

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



**THE UNIVERSITY SERVICES UNITS:
IS THE 'OFFER' RIGHT?**

A Report by the COMEC Working Group

July 2017

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**FOREWORD BY
PATRICK MILEHAM
COMEC VICE-CHAIRMAN**

This Report is written in response to a presentation at the COMEC 2015 Conference by Brigadier Mark van der Lande, Head Reserves, Defence People Directorate, MOD. The Conference was informed of the increased needs for Reserve officers to meet Future Force 2020 establishment, and how the MOD was proposing to extend a more intense engagement with the civil population and in particular Higher Education, to meet the need for officer and enlisted recruitment. The presentation included the statement that of

‘6000 officer cadets across the 3 [types of] USUs... more than 90 per cent of USU officer cadets do not continue service elsewhere’.

In essence the Brigadier was talking about the possible double event in individuals' lives – **continuation-recruiting** either directly, or after a period of time – progressing from the Universities Services Units (USUs) into Regular or Reserve service. The questions he asked COMEC to address are in the Introduction at Part 1. None attending could have been left in any doubt that the MOD, understandably, sought greater value for money from the £80m thought to be spent on the USUs annually.

Clearly the above statistics, if true two years on, are a worry to the MOD. COMEC was asked for ‘ideas, initiatives and recommendations’ about the future value of the USUs and the current ‘offer’. In the past 30 years, some 20,000 men and women have served in these units, ambassadors for Defence for the benefit of the nation, most not ‘serving elsewhere’.

Since 2015 there have been mixed messages from Staff at the MOD, both Joint and Single Services, and the officer academies – COMEC’s direct strategic alliance partners – about the continuation-recruiting emphasis for Regular and Reserve service from the USUs, how far it is required to be more intensive to meet overall FF 2020 targets. COMEC, and the Working Group (WG) appointed by the Chairman in 2016, understand that Commanding Officers and Officers Commanding of the USUs may well be under pressure from their Chains of Command, even if quotas and targets are not openly and formally declared.

The pressure has clearly now been extended by the MOD to the Higher Education sector. COMEC and the twenty Military Education Committees (MECs) have

representative roles and functions at the interface between the Universities and Defence, albeit entirely independent of the MOD - unlike our near-counterparts, the statutorily responsible and fully funded Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations (RFCAs).

This Report and recommendations are in response to the MOD and incorporating comments from correspondents after a draft was circulated. Many see beyond the stark 'utility' of the USUs for the Armed Forces, with a more subtle difference in the means of 'messaging' about 'value' and the difference between the 'direct' and 'indirect recruiting' from the USUs into the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. Whichever approach, there are always sensitivities and maybe dangers to the Armed Forces' connection with universities, from unsympathetic academic staff and students. Student Unions in some universities are powerful and politically assertive bodies.

Members of the WG are content that addressing the questions has resulted in some robust and sensible ideas, initiatives and recommendations, including attention to the last three mentioned questions (on the next page) about 'reach' and 'messaging'. It is in those where MECs and COMEC may be able to exert greater influence, despite the limited resources of unfunded bodies. Further considerations are included more appropriately in the parallel publication, COMEC Occasional Paper No 10, COMEC *Rejoinder. The Value of the University Armed Service Units*. How the recommendations are handled is now up to the MOD. We believe all should be tabled, even if some recommendations may be for the future. COMEC holds the best corporate memory about USUs, its duty being to record its work and deliberations as archive material on its website.

Finally I should like to thank the two successive COMEC Chairmen, Dick Clements and Roddy Livingston, members of the WG and all participants and respondents in the research exercise, resulting in the two publications. Personally it has been a privilege to be able to lead this work as I complete nearly 30 years as a member of COMEC in various capacities, hopefully learning all the time about these remarkable military units, at once territorial yet firmly in the nation's voluntary military tradition.

Patricia Williams

PART ONE. INTRODUCTION

Background and Aim

1. The COMEC Conference 2015 presentation, cited in the Foreword, exposed the MOD's 'future approach to Higher Education' as a source of recruits to the Armed Forces, with 'options to attract more HE graduates into both commissioned and other rank roles across the three Services'. The following questions were asked of the COMEC audience.

- 'Have we got the USU offer right?
- What are the other opportunities?
- How could we reach more undergraduates?
- How can we message students more effectively?
- How can we message universities more effectively?'

2. The aim of this Report is to investigate the current and future of the University Services Units' value to students, the Armed Forces, universities and the public, taking account of the existing reliance and increasing emphasis on graduate officers and specialists for Regular and Reserve military service, and make recommendations in support. The term 'continuation-recruiting' used in this and the accompanying COMEC *Rejoinder*¹, indicates the double action of an individual, first joining a USU, then joining for Regular or Reserve service after graduation from university, maybe delayed for some months or years. The term 'offer' denotes the means of achieving the ends for which the university units have been established and are maintained.

3. In preparing this Report the COMEC Working Group has considered much

¹ COMEC Occasional No 10, *A Rejoinder. The Value of the University Armed Service Units. Rejoinder*, June 2017.

data and many factors expressed in the University of Newcastle's independent, one-time research exercise, published in book form as *The Value of the University Armed Service Units*². The WG has separately added much more evidence and wider discussion in the accompanying academic COMEC research paper, a *Rejoinder* to the Newcastle research (see footnote 1).

4. In the mass of detail, much of it exposed in the Newcastle research, the WG have found and considered significant dependent variables, some competing and others combining, in the USUs' operations with regard to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Single Services, Universities, COMEC, MECs and the public. This Report contains recommendations for future development and support of the USUs, where possible looking up to ten years ahead. The target readership of this Report includes all those responsible for the management and governance of the USUs, notably MOD Joint and Single Service directorates and Chains of Command, RFCAs, MECs, participating universities and corresponding partners, current and future.

University Service Units' Offer

5. In answering the question in the title, three significant factors are worth noting about the forty-nine USUs, comprising University Royal Naval Units (URNUs), University Officer Training Corps (UOTC)³ contingents and University Air Squadrons (UASs). Firstly, they exist as officer training Reserve units for men and women within Higher Education Institutions (HEI), usually referred to below as 'universities', sponsored and funded by the MOD. The Single Services expect a return from their investment, albeit very difficult to quantify, particularly over time.

6. Secondly, for the student members the essence of service is that they join USUs in the spirit of voluntary military service, a centuries' old and so far unchanged

² University of Newcastle, Rachel Woodward, K. Neil Jenkins and Allison J. Williams *The Value of the University Armed Service Units*, Ubiquity Press, 2015, freely accessible on www.ubiquitypress.com/site/books. The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

³ Two pairs of UOTC contingents have combined to form North West Officer Training Regiment (OTR) and Yorkshire OTR.

British tradition. In parallel with their degree studies, commitment to attend and participate in day-by-day unit activities is also a matter of choice. Members hold a special status as officer cadets in the Armed Forces and in their universities, more fully explained in the *Rejoinder*. **Their status is recognized as being of the nature of a quasi-professional, free association, but significantly with strictly limited liability for military duty.** The students also seek a return on their commitment to their USU.

7. Thirdly, universities are generally content, some very enthusiastic, about the opportunities the USUs provide for their member-students, particularly linked to future employment. University Careers Services are important and powerful agencies. Realizing graduate employment expectations is part of the competitive marketing and success rate of HEIs on a global scale⁴.

8. In the main the student officer cadets are extremely well motivated, seizing opportunities offered for military training and other formally programmed and informal activities. The units are recognized vehicles for individual character development and means of gaining leadership experience. Over the years most units are well- or over-subscribed, with first-degree students willing to join, play a full part in unit activities, including unit social life, while grasping the personal benefits of membership. These facts are well established in the Newcastle research.

USU Roles

9. From the start it must be acknowledged that the generic aims of the USUs, as regarded by universities, the MECs and COMEC, have remained almost entirely unaltered for many years. The authoritative and endorsed COMEC explanation of the USUs' roles is contained in two documents dating from 2004, the currently extant *COMEC Constitution, Organisation and Operating Instruction*, and a COMEC Conspectus, *Defence and the Universities in the 21st Century*. Both documents are endorsed by the MOD. The former cites the USU aims, mission and tasks as

⁴ The universities maintain periodic data in Higher Education Achievement Records (HEAR) based on Destination of Leavers within Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) figures.

- ‘To raise the profile and project a positive image of the Armed Services through University Service Unit members to the wider university and civilian community.
- ‘To educate and develop the skills of a wide spectrum of high calibre students who show potential as society’s future leaders, policy makers and opinion formers in order to better inform them of the ethos, need for and the role of the Armed Services, and to develop an awareness of the career opportunities in the Services.
- ‘To provide high quality Sea, Land and Air training opportunities in support of the Mission Statement and to develop leadership and management skills of selected university students; in order to secure their commitment, whether as officers or as future leaders in their chosen profession, to champion the Armed Services in society. University Service Units also provide training opportunities for other national Cadet organisations’.

10. The many MOD and Single Service Chain of Command instructions and policy documents, setting out aims, missions and tasks, as well as resourcing, are periodically updated, but not routinely circulated to MECs or COMEC or set out on MOD websites. Arguably the Working Group would like to see these permanently published on the COMEC website, and checked each year for currency. However Staff officers report at COMEC Executive meetings and the AGM any significant changes which, after discussion, are normally accepted by consensus. The MOD and Single Services’ aims may have diverged considerably from those endorsed in the COMEC Constitution and other formal documents, particularly the Army’s. This has happened almost gradually over a twenty-five year period, as the Armed Forces’ young officer entry has become almost entirely graduate. Added to which there is the hitherto unquestioned assumption, among all parties, that the USUs are for potential officer entry, not enlisted men and women. This may change.

11. Existing COMEC documents studiously avoid any mention of the word ‘recruiting’, using elegant euphemisms instead so as not to offend possibly over-sensitive or antagonistic university authorities, student groups and Student Unions. The Single Services’ requirements, particularly the Army’s, may be considered as engaged within a new direct continuation-recruiting emphasis, whereas before such has been subtly and indirectly achieved. Informally the signs of a new emphasis has been obvious if COMEC and MECs have maintained due alertness. Indeed,

the MOD is now investigating (through COMEC and other means) extending the recruiting emphasis under Future Force 2020 / 2025 targeted Establishment figures and Force Design over the next three years, which includes the equality of Reserve with Regular service. A divergence of perceptions and even aims between what the universities might believe and what the Armed Forces need is now becoming apparent. However the MODs' policies are still less than clear. This is the underlying reason for this Report.

PART 2. USUs – CONTINUATION-RECRUITING ROLE TO DATE

12. Universities already provide a major source of officer cadet recruiting for the initial officer training establishments, Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC)⁵, the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst (RMAS) and the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell (RAFC). Hitherto the MOD has been broadly content with the proportion of members of the USUs who on graduation, commit to continuation of military service under different terms of service, whether Regular or Reserve. The current overall percentages and trends for continuation-recruiting are not easy to ascertain from the Single Services, and are not routinely published to inform COMEC and the MECs. One assumes information is sensitive and therefore protected. When last declared by the MOD by the Head of Reserves himself at the 2015 COMEC Conference, figures were

- '6000 officer cadets across the 3 USUs
- 40 percent of Regular entrants and 70 percent of Reserve entrants at the RMAS are from UOTCs
- Overall approximately 9 percent commission into the Regular or Reserve Forces
- More that 90 percent of USU officer cadets do not continue service elsewhere'.

Taken over time there seems to be an overall shortage of candidates for commissions.

⁵ Officers for the Royal Marines are trained at the Commando Training Centre RM (CTCRM), Lymington.

13. Each of the Single Services has a direct system of officer recruiting from the USUs and via other routes. The Army contracts much of its recruiting of officers and soldiers to a civilian contractor. Anecdotal evidence reveals that there are problems of delivery. As noted above USU Commanding Officers (COs) and Officers Commanding (OCs)⁶ have a remit to push officer recruiting for their Single Services. How far they inform their MECs of current continuation-recruiting policy varies. These considerations comprise another set of competing variables. Individuals, the MOD and universities are well aware that there has to be a balance between diligence for academic studies and enthusiasm for military training. It is worth pointing out that military discipline is of the nature of command/ obedience, the *imperium* of conduct and behaviour which can be sharply distinguished from academic discipline, based on challenging received wisdom in the republic of ideas⁷. That having been said, universities are now fully exposed to fierce commercial market forces and political priorities, in line with many other institutions in Britain. Increasingly one has to question the claims of the universities having true academic independence, with so much public and commercial funding invested, as well as fee income. (See footnote 23.)

14. In this regard MECs and COMEC often find themselves acting as the corporate memory of the USUs, much more effectively than the MOD and Chains of Command. They are able sometimes to monitor these factors otherwise lost during rapid turnover of USU COs, OCs and staff officers. What has happened over the past 50 years, and accelerating since 1992, is that the Armed Forces have become strongly reliant on the USUs to fill a consistently high proportion of its young officer entry through the initial officer academies, particularly the Army through Sandhurst. The demand for an increase of numbers of Regular and Reserve officer recruits is now being thrust on the UOTCs and, to a lesser extent, on the other USUs⁸. Thus by force of circumstance the USUs may be changing and having to assume more openly the nature of recruiting agencies. This desire by the MOD to change, even subtly, the 'rules of engagement' with universities is a new departure, while reciprocally

6 UOTCs have COs of Lieutenant Colonel rank: four of the UOTCs are grouped in two pairs, with a CO and OCs at Major level in each. The URNUs and UASs have Lieutenants and Squadron Leaders as OCs.

7 This is a noticeable phenomenon of the US Armed Forces degree-awarding initial officer academies such as West Point, Annapolis and Colorado Springs where the tension exists. It is assumed that this is deliberate, making the point to the officer cadets of two competing disciplines within one profession.

8 The RN and RAF do not declare an officer recruiting problem at present, except for engineers, but like every institution in Britain, they need to watch for changing circumstances and public priorities.

increasing their usefulness and value more than ever to all parties. However, the universities' political sensitivities continue to induce staff and students to be wary of the Profession of Arms and overt militarism on campus.

15. **Understanding.** The WG understands the educational relevance and value of the current USU offer to student members, and the MOD's desire to seek to improve the proportion of former USU members in gaining future employment and careers in the Armed Forces, Regular and Reserve, commissioned and non-commissioned. The Recommendations below are based on this understanding.

PART THREE. FUTURE CONTINUATION-RECRUITING

Continuation-Recruiting Emphasis?

16. 'The British Army simply wants the best people that British Society has to offer'⁹ is the current officer recruiting message. With regard to reaching the Future Force 2020/25 and FR20 manpower targets against 'establishment', every means of attracting a sufficient number of officers and enlisted personnel required in the manpower 'supply chain', and of the right quality, are being investigated and developed by the MOD Chief of Defence People's directorate and Single Services. Continuation of Regular or Reserve military service *after* USU membership ceases is subject to employment market forces, with a large number of competing variables, known and unknown, internal and external, within universities, the Armed Forces and beyond.

17. A sensible caveat is in the recognition that to attempt to force sustainable increases in numbers of recruits into the USUs with intensified activities on the existing 'footprint' of universities within 'reach' of individual USUs¹⁰, may be subject to diminishing returns against the extra resources needed, which in any case are unlikely to be supplied. Each additional recruit is likely to become more expensive per head, and introduce other factors, maybe detrimental, including devaluing

9 MOD (Army) booklet 'Your Guide to becoming an Army Officer' 2016, 14.

10 It is suggested that the dynamic metaphor from 'Ah but a man's reach should exceed his grasp...' (poet Robert Browning) is a more appropriate than the static metaphorical geographical 'footprint', as currently used by the MOD.

the concept and quality of 'officership', inherent in the serious officer-producing purpose of the USUs. In conjunction, all parties have to exercise caution not to disturb the character of the USUs, so as to make them unwelcome in universities and among students, thus hastening their decline.

Retention in USU Service

18. Retention of interest by USU members in their training is a matter for COs and OCs, and the Chains of Command, both in syllabus design and delivery. Poor retention in USUs can affect the dynamics of recruiting *into* USUs and the seeking of Regular and Reserve service *after* USU service. Retention of interest in activities within the USUs is often reported to be problematical during the later months of the academic year and particularly in the third (and fourth) year of an individual's service. Much is to do with the pressure of exams and finals. This unevenness is exacerbated when USU staff posts are gapped and perhaps when there is widening divergence between training in theory and practical seaborne, field and air training. Drill hall training syllabuses can become narrow. This may become worse if more ships and aircraft are withdrawn from USU use in future.

19. As strongly asserted from the start, the MOD are particularly keen to increase the number of university undergraduates recruited directly for Reserve service. Numbers coming forward are of course subject to the same highly competitive employment market forces noted for Regular service candidates. The WG suggests that current USU members, in receipt of the valuable benefits as fully 'attested' members - well described in the Newcastle research and the COMEC *Rejoinder* - while serving, could be encouraged and induced to accept a novel but now directly and openly stated, personal 'covenanted' obligation beyond their USU service. For consideration of detail,

- All members at the time of being discharged from their USU, could be invited individually make a formal commitment, duly recorded, enabling them to be *contacted periodically* for receipt of offers of service in the Armed Forces, Regular or Reserve. This should be a formal 'expression of intent', to record the achievements, status and the shared unique experience between the Armed Services and the individual, with the aim of providing a tangible commitment to maintain mutual recognition and a strong mutual relationship into the future.

- While being a document for the individual, signed by a Minister or Senior Officer, it should be similar to the corporate commitment in the Armed Forces' Covenant. That document is a formal reminder of the tri-partite 'moral obligation' between society, government and the Armed Forces, introduced for organizations, companies, communities. (See Part Six below.) Carefully worded, the document for the USU member on leaving could be useful to the individual USU member for other purposes, including for his or her CV.
- The USUs and the MOD would be required to maintain such records of expressed commitment for a period of years, say ten, after their members leave the USUs.

This may or may not involve universities or MECs. A high level of traceability could be maintained with the OCs and OCs diligently keeping records in specially designed unit databases (see paras 39-41.)

20. **Recommendation 1. It is recommended that the MOD and Single Services devise a formal 'expression of intent', to be applied at the end of the period of USU service, to record the status, achievements and the shared unique experience between the Armed Services and the individual, with the aim of providing a tangible commitment to maintain a mutual recognition and relationship into the future (linked to Recommendation No. 6).**

Reserve Service

21. Occasionally students, enlisted into Reserve units, have willingly been called up for active duty within their normal Reserve commitment. It is thought that numbers hitherto have been modest. Although some individuals might have found full-time military service conflicting with their studies, individual arrangements have usually been made to defer studies and prolong registration without extra cost to students. It is thought that MECs and universities generally have seldom raised concerns about a clash of personal priorities for such students. However, should numbers of active duty undergraduate Reserve personnel rise substantially, the Armed Forces and MECs should be sensitively aware of greater problems thus exposed.

22. Furthermore the MOD are keen to raise the numbers of university academic and support staff as members of Reserve units. Again employment market forces apply, but sustainably greater numbers might be facilitated by universities engaging in the Armed Forces' Covenant scheme which regional RFCAs are currently active in promoting. (See footnote 27 and paras 52-54 below.)

USU 'reach' and 'grasp'

23. While the URNUs and UASs have been subject to constant review and some re-location of headquarters and facilities, including ships and aircraft, the question of geographical re-siting of the UOTCs' headquarters and outstations (in respect of the expansion of universities) has been occasionally addressed¹¹, although the footprint of USUs remains largely unchanged. That having been said, all three types of USU have been actively developing the extent of their 'reach' for many years. Indeed, the Newcastle research finds that

'the USUs have good levels of reach across the higher education sector... access to USU activities is potentially available to students attending the majority of UK universities. However, reach is very uneven, in that some units have far higher number of students from some universities than others in the same catchment area'¹².

24. As has been mentioned already, over recent years the MOD seem to have been intuitively and implicitly fostering an increased continuation-recruiting culture, to produce greater numbers for Regular and Reserve commissions, to achieve a higher return on investment. Some universities traditionally provide a high proportion of candidates for USU membership and commissions. The MOD is minded that the 'reach' of USUs and recruitment for Regular and Reserve service should be extended to universities which have little or no history or culture of officer-producing institutions. However, the current countervailing factor in some USUs of severe instructional and administrative staff under-manning (early 2017)

11 Reviewing of the UOTCs' 'footprint' was considered in reports of 1988, 1989 and as part of the New Management Strategy of 1990-92 when UOTCs were effectively 'nationalized'. Their siting has largely remained unchanged although 'outstations' have been set up to meet changing demand.

12 Newcastle, *ibid.*, 165.

reduces the physical ability to reach out to and cover possible extra officer cadets or non-members student-participants from such universities. Inversely interacting variables could frustrate COs and OC's efforts.

25. It must be pointed out that the MOD has benefited from the valuable and timely Newcastle research on the USUs, which was independently funded, and that this present Report and accompanying documents, together with considerable professional advice, has also been free of charge to the MOD. COMEC, MECs and RFCAs are nevertheless well involved and have responsibilities to assist. Research into the motivation of graduates either to seek a military occupation/career, or reject the same on graduation, such as of the quality produced by Brian Howieson and Howard Khan in 2003, 'Implications for the Recruitment of Graduates into the British Armed Forces'¹³, has not been repeated. To replace guesswork new research could be valuable in judging how far sensibly to extend the USUs' reach and grasp.

26. The WG has noticed that four consultancy projects have been launched by the MOD Chief of Defence People directorate between 2014 and August 2017, being conducted by Edinburgh, Exeter, Lancaster and Newcastle universities, under the title the Future Reserves Research Programme¹⁴. The subjects being researched are 'the relationship between the armed forces and civilian society', 'motivation for retention in the Army', 'how reservists cope with competing responsibilities' and 'how part time military service affects families'. The WG believe that parallel research should be conducted to ascertain the dynamics of USU 'reach, 'grasp' and other factors, given the more aggressive recruiting climate.

27. Recommendation 2. It is recommended that the MOD should commission research into the USUs' 'footprint' and 'catchment areas' with the aim of assessing the future ability of USUs to 'reach' and 'grasp' potential recruits, for Regular and Reserve service, thereby extending inclusiveness amongst those universities not traditionally officer recruiting.

13 See the COMEC Paper No 10, *Rejoinder*. Brain Howieson and Howard Khan, 'The Changing Macro- Environment (1979-2001): 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, 112-138. It has been reported that some initial research has been conducted by the Defence Scientific and Technical Laboratory into statistical student population distribution in the UK, reference DSTL / TR94656 1 Stevens A 'University Officer Training Corps Laydown Assessment. This research has not been seen by the WG.

14 www.future-reserve-research.ac.uk accessed 7 November 2016.

Regular or Reserve?

28. If met, the increase required of Reserve personnel for Future Reserves 2020 will bring the proportion of all ranks within the Army to a ratio of Regular: Reserve of 3:1. While officer recruiting for the RN and RNR, as well as the RAF and RAFR, is considered satisfactory at present, that position may change. Regular Army officer recruiting fluctuates, and that for the Reserves is proving problematical. Indeed, the character of Reserve service, from the time of the loss of 'formed unit' deployment roles, is thought to be more fragile when reliance on individuals for operational deployments has become more crucial than ever before. Reserve individuals have other commitments, responsibilities and priorities outside the Army, however much the politico-military will of the MOD might seek first call on Reservists' time, enthusiasm and sense of duty - including the ideal of the moral obligation of 'selfless commitment', expressed in the Armed Forces' codes of conduct.

29. The twin track of civilian-military employment offer is also likely to be confusing to those leaving the USUs, added to the fact that modern-day university leavers do not expect necessarily to commit themselves for ever to an occupational career in any one profession or field. The 2003 Howieson/Khan research exposes the trenchant statement that of Officer Cadets at Dartmouth, Sandhurst and Cranwell on Regular commissioning courses

'Almost 80 percent..... 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'¹⁵.

While this research is dated, it is considered more than likely to apply to today's cohort, both Regular and Reserve. For the MOD to understand the motivation of young people for joining the military, much other general evidence exists. However, the WG have not found research evidence to reveal why the Regular is more popular than the Reserve route.

15 Howieson /Kahn, *ibid.*, 126. For other research, see for instance, *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2016, High Flyers Research*, in the *Times*. While containing a section on the Army's profile on campus, the research does not differentiate between Regular and Reserve service. It surveyed 18,000 students in some 35 selected universities, presumably those thought to have attracted would-be high flyers.

30. The MOD need to know the motivational dynamics of young graduates seeking continuation-recruiting for full Reserve membership; delaying a decision say up to ten years; declining firmly to consider either; or maybe changing their minds while still young enough to be employed in military service. The MOD also needs to distinguish between 'employment' meaning 'short term' up to ten years from graduating, and Regular or Reserve 'career' professional service, which means service into the individual's 30s, 40s and 50s. Some individuals of both categories, Regular and Reserve, switch from 'employment' to 'career' during their service, but to do so is consequent on many factors including the changing demography of requirements over time of the Armed Forces. The WG are of the opinion that proper research is needed to discover facts and factors upon which the Armed Forces can plan for the future recruiting of Reserve officers and enlisted persons from USUs and universities.

31. Recommendation 3. It is recommended that the MOD conduct research with the aim of understanding why many more USU students seem opt for 'Regular' rather than 'Reserve' employment.

Extending USU activities

32. In the Newcastle research there is an undercurrent of feeling firstly that USU activities and 'experience should be more widely available'¹⁶. Secondly that USU 'participants are not representative of the student body, or even the Home (that is, UK domiciled) student population'¹⁷, which is of course more diverse in modern-day Britain than at any time in history. The implication is that the Armed Forces should be representative of the dynamics of 'inclusiveness' and 'diversity' in the population. Two questions are immediately raised. Should USUs provide a new sort of socio-educational service? Does the MOD wish them to take on the character of a 'youth club'¹⁸, moving away from the existing status of a Reserve unit, comprising fully attested members?

16 Newcastle, *ibid.*, 137.

17 Added to which 'Participating students are more likely to attend a Russell Group university, are more likely to have attended an independent sector school, are more likely to be male, and are more likely to be studying particular studies at university...' Newcastle, *ibid.*, 99.

18 Newcastle, *ibid.*, 99.

33. The value of the civil-military relations role should not be forgotten. Extending USUs' reach in this way might marginally or substantially increase the number of Regular and Reserve officers or specialist candidates, and particularly where there are professional shortages in already established fields, or in new and emerging professional fields, such as cyber skills. There are dangers in attenuating the current reach of USUs so that more students 'sample' life in the Armed Forces without full USU membership. Some dangers are obvious, others less so.

34. The diversity of the student population categorically precludes a significant proportion of them, being ineligible or unsuitable for military service, whether commissioned or not. Extending the reach and physical numbers of those 'grasped' and given a sample period of the Armed Forces' occupation and activities, would require more staff and resources being invested by the MOD and Single Services. Nevertheless, there must be merit in the MOD conducting research in this extension of USU operations.

35. Recommendation 4. It is recommended that the MOD conducts a feasibility study, with the aim of assessing the virtue of extending USUs' operations in order to attract and influence far greater numbers of individuals, including specialists, to sample employment in the Armed Forces.

What are officers for?

36. The recruiting of personnel from universities for non-commissioned professional specialist service in the Armed Forces has been mentioned above. This begs a question for all USUs and universities. In 2003, the MOD (Army) Directorate of Personnel Strategy sought an explicit answer to the question, what are officers for? It included establishing the distinction in the Chain of Command between commissioned and senior non-commissioned officers in the current model of rank-by-rank promotion. There are a few simple, short answers, but those from first principles are wider, deeper and of course longer. The fundamental answer is generic; in the first instance it is about the holding of military office to fit appropriate command and management appointments. Character and personal leadership capability follows *a fortiori*. The research was about the proportion of each category of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, their professional

level, roles and tasks, together with the internal demographics needed by the Army at the time, and into the then future, now overtaken. As a consequence of this 2003 research an 'officership'¹⁹ syllabus was introduced at the RMAS in 2004. However, the RN and RAF, as far as it is known, have not addressed this fundamental question in recent times, despite many individuals being commissioned after short or long service in the ranks. One day, maybe soon, the public or Parliament will want to know the answer to the question, 'what are officers for?'

37. As currently understood the categorical term 'officership' is about holding public office in the military, both commissioned and non-commissioned, with distinct civil-military 'fiduciary' trustee responsibilities for those with commissions. The words used in the Commission are 'special trust and confidence'²⁰. Such concepts are expected to be generated in actions and relationships by office holders, with responsibilities requiring the very highest degree of expertise and integrity. However, the Army has now suspended the 'officership' syllabus at RMAS, for lack of grasping its significance and developing the concept and practice, together with the problems of a crowded programme of study. General Sir Nicholas Carter, Chief of the General Staff, is quoted in July 2017, as proposing a 'Lateral entry into the Army's middle and possibly higher [commissioned] ranks,' in estimating 'that nearly 30 percent of personnel will be specialists in future'. 'Experts in cyber-technology, logistics and aviation technology [including unmanned aerial vehicles] will be targeted to address high-tech skills shortage'²¹. In these days of current Whole Force Concept and integration, questions in general about 'officership', is at the core of everything done in the USUs, initial officer training and subsequent service in each Single Service, could be investigated for effect. This exercise can be done in-house by the Single Services and extended into the Joint Services' Command and Staff College, with outside academic advice.

19 MOD DAPS, 'The British Army Officer' 2003. Also 'The Queen's Commission' and 'An Officership Compendium', RMAS 2004. Officership is a longstanding word (1856, *Oxford English Dictionary*) and used by Samuel Huntington in his seminal Book *The Soldier and the State, Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Belknap Press 1957. Numerous other references can be supplied.

20 The words taken from the UK, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand commission, as shared with the US Armed Forces. The term 'fiduciary responsibilities of trust' appears in an ECAB Paper, 'The Ethical Foundation of the British Army's Values and Standards, of 1 May 2015.

21 The Times, 10 July 2017.

38. Recommendation 5. It is recommended that each of the Single Services should conduct desk-based research, with the aim of understanding better the commissioned non-commissioned distinction, and take such findings into their through-career officer and NCO education syllabuses.

Tracking of USU members after discharge

39. Many USUs maintain alumni databases for social purposes, which can be kept up to date over many years under current unit arrangements. Information is already maintained in MOD databases on each individual, for recording personal details, attestation records and pay. All databases are subject to data protection law, but some data, subject to the individual's agreement, could probably legitimately be transferred to USU alumni databases. Universities also maintain databases for current students and, separately, for alumni. However it is considered most unlikely that universities would agree to any exchange of information, or even linkage of databases, being mindful of data protection. Their chief concern is to maintain alumni contact addresses for social events and fundraising.

40. During interview with the chairman of the WG in June 2016, the Minister Reserves, Sir Julian Brazier MP, was emphatic about the desirability of tracking former USU members for the future offering of employment opportunities in the Armed Forces, maybe some years after being discharged and particularly attracting recruits for the Reserves. This could be linked to Recommendation No 1 (para 20) for an affirmation of intent by individual members faithfully to supply their contact details for a period after leaving. However, It is suggested that this can only be formalized at USU level, under the firm direction of COs and OCs and monitored by the Single Service's recruiting directorates. How such databases could be managed successfully can be publicized as 'good practice' in MOD and COMEC publications. A new series of COMEC *Memorandums* is being encouraged.

41. Recommendation 6. It is recommended that individual USUs, in conjunction with the Single Services Chains of Command, maintain a database to track USU members after discharge, with the aim of the MOD making future recruiting offers to individuals (linked with Recommendation No 1).

PART FOUR. USUs AND UNIVERSITIES

42. The expression 'graduateness' in British universities dates from 1996. An awkward word, its meaning is not immediately obvious. Graduateness refers to the concept and practice of adding extra opportunities and interventions for individual students within university degree programmes for the self-development of personal skills, character and sense of professional responsibility. An increasing number of universities are adapting their programmes to include such provision, both for the benefit of individuals and as a value-added selling point in the fierce competition to attract students wanting more than mere academic recognition for their CVs and future careers.

43. Space limitation precludes much detail of the graduateness agenda in many universities. Formal accreditation of student performance exists in a number of universities, with schemes such as Enhanced Learning Credits, and Higher Education Achievement Reports. Some detail of performance is given in this footnote²². A quick comparison with the identification of the same developmental interventions which USUs provide for developing skills, character and a sense of professional responsibility, is given in detail in the Newcastle research and summarized and referenced in the COMEC *Rejoinder*. COs and OCs are in a strong position to identify and correlate what they do with local university academic programme leaders to greater effect, and for the benefit of their USUs and the universities they support. Again the findings of such an exercise, which should be ongoing, can be publicized in COMEC publications as 'good practice'.

²² The promoting of opportunities to develop 'better graduates' is demonstrated in a number of universities, as discrete programmes or extensions. For instance the University of Keele, Newcastle and Leeds, have instituted 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, all of which lead to 'employability' in a 'global society'. The key to 'enhancing graduateness' is 'to challenge yourself by doing worthwhile activities that stretch you and develop your attributes. Attributes are more than just skills'. See also Manchester University Study by Dr Paul Redmond, 'Employers' perceptions of skills and experience gained by University Armed Service Units: summary of findings', 23 June 2016.

44. Recommendation 7. It is recommended that USUs, in conjunction with MECs, should conduct in-house research and cross-referencing with university staff, of such personal development programmes, transferable skills and ‘graduateness’ initiatives in their universities, with the aim of USUs publicizing their own and embracing collaborative opportunities more widely and confidently.

PART FIVE. USU SUPPORT

First degree Provision in Universities

45. As Higher Education become more and more globalized and competitive, there could be profound changes in the provision of first degrees via courses and programmes in the UK and abroad in the next ten years and beyond. Pressures on the teaching of university students, who are fee-paying, are growing. In the fluctuating academic subject market, the current first degree model and its quality in face-to-face tutored delivery²³ could change fundamentally and quickly. Two year degrees are increasingly being discussed in universities.

46. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education guarantees the quality of first degrees as means of acquiring specialist knowledge and understanding. Any increase of, say, distance and on-line first degree provision in the UK, rather than that based on residence in or near the university, may disturb the current model of university residence and localization of USU membership and participation, upon which the full range of activities and recruit marketing for the Armed Forces’ officer entries relies. Similarly, ‘elite apprenticeship’ schemes, which include first degree provision, could increasingly impinge on the market place, competing for the most

23 Across the university sector the proportion of university lecturers on insecure and non-permanent contracts has risen to 53 percent, with a number of Russell Group universities showing much higher proportions. Higher Education Statistics Agency figures, quoted in the *Guardian*, 17 November 2016. A deeply critical assessment of the current British universities’ standing and activities is made in two recent books by Professor Stefan Collini, Emeritus Professor of the University of Cambridge, *What are Universities For?* and *Speaking of Universities*, Verso, London, 2013 and 2017 respectively. For commercialization and loss of independence see Michael Baatz, *English universities 1852-2012. From Freedom to Control*, Downland Press, 2013.

talented school leavers²⁴. This might affect fundamentally, even undermine, the USUs current establishment and operations, being the traditional model for entry into Regular commissioned officer service for at least the past 25 years.

47. Recommendation 8. It is recommended that jointly COMEC and the MOD should proactively and periodically investigate and circulate desk research²⁵ into the likely future trends as far ahead as possible in universities and other degree awarding processes, with the aim of assessing how the USUs might be affected.

The Armed Forces as Learning Organizations

48. The changes in the universities in the past 50 years have been vast. The Higher Education sector growth has been the result of the government's 50 percent demographic target for university education. The Armed Forces have overcome the well documented anti-intellectual traditions of past generations, and nowadays embrace higher education almost *sine qua non* for commissioned ranks. Moreover, they now encourage the attainment of higher degrees for career officers of OF3 level, namely Lieutenant Commander, Major and Squadron Leader ranks.

49. The Armed Forces have long adopted the Learning Organization (LO) concept and practice. Many other professions and commercial companies also have the concept embedded in their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements. So far the awareness of the USUs, as major learning organizations in their own right, has not been much publicized or celebrated. As well as important to the Armed Forces themselves this is of interest to MECs and COMEC, whose place is to assist in local and national strategic awareness and development. In COMEC's documentation and website the USUs contribution to LO and CPD models should be publicized, as belonging to COMEC's core business.

24 *The Times* 'Guide to Elite Apprenticeships' 25 January 2017. In 2016 the Civil Service recruited 725 to such programmes, Price Waterhouse 285, KPMG 214, Deloitte 210, Ernst and Young 77, while GCHQ, MI5 and MI6 recruited 77 and the Royal Navy hired 50 undergraduate apprenticeships on a starting salary of £31,100. The Defence Technical and Engineer Entry Scheme (DTOEES) is akin to an elite apprenticeship scheme. The MOD provide 'apprenticeship schemes' for the vast majority of the 20,000 entrants each year, as part of accredited 'trade training'.

25 Universities' United Kingdom (UUK), the Higher Education and Policy Institute (HEPI), Teaching Excellence Framework reports, are some sources.

50. Arguably there should be a more proactive and recognized trajectory between the Combined Cadet Force in schools and other cadet forces; via the three types of USUs; BRNC, RMAS, RAFC and CTCRM; the Joint Services Command and Staff College; the MOD contracted universities²⁶ and other universities which contribute to Defence, for personal academic and technological development. This is a primarily for Single Services' attention but also a suggested Defence Academy responsibility. In this regard COMEC has strategic alliance responsibilities, and locally though the MECs.

51. Recommendation 9. It is recommended that COMEC collaborates in work and influence with the MOD and other parties with the aim of projecting the through-life learning concept through its existing 'strategic alliances' and 'corresponding partnerships', linking the cadet forces, via USU membership and initial officer college/academy, to Joint Services' Command and Staff College masters' and higher degrees, and other professional qualifications.

PART SIX. THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

52. The way the civil population relates to its military institutions concerns all thinking and responsible people in any nation. In Britain it is partially expressed in the 'Armed Forces' Covenant and the 'Military Covenant'. The civil military relationship is also expressed in the duty of the MECs and students. **The chief function of MECs is the civil and academic direction and supervision of those students for whom they are responsible engaged in military activities.** (See COMEC Paper no 10, *Rejoinder* for detail.) Beyond universities, the actuality of what is loosely described as the civil-military relationship, communicating the role of Defence in the life of the nation, and the efficacy and responsibilities of the Profession of Arms, are matters that are taken much for granted. It is believed that there are no fundamental problems with the relationship, and the Armed Forces have developed many means and mechanisms of their engagement with the public, both obvious and subtle. The MOD now places much priority in 'Defence engagement' with civil society and the Armed Forces contribution to national confidence and 'resilience' in respect of current and future threats to Britain's security, including terrorist attacks, as well as other man-made and natural disasters.

26 King's College London and Cranfield Universities.

53. Since 1945 the civil-military role of the USUs has been the *raison d'être* and mainstay of the relationship between the MOD, USUs and the universities. The WG are of the opinion that, as the USUs have such a substantial front-line role in this regard, they should be better served by their MECs and COMEC, via publications, website and practical actions, including through such mechanisms as the Armed Forces Covenant project at unit and university level²⁷. Some universities have been party to Covenants already, direct or brokered by regional RFCAs. Of course such 'covenanted' understandings and agreements need continual renewal. Quite apart from the intrinsic benefits, their actions could also prompt more university staff applying to join the Reserves. This needs publicizing as 'good practice'.

54. **Recommendation 10. It is recommended that COMEC, in conjunction with the MOD and, with the advice and assistance of the RFCAs and other partner agencies, should constantly re-confirm the civil-military relations role of the USUs, MECs and COMEC, with the aim of generating activities and re-endorsing, developing and extending the dynamics of civil-military 'engagement', particularly through the Armed Forces Covenant scheme.**

PART SEVEN. CONCLUSIONS AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

55. The role and emerging tasks of COMEC and MECs is detailed in the COMEC Occasional No 10, *Rejoinder*. In common with many institutions responsible for governance, COMEC and the MECs have obligations and rights, namely to be consulted, to encourage and to warn. The following understandings and recommendations are put forward for consultation and implementation to improve both knowledge about the USUs and their *raison d'être*. They thrive at the current time, despite some under-resourcing, while with follow-up work on the recommendations, the position and effectiveness of the USUs, and those who support them, should be substantially improved for the benefit of the members, universities, MOD and Single Services, both Regular and Reserve, and British society.

²⁷ All university Vice-Chancellors were written to by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in November 2015, inviting their universities to join the Armed Forces Covenant Scheme. No mention of any connection with the so addressed university and existing on-campus USUs they host was made in the letter. COMEC and MECS were not consulted or notified.

56. There are two major overarching factors which sustain the recommendations of this Report. Firstly, the *defined status* of an officer cadet is 'especial', confirmed by all that the USUs exist for and the way individuals identify themselves and relate to their obligations of service and the benefits of USU membership. This is expanded on in Part 2 of the COMEC *Rejoinder* (see footnote 2.)

57. Secondly the Profession of Arms is privileged to be permitted by universities to be instituted formally within their aegis, campuses and localities, with unique access to their students. Neither of these special factors should be endangered or lost sight of by those who are responsible, and are invited to use this Report for future policy, command and planning purposes.

Understandings and Recommendations

Understanding 1. (Para 6.) This status of officer cadets is recognized as being of the nature of a quasi-professional, free association, but significantly with strictly limited liability for military duty.

Understanding 2. (Para 52.) The chief function of MECS is the civil and academic direction and supervision of those students for whom they are responsible engaged in military activities.

Understanding 3. (Para 15.) The WG understands the educational relevance and value of the current USU offer to student members, and the MOD's desire to seek to improve the proportion of former USU members in gaining future employment and careers in the Armed Forces, Regular and Reserve, commissioned and non-commissioned.

Recommendation 1. (Para 20.) It is recommended that the MOD and Single Services devise a formal 'expression of intent', to be applied at the end of the period of USU service, to record the achievements, status and the shared unique experience between the Armed Services and the individual, with the aim of providing a tangible commitment to maintain a mutual recognition and relationship into the future (linked to Recommendation No. 6).

Recommendation 2. (Para 27.) It is recommended that the MOD should commission research into the USUs' 'footprint' and 'catchment areas' with the aim of assessing the future ability of USUs to 'reach' and 'grasp' potential recruits, for Regular and Reserve service thereby extending inclusiveness amongst those universities not traditionally officer recruiting.

Recommendation 3. (Para 31.) It is recommended that the MOD conduct research with the aim of understanding why many more USU students seem to opt for 'Regular' rather than 'Reserve' employment.

Recommendation 4. (Para 35.) It is recommended that the MOD conducts a feasibility study, with the aim of assessing the virtue of extending USUs' operations in order to attract and influence far greater numbers of individuals, including specialists, to sample employment in the Armed Forces.

Recommendation 5. (Para 38.) It is recommended that each of the Single Services should conduct desk-based research, with the aim of understanding better the commissioned non-commissioned distinction, and take such findings into their through-career officer and NCO education syllabuses.

Recommendation 6. (Para 41.) It is recommended that individual USUs, in conjunction with the Single Services Chains of Command, maintain a database to track USU members after discharge, with the aim of the MOD making future recruiting offers to individuals. (Linked with Recommendation No 1.)

Recommendation 7. (Para 44.) It is recommended that USUs, in conjunction with MECs, should conduct in-house research and cross-referencing with university staff, of such personal development programmes, transferable skills and 'graduateness' initiatives in their universities, with the aim of USUs publicizing their own and embracing collaborative opportunities more widely and confidently.

Recommendation 8. (Para 47.) It is recommended that jointly COMEC and the MOD should proactively and periodically investigate and circulate desk research into the likely future trends as far ahead as possible in universities and other degree awarding processes, with the aim of assessing how the USUs might be affected.

Recommendation 9. (Para 51.) It is recommended that COMEC collaborates in work and influence with the MOD and other parties with the aim of projecting the through-life learning concept through its existing 'strategic alliances' and 'corresponding partnerships', linking the cadet forces, via USU membership and initial officer college/academy, to Joint Services' Command and Staff College masters' and higher degrees, and other professional qualifications.

Recommendation 10. (Para 54.) It is recommended that COMEC, in conjunction with the MOD and, with the advice and assistance of the RFCAs and other partner agencies, should constantly re-confirm the civil-military relations role of the USUs, MECs and COMEC, with the aim of generating activities and re-endorsing, developing and extending the dynamics of civil-military 'engagement', particularly through the Armed Forces Covenant scheme.

It is finally strongly recommended that all actions and information following this Report and Recommendations are then shared between all parties, military and civilian, particularly through the COMEC website.

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