

CHAPTER I

The University Armed Service Units: Background and Context

This chapter introduces the university armed service units (hereafter USUs), and the reasons for studying them. It outlines the key features and missions of the three service units, the Officer Training Corps (OTC), the University Air Squadrons (UAS) and the University Royal Naval Units (URNU), and introduces the Military Education Committees (MEC). It provides an overview of the higher education sector in the UK, the context in which USU participation takes place. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the key policy issues currently facing the USUs, and outlines the structure of the book.

1.1 Introducing the university armed service units

1.1.1. *What are the university armed service units?*

The USUs comprise the OTC, UAS and URNU.¹ These units are overseen and managed through their respective parent services, the British Army, the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Navy, and funded through public expenditure via the defence budget. The USUs exist to provide military training and an experience of military life to students attending UK universities. Participation is open to British and Commonwealth students, and is selective, subject to specific medical and physical criteria. Participation is paid, but does not involve payment or subsidy of university tuition fees. Students who join a USU do

¹ See Note on terminology.

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so voluntarily, can leave at any time, and are under no obligation to join the armed forces when they graduate from university. Participation takes the form of weekly attendance at drill nights, and activities undertaken at weekends and during university vacations, which involve a combination of specific training activities (including land-based exercises for the OTC, flying for the UAS or ship-based activities for the URNU) and adventurous training opportunities in the UK and overseas. Although encouraged, it is not a requirement that cadets attend every drill night or weekend, though many do.

As of 1 April 2014, Ministry of Defence (MoD) statistics record a total of 6,370 students enlisted across the USUs: 4,420 in the OTC, 1,090 in the UAS and 850 in the URNU.² To put this into context, the total UK student population in the academic year 2013–14 (the most recent figures available) was 2,299,355, comprising 1,759,915 students registered for undergraduate degrees, commonly Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Sciences (BSc), and 539,440 students registered for postgraduate degrees at a Masters of Arts or Sciences level (MA, MSc) or for a Masters or Doctor of Philosophy degree (MPhil, PhD).³ USU members comprise around 0.28% of the total UK student population, a very small percentage of this group.

USU members are enlisted as Category B reservists but cannot be mobilised for active service. They are considered as part of the total strength of the UK armed forces in some iterations of MoD statistics, although not all. As of September 2014, the total strength of the UK armed forces, including trained and untrained, Regular, full-time and Reserve personnel (but excluding OTC, UAS and URNU participants), was 195,980 (120,800 for the British Army, 37,170 for the RAF and 38,020 for the Royal Navy).⁴ As with the UK student population, USU members are a minority organisation, one-thirtieth the size of the full UK armed forces, although this proportion is likely to have grown over the past decade with the overall reduction in the size of the armed forces.

1.1.2. *Why study the university armed service units?*

It could be argued, given the relatively small size of the USUs relative to both the UK student population and the UK armed forces, that this is a minor, possibly even insignificant organisation in terms of the wider interests of the defence and higher education sectors, and wider debates about student experience and

² **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *TSP7 UK Reserve Forces and Cadets*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314795/uk_reserve_force_cadets_2014.pdf

³ **Higher Education Statistics Agency.** (2015). *Statistical First Release 210*. Retrieved from <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/stats>

⁴ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *UK Armed Forces Quarterly Personnel Report (1st October 2014)*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/373115/af-quarterly_personnel_report_oct14.pdf

student employability. We disagree. The USUs are significant and merit scrutiny for the following reasons.

First, the UK armed forces are undergoing a substantial programme of restructuring in the wake of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and the Future Force 2020 programme, and anticipate further changes with the anticipated 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, which is under development at time of writing.⁵ The longer history of the units suggests that their planning, organisation and strategic development has always been closely tied to wider UK defence structures and objectives. Given current debates about the size, structure and function of the UK armed forces under conditions of tight public expenditure controls, and given that the USUs are part of the wider UK defence picture in that they are maintained by the three parent armed forces, there is a case for close scrutiny of the value of the USUs as part of the wider debate on the future structure of the armed forces.

Second, knowledge and understanding of the role and function of USUs, and of the nature of the USU experience for participants, is uneven within the armed forces. Those with experience of USU command, or indeed personal experience of membership as students themselves, will be alert to the existence and function of the units. There is reason to believe that within the wider defence community in the armed forces and MoD, knowledge of the units, what they do and what their value might be, is not as widely shared. This book is our contribution to expanding the knowledge base within that defence community.

Third, the UK higher education sector is also undergoing a period of quite distinct structural change. Specific initiatives include the recent introduction of payment of full tuition fees by undergraduate students (up to £9,000 per year for full-time study, at time of writing), coupled with the development of broader moves within higher education to make explicit the value of graduate-level skills and the demonstrable employability of graduates. Such developments have in turn introduced a greater awareness across the sector and within higher education institutions of the need to make explicit the value of a university degree. This broader debate about the value of a degree necessarily needs to include informed understanding about the full range of activities undertaken by students, and the benefits that these activities may bring to their employability. So whilst USU participation may be a minority pursuit within the UK student body, there is evidence that an understanding of the USUs brings an

⁵ For a summary of changes initiated and proposed under the Future Force 2020 plans, see https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62487/Factsheet5-Future-Force-2020.pdf. A key element of the Future Force 2020 plans is a restructuring of the Reserves, including a significant increase in the size of the Army Reserve (formerly the Territorial Army) to a trained strength of 30,000, 1,800 for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and 3,100 for the Maritime Reserves. These proposals were set out in the Government White Paper: **Ministry of Defence**. (2013). *Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued* (Cm 8655). Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210470/Cm8655-web_FINAL.pdf

additional and potentially valuable contribution to that wider debate. We are also alert to the potential utility of this book in raising awareness of the existence and core functions of the units within the higher education sector more generally, where informed knowledge amongst academics, administrators and students is unevenly distributed, and sometimes non-existent.

Fourth, despite their long history (the OTCs were first established in 1908, and some units trace their origins back over much longer timescales) there have, to date, been very few published accounts of the units.⁶ This book is an attempt to fill that gap. It is also worth noting that for those involved with USU organisation and administration, and for their participants, the units can be a very significant element of their university or military career. Furthermore, given the long history of some units, and the continual throughput of students within the units over time, what looks initially to be a pursuit undertaken by a very small proportion of students is in fact a far more widely-shared experience than per annum participation numbers initially suggest. Therefore this book provides both a knowledge base about the current state of a much older organisation, and a summary of the units and the unit experience for a wider interested readership who may have previous or current experience of unit participation.

Finally, there are any number of anecdotal understandings about the units which have informed the genesis of the research underpinning this book, and which merit investigation in their own right. These include: questions about the reach (or otherwise) of the units across the higher education sector, including the question of the disproportionate inclusion of students from elite or Russell Group universities; considerations of whether USU graduates have a greater chance of success in the graduate labour market; interest in the significance of the USU experience for those seeking careers in the armed forces; questions about employer awareness of the units; what the experience may bring to graduates; questions about the influence of USU graduates in civil society as they pursue non-military careers after university; questions about whether USU participation is, could or should be included in mechanisms formally recording student activities whilst at university and questions about whether the USUs constitute a form of militarisation of universities.

This book does not constitute a formal assessment of the USUs for strategic defence planning purposes, and has been produced independently of the UK MoD (which funds the USUs) and the three armed forces. Neither does it constitute a formal evaluation of the skills and employability aspects of USUs for the purposes of university audit, or an assessment of the USUs for the purposes of

⁶ See **Strachan, H.** (1976). *The History of the Cambridge University Officer Training Corps*. Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books; **Mileham, P.** (2012). *University Service Units: What are they really for?* (Council of Military Education Committees of United Kingdom Universities occasional paper no. 1). Retrieved from http://www.comec.org.uk/documents/occasional_paper_no_1_small_file1.pdf; **Harrop, M. D.** (2013). *The University Air Squadrons: A valuable organisation and an organisation that adds value?* (Unpublished MSc thesis, Cranfield University, Bedford).

student-centred organisations. However, it has been written with a view to its potential utility in informing current debates on the future role, purpose, impact and organisation of the units across the defence and higher education sectors.

1.2 The university armed service units missions

1.2.1 *The Officer Training Corps*

‘The mission of the UOTC is to develop the leadership potential of selected university students and raise awareness of the Army ethos. Each UOTC is an independent [unit] with its own cap badge, customs and traditions. Members of the UOTC are paid to participate in training activities, but have no obligation to join the Armed Forces when they leave.’⁷

The OTC is the largest of the three service units, with a membership of 4,420 in 2014. The size of the OTC nationally has remained fairly constant over the past decade.⁸ There are 18 units in total; some include multiple sub-units to account for geographical distance between units. One of the 18 (Yorkshire) is designated an Officer Training Regiment (OTR) following proposals from an internal OTC review (the Roskelly Study) in 2010. Originally structured as two separate OTCs, the Yorkshire OTR was stood up in 2011, combining Sheffield and Leeds OTCs.⁹ The units and their participating universities are listed in Table 1.1. OTC units range in size from around 120 to over 400 actual strength.

As Table 1.1 shows, all OTCs take students from a number of different universities. Unit catchment areas can be geographically large, and some OTCs have local detachments to facilitate participation from geographically distant universities within a region or across federal universities (for example, London and Wales OTCs). It is also significant that each unit takes students, potentially at least, from universities across the range of providers in the higher education sector (see 1.3.2. below). So whilst all units offer a broadly similar training programme, they do so to a potentially diverse range of students. Units will not necessarily have, in any one year, students from all the universities listed in Table 1.1. Also, access to units by students from different universities will be uneven in terms of travelling distance.

⁷ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *TSP7 UK Reserve Forces and Cadets*, pp. 28. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314795/uk_reserve_force_cadets_2014.pdf. Omission of ‘unit’ in original text.

⁸ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *TSP7 UK Reserve Forces and Cadets* gives figures of 4,700 for 2004, 4,140 for 2010, 4,120 for 2011, 4,360 for 2012 and 4,400 for 2013, with the cautionary note that a discontinuity in the time series means that figures for the pre-2012 period include support and training staff, and from 2012 includes students only.

⁹ Although a second OTR for the North West of England was proposed through the merger of the Manchester & Salford and Liverpool OTCs, these two OTCs remain as distinct units.

Unit name	Participating Universities ¹
Aberdeen UOTC	University of Aberdeen Robert Gordon University
Birmingham UOTC	Aston University Birmingham City University University of Birmingham Coventry University Harper Adams University Keele University Newman University Staffordshire University University College Birmingham University of Warwick University of Wolverhampton University of Worcester
Bristol UOTC	University of Bath Bath Spa University University of Bristol University of the West of England
Cambridge UOTC	Anglia Ruskin University University of Cambridge University of East Anglia University of Essex University of Hertfordshire Bedfordshire University
City of Edinburgh UOTC	University of Edinburgh Edinburgh Napier University Heriot-Watt University Queen Margaret University
East Midlands UOTC	De Montfort University University of Derby University of Leicester University of Lincoln Loughborough University University of Northampton University of Nottingham Nottingham Trent University
Exeter UOTC	University of Exeter Peninsular College of Medicine and Dentistry (Plymouth) Plymouth University University of St Mark and St John Plymouth

Unit name	Participating Universities¹
Glasgow & Strathclyde UOTC	University of Glasgow Glasgow Caledonian University University of Strathclyde University of the West of Scotland
Liverpool UOTC (includes both Liverpool and Lancaster detachments)	University of Chester (Warrington campus) University of Cumbria Edge Hill University Lancaster University University of Liverpool Liverpool Hope University Liverpool John Moores University University of Central Lancashire
Manchester & Salford UOTC	University of Manchester Manchester Metropolitan University University of Salford
Northumbrian UOTC	Durham University Newcastle University Northumbria University University of Sunderland Teesside University
Oxford UOTC	University of Buckingham Cranfield University University of Gloucestershire University of Oxford Oxford Brookes University University of Reading Royal Agricultural University Cirencester
Queen's UOTC (Belfast)	College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise Queen's University Belfast University of Ulster
Southampton UOTC (includes Brighton detachment)	Bournemouth University University of Brighton University of Chichester University of Portsmouth University of Southampton Southampton Solent University University of Sussex University of Winchester
Tayforth UOTC (detachments in Dundee, St Andrews and Stirling)	Abertay University University of Dundee University of St Andrews University of Stirling

(Continued)

Unit name	Participating Universities ¹
University of London UOTC (includes Canterbury Company)	Includes the colleges and institutes of the federal University of London ² Brunel University Canterbury Christchurch University City University London University of Greenwich University of Kent Kingston University St Mary's University
Wales UOTC (Detachments in Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham)	Aberystwyth University Bangor University Cardiff University Cardiff Metropolitan University University of Chester (Chester campus) Glyndŵr University Swansea University University of South Wales University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Yorkshire Officer Training Regiment (detachments in Leeds, Sheffield and York)	University of Huddersfield University of Hull University of Leeds Leeds Beckett University University of Sheffield Sheffield Hallam University University of York York St John University

Table 1.1: Officer Training Corps units and participating universities.

¹ The university titles given are the trading names of the institutions concerned as of February 2014.

² Birkbeck, University of London; Courtauld Institute of Art; Goldsmiths, University of London; Heythrop College; The Institute of Cancer Research; King's College London; London Business School; London School of Economics and Political Science; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Queen Mary University of London; Royal Academy of Music; The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama; Royal Holloway, University of London; Royal Veterinary College; St George's, University of London; School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London; University College London; School of Advanced Study, University of London.

OTCs follow a standardised training syllabus laid down by the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. In year one, students complete basic training (known as MOD1) which covers key military skills including drill, map reading and field craft, as well as weapons handling, camouflage techniques and first aid training, and includes a number of exercises and often an extended training visit to a British Army base. In year two, students progress to leadership training (known

as MOD2) which focuses on learning to manage small groups of officer cadets, organising and planning battlefield tactics, giving orders and debriefing after exercises. Both MOD1 and MOD2 are assessed and students are required to pass a series of written and practical exercises in order to progress satisfactorily. In year three, students can be chosen to take on additional responsibilities as senior cadets, leading platoons and providing some training for more junior students.¹⁰

1.2.2. *University Air Squadrons*

‘University Air Squadrons (UAS) offer flying training to undergraduates and a chance to experience life in the Royal Air Force. Undergraduates are paid for any training activities they take part in, however there is no obligation to sign up to the Royal Air Force upon graduation.’¹¹

In 2014, 1,090 students were enlisted into UAS units, and numbers have been broadly stable over the previous decade.¹² There are 14 UAS units in the UK. Potentially, students from any of the universities listed below can participate in a UAS unit, although geographical distance and ease of access may be a factor shaping participation. Each UAS takes around 70 students. Table 1.2 lists the units, their locations for air training and participating universities.

Although there are fewer UAS than OTC units, they are distributed across the full extent of the UK, with 2 squadrons operating in Scotland, 1 in Wales and 11 in England. Of course, access to an airfield is not as even as the location of universities, and thus in some cases, UAS are located in cities that are tens of miles from their home airfield (London UAS for example). However, all UAS offer a weekly meeting, usually at a location close to their home city, with weekend visits to the airfield that houses their aircraft. The UAS fly Grob training aircraft and students can participate in flight training, although this element has been reduced in recent years and students are no longer streamed as air or ground trade officer cadets. This means that all UAS participants can receive flying training, although limits in the availability of suitably qualified personnel to support UAS flying instruction has limited the amount of flying each student is able to undertake to 10 hours per year.¹³

¹⁰ For further details, see the UOTC Military Training information on the British Army website, available at: <http://www.army.mod.uk/UOTC/32104.aspx>

¹¹ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *TSP7 UK Reserve Forces and Cadets*, pp.28. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314795/uk_reserve_force_cadets_2014.pdf

¹² **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *TSP7 UK Reserve Forces and Cadets* gives figures of 1,030 for 2004, 1,200 for 2010, 1,080 for 2011, 1,100 for 2012 and 1,110 for 2013.

¹³ Details on the University Air Squadrons are available at: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/universityairsquadrons/aboutus/>

University Air Squadron	Training location	Participating Universities
Birmingham UAS	RAF Cosford	Aston University University of Birmingham Birmingham City University Coventry University Keele University Staffordshire University Warwick University University of Wolverhampton
Bristol UAS	Colerne Airfield	University of Bristol University of the West of England University of Bath University of Exeter University of Plymouth
Cambridge UAS	RAF Wyton	Cambridge University Anglia Ruskin University University of Essex University of East Anglia
East Midlands UAS	RAF Cranwell	Nottingham University Nottingham Trent University Loughborough University Leicester University De Montfort University University of Lincoln
East of Scotland UAS	RAF Leuchars	The University of Aberdeen University of Abertay [Dundee] Edinburgh Napier University University of Edinburgh Heriot Watt University Robert Gordon University The University of St Andrews The University of Dundee Queen Margaret University
Glasgow & Strathclyde UAS	Prestwick Airport	Glasgow University University of Strathclyde University of Stirling Glasgow School of Art Glasgow Caledonian University University of the West of Scotland
Liverpool UAS	RAF Woodvale	Bangor University University of Chester University of Cumbria Edge Hill University Glyndwr University

University Air Squadron	Training location	Participating Universities
		Lancaster University University of Central Lancashire University of Liverpool Liverpool John Moores University Liverpool Hope University
London UAS	RAF Wittering	University of London (all colleges) University of Kent
Manchester & Salford UAS	RAF Woodvale	University of Manchester Manchester Metropolitan University Queen's University Belfast Salford University
Northumbrian UAS	RAF Leeming	Durham University Newcastle University Northumbria University Sunderland University Teesside University
Oxford UAS	RAF Benson	Oxford University Oxford Brookes University Reading University
Southampton UAS	MoD Boscombe Down	Bournemouth University Portsmouth University Southampton University Southampton Solent University
Yorkshire UAS	RAF Linton-on-Ouse	Leeds College of Music Leeds Metropolitan University Sheffield Hallam University University of Bradford University of Huddersfield The University of Hull University of Leeds University of Sheffield University of York York St John University
Wales UAS	MoD St Athan	Aberystwyth University Cardiff University Cardiff Metropolitan University University of Wales Trinity Saint David University of South Wales

Table 1.2: University Air Squadrons, training locations and participating universities.

The first UAS were set up in 1925 to provide initial flying training for would-be RAF pilots.¹⁴ Whilst this remit still exists to an extent, the range of activities offered by UAS now extends to cover not only basic military training and procedures and RAF-specific training relating to both aircrew and ground-based roles, but also includes adventurous training and a range of sporting activities, as well as annual camps and opportunities to visit RAF stations. Officer cadets in the UAS are officially members of the RAF volunteer reserve, but are under no obligation to join the RAF, nor can they be deployed during their university careers.

1.2.3. *University Royal Naval Units (URNU)*

‘The aim of the URNU is to provide an insight into Naval life for undergraduates. Each URNU has land based facilities close to the university plus a dedicated training vessel. Members get paid for any training activities they participate in, however there is no obligation to join the Naval Service upon graduation.’¹⁵

There are 14 University Royal Naval Units, with 850 enlisted students in 2014.¹⁶ Although historic figures are unavailable, anecdotal evidence suggests that, as with the OTC and UAS, total URNU strength has remained stable over the past decade. Historically, the URNU has not seen recruitment to the Royal Navy as part of its core mission, although increasingly the development of awareness of opportunities within the Royal Navy has become more significant.

The URNU train on dedicated vessels, P2000 class fast inshore patrol craft, and the URNU ships are counted as part of the Royal Navy’s total fleet strength, comprising 14 out of a total of 66 ships in service in the Royal Navy in 2013.¹⁷ As the Royal Navy’s website notes, the mission of these ships is:

‘To provide high-quality sea training experiences to undergraduates from universities, developing seamanship, teambuilding and leadership skills in a maritime environment. These ships also support the Fleet in

¹⁴ Details on the history of the University Air Squadrons are available at: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/universityairsquadrons/history/index.cfm>

¹⁵ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *TSP7 UK Reserve Forces and Cadets*, pp.27. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314795/uk_reserve_force_cadets_2014.pdf

¹⁶ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014) *TSP7 UK Reserve Forces and Cadets*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314795/uk_reserve_force_cadets_2014.pdf. Historic figures for URNU strength are not available in this publication.

¹⁷ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *UK Defence Statistics Compendium 2014*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378301/2014_UKDS.pdf

a range of tasking around the UK and European waters, showing the White Ensign in places that larger vessels cannot reach.¹⁸

As with the OTC and UAS, the potential number of universities in the catchment area for each URNU is large, but as with the UAS, in practice the feasibility of access to one of the 14 units will be a factor shaping recruitment in some regions; although physical distance from the sea is not an issue, as URNU weekly training nights are held at locations near to host universities, except for access to their ship. Each URNU has about 60 members. Table 1.3 lists the URNU units, ship and shore base and participating universities.

URNUs are located across the UK, with a similar distribution to the UAS, with 1 unit in Wales, 2 in Scotland and 11 in England. Training for URNU members focuses on basic military drill, skills and procedures both on land and at sea, via the Royal Navy Patrol boats that are assigned to each unit. Until recently the officer commanding each URNU also commanded its allocated vessel, but recent staffing changes have led to this command being split, with a dedicated ship commander now being assigned. This doubling of command opportunities also enables a wider range of staff to be allocated to the shore command role, offering students the opportunity to work with a broader contingent of Naval Service staff.

URNU members are offered the opportunity for deployment at sea, to develop their navigation and seamanship skills on their assigned ship at weekends and during most university vacations. In addition to military-specific training and activities, as with their OTC and UAS colleagues, URNU members are given opportunities to undertake sporting and adventurous training activities, and there is a formalized social calendar, including Trafalgar Night celebrations. URNU members hold the rank of honorary Midshipmen in the Royal Navy Reserve, but have no commitment to serve and cannot be called upon for deployments.

1.2.4. *Military Education Committees*

OTC, UAS and URNU, with some small discrepancies, recruit from the same universities within their geographical area. In 1908 when the first OTC was established under the Haldane Reforms¹⁹ to promote military skills and supply officers to the British Army, particularly in wartime, it was agreed that some form of oversight and conduit for communication between the units and their host universities was required, and to do this the MECs were established.

¹⁸ See <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/our-organisation/the-fighting-arms/surface-fleet/patrol/archer-class/hms-ranger>

¹⁹ **Strachan, H.** (1976). *The History of the Cambridge University Officer Training Corps*. Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books

University Royal Naval Unit	Ship and base	Participating universities
Birmingham URNU	HMS Exploit HMS Forward, Birmingham's Royal Naval Reserve Training Centre.	Aston University University of Birmingham Birmingham City University Coventry University University of Leicester Loughborough University De Montfort University Newman University Nottingham University Warwick University
Bristol URNU	HMS Dasher HMS Flying Fox, Bristol's Royal Naval Reserve Training Centre	Bath University Bristol University University of the West of England
Cambridge URNU	HMS Trumpeter Cambridge University Royal Naval Unit, Chaucer Road, Cambridge	Cambridge University University of East Anglia Anglia Ruskin University
Edinburgh URNU	HMS Archer Edinburgh Universities Royal Naval Unit, Hepburn House, East Claremount Street, Edinburgh	University of Edinburgh Edinburgh Napier University Heriot-Watt University Queen Margaret University
Glasgow and Strathclyde URNU	HMS Pursuer HM Naval Base Clyde and University Place, Glasgow	Glasgow University University of Strathclyde Stirling University Glasgow Caledonian University University of the West of Scotland
Liverpool URNU	HMS Charger RNHQ Merseyside, East Brunswick Dock, Sefton Street, Liverpool	Lancaster University Liverpool University Liverpool John Moores University Liverpool Hope University
London URNU	HMS Puncher HMS President St Katharine's Way London	All London Colleges
Manchester and Salford UNRU	HMS Biter Crawford House, The Precinct Centre, Oxford Road, Manchester	Manchester University Manchester Metropolitan University Salford University University of Central Lancashire

University Royal Naval Unit	Ship and base	Participating universities
Northumbrian URNU	HMS Example HMS Calliope, South Road, Gateshead	Durham University Newcastle University Northumbria University Sunderland University Teesside University
Oxford URNU	HMS Smiter Falklands House Oxpens Road Oxford	Oxford University Oxford Brookes University Reading University
Southampton URNU	HMS Blazer National Oceanography Centre Waterfront Campus European Way Southampton	Southampton University Portsmouth University Southampton Solent University
Sussex URNU	HMS Ranger University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton	Sussex University Brighton University
Wales URNU	HMS Express HMS Cambria, Sully, South Glamorgan and Penarth Marina, Cardiff Bay	Cardiff University University of South Wales Swansea University
Yorkshire URNU	HMS Explorer 22 Pearson Park, Hull	Leeds University Hull University Sheffield University Sheffield Hallam University

Table 1.3: University Royal Naval Units, ship and base, and participating universities.

Currently there are 20 MECs: 1 in Wales, 1 in Northern Ireland, 4 in Scotland and 14 in England. Not all MECs have a full complement of USU units attached to them (Queens Belfast MEC, for example only has responsibility for an OTC). Table 1.4 shows the current provision of MECs and the units they oversee.

The 20 MECs commonly represent combined university interests in a locality or region on one committee.²⁰ They vary considerably in terms of their

²⁰ The full list of Military Education Committees (there are 20 in total) can be found on the Council of Military Education Committees website at: http://www.comec.org.uk/military_education_committees

MEC	Associated USU units	Participating universities
Bristol MEC	Bristol OTC Bristol UAS Bristol URNU	Bath University Bristol University University of the West of England University of Plymouth
Cambridge MEC	Cambridge OTC Cambridge UAS Cambridge URNU	Cambridge University University of East Anglia Anglia Ruskin University Bedfordshire University Essex University Hertfordshire University
East Midlands MEC	East Midlands OTC East Midlands UAS	De Montfort University Leicester University Loughborough University Nottingham Trent University Nottingham University University of Derby University of Lincoln University of Northampton
Edinburgh MEC	Edinburgh OTC East of Scotland UAS Edinburgh URNU	University of Edinburgh Edinburgh Napier University Heriot-Watt University Queen Margaret University
Glasgow & Strathclyde MEC	Glasgow & Strathclyde OTC Glasgow & Strathclyde UAS Glasgow & Strathclyde URNU	Glasgow Caledonian University Glasgow School of Art Glasgow University Stirling University University of Strathclyde University of the West of Scotland
Leeds MEC	Yorkshire URNU Yorkshire OTR Yorkshire UAS	Hull University Leeds College of Music Leeds Metropolitan University Leeds University The University of Bradford The University of Huddersfield The University of Leeds The University of York York St John University
London MEC	London OTC London UAS London URNU	All London colleges ¹

MEC	Associated USU units	Participating universities
Manchester and Salford MEC	Manchester and Salford OTC Manchester and Salford UAS	Manchester Metropolitan University Queen's University Belfast Salford University The University of Manchester University of Central Lancashire
MEC for Wales	Wales OTC Wales UAS Wales URNU	Aberystwyth University Bangor University Cardiff University Glyndŵr University Swansea Metropolitan University Swansea University Trinity College Carmarthen University of Chester Cardiff Metropolitan University University of Wales Trinity Saint David University of South Wales
Northumbrian Universities MEC	Northumbrian OTC Northumbrian UAS Northumbrian URNU	Durham University Newcastle University Northumbria University Sunderland University Teesside University
Oxford University – Delegacy of Military Instruction	Oxford OTC Oxford UAS Oxford URNU	Oxford University Oxford Brookes University Reading University Royal Agricultural College University of Gloucestershire
Queen's Belfast MEC	Belfast OTC	Queen's University Belfast University of Ulster Stranmillis University College
Sheffield MEC	Yorkshire OTR Yorkshire UAS Yorkshire URNU	Sheffield Hallam University Sheffield University
Southampton MEC	Southampton OTC Southampton UAS Southampton URNU	Bournemouth University Portsmouth University Southampton Solent University Southampton University The University of Winchester
Universities of Sussex and Brighton Services Liaison Joint Committee	Sussex URNU	Sussex University Brighton University

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MEC	Associated USU units	Participating universities
Tayforth MEC	Tayforth OTC	University of Abertay Dundee University of Dundee University of St Andrews University of Stirling
Universities of Aberdeen MEC	Aberdeen OTC	Aberdeen University Robert Gordon University
University of Exeter MEC	Bristol OTC Bristol UAS Bristol URNU	Exeter University
University of Liverpool MEC	Liverpool OTC Liverpool UAS Liverpool URNU	Bangor University Edge Hill University Glyndwr University Lancaster University Liverpool Hope University Liverpool John Moores University Liverpool University University of Central Lancashire University of Chester University of Cumbria
West Midlands MEC	Birmingham OTC Birmingham UAS Birmingham URNU	Aston University Birmingham City University Coventry University De Montfort University Harper Adams University College Keele University Loughborough University Newman University College Nottingham University Staffordshire University University of Birmingham University of Leicester University of Wolverhampton University of Worcester Warwick University

Table 1.4: Military Education Committees, associated USUs and participating universities.

³ Birkbeck, University of London; Courtauld Institute of Art; Goldsmiths, University of London; Heythrop College; The Institute of Cancer Research; King's College London; London Business School; London School of Economics and Political Science; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Queen Mary University of London; Royal Academy of Music; The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama; Royal Holloway, University of London; Royal Veterinary College; St George's, University of London; School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London; University College London; School of Advanced Study, University of London.

statutory or non-statutory status within university governance structures, and vary also in terms of their membership. We know of a number of MECs where representation from some member universities is limited, and others with enthusiastic representation from across participating universities. All have parent service representation on them, usually via the commanding officers (COs) of the local OTC, UAS or UNRU. Where a Defence Technical Officer and Engineer Entry Scheme (DTOEES) unit is hosted by a university, that unit's CO may also be a member of the MEC.²¹ University representation may include senior administrative and academic executive staff, and may also include individual administrative and academic staff with an interest in military issues. MECs may be serviced by university central administration, or run on a more informal basis without formal resourcing. A national Council of Military Education Committees (COMEC) oversees and coordinates collective MEC activities, and includes senior representation from the MoD and the three armed forces.²²

1.3 The UK higher education sector

The university armed service units draw their participating students from across the UK higher education sector. As already noted, the total UK student population (2013–14) was 2,299,355 including both full and part-time students, comprising 1,759,915 students registered for undergraduate degrees, and 539,440 postgraduates.²³ The two features of the higher education sector most pertinent to the context for USUs are participation rates in higher education, and the diversity of provision across the sector.

1.3.1. Rates of higher education participation

Changes in government policies have encouraged wider participation in higher education, reflecting both changing social attitudes towards higher education and structural changes in the UK economy necessitating a higher proportion of the workforce to be educated at graduate level. This, combined with the expansion of the sector following reconfiguration of former polytechnic institutions after 1992, has led to a significant increase over the past two decades in the proportion of UK Home students (defined as those who meet UK residency qualifications for payment of tuition fees at the Home student rate) gaining a university-level qualification. Although statistics accurately reflecting rates

²¹ Details on the Defence Technical Officer and Engineer Entrance Scheme are available at: <http://www.da.mod.uk/dtoees>

²² Details on the Council of Military Education Committees are available at: <http://www.comec.org.uk/home>

²³ **Higher Education Statistics Agency.** (2015). *Statistical First Release 210*. Retrieved from <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/stats>

of higher education participation are difficult to produce with any accuracy, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS), which has responsibility for higher education in England, estimate that higher education participation rates for 17–30-year-old English-domiciled first-time participants attending UK institutions in 2012–13 was 43%.²⁴ The Higher Education Funding Council for England has estimated that the young participation rate (those aged 18 and 19) has risen from 30% in the mid-1990s to 36% at the end of the 2000s.²⁵ What is significant for our purposes here is the point that participation in higher education has increased over the last three decades, and has changed fundamentally and dramatically over the post-war period. A university education is no longer the preserve of a small elite. This increase in the student population of course intensifies the pressure on USU places, which are limited (especially in the URNU and UAS) by restrictions relating to access to ships, aircraft and other training materiel.

This increase in participation includes an increase in diversity among the student population, including a greater proportion of women entering higher education. Data for 2013–14 indicates that of the full-time undergraduate student population, 762,065 (55%) were female and 629,410 (45%) were male. At postgraduate level this female majority is also in evidence, with 162,470 women and 141,925 men in full-time postgraduate study (53% and 47% respectively).²⁶ Within the UK undergraduate population of full-time first degree students (a core group in the USUs), about 23% also identify as being from an ethnic minority.²⁷ Although entry to higher education remains structured quite markedly by economic background and social class, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of young people entering higher education from disadvantaged neighbourhoods over the past three decades.²⁸

The UK has long had a buoyant market for entry to its universities from international students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This is relevant to the USUs because students who are UK or Commonwealth citizens or Irish nationals can join USUs, so whilst USU membership is not open to the

²⁴ **Department for Business Innovation and Skills.** (2014). *Participation Rates in Higher Education: Academic Years 2006/7–2012/13(Provisional)*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/347864/HEIPR_PUBLICATION_2012-13.pdf. Note that participation rates for 2012–13 reflect the introduction of full tuition fees payable by undergraduates.

²⁵ **Higher Education Funding Council for England.** (2010). *Trends in Young Participation in Higher Education: Core Results for England* (January 2010/03). Retrieved from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2010/201003/10_03.pdf

²⁶ **Higher Education Statistics Agency.** (2014). *Student Introduction 2013/14: Student Population*. Retrieved from <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/3484/#eth>

²⁷ **Higher Education Statistics Agency.** (2014). *Student Introduction 2013/14: Student Population*. Retrieved from <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/3484/#eth>

²⁸ **Higher Education Funding Council for England.** (2010). *Trends in Young Participation in Higher Education: Core Results for England* (January 2010/03). Retrieved from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2010/201003/10_03.pdf

full student body at UK universities, there is a significant proportion of international students who are potentially able to access the USUs.

The USUs have long existed in an evolving landscape of increasing higher education participation. Although participation across higher education, and within certain parts of the sector, remains structured by socioeconomic factors, participation in higher education is no longer the preserve of a small elite. This is relevant to the USUs because it signals the potential diversity of student participants in terms of social background, and if recruitment to the armed forces (whether Regular or Reserves) follows USU participation, this has a potential effect on the social diversity of recruits to the British armed forces. Yet whilst the increase over the past two decades in total student numbers provides a larger potential recruitment pool for USUs, the number of students able to participate in a unit is becoming an ever smaller percentage of the overall student population because the size of the service units has remained fairly static.

1.3.2. *The diversity of the higher education sector*

Higher education provision in the UK has expanded considerably over the past three decades, and these changes sit within a much longer history of the development of the sector. The sector is marked by a range of types of institutions when defined by date of establishment, including universities with medieval origins, universities emerging from the requirements of 19th-century industrialisation for a technically-trained elite (the ‘red brick’ universities), universities developed in the wake of the Robbins Report of 1963 which recommended expansion of the sector (the ‘plate glass’ universities) and the former polytechnic institutions granted university status following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (the ‘new’ universities). Institutions in the sector differ in terms of governance and organisation, mission and core educational market for the degrees they offer, patterns of research intensity and of course, size. Bradshaw and Hamilton’s exercise in mapping OTC provision against the different segments of the UK higher education sector illustrates this diversity.²⁹

The higher education sector in the UK also shows huge variety in terms of provision across degree programme subjects and structures of degree programmes, with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) estimating that there were over 37,000 undergraduate degree programmes offered in 2014 across over 300 providers. Admissions requirements vary, and recruitment to the increasing number of providers in the sector is often highly competitive.

A number of lobbying or mission groups exist within the sector, to promote the interests of their representatives. Universities UK is the largest grouping with a membership of 133 institutions, speaking for institutions across the

²⁹ **Bradshaw, R.** and **Hamilton, H.** (2010). *UOTCs and the UK Higher Education Sector*. Unpublished paper, East Midlands Military Education Committee.

sector. The Russell Group of 24 research-intensive universities represents perhaps the most visible group of universities, those that have international reputations as leading research institutions, and including those that housed the original USU units. GuildHE provides a formal representation function for its 38 members who are drawn from across the specialist, further education and post-1992 universities sector. University Alliance represents 20 universities, mostly from within the post-1992 sector, whilst Million+ is a think tank representing 17 universities from across the post-1992 sector.

The organisation and structuring of higher education provision in UK is the responsibility of the universities themselves, shaped by policy guidance from the DBIS and the higher education funding councils for England, Scotland and Wales, and the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland. The defence sector has no direct involvement in these matters. However, defence has a necessary interest in higher education because, like employers across the UK, the defence sector draws on graduates as a key component of its recruitment pool: in civilian roles through the MoD, as employees within the wider defence industrial and service sectors and as recruits for (predominantly) officer training in the three armed forces. Entry for officer training is not restricted to graduates, but (reflecting the expansion of higher education provision in the UK over the past three decades) the majority of entrants to officer training programmes are graduates from UK universities. Furthermore, reflecting innovations in other labour market sectors, the defence sector's interest in higher education is reflected in the provision of university-level training specifically targeted at the employment needs of certain parts of that sector; this is evident in the DTOEES, administered by the UK Defence Academy with training provided through specific universities.³⁰

1.4 Policy issues framing the university armed service units

The two preceding sections have given a very broad introduction to both the USUs and to the higher education sector in which they sit. In this section we identify six key policy issues which, in our view, frame the empirical research findings detailed in the remainder of this book. Neither the USUs, nor individual universities, sit in isolation from these policy issues.

1.4.1. *Student fees*

Students at most UK universities now have to pay fees for their studies. In 1998 a fee of £1,000 per year of study was introduced. By 2004 this had risen to

³⁰ Details on the Defence Technical Officer and Engineer Entrance Scheme are available at: <http://www.da.mod.uk/dtoees>

£3,000 and in 2012 the maximum fee was raised to £9,000 (although the full sum payable per year varies between institutions) for UK students studying at English universities. Scotland-domiciled students studying at Scottish universities pay no fees, after the Scottish government abolished them. Wales-domiciled students pay full fees if attending a university in Wales, but are entitled to a maintenance grant that can be used to offset some of the costs. Students paying fees usually cover these costs through a loan. In 1990, the government replaced the grants system with the student loans system, which provides students with the ability to receive a loan during their studies, to be paid off once they enter graduate employment. The effect of both the introduction of student fees and the replacement of grants with loans is that students in UK higher education tend to incur debt. Although students have traditionally had limited financial resources, these changes mean that the majority of students now graduate from university with considerable debt (for example, a minimum of £27,000 if attending an institution which charges the full fees of £9,000 per year). In this climate, payment for USU participation continues to be significant, and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that when in recent years one or more of the USU units temporarily suspended paying its students, participation rates dropped. Another potential implication of the higher fees environment is that it might encourage students to aim higher after graduation, to look for better paying graduate jobs in order to be able to cover the costs of repaying their fees and maintenance loans,³¹ and this may have consequences for recruitment to some sectors within the graduate labour market (which includes officer training in the armed forces).

1.4.2. *Graduate employment and employability*

The employability of graduates is a key concern within the higher education sector. This is, in part, a consequence of the need for universities to make visible the value of a university degree to students incurring substantial debt in order to complete their education at this level. Concern also reflects a wider public debate about the expansion of higher education, and the correspondence (or otherwise) between the skills required in the graduate labour market and the availability of suitably skilled graduates. Although a long-standing issue within higher education, the 1997 Dearing report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society*, made recommendations in this regard, linking graduate employability to the development of transferable skills.³² A joint report by

³¹ The converse may also be true, as repayments are only made beyond a specified earnings threshold.

³² **The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education.** (1997). *The Dearing Report 1997: Higher Education in the Learning Society*. Retrieved from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dearing1997/dearing1997.html>

Universities UK and the Confederation of British Industry made explicit the necessity for universities to attend to the employability of their graduates.³³ Institutions across the higher education sector have responded with a range of measures aimed at enhancing graduate employability, including graduate skills frameworks, institution-specific accreditation for extracurricular activities (which may include skills training) and initiatives within curricula aimed at highlighting the transferable skills development inculcated within degree programmes.³⁴ There are a number of examples of these sorts of opportunities. The Durham Award, run by Durham University, provides students with the opportunity to apply for recognition of the transferable skills that they can develop as part of their degree programme and as part of being a student at Durham University.³⁵ The Sheffield University 'Skills for Work' scheme offers students the opportunity to have work experience recognised through the awarding of a certificate.³⁶ Other institutions run skills-specific modules that provide students with the opportunity to have work experience placements assessed as part of their degree programme; for example, Newcastle University's 'Career Development' module.³⁷

The graduate employability agenda is significant for the USUs because there is considerable potential intersection between the skills development offered in units, and the skills development activities encouraged by universities. Whilst explicit focus on skills development and employability by the USUs may not always have been a deliberate intention, what has become apparent during the course of this research is the extent to which (both intentionally and inadvertently) the training experience offered by units, and as understood by participants, delivers skills and competencies which closely match those required by graduate recruiters. This is especially true in relation to key transferable graduate skills, such as time management, self-organisation, team-working and project preparation and management. USUs are increasingly aware of the transferable skills agenda within the graduate employment market, and many now offer accreditation for their students in order to provide recognition of the skills that USU participation offers. For example, USU members can use their

³³ **Universities UK and the Confederation of British Industry.** (2009). *Future Fit: Preparing Graduates for the World of Work*. Retrieved from http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1121435/cbi_uuk_future_fit.pdf

³⁴ See, for example, **Cole, D.** and **Tibby, M.** (2013). *Defining and Developing your Approach to Employability: A Framework for Higher Education Institutions*. The Higher Education Academy. Retrieved from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Employability_framework.pdf

³⁵ Details on the University of Durham, Durham Award are available at: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/careers/daward/>

³⁶ Details on the University of Sheffield Skills for Work certificate are available at: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/advice/sfwc>

³⁷ Details on the Newcastle University Career Development module are available at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/develop/cdm/index.php>

participation to apply for the Chartered Management Institute Level 5 Award in Management and Leadership.

It should be noted that the USU experience is just one of many activities students undertake at university beyond their academic studies. Most students will at least have the opportunity to develop their employability and transferable skills through, for example, part-time work, involvement with charitable or voluntary work, sports and university clubs and societies.

1.4.3. *The student experience*

The idea of the 'student experience' and its associated terminology has gained traction in the UK higher education sector for two reasons. First, following the introduction of full fees, much public debate followed about the financial worth of a university degree, and what specifically students might anticipate getting in return for this payment (including enhanced employability in the graduate labour market). Although much of that debate is not of particular significance here, there is one element which is particularly pertinent. Across the higher education sector, universities are making very deliberate attempts to highlight how, in return for fees, they provide an education which delivers a curriculum appropriate to the degree programme, with appropriate levels of support and resources to facilitate student learning. In other words, the idea of the student experience includes increased visibility of the support structures in place at universities which underpin teaching and learning. Whether or not these structures are new (as a result of fees) or established (having already been in place) is not for us to comment on here. The point is the increased visibility of educational support in university marketing to potential applicants, and communications to current students, highlighting that universities take the student experience of education very seriously.

The second reason for the development of a language around the student experience is the need for universities to show explicitly that they have an awareness of the significance of the wider social experience of a university education. This is not just about the marketing of universities as places where (predominantly young) adults can enjoy a full and active life, although there is an element of that identifiable in much university recruitment material. This is primarily about making visible to a wider public the sector's awareness that individuals and groups experience their university participation in often quite markedly different ways, and that understanding of and support for those differences is necessarily a responsibility of institutions as part of their efforts to create the conditions of possibility for a positive student experience.

The increased focus on the student experience is significant for the USUs because it influences how students understand and reflect back on their university education. The material practices that are directly under university control and shape the student experience include health and welfare provision,

additional educational support (for example, in literacy and numeracy), infrastructure and facilities for both educational and recreational purposes (ranging from free Wi-Fi to sports facilities) and the ready availability of social activities (which are not provided by institutions themselves, although institutions shape the conditions of their provision in, for example, indirect support for Student Unions and sports facilities). The efforts of institutions to enhance the student experience are influential, even when students are unaware of them. The practices universities have in place to enhance the student experience are significant to USUs because of the comparisons students will necessarily draw between their educational experience and that of their USU participation. Whether those comparisons are favourable or unfavourable, the point remains that the USU experience for students is structured relative to their university educational and social experience.

1.4.4. *Recruitment rates to the UK armed forces*

Recruitment into the armed forces has been an ongoing issue over the past decade, manifest in current levels of deficit against personnel requirements of 4.4% for the Army, 5.8% for the RAF and 0.3% for the Royal Navy/Royal Marines.³⁸ Although significant numbers of personnel have been made redundant under successive tranches of the Armed Forces Redundancy Programme (part of the Future Force 2020 restructuring), particularly from the Army, achieving the required levels of personnel is a delicate task involving a match between recruitment, retention and redundancy.

One of the key issues affecting armed forces recruitment (apart from the availability of jobs in specialties to which applicants want to apply), is the attractiveness or otherwise of an armed forces career. This is an issue very relevant to the USUs: for the OTC and UAS (although far less so for the URNU), the recruitment function of the units has become more central to their mission over the past few years. We should make clear that the service units do not exist solely as recruitment tools for the UK armed forces. However, it has long been recognised (as the research underpinning this book confirms) that they have a role to play in recruitment, particularly at officer level, and recruitment policy and practice within the three armed forces are increasingly alert to the significance of USUs in the context of concerns about declining levels of recruitment.

There are multiple factors shaping the receptiveness or otherwise of UK graduates to the idea of a military career (whether or not they are USU participants, as entry for officer training is not contingent on USU participation), including: the state of the graduate labour market for new entrants and its susceptibility

³⁸ **Ministry of Defence.** (2014). *UK Armed Forces Quarterly Personnel Report (1st October 2014)*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/373115/af-quarterly_personnel_report_oct14.pdf

to shifts in local, regional, national and international economies; demographic changes including declining birth rates having an effect on the number of people within a particular age cohort; perceptions about job insecurity in the armed forces as a consequence of redundancies and restructuring; the possibility of effects of the estrangement between the armed forces and civil society as a consequence of shifts over decades in the proportion of people with personal or relational experience of military participation; and antipathy towards the idea of military participation as a consequence of the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the very real possibility of serious injury or death as a consequence of that participation. These factors are also thought to impact unevenly on different groups of potential recruits, and there is currently concern that recruitment levels are particularly low amongst women, and amongst certain religious and ethnic groups, which continue to be grossly underrepresented in the UK armed forces.

The armed forces have been proactive in tackling these issues, with a number of high-profile marketing campaigns in recent years aimed at increasing awareness of the range of occupations that the Army, Navy and Air Force can offer. Whilst the USUs are not explicitly recruiting organisations, recruitment pressures have led to a shift in approach, with more focus on the development of students who are looking to continue to officer training, and within the OTC especially, promoting future Reserves participation.

1.4.5. *The expansion of the Reserves*

The reduction of Regular forces and concomitant expansion of the Reserves as part of the Future Force 2020 programme has significant implications for the UK armed forces. These changes originate in a host of factors, including tight controls over levels of public expenditure on defence, the changing nature of the threat (and changing perceptions of those threats) to UK security, the emergence of new modes of warfare and of ways of responding (for example, to terrorist or cyber-warfare threats), and the constant and ongoing negotiations around the UK's strategic commitments and operational practices with respect to its allies. The ongoing expansion of the Reserves is only one of a whole range of measures outlined in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, and put into operation in the years since.³⁹⁻⁴⁰

³⁹ **Ministry of Defence.** (2010). *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62482/strategic-defence-security-review.pdf;
Ministry of Defence. (2013) *Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210470/Cm8655-web_FINAL.pdf

⁴⁰ As an entirely separate enterprise, the research team sought and obtained funding for research investigating the workplace and identity issues pertaining to individuals pursuing

Although the USUs may seem quite distant, irrelevant even, to both profound changes in the nature and conceptualisation of security by successive UK governments, and to the restructuring around the Whole Force Concept (the label applied to the UK's reform of its military) currently underway across the British armed forces, by virtue of the fact that the USUs comprise an element of the Reserves, they are connected to these broader changes. At the time of writing, there is no way of telling exactly how the expansion of the Reserves in particular will shape strategic and practical organisational issues within the USUs. What is clear, however, is that the USUs are part of that broader conversation. There has always been a relationship between USU participation and subsequent Reserves participation, and the units' role in current Reserves expansion (particularly the OTC) will undoubtedly be subject to close scrutiny. We have already noted the Roskelly study of the OTC undertaken in 2010, which established the OTRs and also established pathways through which individuals could receive training within the units sufficient to commission individuals as officers in the Reserves. We would expect scrutiny of the USUs by the MoD and the three armed forces to continue, in terms of a return on the financial investment (however that return might be defined). Thus USU participation can be a stepping stone during a university career for those with an interest in continuing military participation but who do not wish to pursue a full-time military career.

1.4.6. *Armed forces on campus*

The first OTCs were established in 1908, as part of the Haldane reforms, meaning there has been an official UK armed forces presence within the UK university system for over 100 years. This historic, long-standing association is formalised through the MECs, but is probably made most visible at the annual Freshers' Fair events. Apart from these recruitment events at the beginning of each academic year, USUs are not particularly visible on campus; although some units have drill nights in buildings on campus, most are based at military facilities away from their host universities' estates. Although some universities have DTOEES units comprising students studying under the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS), these students are rarely evident collectively (and in uniform) on campus; they take part in teaching and learning activities as any student on their degree programmes would, and their military commitments (such as drill nights) usually take place away from campus.⁴¹ In

both paid civilian employment and employment with the Reserves, see: **Woodward, R., Edmunds, T., Higate, P., Hockey, J. and Jenkins N. K.** *Keeping enough in reserve: the employment of hybrid citizen-soldiers and the Future Reserves 2020 programme* (Economic and Social Research Council grant reference ES/L012944/1). Retrieved from <http://www.future-reserves-research.ac.uk/>

⁴¹ Details on the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme are available at: <http://www.da.mod.uk/dtoees>

this respect, the question of armed forces recruitment and presence on university campuses is fundamentally different in the UK compared with the United States, where the Reserve Officer Training Corps has a more explicit presence on college campuses, and requires its students to sign up to military service on graduation.⁴²

In the UK, there is some history of resistance by some student organisations to the presence and the idea of the presence of USU units on university campuses, usually articulated by specific Student Unions at specific universities. Student Unions are autonomous organisations, completely independent of the universities in which they operate, and exist to provide a framework for organising student services such as welfare support, and student activities including sporting, social, cultural and political activities. Most are affiliated to the National Union of Students, which provides a national voice for and representation of students in the UK. A number of Student Unions have a long history of initiating debate over military issues, including the deployment of armed forces and discussions over wider issues of militarisation on and beyond campus.

We have included this here as a policy issue to flag up that it is through Student Union policy, that questions around the armed forces on campus become an issue from time to time, primarily over the presence of USUs at Freshers' Fairs and similar events to advertise societies and activities on campuses. Some Student Unions have prevented USUs from participating in Student Union society recruitment events, although this can change from year to year at a single institution depending on the political make-up of the sabbatical officers that run each union, or may be a longer-standing and more embedded policy.⁴³ Some student organisations may also articulate a politics particularly critical of the relationships between university research and defence funding (particularly from multi-national arms manufacturers), and around university investments in the arms trade and associated sectors.⁴⁴ Arguments against the presence of USU recruiters at student events appear to rest either with a broader anti-militarist politics, or with concerns over student vulnerability.⁴⁵ We return to this issue of recruitment, and in particular of Freshers' Fairs, in Chapter 3.

⁴² **Neiberg, M.** (2000). *Making Citizen Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service*. Harvard: Harvard University Press; **Axe, D.** (2007) *Army 101: Inside the ROTC in a Time of War*. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press.

⁴³ **Young-Powell, A.** (2013, 9 December). Armed forces make over 300 visits to UK universities in two years. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/dec/09/armed-forces-universities-recruit>

⁴⁴ Note that this is also the focus of research and debate by academics working on military, defence and security issues; see for example **Stavrianakis, A.** (2006). Call to arms: the university as a site of militarised capitalism and a site of struggle. *Millennium*, 35 (1), 139–154.

⁴⁵ **Iordanou, G.** (2013, 27 October). Get the armed forces away from universities *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/george-iordanou/armed-forces-universities_b_4161976.html?utm_hp_ref=uk

1.5 The purpose and structure of this book

The purpose of this book is to explore the value of the USUs, and in doing so we draw on data generated through a research project on precisely that issue. Throughout the research, and in this book, we have focused on value in non-financial terms, and indeed one of the research questions guiding the project concerned how the concept of 'value' might be understood. This book examines the value of the USUs from the perspectives of four key groups. These are: student participants in the USUs; graduates who had a USU experience as students, and who subsequently went on to pursue civilian careers; the three armed forces which provide strategic overview, funding, and daily organisation, staffing and management of the units; and the universities which provide student participants and have an interest in the workings of the USUs because of this. Throughout our discussions of the question of value to these groups, we also consider how a further group, employers of graduates, might also be understood as having an interest in the value of the USUs.

The book is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, we explain in more detail the rationale for the research, the methodology used to generate and analyse data, and consider what was and was not included in the study. Chapter 3 draws on a survey of USU members conducted during spring 2013 to explore the question of value from their perspective. Chapter 4 discusses findings from interviews with graduates of USUs, to provide an assessment of value of the USU experience from the perspective of those looking back to their student experience, and subsequent use (or otherwise) of the USU experience across their working lives. Chapter 5 explores the question of the value of the USUs from the perspective of the armed forces, and in particular the COs charged with the strategic and daily managerial direction of the units. Chapter 6 assesses the value of the USUs to universities. Chapter 7 concludes the book by summarising key findings and highlighting areas for further debate within the defence and higher education communities on the value of the USUs.