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NORTHUMBRIAN UNIVERSITIES MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (NUMEC)

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Background

The Armed Forces sponsor three designated University Service Units to serve the five universities in the North East:

- Northumbrian Universities Royal Naval Unit (NURNU)
- Northumbrian Universities Officer Training Corps (NUOTC)
- Northumbrian Universities Air Squadron (NUAS)

The mission of the service units is to develop the leadership and management skills of selected university students, thereby enhancing their potential as future officers in the armed forces, or as leaders in their chosen future professions.

Following the purpose laid down in the Haldane report (1908), the Northumbrian Universities Military Education Committee (NUMEC) oversees the work of the service units and represents the combined interests of the region's higher education institutions (Newcastle, Durham, Northumbria, Sunderland, Teesside) in liaising with them and providing advice and support. The primary aims of the committee are as follows:

(i) to encourage the study of defence-related issues within the constituent universities;

(ii) to promote the selection, instruction and training of candidates for Commissions in the Regular and Reserve Forces;

(iii) to co-operate with the Ministry of Defence in all Service matters affecting the universities;

(iv) to ensure that the time spent by undergraduates enrolled in a Service contingent is not to the detriment of their academic studies;

(v) to encourage liaison between the university Service contingents and the Regular and Reserve Forces at regional level;

(vi) to report via the Senates to the Councils of the universities, or their equivalent statutory bodies, on all matters which require their financial consideration, and all matters which affect the roles of the Service Units in the universities.

NUMEC members include the Commanding Officers of each service unit, and academic and professional service colleagues appointed by each university. The committee normally holds two formal meetings annually. Additional informal visits to the service units are arranged on an opportunity basis. Each university pays a small annual subscription. The Committee is serviced by Newcastle University which is also responsible for organising the Annual Defence Lecture as part of the University's Insights Public Lectures series.

NUMEC Activities in 2025-26

The committee held formal meetings on two occasions. Both meeting were held at Newcastle University, on 6 February and 10 June 2026. The Committee received update reports from the service units on their activities throughout the year, commending the opportunities provided for Officer Cadets, and also giving occasion to discuss areas of mutual interest. Amongst the topics discussed at MEC meetings were ways in which universities could support the Officer Cadet recruitment pipeline, how to facilitate unit access to Freshers' Fairs, student representation at MEC meetings, the Defence Universities Alliance, and the role and purpose of the Council of Military Education Committees (COMEC).

MEC member Professor Katharine Wright was elected as a member of the COMEC Executive.

The MEC visited the RAF Fylingdales radar station in North Yorkshire on 6 November 2025.

Services of Remembrance were held in the Newcastle University Armstrong Quadrangle, and at Durham Cathedral, on Sunday 8 November 2025. The University of Sunderland marked Armistice Day on Tuesday 11th November 2025 with a remembrance service at the Sunderland Veterans' Garden, on its City Campus.

The University of Sunderland continues as a key member of the Sunderland Armed Forces Partnership (AFP), which brings together the Council, University, Sunderland College, Sunderland AFC, Veterans in Crisis and Northumbria Police as well as other organisations to support veterans, reservists and military families across the city.

Professor Wright and Dr Colin Campbell (Chair of NUMEC) attended the annual COMEC AGM and Conference in Edinburgh on 28/29 November 2025.

Professor Wright hosted a programme of presentations by students following the Newcastle University 'Problem Solving for Defence' (Hacking4MoD) module on 9 December 2025. Topics included 'Innovative Pathways to Keep Women, Peace & Security a Priority at NATO' and 'Understanding Public Attitudes Towards Societal Mobilisation',

A number of NUMEC members, service unit representatives and officer cadets attended the NUMEC Annual Defence Lecture, held at Newcastle University on 5 February 2026, and given by the broadcaster and journalist Iain Martin with the subject 'The end of the holiday from history'.

The NUMEC Secretary attended the Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association for the North of England Annual General Meeting, which took place at Anzio House on 27 March 2026.

Next steps

The Committee will continue with its range of formal and informal engagements with the Service Units with a view to involving University representatives throughout the region. Strengthening interaction with and support for students remains a primary ongoing objective, and further opportunities for engagement with Officer Cadets in training will be explored.

Dr Simon Meacher
Head of Executive and Governance Office, Newcastle University
On behalf of NUMEC

October 2026