

UNIVERSITIES OF SHEFFIELD MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEEAnnual Report for the Session 2015 – 2016

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 2015, 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 many structural and organisational changes for the Units as well as the MEC itself.

The structure of the MEC Committee has undergone renewal, with many committee members agreeing to continue for a further term on the committee. The MEC also saw The Chair, Mr. Michael Heselton step down and hand over Chairmanship to Professor Stephen Beck who will chair his inaugural meeting in October 2016. The committee also received a new Secretary, Miss Chloe-Eve Stentiford who began the role on September 2015, successfully completing the integration of the role into the University of Sheffield.

The Units themselves are in good health, having seen an increase in recruitment across the board, specifically from Sheffield. We are now entering a period where the focus for recruitment is changing. While the opportunities for students' personal development and employability skills remain the priority, Units are also considering options for the future that may encourage students who wish to pursue a career in the military, specifically in the reserves.

Morale in the units has reached an all-time high. Students are being provided with opportunities to lead activities and events, including operational exercises and the Units

are collaborating both with each other and other areas of the University and the wider communities in an unprecedented way.

A high 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 reports noted that the OTC had been successful in generating stronger relationships with both Universities throughout the past year which resulted in them having a much higher presence both on campus. This greatly assisted them in their recruitment period.

This year also saw the retirement of Lt Col Lisa Brooks and the arrival of Commanding Officer Lt Col Nick Thom for the SUOTC and Commanding Officer Colonel Jason Wright for the YOTR.

Activities

The Summer Expedition for 2015 was the Northern Cutlers' Climb Exercise which took place in the Triglav National Park in Slovenia. There were two rotations lasting 1 week each: Mountaineering and Rock Climbing. All 24 SUOTC participants gained their Summer Mountain Foundation qualification and many others were also able to complete their Rock Climbing Foundation qualification. The Cadets felt that the trip was the perfect opportunity to develop leadership skills, navigation skills and promote team work.

The Sheffield UOTC once again took a prominent role in the Remembrance Parade at Weston Park in November 2015. This Parade was followed by a curry lunch at Somme Barracks. The Parade is likely to take place again next year, however it will require more organisation as the future viability of the Barracks is being discussed. The Barracks are now owned by the University of Sheffield.

Since September 2015 the Officer Cadets have been following a directed Modular Training Programme designed by Sandhurst. The Off Cadets follow either Module A or Module B training route. Module A is taken by first year students and Module B is

taken by second year students. Both of these routes are a more improved pathway to commissioning should students wish to undertake a military career.

The Easter Break 6 day trip took place at the end of March 2016 giving 41 Off Cadets the opportunity to visit Berlin. 18 SUOTC attended this trip which gave them the opportunity to gain an in depth knowledge of pre and post war Berlin. The Off Cadets had a busy schedule, viewing the Arnhem Bridge, the Seelow Heights and visiting the Seelow Museum.

They also visited the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, the Commonwealth Memorial and the Karlshorst Museum. They took a trip to the Treptow Memorial Park and the Humboldt Flack Tower and went on to visit the largest bierkeller in Europe, Munchen Bierkeller.

The Cadets then viewed the Topography of Terror Museum, the Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie and had a VIP tour of the Reichstag.

Lastly, Annual Camp will take place from the 17th June to the 31st July 2016 in Thetford.

Recruitment and Outreach

Recruitment throughout the year 2015 – 2016 was very healthy which could potentially be due to access to both Universities which has been unlimited this year.

537 expressions of interest were received and 289 initial interviews were conducted at Somme Barracks. This resulted in 124 Officer Cadets who were eligible to receive medicals and be selected and enlisted into the unit. This was healthier than last year where only 103 were selected. This year, the recruitment equated to 70% from The University of Sheffield and 30% from Sheffield Hallam University.

Issues with recruitment retention rates appeared throughout this year however, as students were looking to balance their time with their studies more effectively or go on to pursue other interests. 17 Officer Cadets have been discharged and a further 13 are awaiting discharge.

The Unit also undertook the Cutlers' Hall Outreach activity in conjunction with The University of Sheffield Business School and Sheffield Hallam University Business School. This took place for the second year running and proved to be an effective way to raise awareness of the OTC within the Universities.

2.2 Yorkshire Universities' Air Squadron

Significant changes have been made in the YUAS this year as the system has now split from 3 FTS and will stand on its own as No. 6 FTS. The YUAS are very appreciative of all the support that they have received from the MEC throughout this transition period.

Activities

The YUAS Christmas Vacation Expedition took place in the form of their Lake District Adventurous Training (AT) Expedition. 8 students completed mountain biking and hill walking and achieved the necessary standards to complete further courses.

This year, the Unit also undertook Easter Camp, a compulsory field training activity to equip Cadets with basic survival skills. They completed Leadership Training days also to learn interview techniques, OASC familiarisation and logistical planning skills. They then undertook leadership tasks to test the techniques that they had learned.

The Cadets also attended Induction Camp, a 3 day AT Expedition, and Saturday Sports Days. Fitness took place in the morning followed by sports training in the afternoon. The Cadets stated that the exceptional facilities at Linton-on-Ouse allowed for a variety of fitness training and allowed for increased integration as all Cadets were able to train together.

In total, 8 solo flights have taken place this year and first year Cadets have been progressing rapidly with several reaching solar standard. The YUAS have now developed online training resources which Cadets can access to help them plan their YUAS training around their degree studies.

Recruitment and Outreach

Recruitment has gone well this year although there some issues with the presence of the YUAS wearing uniforms on campus. This did not cause problems for recruitment however and they encountered no problems during their attendance at the Activities Fair and the Sports Fair in The University of Sheffield.

Applicants for the YUAS were healthy with 166 applications and 69 gaining an invite to interview. Of the number recruited, 29 were from The University of Sheffield and 22 were from Sheffield Hallam University. The YUAS have been incredibly impressed with the number of Sheffield Hallam University students that are part of the YUAS.

The YUAS is keen to continue to promote a positive image of the RAF within the Universities as currently 1 in 4 students with the YUAS are currently applying for, or have received, a place at Cranwell to join the RAF post-graduation.

With regards to outreach, the YUAS Cadets raised over £8,000 for charity in the past year and completed 'Exercise Easter Bunny', where they gave Easter eggs to poorly children in hospital.

2.3 Yorkshire Universities' Royal Naval Unit

The YURNU have seen changes to their Service Unit Staffing structure throughout the past year, resulting in the appointment of Lt Cdr Christopher Pate as their new Commanding Officer for the MEC.

In June 2015, command of the URNU and HMS Explorer was split to ensure that maximum staff effort could be delivered into each of these roles without conflicting priorities. Whilst there were initial concerns from the Universities, the process has proved to be highly beneficial.

In addition, facilities for the YURNU have been upgraded this year as the refurbishment of Carr Lodge was completed in January 2016. The building was officially opened by HRH The Princess Royal in February 2016. The building is now an excellent training facility for Officer Cadets with an administration office, bar, mess, and accommodation unit.

Activities

The YURNU Summer 2015 activities largely revolved around their Summer Deployment, taking place from Saturday 13th June to Thursday 6th August 2015. Deployment saw the HMS Explorer meet with Manchester, Glasgow and Cambridge URNUs and deploy on a 5 phase tour of Northern Europe and the Baltic region. 44 students took part in the deployment, of which 11 were Sheffield Cadets.

Adventurous Training also took place during this time. 6 students undertook a 5 day parachuting course which resulted in 2 solo jumps from a plane. Furthermore, 8 students conducted a successful yachting expedition on the South East Coast of England.

The Unit held its Annual Mess Dinner on the 28th November 2015 at the University of Leeds. The main objective of the evening was to promote the URNU and host local dignitaries, affiliates and other military guests that assist the Yorkshire URNU throughout the year.

The Unit also completed a Sports Weekend that took place in Portsmouth from the 19th - 21st February 2016. There was a good turnout from the YURNU who reached the rugby semi finals.

The YURNU also undertook sea weekends in Hartlepool and Grimsby; completing different exercises such as 'man overboard' to test their skills in rescue.

In addition to this, the YURNU completed a successful Easter Deployment on HMS Explorer which took place from the 21st March to the 15th April 2016 to the South Coast of the UK, the Channel Islands and Northern France. Phase one began from the UK to France. Students completed only 3 sails throughout Phase One due to bad weather. The Off Cadets toured maritime museums, completed Physical Training (PT) and undertook personal leadership tasks on shore.

Phase Two began on the 28th March 2016, sailing to Roscoff, Brest, Guernsey and Plymouth. The Off Cadets undertook intense PT alongside other water activities. They also joined a 2 day Military Training Programme at the French Naval College in Brest.

Phase Three commenced in base before sailing to Hull and then on to Ramsgate. The Officer Cadets then sailed to London before sailing back to Lowestoft and then finally back to Hull in very difficult conditions.

The YURNU are also due to host the Queen who will tour HMS Explorer this Summer, after which, Summer deployments will begin at the end of June through to August. This deployment will tour the Baltics.

Recruitment and Outreach

With regards to recruitment, the YURNU received 850 expressions of interest and 45 interviews. This is a very good level of engagement, resulting in the recruitment of 19 candidates, of which 6 were from Sheffield Universities. The URNU currently stands at maximum capacity with 51 Officer Cadets.

In relation to outreach, the YURNU held a highly successful charity evening; their Annual Charity Horse Racing Night held on the 27th February 2016. The event was a great success and included cocktails, an auction and a raffle. In total the URNU raised £1,800 for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) and the Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST).

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

*Submitted by Chloe-Eve Stentiford
Secretary for the Military Education Committee*