

UNIVERSITIES OF SHEFFIELD MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEEAnnual Report for the Session 2018 – 2019

In Section 1 below, this Annual Report details the origins of the Military Education Committees (MECs) in Higher Education, and refers to recent events affecting this MEC and the Military University Service Units for which it has a responsibility. It will then touch upon the place of these Units in student development. Section 2 of this report will describe activities and experiences in the Service Units since the previous report, submitted in September 2018, before concluding in Section 3 with a further summary of the benefits that can accrue to students through their membership of one of the three Service Units which they are potentially able to join.

1. Introduction and Background

Military Education Committees (MECs) owe their existence to a Privy Council ruling before the First World War, which requires Universities with associated University Service Units (USUs) to maintain a linking Committee, charged as a crucial part of its duty with ensuring that students' academic progress is not compromised by their military interests. In Sheffield, the MEC is a joint committee of the two Universities and its responsibilities relate not only to the Sheffield Universities Officer Training Corps, but also the Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron and the Yorkshire Universities Royal Naval Unit (respectively SUOTC, YUAS and YURNU).

The theme of change, as outlined in previous reports, has continued throughout the past year, with organisational changes for the Units as well as the MEC itself.

There will be significant changes again to the MEC members over the next academic year due to the historical mistakes regarding roles and terms of office. A new Chair from Sheffield Hallam University will take up the position for three years. A new Vice-Chair will be a member from the University of Sheffield. A new member appointed from the Academic Board at Sheffield Hallam University will join the Committee from 1 August. A vacancy for a member appointed by the Council of the University of Sheffield is currently being organised by Governance.

All three Units are in good health, recruitment as well as retention has gone very well, although there is still an issue with the cost of attending Freshers' Fairs. Opportunities for students' personal development and employability skills remain the priority.

Morale in the Units is very high. Students are offered opportunities to lead activities and events, including operational exercises and the Units are collaborating with each other and other areas of the University plus the wider communities.

A good number of Service Unit members from the Sheffield Universities have successfully completed the initial stages of Officer Training over the past year. The MEC

strongly feels that the students are to be commended for their achievements, and notes that this is an excellent example for current and future students.

In addition to their military based skills, students in the Service Units have also excelled themselves over the past year with Adventurous Training (AT) and sporting exercises, together with their charity and outreach work, which has represented both the Service Units and the Universities to an exemplary standard.

2. Matters Concerning Individual Service Units

2.1 Yorkshire Officer Training Regiment and Sheffield Universities' Officer Training Contingent

The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) continues to review the format and content of the Reserve commissioning course training syllabus, from which the UOTC training is drawn.

A review of the OTCs has progressed and their benefits and value for the Army are now very clear. 39% of those going to Sandhurst to the join the Regular Army and 65% gaining Reserve Commissions are drawn from the OTCs. This means there is no danger for OTCs as the Army does not know how it would recreate these statistics without them. The UTOC are keen to enhance the number of recruits for next year and are looking at streamlining medical and on-board processes so potential candidates do not fall at the first hurdle.

A key figure this year is the number of female non-core intenders who go on to commission into the Reserves, around 75%, which is significant.

Out of all the OTC's Sheffield has had the most reserved commissions over the last three years, 32 in total, 18-20 cadets have applied for selection this year.

A major change to the UOTC is that they will now wear blue berets as they are part of Sandhurst.

Financial constraints have improved and this means that all third years are encouraged to remain with the OTC until they finish their studies rather than removing those not committed to an Army Regular or Reserve commission.

Activities

37 Officer Cadets and staff took part in the regimental winter Adventurous Training (AT), Exercise Northern Dalesman Piste, an intensive alpine skiing expedition to Tignes, France. Cadets gained Ski Foundation 1 (SF1), SF2 and SF3 (Instructor level) qualifications during the exercise. Two cadets took part in a nine day climbing expedition to Corsica and had the chance of doing the RSF1 climbing qualification. Ten cadets visited Malta to take part in the regimental diving expedition, all cadets gained the BSAX Ocean Diver qualification.

The Sheffield UOTC once again took a prominent role in the Remembrance Parade at Weston Park in November 2018 with over 100 Officer Cadets in attendance. In addition, another group paraded with the main commemoration at the Cenotaph in Sheffield city centre. The 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings will take place in June. The Officer Cadets and Staff from Sheffield SUOTC will be forming the main body of the marching contingent.

Additional military activities included an opportunity to attend a pistol range day at Catterick in March and a familiarisation visit to Northumbria Police Firearms unit in April.

Other planned activities include the Annual Training Exercise at Otterburn and the Commissioning Parade taking place in June. The AT Concentration - Exercise Dalesman Wanderer in July will offer foundation level qualifications in summer mountaineering, mountain biking and rock climbing in Snowdonia as two one-week packages.

Realities of War opportunities took cadets to the Battle of Stoke Field in March and to a study of the battlefields around the Somme, Arras and Ypres in May to learn command and leadership, offensive and defensive planning, welfare and impact of conflict on the civilian populations.

Recruitment and Outreach

105 students attested to the Unit and were medically tested in October, which reduced numbers to 77. This represents a 73.3% retention rate compared to 66% the previous year. The Intermediate Division has sustained some losses due to more demanding university courses. The RMAS syllabus will switch focus to develop intellectual skills as part of learning the Orders and Estimate process.

Five cadets are expected to commission during the summer of 2019. Additionally, a strong cohort is being prepared for the 2020 summer course, possibly as high as 12 to commission. Since October 2018 seven 2Lts have transferred to Army Reserve units bringing the total to 12 for the year.

Leeds and Sheffield came together as a Regiment again for the most high profile event of the year, the Annual Formal Dinner at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. It gives cadets experience of formal dining, dressing suitably and hosting VIP dignitaries.

Cadets have raised £1500 for charity via various activities and donated to the Children's Hospital and the Army Benevolent Fund. Numbers of cadets donating blood are low but to encourage more, they are working with the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Charity and 30 cadets have registered.

2.2 Yorkshire Universities' Air Squadron

This year has been very successful again with 12 YUAS students entering Cranwell for Initial Officer Training since August 2018. The Squadron is also supporting the RAF's Elementary Flying Training for two RPAS pilots.

Cadets flying achievements include three First Solos and three Preliminary Flying Badges, two of which were from Sheffield.

A Defence Basing Review continues across all elements of the military. The Unit is based at Linton-on-Ouse which is set to close after the Tucano jet fighter ceases service in October 2019. There is still no notification of where they will be located. However, the future of the YUAS remains as assured as it can be.

There is a new RAF advert challenging the stereotypes of women, which has won a prize of £1 million worth of funding from Channel 4 Advertising. All areas of the RAF are now open to women.

Activities

The YUAS were the only uniformed Squadron to parade in Tadcaster for Remembrance Day. Cadets also participated in the University of Sheffield concourse parade.

New recruits began with a three-day induction camp in the Lake District in December 2018, there were activities such as mountain biking, orienteering and caving. Basic military skills training was undertaken including Health & Safety plus Fire and Police/Security. Easter Camp builds on induction and is the Initial Officer Training leadership lessons, incorporating inspections, discipline, drill and other things. Leadex is a field week deploying to Catterick for fieldwork, leadership and command tasks. Range camp is run by HQ RAF Cranwell: it covers leadership and weapons handling.

The majority of training includes flying. This is so expensive the RAF organises other activities for the students, which are mainly historical. The cadets visit key museums around the country to learn about campaigns and leadership.

Alpine leadership and team building took place in Austria giving several cadets the opportunity of gaining Ski Foundation 1 and 2 qualifications.

During summer the Leadex Exercise will take place which is leadership training, over five days in the field, pushing cadets out of their comfort zone. Also taking place is the 50th Anniversary celebration in August, where alumni from Yorkshire and current students will celebrate. Other expeditions over the summer will include mountain biking, climbing and kayaking. Some cadets will also be going on Joint Services Adventurous training.

A full team of Officers and Cadets will participate in the Nijmegen Marches in July, they will complete a series of endurance marches walking 113 miles over four days.

Recruitment and Outreach

The Squadron attended five of the affiliated university Freshers' Fairs with the exception of Bradford and Huddersfield, where again a military presence was not welcome. There continues to be an issue with the location of military stands at fairs.

The Squadron received a total of 184 applications. 46 students were formally interviewed with a final 30 invited to constitute 50 Course. Of the 30 selected, four are from the University of Sheffield and five from Sheffield Hallam University.

The student establishment is set at 75. This year they have recruited 27 new cadets, which includes nine from Sheffield bringing the total to 72 for this academic year. One or two more may join as they have received RAF bursaries from the Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre.

With regards to outreach, the Unit is involved in various charities, the Jon Egging Trust is one, cadets go out on community outreach to teach leadership and team-building exercises to pupils in schools. They go to the local Leonard Cheshire Disability Foundation to sit and chat with residents. The two main squadron charities they support are the RAF Benevolent Fund and the Yorkshire Air Ambulance. Sponsored runs are the main way of raising funds including Sheffield Half marathon. Two students will also be taking part in the Tour de Yorkshire.

2.3 Yorkshire Universities' Royal Naval Unit

This reporting period has been very successful again in terms of both core military training delivered and extra curriculum activities conducted such as charity fund raising, adventurous training and sport.

Activities

The Royal Navy syllabus remains very much co-ordinated towards deployment. Sea training is a highlight of the year with two deployments, one at Easter and another during the summer. The training ship is HMS Explorer, which is moored in Hull.

Easter deployment took place between 1st-26th April, HMS Explorer sailed around the UK including the Highlands of Scotland. The voyage included Squadex where all 14 P2000s come together for exercises. Summer Deployment will see cadets sailing around the south coast and across to Ireland returning through the Caledonia Canal.

During a week in late September 2018, cadets participated in Adventurous Training in the Scottish Highlands carrying out a range of activities including hill walking, climbing and kayaking. Other Adventurous Training exercises included a Coasteering Day in Scarborough and a more relaxed weekend in Lancashire culminating in a hike. In March cadets stayed at Bowley Scout camp to take part in low ropes, clay pigeon shooting and a hike around Pendle Hill. Mountain Units participated in a range of visits including one to HMS Audacious and another to RAF Coningsby for a tour of the Merlins with 802 Squadron.

The Annual Mess Dinner took place in Leeds on 24th November 2018. The event enables affiliates, military guests, alumni and university staff to meet current students. This year the guest of honour was Captain Mike Young MBE RN, a leader in coaching and mentoring in the Royal Navy.

A highlight of the year was the VIP Day on 26th February aboard HMS Explorer. Guests, including members of the Military Education Committee, spent a day sailing on the Humber. The cadets gave demonstrations of their duties on board.

The first weekend of March saw all 15 University Royal Navy Units participating in the Annual Sports Weekend at HMS Temeraire. Events included swimming, hockey, touch rugby, bucketball, netball and an 8x200m relay. Yorkshire won the bucketball beating arch-rivals Manchester!

Recruitment and Outreach

The URNU currently stands at maximum capacity of 51 Officer Cadets. The Unit did not receive as much interest as normal from Sheffield, mainly due to weather conditions on the day of Freshers' Fair. Targets were achieved as the YURNU recruits from Leeds and Hull. Overall, more interest came from Leeds this academic year.

In relation to outreach, the charities the cadets support are the Royal Navy Marines Charity and Sue Ryder. One fundraising activity is Charity Night, alumni, staff and family participate in horse racing activities. 20 cadets participated in the Yorkshire Warrior, a 10k obstacle course through mud. The total raised is around £2500.

For a second year, the YURNU kindly supplied the wreath for the Vice-Chancellor to lay at the University of Sheffield Remembrance Service held on 11th November 2018.

3. Conclusion

This report must, by necessity, only deliver a relatively narrow insight into the achievements of the Sheffield student members of the Service Units. The breadth and depth of development afforded to those students who participate in the Service Units helps to prepare them for their future, both in terms of life skills and employability. Being successful in the recruitment process, and consequently becoming a member of a Service Unit is an achievement in itself. Furthermore, the skills they learn within the Service Units are of great importance for their life after University. The Students involved with the Units display a maturity and level of professionalism that is a credit to the Universities at which they study, whilst still maintaining a sense of perspective and fun.

The Military Education Committee's role is to oversee the balance between the University and the Service Units and ensure that a conduit exists to extinguish any problems that arise. The Chair is very pleased to report that in the last twelve months, for the first time in several years, academic members of the Committee from both universities have visited all three units, to be better informed about activities by their commanders and to discuss the experiences and benefits of unit membership with Sheffield students. It goes without saying that this is immensely and mutually beneficial, and represents the key role and

responsibility of the MEC. It has been noted by Service Units themselves that they greatly appreciate this link and support provided by the Universities. The MEC has been able to deliver appropriate levels of support over the past year, and it is hoped this will continue into the future.

*Submitted by Mari Brazil
Secretary for the Military Education Committee*