

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN and THE ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY
MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Meeting held in the Robert Gordon University
on 1 December 2008**

Present:

Professors Salmon (Convener) and Flin, Dr Clarke, Dr Galbreath, Dr Grieve, Mr Lemon, Dr Page, Chief Petty Officer Alexander (representing Lieutenant Commander Wells), Lieutenant Colonel Wallace, Lieutenant Colonel Halford-McLeod (representing Lieutenant Colonel Southward), Lieutenant Commander Atkinson, Wing Commander Henderson (representing Colonel Miller); with Mr Duggan (Clerk)

Apologies:

Principals Rice and Pittilo, Professors Robertson and Alexander, Mrs Buchanan, Mr Fantom, Dr Molyneaux, Squadron Leader Ross, Brigadier Allfrey, Wing Commander Kennedy, Lieutenant Commander Wharrie.

The Convener invited members to introduce themselves and welcomed the following members who were attending for the first time: Dr Galbreath, Wing Commander Henderson, Chief Petty Officer Alexander.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Minutes

The Committee approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 December 2007
(copy filed as MEC08/1)

2. Unit Progress Reports

(a) URNU (copy filed as MEC08/2a)

CPO Alexander reported that the main drive in the earlier part of the session had been recruiting, as membership had declined to around 50% by the end of the session. 26 new members had been recruited, including 11 females, and the Unit now stood at its full complement of 51, with 3 Bursars. Two students had been recruited from Dundee, who had travelled to Aberdeen for training every Thursday evening. The summer deployment had been for 10 weeks, rather than 8, and had been very successful.

In terms of staff, it was hoped that the CO would extend for a further period; CPO Alexander was scheduled to be posted to *HMS Dragon*, before which he would have a handover, unusually, of 6 months with his successor.

The Convener indicated that he had attended a presentation at which the Director of Naval Operations had referred to the possibility of a presentation in Aberdeen in May/June 2009, with invited speakers and audience. CPO Alexander would look into that.

(b) OTC

(copy filed as MEC08/2b)

Colonel Wallace referred to the OTC's guest speakers, of which there had been 5 in recent months, including graduates with operational service in Iraq and Afghanistan: all had been well attended and some speakers had been very impressive. The next phase would include invitations to Committee members. The Convener welcomed that; he felt it was important for the units to engage with the Committee, as well as for the Committee to interact with units' student members.

Mr Lemon referred to a previous occasion on which URNU members had visited Commonwealth War Graves sites, which had proved a salutary experience – some members had found graves of relatives. He wondered whether such visits could include members from other units. Colonel Wallace indicated that such arrangements were currently on an informal basis; his hope was to look to make them more formal and thus possibly to include members from the other units.

Recruiting had been successful, with 91 officer cadets achieved. While overall, the result had been better than in previous years, the numbers from RGU had been less than in the past. Both universities had made provisions in January/February for "re-Freshers" arrangements and that had been, in part, a source of recruitment from second and third year students.

On the matter of seeking accreditation for the students' OTC activities, he was pleased to report that some focus had been achieved partly through the recruitment of a young captain who had recently left the army and who was "putting some meat on the bones" of the proposals. In the University of Aberdeen, he was soon to meet the Academic Registrar and the Head of the Business School to progress discussions. The plans had been very well received by the students and he hoped to have some thing concrete by, say, Easter 2009. It seemed likely that the Robert Gordon University discussions would result in a credit value of 40, additional to the degree requirements. In response to questions, he confirmed that the credits were intended to be additional to those achieved as part of a degree programme requirements and it appeared that Newcastle University was also going to adopt a similar scheme based on the paper produced on 20 Jan 08 by CO AUOTC. The Convener referred to current discussions in Aberdeen on the question of additional information being included in University transcripts, providing evidence of other achievements, such as participation in the units' activities.

Colonel Wallace reported that the OTC had won the inter-OTC competition, *Northern Lights* – and had done so comprehensively. The competition would be held in Ballykinler in Northern Ireland, in March 2009: he hoped that his successor would be able to report a similar success at the Committee's next meeting.

He also referred to the OTC's considerable involvement in the Veterans' Parade in Aberdeen, which had been very successful. A repeat performance was scheduled for 27 June 2009, with the aim of having 1,500 taking part in the parade.

(c) UAS

(copy filed as MEC08/2c)

In the absence of the OC, the Committee noted the report.

The Convener referred to his recently meeting a former student of his, who had attended the King's Remembrance Sunday service and parade and who was a prime example of a graduate, now with the Foreign Office, whose academic achievements had been supported by his extra-curricular activities, mainly as a member of the UAS.

3. COMEC

The Annual General Meeting of the Council of Military Education Committees had been held at **RAF College, Cranwell, Lincolnshire** between **Wednesday 10** and **Friday 12 September 2008**. Mr Lemon had attended: his report was enclosed. *(copy filed as MEC08/3)*

Mr Lemon reported that his main impression, at his first attendance at a COMEC AGM, was of the differing approaches by the academic and services worlds. He noted that the RAF had appointed a Dean of Education, highlighting the forces' regard for academic achievement and their need to focus on the training and education of future officers.

A presentation by a subaltern recently at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) had been impressive and those present had been humbled by the description of the work undertaken by a former student, then in training at RMAS, who had been awarded the COMEC prize. He had also been impressed, at the visit to a joint exercise on the final day, by the young people who were involved.

He reported that the 2009 COMEC AGM would be a week earlier than in past years, as had been requested by several MECs, and would be based at RMAS.

4. REVIEW OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURES

The Committee was invited to consider its primary role, as referred to in the enclosed papers. *(copy filed as MEC08/4, 4A)*

After some discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk should report to Committee's views:

- (i) that the Committee should continue its existence;
- (ii) that, in terms specifically of its detailed remit, its role was functional and, to an extent, strategic;
- (iii) that, less formally, its role as a joint body of the two Universities was important;
- (iv) that it should continue with its current membership and reporting lines.

FOR ROUTINE APPROVAL

5. Date of Next Meeting

In accordance with the regular schedule of meetings of major Committees in the University of Aberdeen, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 7 December 2009 at 11.30 am. The meeting was scheduled to be hosted by the University of Aberdeen.

It was further agreed that the Elphinstone Defence Lecture 2008/09 would be held on Wednesday 18th February 2009, in the Robert Gordon University. The lecture would be given by Lord Alderdice: "*Hearts and Minds*" - *The Soldier in the Peacekeeping Role (how do soldiers effect the transition from "Warrior" to "peacekeeper?")*". A brief "pen picture" of Lord Alderdice was enclosed. *(copy filed as MEC08/5)*

FOR INFORMATION

6. Changes in Command

AUOTC

As intimated at the previous meeting, Colonel Wallace's successor, from June 2009 would be Lieutenant Colonel MR Wardner MERCIAN.

7. Committee Remit

The following remit was approved in 1993 by the Court and Senate of the University of Aberdeen and by the Academic Council and the Board of Governors of the Robert Gordon University:

- (a) To direct the policy of the Officer Training Corps, the Air Squadron and Royal Naval Unit (the three Service Units) within the University of Aberdeen and the Robert Gordon University (the Aberdeen Universities).
- (b) To co-operate and liaise with the Ministry of Defence in all service matters affecting the Universities.
- (c) To encourage the study of National Defence within the Universities and to secure Military Science its due place in University studies.
- (d) To ensure that the time spent by students with the Service Units is not to the detriment of their academic studies.
- (e) To promote instruction and training for candidates for commissions in the Armed Services.
- (f) To foster an interest in, and an understanding of, the Armed Services and to provide leadership training in a military environment.
- (g) To approve recommendations for the posts of Commanding Officers of the three Service Units.

8. Membership

The relevant bodies of the Universities also agreed on the following composition (current members indicated):

The University of Aberdeen

Court	Principal and 3 nominees: (Professor Meston, Dr Molyneaux, Mr Fantom)
Senate	6 nominees: (Professors Flin and Salmon, Dr Clarke, Dr Grieve, Dr Page, Mr Lemon)

The Robert Gordon University

Board of Governors	Principal and 1 nominee (Professor Alexander)
Academic Council	3 nominees (Professor Robertson, Mrs Buchanan, [<i>vacancy</i>])

Ex Officiis

CO OTC	Lieutenant Colonel Wallace
OIC URNU	Lieutenant Wells
OC UAS	Squadron Leader Ross
Commander, 51 Brigade	Brigadier Allfrey
Highland RFCA	Colonel Miller
Nominee, FOSNNI	Lieutenant Commander G Atkinson
University Liaison Officers:	
Army	Lieutenant Colonel Southward
Navy	Lieutenant Commander Wharrie
RAF	Wing Commander Kennedy

9. Elphinstone Defence Lecture 2007/08

The Elphinstone Defence Lecture had taken place on Tuesday 19 February 2008, in the University of Aberdeen. The lecture was given by Professor J Ryan OstJ, MB, MCh, FRCS, DMCC, Hon FFAEM, Leonard Cheshire of Conflict Recovery and recently-retired Professor of Surgery, University College Hospital, London, whose topic was '*Conflict Medicine – A Neglected Challenge*'.

10. Unit Invitations

The service units extended an invitation to Committee members to visit, as follows:

URNU: Sea Days, 23 May and 30 May 2008;
 Annual Cocktail Party, 6 March 2008;
 Trafalgar Night Dinner, 23 October 2008.

OTC: MEC Dinner 17 September 2008.

UAS: Annual Dinner, 18 April 2008;
 Annual Inspection - lunch, 4 June 2008.

11. Other Business

- a. The Convener asked for an indication of the numbers of student members in the Units from each of the two Universities. CPO Alexander indicated that around 20 of the 51 officer cadets and midshipmen were from the Robert Gordon University; Colonel Wallace confirmed his disappointment at a current figure of around 10% from RGU in the OTC.

- b. Mr Lemon referred to a previous practice of recruiting officers for the Units from staff of the Universities; unfortunately, in a time of requirements for greater experience and training for such posts, that was very unlikely.
- c. Colonel Wallace wondered whether it might be possible for the Units to brief Advisers of Studies, or equivalent University staff, to underline the Units' clear view of the need for student to have responsibility both for their studies and for unit activities; Mr Lemon felt the same applied to the URNU and agreed that such 'familiarisation' activities would be mutually beneficial. It was agreed to pursue the matter further.