

THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN and THE ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee on 30 November 2015

Present: Dr J Grieve (**Convener**, UoA), Professor I Broom (RGU), Mrs C Buchanan (RGU), Mr M Combe (UoA), Brigadier M Dodson (HRFCA), Lt Col P Fox (AUOTC), Mr Z Hickman (UoA), Mr J Lemon (HRFCA), Sgt L Powles (ESUAS), Mr J Wylie (UoA) and Ms Y Gordon (Clerk) with Ms J McKernan (Minute Secretary).

Apologies: Professor Sir I Diamond (UoA), Mr P Fantom (UoA), Brigadier P Harkness (51 Brigade Commander), Wing Commander BJO Kennedy (ESUAS), Prof S Klein (RGU), Squadron Leader I Torrance (ESUAS), Prof F Von Prondzynski (RGU), Dr P Zeigler (UoA).

MINUTES

1.1 The Committee approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 March 2015.

(copy filed as MEC/301115/01)

MATTERS ARISING

Representation for the North East Area Committee of the Highland Reserve Forces and Cadet Association (Minute 4.1 refers)

2.1 Mr Wylie volunteered to be the representative from the University of Aberdeen on the HRFCA. Robert Gordon University was still to discuss the matter and nominate a representative.

What our universities are looking for from their military formations?

2.2 The Convener said that he still felt it would be a good idea to undertake an exercise to re-evaluate what our universities are looking for from their military formations and how best to identify a profile that fits for Aberdeen.

2.3 Brigadier Dodson commented that the RFCA was not the engine for this exercise and it needed to come from the Universities themselves.

UNIT PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee considered and noted the reports from the Service Units:

AUOTC

3.1 Lt Col Fox provided the AUOTC report:

- Recruitment from the autumn term saw 70 new recruits with a second intake due in January 2016;
- The Unit move to the Gordon Barracks took 3 months and was completed in August;
- Training for the year included a summer camp to Sennybridge, Wales; rock climbing in Germany and Cadet training in Corsica with a skiing trip to France planned for the New Year. The cadets had been involved in a Battlefield tour for the Centenary year of U Coy at Hooge, Remembrance Parade and Aberdeenshire Fly a Flag Day.

ESUAS

3.2 Sgt Powles provided an update from the ESUAS:

- Cadets now had flying time throughout the whole year;
- Sqn Ldr Richards had left in the summer and Sqn Ldr Ian Torrance had replaced him in a temporary role until a permanent appointment was made;

- In the 2015/16 recruitment round there were 23 UoA candidates, 12 were offered interviews, 7 withdrew, with 4 successful, with another 1 inducted from RGU after 3 were offered a place;
- It was noted that there were still ongoing problems with the Medical provided by Capita, though minimal compared to last year;
- Training activities have included sailing in Lanzarote and Portugal; basic parachute training; bushcraft skills and kayaking with an onus on developing leadership and management skills. Any cadets joining the RAF from the UAS would have a slightly reduced training programme so as not to duplicate training that they already had;
- The Unit had changed its name from 3 FTS to 6 FTS (flying training squadron).

3.3 Mrs Buchanan queried the high number of applications that were withdrawn. Sgt Powles suggested this may be due to the geographical distance and felt that recruiting at Freshers Fairs may not be the most successful way of recruiting new cadets. It was noted that the Careers Service at both universities could help. It was not felt that the compressed term time at UoA had made any difference. The ESUAS was balancing 9 universities that all had slightly different term times.

MEC REVISED REMIT AND COMPOSITION

4.1 The Convener invited comments from committee members on the proposed changes to the remit of the Military Education Committee.

4.2 The Clerk explained that the University of Aberdeen had undertaken a Committees Review and the outcome was that the committee would no longer be a committee of the Senate. The Academic Registrars from both Universities had met to discuss how to take the committee forward, and had taken the opportunity to revise the remit to bring it more up to date. When doing this they reviewed remits from MECs around the UK and all bar Edinburgh had student representation on it. The change would bring Aberdeen in line with sector-wide practice.

4.3 The committee would now report to the *Student Experience Committee* at UoA and the *Learning Infrastructure Sub Committee* at RGU. These committees would then report to Senate and the Academic Council respectively.

4.4 A discussion ensued, the salient points were:

- i) The Convener felt that the proposed changes had come without warning, although he acknowledged that he had been invited to take part in the UoA's Committees Review discussions 2 years ago. Although not opposed to evolution of the committee he was disappointed with the draft remit which he felt had been ill thought through. His main objection was the potential lack of continuity regarding the proposal to change the Convener and Clerk on an annual basis. The committee met so infrequently that it could result in a new Convener for each meeting. The Committee agreed with the Convener, questioning the motivation behind the changes and were keen to seek further clarity.
- ii) Mr Lemon reported that he had consulted COMEC and they were against the Chair rotating, preferring fixed-term appointments and the opportunity for members to stand for re-election.
- iii) Mrs Buchanan thought that the review of committees had come about as part of a review of University Governance. She advised that the RGU Learning Infrastructure Committee (LISC), given its focus on the Student Experience, was the appropriate committee for consideration of MEC business as this in turn, reported to RGU's Academic Council which is the equivalent of the Senate of the University of Aberdeen.

- iv) The Convener welcomed the addition of student members to the committee but suggested this would need to be well thought out as the students would only be with their university a short time and wouldn't hold any executive power.
- v) Mr Combe asked whether constitutional procedures had been followed to permit such changes to the committee. Although the Clerk reported that she thought that correct procedures had been followed the Committee asked for this to be confirmed.
- vi) The committee questioned whether the changes were financially motivated. The Convener also questioned whether there would be support in the future for COMEC expenses to attend the annual conference, for prizes etc.
- vii) The committee questioned whether the two Principals had been consulted. Were they not included in the new remit because it was no longer to report directly to Senate and Academic Council?
- viii) The committee questioned whether the Student Presidents had been consulted and did they want to be a part of the committee?
- ix) The Convener felt it was unclear as to who would be appointed first, the new Convener or the Academic Members of Staff and where would these committee members come from? With regard to continuity the Clerk said that Mr Combe or Mr Wyllie could put themselves forward to continue on the committee but that members would be approved by the relevant committees, for UoA this would be the Student Experience Committee.

4.5 Committee members felt it would be useful to receive further information from the Academic Registrars on the reasoning behind the decision to amend the remit and the implementation of the proposed changes. It was felt that an additional meeting should be held in January with the Academic Registrars present.

[Note by Clerk: Following the meeting, the Academic Registrars agreed to meet with Professor Grieve and Mrs Buchanan to discuss the remit.]

ELPHINSTONE DEFENCE LECTURE 2016

- 5.1 The University of Aberdeen was to host the next Elphinstone Defence Lecture with a date to be settled in either February or March.
- 5.2 Suggested speakers included Ian Gordon, Norman Drummond following his involvement in the Centenary Programme. Cpt Nick Dorman would be unable to be the speaker for the 2016 lecture but may be available for 2017.

OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1 Brigadier Dodson updated the committee on funding issues that may affect the barracks with funding cuts to defence noting a £1.9 million backlog, with only £385,000 received.
- 6.2 The Convener thanked Lt Col Fox for hosting the committee.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 7.1 It was agreed that an interim meeting should be held in January to resolve the issues surrounding the new remit prior to the meeting held before the Defence Lecture.