s Doctrine Paper (ADP) No 5, *Soldiering. The Military Covenant*, 2000. By definition a covenant cannot be a contract, and the Military Covenant was deemed in British Military and Defence Doctrine, to rest not in law, but within the understanding of the 'moral component' of military effectiveness and capability. The other two 'components' are the 'physical' and 'conceptual' (intellectual), see *British Defence Doctrine*, 5th edn, 2014.

Recent research

It should be well understood that as public-sector institutions Britain's Armed Forces are driven by numerous mechanistic and organic dynamics with synergistic and exponential effects, often difficult to analyse and even explain. They have significant roles in achieving national and international security objectives, but bring together highly subjective and personal factors inherent in the military professions unequivocally with responsibilities of high risk.

Over the years, apart from the proportion of those who join for military service on leaving university, the many benefits of membership for the students, the Single Services and the universities as institutions, had an assumed value recognized by all parties, albeit indeterminate and intangible. This is characteristic of the 'British way'⁵ society relates to the tradition of voluntary, not compulsory, full-time and part-time military service. Having two sets of aims, one overt and another partly concealed, is another characteristic of British institutional practice. However until recently there had been no formal published research, whether MOD directed or independent, investigating the essential British concept and practice of voluntary military service in universities. In 1992, a research programme was planned by HQ United Kingdom Land Forces, but in the event not conducted⁶.

Although there was no connection made with USUs, in 2003 an academic study was conducted by Brian Howieson and Howard Khan about the 'The Implications for the Recruitment of Graduates into the British Armed Forces', amongst university students with no military ambitions contrasted with officer cadets at Dartmouth, Sandhurst and Cranwell. The most significant finding amongst the serving officer cadets, training for Regular officer service in those institutions, 'almost 80 percent of the respondents [to surveys and interviews] saw their careers in the British Military to be short term in nature and saw the British Armed Forces as a "stepping stone" to something else'⁷(page 126). The change from hitherto dedicated career-mindedness to one of short service aspiration had taken place years before,

5 The 'British way' explains some of the features, traditions and phenomena which surround military service in Britain. This is touched on in MOD British *Defence Doctrine*, Edn 5, 2011 (updated 2014), para 3.23. 'Defence has many intangible resources including reputation, professionalism and integrity – and we should protect and maximise the value of these resources'. This falls within the doctrine of the Moral Component' of military capability and effectiveness.

6 In COMEC's corporate memory.

7 Brian Howieson and Howard Khan, 'the Changing Macro-Environment (1979-2001): The Implications for the Recruitment of Graduates into the British Armed Forces', in *Defence Management in Uncertain Times*, Ed. Teri McConville and Richard Holmes, Frank Cass, London, 2003.

between 1979 and 2001, or even earlier a consequence of the post-Robbin's expansion of universities.

Priorities of job expectation criteria differed between those in service at the officer academies and those undergraduates still at universities, more or less refusing to consider joining for military service. The latter group's reasons were, in order, 'Discipline, Career opportunities are better elsewhere, Not a useful career, [being] Anti-military and Can be sent abroad at short notice' (Ibid. page 128). In order Already-serving officer cadets at Dartmouth, Sandhurst and Cranwell acknowledged the following criteria for their expectations in rank order, namely 'Job satisfaction, Varied work, Good salary [on entry], Adventure/travel and Intellectual challenge' (Ibid. page 127). The sixth criterion in order was the expectation of 'Friendly colleagues', which also featured in the positive list of those undergraduates rejecting military service. For military persons on operations this generic criterion presumably rises to the top, most acutely when lives depend on 'discipline, commitment, integrity, courage, loyalty and respect for others'⁸ when under fire. While the USUs were not approached by Howieson and Khan, such criteria obviously feature in choices made by those joining for USU service and contemplating Regular or Reserve service after university.

During 2012–2015 Newcastle University conducted an independent research project entitled *The Value of the University Armed Service Units*, gathering a substantial weight of evidence from quantitative surveys and widely conducted qualitative interviews. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) their report is published by Ubiquity Press in book form and, being in the public domain, is freely down-loadable. It must be noted that this is a one-off research exercise and does not reveal trends from the past, nor forecasts the future. Ideally such research needs to be periodically applied, at least with regard to the more significant questions and findings.

Rejoinder

As a 'rejoinder' the purpose of this COMEC Occasional Paper is to note and assess significant findings in the Newcastle University research, make substantial comment on various points, and add further material and insights on the facts and factors involved, some being from first principles.

⁸ These criteria are the well-known Values and Standards for the RN and Army.

It is not a critique of the findings or methodology. **The word continuation-recruiting – indicating the two stage expectation and maybe fact of an individual joining a USU, and then being recruited into Regular or Reserve service after university** – appears unequivocally in this Occasional Paper. It is written in support of the imminent COMEC 2017 Report ‘Is the “Offer” Right?’⁹ The expression ‘USU Offer’ denotes the means of achieving the aims and objectives for which the units have been established and are maintained.

The format of this paper divides the commentary under various headings and sub-sections. Rather than paragraph numbering bullet points have been used to avoid the text becoming too dense and unreadable. Within the text referencing from the Newcastle research is by page number in brackets. All other references are in the footnotes. For clarity the present tense is used.

Because much of the detailed substance is reciprocal and mutually supporting, Parts 2 and 3 should be read together; similarly Parts 4 and 5 are paired. The wider dynamics and influences of the civil-military relationship, of which the USUs play a major contribution, are in Part 6. Some conclusions are expressed in Part 7, with a summary.

COMEC and the Working Group are grateful particularly to Professor Rachel Woodward, Dr K. Neil Jenkins and Dr Alison J. Williams of Newcastle University for their work in the first place, then allowing interpreting and adding to in detail in this way. They have viewed and made comments on drafts before final publication.

Part 2. VALUE TO USU STUDENT MEMBERS

Status of student members

The Armed Forces’ University Service Units exist for students accredited by their universities to engage in what are considered the most appropriate programmes of military training to meet the USUs’ expressed aims and objectives. With due regard to their full university status, and the diligence expected of them by their university to attend to their studies and abide by university regulations, students additionally are selected by the Armed Forces to fulfil a particular military status and prepare for a special role.

⁹ COMEC 2017 Report ‘The University Services’ Units: Is the ‘Offer’ Right?’

From start to finish student members of the University Service Units (USUs) are all self-selected volunteers. When fully accredited and 'attested', they formally become 'Officer Cadets' and members of the Reserve Forces, until finally 'discharged'¹⁰ from service. They volunteer firstly to join, and then give as much or as little of their time on a daily, weekly and monthly basis in order to attend for unit training, other organized duties, activities and events under military discipline. **This status is recognized as being of the nature of a quasi-professional, free association, but significantly with strictly limited liability¹¹ for military duty.**

Under current arrangements most officer cadets have little or no formal commitment to be mobilized for service in the Regular or Reserve Forces. Service Law is seldom invoked for infringement of Service Regulations by officer cadets except through discharge. Since at least 1992 the deeper significance of this free association has been of some institutional concern, because a high proportion of USU members do not continue service either in the Regular or Reserve Forces after leaving university, the USUs being maintained at considerable cost to the MOD.

Benefits to student members as Officer Cadets

Turning now to the Newcastle research exercise (with page number references in brackets), it finds that more often than not the USUs are well recruited, up to the number allowed by unit establishments, and sometimes oversubscribed. Generally, for 'participating students', the USUs 'have value to individuals and [to] the Armed Forces in a range of different ways' (137). Some are recognized as being of practical and professional utility, others of intangible value. A neat summary of the current (2015) positive value and benefits of the USUs is that

'The benefits [are] in the form of the USU experience providing opportunities for self-development, the development of transferable skills, enhanced understanding of the Armed Forces, information to inform a decision on whether an Armed Forces' career [is] appropriate for the individual, the experience of a good social life, the provision of an experience in addition to

10 The officer cadets have a legal status, recorded in Unit and Service records, of their taking the 'Loyal Oath' (less RN Officer Cadets and Midshipmen) and in accord with the full range of Service Law and Regulations, and those applicable for the Reserve Forces. They are expected to abide by the 'Values and Standards' of the Service to which they are accredited, as well as those of their university.

11 It must be pointed out that this contrasts with the (sic) 'Contract of Unlimited Liability' put forward in MOD *Army Leadership Doctrine*, 2016, 9 and a more muted statement 'a potentially unlimited liability' in MOD *Defence Doctrine*, (5th Edn) 2014, 36.

academic study whilst at university and of course, the benefits of being paid whilst a student.

There [is] also thought to be value to the armed Forces, again in terms of establishing the suitability of USU students for careers in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserves, in terms of enhancing wider public understanding and visibility of the Armed Forces, and the wider social value which might follow from the existence in civilian society of individuals with the skills and attitudes developed within the USUs' (137).

Much evidence in support of all these findings forms the detailed substance of the Newcastle research, which runs to over 200 pages.

From the data in the Newcastle research, taken from a large sample of surveys and qualitative interviews amongst those participating in the USUs, the opportunities on offer are generally acknowledged as

- Being 'Overwhelming positive' (99), with current members recognizing the offer of many types of 'skills development' openings (137) and a 'diversity of experiences' (135)
- Enabling the personal development of individuals to be able 'to work under pressure, develop a work ethic, to plan and to problem solve' in the context of providing 'leadership' opportunities and experience (150); as well as developing in members a 'sense of discipline' (135), 'critical thinking' and 'communications and interactional skills' (150); all being additional to the 'cognitive/intellectual skills' (100) to be gained from their university degree programmes
- Enabling students to gauge their own likely 'suitability or otherwise' (137) for initial employment in the Armed Forces or possibly for a longer career, the activities provide a significant depth of knowledge upon which individuals can make an 'informed choice' (152)
- Being very helpful in improving 'employability' (100) which, for some members, may later prove to be 'life- changing'.

Longer term benefits

Additionally the USUs are considered to

- Give an out-of-the-ordinary broadening of experience, valuable to post-university life (135) including 'generating defence-mindedness', (136) of land, sea and air dimensions (151-152)
- Produce 'better graduates' and 'better citizens... and [bring] social benefits through the units' inculcation of a sense of discipline in individuals, rather like National Service' (135), a specific response from many participants in the research.

Understanding what disciplined service means may well prove valuable for promoting and developing strong self-discipline, a defining criterion required in professional people within a liberal democracy. In such nations it is the tradition that employments should, whenever possible, have a social benefit beyond simple commercial competition and personal gain, with officials always subject to professional and public accountability. It should be noted, however, that during the two periods of National Service (between 1916/ 1919, and 1938/ 1960), military service was compulsory for many categories of British subjects. For some it was an acceptable, even a significant experience, while for others serving during peacetime (between 1945 and 1960), it was irksome and contrary to the national tradition of voluntary military service. It can be argued that the term professional must include free choice of entry: in this regard military conscripts cannot be properly deemed professionals, even if publicly accountable.

A significant insight, which the researchers claim to be typical of former USU members, recognizes as an end in itself the general life-long learning 'benefit of investing time and energy in people' (138). This experience is also of benefit to society over the long term, being a tangible and additional factor inherent in the civil-military relationship (see Part 6. Below).

Part 3. VALUE TO DEFENCE AND THE ARMED FORCES

Current benefits to the Armed Forces

As outlined above, until now the continuation-recruiting aim of the USUs has been deliberately muted¹². Britain's Armed Forces have long had an intuitive, heuristic dislike of the concept of a 'military university' for the initial education of Officer Cadets¹³. Successive governments have opted to continue to educate the now high preponderance of academically educated Armed Forces officers in mainstream civilian universities. Whether or not this includes prior USU membership at university, the initial officer training given at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC), the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines (CTCRM), the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) and the Royal Air Force College (RAFC) Cranwell provides the current nationally acceptable model.

This particularly sustains the socializing-civilizing effect required of people serving in the Armed Forces (hinted at on page 136), while USUs can also be seen as bridging the gap between military and academic disciplines – the difference between obedience to commands and challenging received wisdom (or characteristics of *imperium* as against *res publica*). This again is a feature of the civil-military relationship, categorized in the Newcastle research as one of a number of 'military phenomena' (172) (see footnote 5). The notion of a civilized-soldier is a paradox explored by General Sir John Hackett, who asserted that

'The officer is endowed with powers of coercion. In a society of free men this power cannot safely be bestowed on those who do not possess sufficient detachment and liberality of mind to use it wisely'¹⁴.

12 For much of their history, the RAF gave great prominence to initial pilot training in the UASs, with students qualifying for a pilot's licence and mitigation of time subsequently spent on initial flight training. *De facto* the UASs had a strong, almost unquestioned continuation-recruiting standing in the RAF. In the 2004 COMEC Conspectus, the figure of 80 per cent is cited of UOTC Officer Cadets 'who do not go on to join the Armed Forces'. However this figure, while used to make a point, was probably already reducing by then as, for instance, the RMAS graduate intake had been increasing substantially from the early 1990s.

13 In comparison with USNA Annapolis, USMA WestPoint and USAFA Colorado Springs, St Cyr, Breda etc. and the many ROTC programs in US universities. The establishment of a degree awarding establishment for all career officers, a Royal Defence Academy, was explored in the Howard-English Report of 1966 but rejected by the MOD. Already commissioned technical corps specialists for many years, had taken in-service degrees, and accredited by London University, at the Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham. While the Army remained generally opposed to graduate officers in non-technical combat arms as such until the 1990s, there was a feeling in 1966 that the (sic) Royal Defence Academy at that time would not be considered an acceptable university, one providing a liberal education.

14 General Sir John Hackett, 'The education of an Officer', *The Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. 105, 32-51, 1961. Hackett was an Arnhem veteran and later Principal of Kings College London.

This is both about the ethics of war and the moral standing of the Armed Forces, with their governance by the civil authorities and internally by the military chain of command.

Both beneficial and inhibiting factors flow from those findings cited in Part 2 above, the 'value to student members'. The research recognizes the USUs' positive task of enhancing the quality and character of individuals who potentially form part of the Armed Forces' recruitment catchment population, and upon which any increase in numbers firstly joining the USUs, and subsequently the Armed Forces for Regular and Reserve service, must rely.

The Newcastle research continues with more positive and enabling factors of USU service for Defence generally and the Single Services, in that

- Overall 92 percent of USU members have 'positive opinions about the Armed Forces' (100)
- The USUs enable the Armed Forces 'to recruit highly educated officers by definition' (152) and 'good candidates for officer training' (153), because USU members can be generally considered as 'good students' (153). How 'special' the USU members are, maybe forming an élite – whatever that means in today's universities and society – is open to question (see 'graduateness' below in Part 4.)
- In respect of the Army, a current officer recruiting brochure contains the unequivocal and significant statement that 'the British Army simply wants the best people that British Society has to offer'¹⁵. This includes the *sine qua non* criterion for specially selected persons in whom can be placed fiduciary trust¹⁶ expected of all military professionals, commissioned and non-commissioned
- USU members gain an understanding of Defence matters generally, and the distinct roles of the three Single Services, which they will use in deciding

15 Undated but current (April 2017) MOD (Army), *With Heart and with Mind. Army Officer. Your Guide to Becoming an Army Officer.*

16 The Commission document requires of commissioned officers 'especial trust and confidence'. This establishes the fiduciary responsibilities of trusteeship on military office holders, particularly commissioned, but also non-commissioned officers as trustees of the profession of arms. The concept of 'fiduciary responsibilities' was mentioned in ECAB Paper of 1 May 2015, 'The Ethical Foundation for the British Army's Values and Standards'. The chief defining principle and factor of ethics in all human affairs is trust.

on Regular or Reserve (150) employment / careers in the Armed Forces. They either find themselves suitable for such (136), or ‘take with them to the civilian workplace’ (149) a greater understanding of themselves (see ‘graduateness’ below in Part 4.)

- The gaining of such understandings by individual members of the USUs effectually assists in the process of self-assessment, ‘de-risking..... recruitment into the Armed Forces [with staff] being able to assess an individual’s suitability’ for military employment and career (152)
- ‘In using student labour to maintain the activities of the units’, an additional benefit is that the USUs are to a degree self-resourcing and self-sustaining (136).

Furthermore, the USUs also help to promote understanding of ‘UK Foreign Policy and Defence missions’ (150) as well as the Armed Forces’ relationship with the civil community. USU members, as part of the Armed Forces, have an obligation to be closely engaged with British Society, distinctly professional but non-militaristic in character (implication on page 136).

Finally, society is encouraged to adopt and the Armed Forces have embraced, the concept and practice of Life-Long Learning as an end in itself, of which universities and the USUs play a part for many individuals. USU members who join for a career in the Armed Forces and attain certain rank levels are later exposed to what one might claim as a wide global corpus of knowledge and understanding at the Defence Academy, or at other universities, many gaining further professional qualifications and higher degrees¹⁷.

Taken all together, the above are positive factors in the ‘USU offer’, for both the Armed Forces’ continuation-recruiting aim, and also Defence civil-military engagement and understanding.

17 King’s College London and Cranfield Universities award higher degrees at the Defence Academy, via the Joint Services Command and Staff College and Royal College of Defence Studies.

Inhibiting factors

While the above are positive and valuable within the USU roles and activities, the Newcastle research also found some negative and inhibiting factors, in that

- Nationally the overall proportion of students who are offered USU benefits has diminished as the student figure has increased. The benefits are acknowledged as being very thinly spread amongst the current 2.3 million student population and there is a feeling amongst USU graduates that benefits 'should be more widely available' (137) for a greater number of students. At the current level of funding and resources it would not be easy or indeed possible to maintain the current 'USU offer' for a substantial increase of fully 'attested' members. Any numerical increase in participating students would reduce the 'reach' and quality of the 'offer', if it included informal, non-attested membership with reduced military responsibilities (see the status of officer cadets above in bold typeface) and personal development opportunities.
- The USU membership is 'not representative of the student body or even the home (UK domiciled) student population' (99-100), which is more diverse in modern-day Britain than at any time in history (166-7). 'Diversity' with its many meanings and implications is subject to government and MOD directives and regulation.¹⁸
- In practice there are strictly limited financial resources and currently considerable USU staff appointment 'gapping' (154). For the UOTCs the gapping is thought to be about 40 per cent (February 2017).

The current geographical 'reach' of full membership and routine activities of the USUs is presumably well known by the Single Services from their own demographic studies over the years. Indeed the Newcastle research concludes that (in 2015) 'The USUs as a whole have good levels of reach across the higher education sector... [meaning] access to USU activities is potentially available to students attending the majority of UK universities. However, the research shows this reach is very uneven, in that some units have a far higher number of students from some universities than others in the same catchment area' (165). The implication is that the less well-

¹⁸ See document cited in footnote 15, whose contents are curiously much more explicit on matters of meeting public social policy, than they are on the core military activities of operational and combat service in the Army.

known officer producing or non-represented universities for USU officer cadets need to be investigated as to whether the 'USU offer' can be extended for good effect to meet USU aims.

However geographical and demographic student population figures should be treated with caution. While egalitarian diversity and equal opportunities are positive features of social inclusiveness policy, unequivocally meritocratic selection is also of social value in a liberal-democracy, and essential in professional military rank hierarchies, with high degrees of necessary regulation and trust. The USUs currently remain the chief established officer-entry routes for service in the Armed Forces. Whether this can be sustained over the medium- to long-term remains an open question.

Other factors and uncertainties

One crucial matter of current concern is that there seems to be a lack of data and statistical evidence as to why students, intent on military employment on graduating (or within a few years), more often seek Regular rather than Reserve commissions (169). While much can be inferred from the 2003 Howieson/Khan research (see footnote 7) concerning student motivation which may be current, it seems that little research has been done by the Armed Forces on student motivation over the years. This lack of knowledge is a long-term managerial weakness. Furthermore no data exists particularly on the 'direct recruitment of reservists from the current student body' (170) while still under university regulation with likely interruption of their studies. It is known that routinely some undergraduates and post graduates serve full time periods in the Reserves, including on operational duty, to fulfil their obligation. The MOD should be able to research these factors for effect.

Moreover the proportion of students likely to be both self-selecting and rigorously selected to meet the highly specialized professional potential necessary for military service remains limited (137 and implicit). Every profession has strict selection criteria beyond academic ones, some very strict. It must be added that universities are themselves selective, some intensely so, in judging academic potential of applicants for their university and programmes of study.

The Newcastle research also mentions that socio-political debates in Britain tangentially affect the USUs and the Armed Forces. Public policy is that secondary

education should be free of charge and non-selective. However schools in the public sector can be selective in a number of different ways, as can independent schools. The public policy on tertiary education seems entirely the opposite, in that universities can be and are vigorously selective, and unashamedly compete amongst themselves to attract potentially the best students. Added to which, except in Scotland, universities now charge substantial fees to students, suspended in the short term by student loans. Requiring people the 'best that society can offer', universities and the Armed Forces are, by way of association, in close accord in promoting potential 'excellence' in their intakes, while coincidentally embracing equal opportunities, diversity and inclusiveness. These factors, being about unique and highly individualistic persons, are often very difficult to judge personal motivation and legal balance.

Finally it must be admitted that there is some doubt about whether USUs are recognized as efficient, effective and militarily responsive Reserve units within the formal Establishments of the Armed Forces, or fall into the category, which the Newcastle research described from interviews, as being of the nature of an organized 'youth club' (99) – a social service. As mentioned in Part 2, members are currently formally attested, take the Loyal Oath and accept implicit fiduciary trusteeship undertakings with regard to the Naval Service's, Army's and Royal Air Force's 'Values and Standards' and the 'Military Covenant', with its 'unlimited liability' clause. This is not so of members the Cadet Forces funded by the MOD as youth movements, even if informally such values are inculcated in their teenage cadets¹⁹ for the benefit of society.

Part 4. VALUE TO UNIVERSITIES

What universities offer

While the universities have been subject to huge social change, and great beneficiaries of change, the increasing recognition of value and investment in Higher Education over the last half century is everywhere evident. All modern-day professions use universities as educational and training grounds for their entrants. This does not only lead to many more people in the population gaining first

¹⁹ It is suggested that statistics showing recruitment into the Cadet Forces and the USUs are not likely to be easily correlated with recruitment figures for combat service in the Armed Forces, Regular and Reserve.

degrees, but also increasingly, higher degrees. Society and individuals benefit from the exponential and synergistic extension of knowledge exchange, and broadening and deepening of human understanding, through the vast amount of research conducted by modern-day universities. The professionalization of much of British society since the 1960s is a feature of Britain modernizing itself via university education, globally in competition with other nations.

The special status of USU students in regard to their universities and the Armed Forces has been explained in Part 2. The universities have a primary responsibility for educating students, and students have a reciprocal responsibility to work on their studies and complete their degree programmes successfully. With the coming of student fees, the subtleties of the *in statu pupillare* relationship have undergone considerable change. (This formal expression is still used in the statutes of some British universities.) Without elaborating, this Rejoinder recognizes the enormous changes brought about by the commercialization of the HE Sector and the consequent financial competition between universities and within universities. University authorities wholeheartedly encourage extra-curricular and social activities in general as part of the university experience, expressed in their prospectuses and marketing. Some recognize their affiliated USUs as bringing considerable competitive advantage.

Historically, when most of the 49 USUs were formed, the Newcastle research emphasizes that tertiary education was for a much narrower section of the nation's society and needs of the professions than is required today (137). In the years since the 1963 Robbins Report and the rapid expansion of universities from the early 1990s, 'degree-level education has become normalized, routine, expected and unexceptional. The USU experience stands out in contrast, and [is] perceived by graduates to have substantial benefits' (137).

Anyway Britain has embraced mass higher education, with a large number of institutions involved offering a wide range of degree programmes. However many universities struggle to give high quality, individual attention, and one-to-one personal service to students. Parts 2 and 3 above confirm that the USUs offer an exceptional service to students and the Armed Forces. The intensive supervised military education and training for USU members is thus in contrast to mainstream higher education, where in many institutions individual educational attention is much diluted. As stated already it means that USU students are indeed 'not representative of the UK student body (99-100), which nowadays includes a

substantial proportion of non-UK nationals, in any case being ineligible for USU membership under current regulation.

The Newcastle research poses some interesting questions about USU accessibility. In the early 1960s the USU members constituted a small part of the then student population, today 'the number of students who could use the USU experience. [is] tiny' (148), indeed it is a smaller proportion of the student body than ever (137). Gender, ethnicity and equal opportunities; secondary education selection/non-selection political debates; university fee-paying/non-fee-paying controversies and many other background factors are involved in today's university experience.

There is a view from USU graduates that ideally the opportunities for USU service should be 'available to a wider number of students' (137) because of the currently perceived inequalities. This might be a sound argument if the USUs were to be funded commensurably by the Department for Education (via the Higher Education Funding Councils), rather than the MOD, for the substantial extra benefits USUs provide (stated and implied on pages 137 and 148). It is assumed that political considerations would not allow such provision.

However on the face of it, even a modest expansion of USU membership and activities could enable a higher proportion 'to benefit from a USU presence' (153). Extra student members, however, would bring the need for increased instructional and administrative staff, which currently (April 2017) faces serious under-manning. This staff shortage is already detrimental to the individual attention which USUs would like to give at the current time to their members' training and development. It is assumed the MOD is unable substantially to increase resources for the USUs in the foreseeable future. Universities cannot expect more from the Defence Budget.

Adding value in universities

The labelling of USUs as providing 'élite activities' (166) is curious when increasingly many universities try hard beyond the purely academic contents of degree programmes, but with varied results, to enhance students' personal skills and qualities for their betterment, and therefore greater employability. Some degree programmes are eminently practical as well as rigorously academic. While minimum quality is assured, there are distinctions between 'a strong university and a strong

course'²⁰ and others obviously less 'strong' as evidenced in the universities' league tables. It cannot be overemphasized that the skill's development and other values which USUs offer, revealed in the Newcastle research, are also desirable university benefits, which all universities should ideally provide as part of their programmes.

This needs further exploration well beyond this Paper. Some universities are highly active in determining graduate skills, sometimes referred to as 'graduateness', a term first used by the Higher Education Quality Committee in 1995 to explore the 'generic qualities that might be expected of any graduate'. These skills are exactly those which the USUs develop so successfully in their members, as defined above in Part 2.

However, the promotion of opportunities to develop 'better graduates' is demonstrated in a number of universities, as discrete programmes or extensions formulated by Departments and University Careers' Services. For instance the University of Keele and other universities, such as Newcastle and Leeds, have instituted programmes for developing graduate 'capabilities and attributes', deliberately active and practical in application, including

'creative enquiry and problem solving; communicating to a variety of audiences; self-awareness, self-confidence and self-direction; qualities of leadership, responsibility, personal integrity, empathy, care and respect for others, accountability and self-regulation; flexibility in uncertain external environments; as well as thinking about the breadth of knowledge, reflection on perspective and scholarship', together with the awareness of the 'provisional dynamic nature of knowledge' and need for independence of thought; together with 'community spirit' as a social value, which taken all together leads to greater 'employability' in a 'global society'²¹.

²⁰ Lord Rees of Ludlow, House of Lords' debate on the *Higher Education and Research Bill*, Hansard, 11 January 2017, Vol 777, 4pm. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise, introduced for 2017, to judge 'teaching and learning' effectiveness, now adds a new way of measuring between the 'strong' and less-strong universities.

²¹ See Dr Stephen Bostock, Glyndwr University, Future Directions Conference, Aberystwyth, April 2014, 'developing graduate attributes and skills across the institution'. www.heacademy.ac.uk/.../developing_graduate_attributes_and_skills accessed 27 August 2016.

This means for individuals, seeking to enhance their 'graduateness' performance, there is a need 'to challenge yourself by doing worthwhile activities that stretch you and develop your attributes. Attributes are more than just skills'²².

Such university-led graduateness programmes have not been subject to much inter-university exposure and evaluation, except indirectly (see TEF exercise noted in footnote 20) and are thought to be very unevenly distributed across universities at the present time. Of those that do, in parallel with the USUs and Armed Forces generally, some may be already accrediting such programmes with professional institutes, such as the Chartered Management Institute, Institute of Leadership and Management and City and Guilds Group.

However it should be admitted that to define closely and measure sensibly the direct transferability of the above sorts of skills remains as elusive as ever. The Newcastle research finds that 'military leadership as a transferrable skill' needs 'closer consideration' (168), meaning better definition and more general contextual testing. Leadership is a notoriously difficult concept and practice to define generally, or explain with any sort of precision, even if most professional people have a substantial heuristic, common sense understanding of how effective leaders lead in many contexts²³. This recognition is borne out in 2016 research, conducted by Paul Redmond of Manchester University among graduate recruiters for the professions and significant employment sectors²⁴, in which leadership skills and communication skills, particularly, are more effectively developed by the USUs in an range of prominent university 'clubs and societies'. The UOTCs came top in the rankings, followed by the URNUs and UASs, those units being of equal ranking with Student Enterprise Societies, all well ahead of other university societies. The value-adding USUs achievements should become more widely recognized given their desire for enhanced public engagement.

22 See also George MacDonald Ross, 1996, <http://www.prs-ltsn.leeds.ac.uk/generic/qualenhance/graduate.html> accessed 27 August 2016; also the Open University noted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in Scotland, www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk ; and the Combined Honours Centre, University of Newcastle, 'Enhancing Graduateness' www.ncl.ac.uk/combined/graduateness/enhancinggrad.htm accessed 17 March 2017

23 Professor John Adair informed the COMEC-Sandhurst Leadership Conference , September 2012, that an estimated 75,000 books had been written world-wide on leadership in the previous 50 years.

24 Manchester University, Directorate for the Student Experience, Dr Paul Redmond, 'Employers' perception of skills and experience gained in University Armed Service Units; Summary of findings', 2016.

Universities' attitudes to USUs

The Newcastle research emphasises that 'although it may be the responsibility of the Service units to initiate and maintain knowledge dissemination across the universities, it is certainly the responsibility of universities to have awareness of the USUs, given their responsibilities of duty and care towards students' (171). 'The distinctiveness', the research finds, 'of the USU experience as an extra-curricular activity is evident' (168) and of tangible benefit. How widely this is recognized in universities is the most significant question of all in the Newcastle research from the universities' side.

All Britain's universities are keen to succeed in providing the highest quality of education and a valuable university experience for their students. The *élite* word is largely avoided, yet the implication is that USU members are high quality students and that

- USUs are manifestly of benefit to the universities in terms of the quality of their graduates, who will become recognized as alumni 'ambassadors for a particular university in later life' (148)
- Employability is important to universities. Ninety per cent of USU participants recognize the 'transferability of skill developed' by the USUs, a most significant statistic (100)
- While some universities are already engaged in Defence research, which may be connected with the presence of USUs, the Newcastle authors particularly 'suggest that some universities may be missing significant opportunities to make the most of their MECs' (153, 163) as agencies in penetrating Defence and gaining research contracts (149).

It must also be recognized that like all commercial enterprises, universities spread their financial risk. The Department for Education expenditure for universities is of course augmented by capital endowments, private funding, research and commercial enterprise receipts and student fees, while the Ministry of Defence annual budget for USUs, thought to be about £80m, is invested for the reciprocal benefit of universities.

However, it also has to be admitted that the Armed Forces are not nearly as important to the universities as the universities are to the Armed Forces. The

Newcastle University Report makes a number of comments about the variation in the universities-USU relationships, resulting from the decreased proportion of USU members compared with the vastly increased student numbers over the past twenty-five years. The report states that

- 'Knowledge levels' of the USUs amongst the university authorities, staff and students are low' (163), and that in some universities there is 'antipathy towards military organizations', generally, and as represented by the USUs (149)
- 'The lack of knowledge and understanding about the USUs within universities' is acute in some institutions, as is the nature of Defence and roles of the Armed Forces (163)
- Thus USUs and MECs can be very useful points of contact for all 'questions of military matters' (149) and possible further research opportunities.

Many universities have Defence contracts, some very large in science and engineering. In respect of additional personal development of people, DTOEES, sponsors of the DTUS squadrons, are responsible for a guaranteed source of technical and engineering officers for the Armed Forces' officers and Technical Civil Service. Universities may or may not seek out such contacts and contracts, but it must be emphasized again that they 'should be making the best of their MECs' (163), which some manifestly fail to do.

Educational free market

Finally, while Joining a USU is subject to market forces within the student experience, the Higher Education sector is as much a free market for applicants as is Defence. Universities are seeking to produce 'better graduates' and indirectly 'better citizens' (135), as are the USUs. Thus the claim that the USUs are 'not representative of the student body' (99-100) being a detrimental factor, is not a strong one. The universities are subject to league tables, like it or not, and are far from equal in their success in seeking out candidates of high academic potential and best all-round performance. Some universities attract a higher proportion of students from the independent sector (166) than other universities, notably the Russell Group. Positive discrimination by universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge, to recruit

students from the state sector is exercised. However there is no hint that universities should be positively equalized in the quality of their intakes, against some sort of standard, national bell curve of educable talent as the template.

The fact that many universities know little about the USUs to which their students belong, or potentially could belong, remains a significant university management weakness. The Armed Forces, as well as MECs and COMEC need to act, maybe with a far greater sense of urgency than hitherto to overcome this fact. Much improved and direct communications and engagement with universities are necessary, using every means of effective publicity and actions.

Part 5. VALUE ADDED BY MECs, COMEC AND THE UNIVERSITIES

Military Education Committees

Independent of the military, the MECs are university bodies under the formal statutes of one or more of their constituent universities, and answerable to the authorities within their universities. Necessary funds for expenses come from their universities. Some MECs are directly regulated by their universities, with constitutions and Terms of Reference (TOR), while others assemble together under looser arrangements as inter-university committees. Suggested TORs for MECs are currently contained in Appendix 1 to the COMEC *Constitution*, which contains the sentence 'To foster arrangements to promote equal and beneficial partnership between the Council, the MEC, the MOD and universities'. It is worth repeating that the chief role and function of MECs is the civil and academic direction of those students engaged in military activities for whom they are responsible.

The MECs can therefore reasonably hold the opinion that MOD policy, establishment, military activities and unit maintenance, and particularly changes in policy, are matters for equal consideration by the parties mentioned. Universities, MECs and COMEC sometimes are not consulted by the MOD. The fact that the MOD pays virtually all the costs of running the USUs has, until now, not been a factor disturbing the assumed equality of the parties. Some people serving in MECs and on COMEC, however, have been aware of the anomalies and the balance is changing.

That having been said the Armed Forces need the USUs more so than ever in their history, and particularly from the 1990s, because they have come to rely so heavily

on the units as the means of continuation-recruiting of Regular and Reserve officers. Arguably there has been a gradual divergence of understanding between COMEC, the MECs and the MOD, which should be redressed outside both this Rejoinder and the COMEC 'USU Offer' Report, noted in Part 1 (see footnote 9).

However with regard to the Newcastle University research it is suggested that, surveys and interviews, were not conducted as widely as they might have been amongst MECs, COMEC and academics, as to their roles, performance and value to the USUs and Defence, as well as the regional Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCAs) in support. How much evidence presented was oblique opinion on these matters, is a valid question to ask of the research. That having been said this Rejoinder recognizes that there have to be practical boundaries and financial limits to all research.

The researchers make the following substantive comments on the MECs.

- For the effectiveness of an MEC 'much depends on the make-up of the MEC' (144), meaning its constitution, constituencies and the personal position and contribution of each Committee member
- The role of the MEC Chair, and the utility of the relationships they are able to cultivate' with a USU CO, is important (144). Some Chairs have 'a position of significance within a university, or high level contacts across several universities in a locality' (144), while others do not
- Much also depends on individual MEC members, whether 'they have [university]administrative authority or [become members] because of a more general interest in military matters' (145)
- Some individual MEC members, being those 'other than MEC chairs, can be invaluable' (153)
- The relationship of MECs with Vice-Chancellors varies and, like USU COs, a number of MECs find 'Vice-Chancellors as largely uninterested in the work of the units', although it must be said that some COs 'had managed to meet with [Vice Chancellors] directly' (145) and maintain a close connection
- 'USUs are quite small and potentially quiet ephemeral to the daily and more [operational and] strategic business of running a university' (145),

yet ‘the decision on how best to use MECs is one for senior university management... and that some universities may be missing significant opportunities to make the most of their MECs (163). Greater pro-activity by MECs can overcome this oft repeated criticism, but often MECs are themselves frustrated in their work by local conditions

- ‘The mechanisms for developing informed debate and decision-making about USUs within universities’ (163) are currently diverse even obscure. At best MECs can be effective, while ‘at worst MECs can exist in a bubble... with little or no discernible effect or value’ (163).

In research one has to be wary in using metaphors. By definition they have a life of their own – and should be taken with a pinch of salt. However, if ‘at worst’ is detected, then it is a matter for university governance authorities to recognize deficiencies and take action about their MEC’s effectiveness and value. Regional RFCAs could have a role in assisting the process.

However the Newcastle publication well recognizes the many anomalies and unevenness in the way professional institutions view themselves and each other, with scope for misunderstanding. Despite occasional difficulties the business of balancing individuals’ academic studies with their enthusiasm for USU membership, the MECs have a further responsibility to curb unacceptable militaristic tendencies emerging on university campuses.

Overall the Newcastle research confirms that there are indeed ‘significant differences between universities and Armed Forces’ in character, culture, management, hierarchies, need for and reaction to change’ (153). The MECs and COMEC exist to handle such differences and bring the two professions together in a closer understanding within their own universities, USUs and beyond. However, it must be recognized that there is danger if USUs’ value and effectiveness as continuation-recruiting agencies becomes the chief measure of their value. The MOD and Service Chains of Command are able to consult about their business with MECs directly, to encourage and to warn. Reciprocally MECs have a duty to do the same equally robustly.

COMEC

The Constitution, Organisation and Operating Procedures of the Council of Military Education Committees begins with an endorsement in the Foreword signed by the Principal of the joint MOD Directorate²⁵ responsible, stating that

‘The relationship between academia and HM Forces has a long history and has always been symbiotic. Any occasional strain has largely been due to ignorance and mutual misunderstanding. Therefore it is essential that the lines of communication between these often insular worlds are kept wide open and COMEC does much to fulfil this purpose.’

It is clear that the functions of MECs and the role of COMEC are not well articulated and understood, and have become increasingly so as both the universities and the Armed Forces have undergone the most rapid and fundamental change in history. What does each of the Single Services, MECs and COMEC require of the academic and Defence relationship and the dynamics of reciprocal engagement? What do the universities want from their MECs and COMEC, extending the same question to the USUs they host?

As the military pressures on USU output increases, the time is surely right for a periodic re-appraisal of the activities and relationships of MECs and COMEC, being made fully aware of the outside pressures. These questions are in need of deeper answers beyond the scope of this Rejoinder, although some matters are addressed in the 2017 COMEC Report (see footnote 9). COMEC and MECs, like all institutional bodies, need to revisit and re-assess themselves from within. However this cannot be directed by military officials in the MOD and Single Service Chains of Command.

Starting with COMEC’s *Constitution* and *Conspectus* of 2004, COMEC’s formal Terms of Reference 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 University Service Units and to advise the MoD, Directors of Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Associations and UK Universities thereon

²⁵ In 2004 the Directorate was Director General Training and Education. In 2017 Chief of Defence People is the joint MOD responsible Directorate.

- To promote co-operation between the MoD, the UK Universities and Military Education Committees
- 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’.

The Newcastle research mentions little about COMEC’s what should be called ‘strategic alliances’, deduced from above, or the suddenness of a change in the Armed Forces’ continuation-recruiting needs and emphasis. COMEC particularly can help to consider the latter as a matter of policy, and this they are doing .

Put the other way, COMEC’s future is linked to being able, through its officers and Executive Committee members, effectually

- To represent MECs strategically with the MOD and Single Services Chains of Command and substantially influence policies and plans on behalf of MECs
- To seek personal contact and institutional ‘engagement’ with and constantly renew and maintain what can be termed ‘strategic alliances’ with other bodies, and conduct work with ‘corresponding partnerships’ within universities, as well as independent, commercial and other institutional bodies, connected with the USUs and Defence
- To conduct study 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

- To stage events on behalf of strategic alliance partners, including conferences, lectures and the COMEC AGM, with MOD financial support to ensure effectiveness
- To support USUs directly (e.g. COMEC Prize)
- To visit USUs, Defence directorates and Chains of Command, so as to network and communicate 'good practice'
- To promote and act as the corporate memory for the USUs, MECs and in regard to the civil and academic nature of universities, in balance with military involvement and engagement.

The universities' contribution to defence and security

In respect of the Armed Forces, it has to be acknowledged that they have changed fundamentally since c.1960 with the ending of National Service and the establishment of a new direction for Defence within the civil-military relationship. The value of intellect applied to the military profession is unquestionable. Many military officers had been severely under-educated in previous generations, even if the intellect was there and not necessarily recognized in individuals. The profession of arms in Britain is now truly a learned profession. Much credit goes to the universities and their growing accessibility.

The universities have changed even more, particularly since the 1963 Robbins Report, which amongst other effects, brought about the substantial national direction and control of universities by the state through funding. We have to be aware of the position of universities at the current time and their likely future development²⁶. This is not the place to comment on how fit for purpose they are individually and collectively as vehicles for thinking and research, independent of politics and commerce, as well as serving the public for which all professions exist.

There are of course mixed signals about their financial and student market position during and after the Brexit process, with regards both to teaching and research.

²⁶ See mention of the planned extension of 2 year degree courses, 'elite apprenticeships and Recommendation number 8 in the COMEC Report *The University Services' Units: Is the 'Offer' Right?*

However, writing about educational values, in particular in Higher Education, Stefan Collini concludes that ‘Attending to these values may help us to remember, amid difficult and distracting circumstances, that we are merely custodians for the present generation of a complex intellectual inheritance which we did not create – and is not ours to destroy’²⁷. Within Britain the fiduciary trusteeship and governance responsibilities in education are argued about incessantly, even if the fiduciary word is not used in such a general sense.

Nowadays the existing university contribution to Defence and, more widely, national security and social resilience is mainly indirect and not obvious within universities and schools. So, if Security and Defence are important, then COMEC and MECs, as well as central government, the MOD and the Armed Forces, need to consult, encourage and warn more widely and substantially messages about the physical security risks to the nation, using the indirect means afforded by the USUs. Before concluding this prompts a final section about the contribution of the USUs, being at the very centre of Higher Education and Defence, to their relationship with society.

Part 6. USUS AND ENHANCING THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

From all existing research attempting to understand what the Newcastle report call ‘military phenomena’ (172), with ‘a bigger and more abstract debate’ (171), there is a growing need in public life and society to develop a better understanding of the military profession, Defence and security generally than ever before. There are significant ‘differences between the universities and the Armed Forces’ (153) and considerable differences between the Armed Forces and the mainstream of British life and society. In their way the Armed Forces invest heavily in understanding universities, paying around £80m per annum through the USUs for the universities to have the same opportunity to understand the Armed Forces. This is irrespective of the more short-term USU ephemeral continuation-recruiting aim, vital though it is. In the Armed Forces, most men and women recruited will not serve as career officers. Almost all will find future employment and attractive career options in civilian life, most sooner rather than later²⁸.

²⁷ Stefan Collini, *What are Universities for?*, Penguin, London, 2013, 199.

²⁸ Albeit not up-to-date research, see Howieson/Khan 2003, footnote 7, page 126. Almost 80 percent of officer cadets [at Dartmouth, Sandhurst and Cranwell] saw their careers in the British Military to be short term in nature and saw the British Armed Forces to be a “stepping stone” to something else’.

Thus the investment in the USUs by government is felt as something necessary to make the civil-military relationship work in modern Britain as a liberal democracy, through Defence 'engagement' and general positive preparations for 'national resilience'²⁹ in the security and defence of the United Kingdom, against instances of natural or man-made disasters, particularly large-scale violence and mass attack on the life of the nation. The role of USU participants as future 'ambassadors for [the] particular universities' (148) of which they were students, is equally important as the same students in future will be 'ambassadors' for Defence for the rest of their civilian careers and lives.

Some questions about the civil-military relationship remain.

- Firstly that many 'universities do not understand USUs or the Armed Forces' (148) and in particular 'what exactly are USUs for?' (145). This uncertainty can be attributed to a failure of communication between universities, MECs, COMEC and the Armed Forces
- In the absence of National Service, do the USUs effectively enable the 'bonding of military into civil social life' (135) and the 'civilian workplace' (151)?
- 'What exactly does civil society want its Armed Forces to be and do' (167), including the place of women in USUs and the Armed Forces, and social class, even if largely defined nowadays by wealth possession and creation in an unequal but free society? These questions should be addressed within and through 'informed political debate about university-military links' (167)
- What is the 'wider political critique of militarism and militarisation' (166) as it affects the USUs in particular, these being relevant features of the Armed Forces in society?
- How attractive is the profession of arms as a profession, a day-job, an occupation, a voluntary fully paid national service or a vocation?

²⁹ The role played by the Reserves, which includes with due emphasis, the USUs, in social response to national threats, actual and potential, are significant factors in the resilience of civil-society and its physical and material security, was a theme in the Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets annual briefing on 7 December 2016.

Further questions emerge. How does one explain the hierarchical structure of the Armed Forces and USUs – against the professional autonomy of very many individuals in other professions, albeit governed in law and regulation working in flat and matrix and management structures? How does one explain the obligation of the Armed Forces ‘to be different’ and claim special treatment in the relationship with society, partly codified in the ‘Military Covenant’ and ‘Armed Forces’ Covenant’. Questions of ‘unlimited liability’ and ‘selfless commitment’³⁰ to Regular and Reserve service recur.

As the civil-military relationship is subject to change, how can ‘new forms of relationships with the civilian world’ be made to ‘reflect the new reality’ of life in Britain and the world? ‘The transferability of skills derived in military contexts’ (171) is a matter generally for Defence to promote to the business and the public sectors for a new depth and breadth of awareness. However there is a circularity about such a comment; universities have strong characteristics of the public and business sectors. In its way, ‘the USU system [is] part of that’ (150) change. Individually USU members and would-be employees obviously argue from their own actual experience, but MECs and university Careers’ Advisory Services have roles to play in transmitting an understanding of the value that USUs provide in linking the military and civilian worlds.

Finally MOD gives resources to Defence Engagement and Defence Relationship Management being part of the civilian–military relationship, as is the Armed Forces’ Covenant³¹ and Corporate Covenant schemes, supported and overseen in Parliament by the ‘All Party Group on the Armed Forces Covenant’, and the ‘Armed Forces’ Parliamentary Scheme’. Recently COMEC has been making new institutional links and ‘corresponding partnerships’. There is much scope for extending more strategic alliances and working partnerships for the benefit of the USUs and the transferable skills they generate in their members, their engagement in public life useful in the world of work and the future defence and security of the Britain.

³⁰ A phrase coined by General Sir John Hackett, *The Profession of Arms*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1983, 202. See also footnote 14. It is likely that Hackett used it as a metaphor applicable for intense combat service, not during general duty in the peace-time context. ‘Self-less commitment’ is in all the Armed Forces’ lists of ‘Values and Standards’.

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/armed-forces-covenant> accessed 17 March 2017.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This Paper is of the nature of a 'position paper', reflecting on and taking forward work recently researched by the University of Newcastle. That research is indeed timely. The military habit and discipline is to demand answers which will work with certainty, even if military people intuitively recognize that many or most enterprises in life are experimental. Like all good research, the most important action is to search out the right questions to be asked and continuously asked, even if the answers may not be as conclusive as institutions and their people would like.

This Paper seeks questions beyond those addressed by the Newcastle research and gives such answers as it can, albeit in a disjointed style, the nature of rejoinders. Recommendations for future guidance are put forward in the COMEC Report 'The University Armed Services' Units: Is the 'Offer' right'? All three publications are snapshots, as things currently are or appear to be. Revisiting the questions and answers, seemingly adequate or good at the time, should be recurring activities, thus leading to better questions and answers for institutional development and refinement of activities and understandings over time.

In summary this Paper comments on

- the value of USUs personally to student members
- the USUs' immediate value to Defence and the armed Forces, including meeting occupational and career opportunities
- the value to universities
- the contribution played by MECs, COMEC and the universities in the exercise of mutual influence between Defence and universities, and
- the USUs significance in civil-military engagement and contribution to national resilience.

It is anticipated that this research exercise will prove to be of considerable value for some years to come. Notable quotations from the Newcastle research provide a fitting conclusion to this Rejoinder.

- 'Degree-level education has become normalized, routine, expected and unexceptional. The USU experience stands out in contrast... perceived by graduates to have substantial benefits' (137)

- 'In terms of knowledge of USUs activities amongst academic staff... then student advocacy is the best way to achieve this' (170)
- Although it may be the responsibility of the [USUs]... to initiate and maintain knowledge dissemination across universities, it is certainly the responsibility of universities to have awareness of the USUs..' (171)
- 'We note that the ...MEC membership and university representation on MECs [is] significant both for the factual flow and the development of initiatives involving USU and university collaboration' (171)
- 'We have also noted that some employers may be more or less favourably inclined towards evidence of employee experience derived from USU participation. We note this reflects a much bigger and more abstract debate about civil-military relations, attitudes towards Defence and military activities and attitudes towards the Armed Forces...' (171).

COMEC is very grateful for the ESRC sponsored Newcastle research and the quality and comprehensiveness of its insights. It is hoped this Rejoinder adds even deeper knowledge and understanding and that new initiatives for collaboration between the universities and Defence can be built on. The future of Britain's security in the globalized world is the question. Intellect, knowledge and professional dedication for sure will be needed for whatever will be the hopes, the dangers and the surprises ahead.

