

NORTHUMBRIAN UNIVERSITIES MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (NUMEC)

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

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 2024-25

The committee met formally once, at Newcastle University on 7 October 2024. The Committee received a stimulating presentation from representatives from RAF Fylingdales and UK Space Command.

Services of Remembrance were held in the Newcastle University Armstrong Quadrangle, and at Durham Cathedral, on Sunday 10 November 2024.

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 4 April 2025.

A number of NUMEC members, and a large number of service unit representatives and officer cadets in uniform, attended the NUMEC Annual Defence Lecture, held at Newcastle University on 13 February 2025, and given by General Sir Patrick Sanders with the subject 'Defending the UK in unprecedented times'.

Dr Jon Warren (member of NUMEC from Durham University), attended the Northumbrian Universities Air Squadron Annual Visit on 4 April 2025.

On 8 May 2025, the NUMEC Chair and Secretary, together with the CE of NERFCA attended a programme of presentations by students following the Newcastle University Problem Solving for Defence (Hacking 4 MoD) module. Representatives from NUOTC, Queen's UOTC and the MoD Human Security Unit were also present.

On 14 July 2025, Northumbria University hosted MEC representatives at a "fireside chat" with General Dame Sharon Nesmith (Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff) who they awarded an Honorary Doctorate.

Finally, MEC members contributed to the Council of Military Education Committee's survey on purpose and effectiveness, and the Secretary attended a follow-up meeting to discuss the survey results. Dr Katharine Wright (Newcastle University) has been elected onto the COMEC Executive Committee, which will help with the MEC's ability to influence policy and the sharing of good practice.

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.

With effect from summer 2025, new Commanding Officers have taken charge at NUOTC and NURN. The MEC Secretary and Dr Katharine Wright attended an onboarding meeting at St Cuthbert's Keep on 27 August 2025, and the Secretary had an introductory meeting with the incoming CO of NURN at HMS Calliope on 9 September 2025.

A MEC visit to RAF Fylingdales will take place on 6 November 2025.

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

October 2025