

University links with the armed forces Case studies

18 October 2019

Summary

Universities UK is encouraging all members to sign the Armed Forces Covenant. The Covenant is a specific commitment which institutions and organisations can make to recognising the challenges faced by service and ex-service personnel and their families. The Covenant itself is not prescriptive on what measures and procedures institutions should put in place. Therefore, this document provides guidance for universities on the measures they can take to implement the Covenant by providing case studies of several universities which have already signed it. All the universities featured have earned recognition for the measures they have put in place.

Introduction

Strong links between universities and the armed forces have the potential to be mutually beneficial for both partners. There are numerous ways in which universities play important roles in this area – both at an individual and organisational level – particularly in supporting recruitment into the armed forces, collaborating on joint research projects, delivering skills training for personnel and their families, and providing retraining and employment opportunities for veterans.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge which institutions can sign in order to commit to the principle that armed forces personnel, veterans and their families should face no disadvantage as a result of their service, with recognition of the specific challenges these groups might face. A wide range of bodies have signed the Covenant and implemented its principles, including government, businesses, local authorities, educational institutions, charities and the public.

This document focuses on one specific part of interactions between universities and the armed forces: how universities which have signed the Armed Forces Covenant are realising its principles in an effective and conscientious way. As the pledge itself is not prescriptive about the measures and procedures which institutions should put in place to implement the Covenant – due to the various forms such support can take across society – there is potentially a wide scope for how universities can abide by its principles.

This case study document is intended to encourage further awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant within the higher education sector and its relevance to decisions in areas such as admissions procedures, employment practices and student support initiatives within universities. It is hoped that these examples of best practice will help demonstrate specific measures which more institutions can emulate in order to effectively support armed forces personnel, veterans and their families.

The Armed Forces Covenant

[The Armed Forces Covenant](#) was introduced as a formal policy in 2000 but reflects the age-old recognition of the obligations which a society has to its armed forces to ensure that personnel, veterans and their families do not face any disadvantage as a result of service. To date, over 4000 organisations have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, including a large number of universities which are implementing its principles in an effective way.

Universities should consider their obligations under the Covenant as both an employer of, and education provider for, armed forces personnel, veterans and their families. They should take into account the specific needs which these groups might have and take steps to accommodate these: for instance, as an education provider offering more flexibility in delivery of courses or having admissions policies which recognise the needs of these groups.

While there are some excellent examples of universities which put into practice the principles of the Covenant, **Universities UK encourages all members to become signatories and consider its principles in different areas of university policies.**

The below case studies set out how a number of universities have demonstrated their commitment to the principles of the concordat. Measures which institutions may take will vary according to an individual university's partnerships, locality and student body.

Case Studies

University of South Wales

The University of South Wales (USW) was the first higher education institution in the UK to appoint an armed forces champion and one of the first higher education institutions to sign the Armed Forces Covenant. Its work was recognised with a gold award in the Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme in August 2018. USW engages with the wider military community through the following initiatives:

- Providing personalised support to serving and former armed forces personnel via the 'Recognition of Prior Learning scheme'. The scheme accredits both credited and experiential learning experiences gained during a career in the armed forces and

aims to provide opportunities to personnel who may not possess enough traditional qualifications. This scheme gained recognition in the UK Armed Forces Covenant annual report 2017.

- Actively encouraging all other higher education institutions in Wales to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, and partnering with 160 Infantry and HQ Brigades to engage with other higher education institutions in Wales and add value to the signing of the Covenant.
- Running press and social media campaigns to advocate and promote the transferable skills possessed by former armed forces personnel.
- In November 2017, USW's Dr Ross Hall was named as winner of the Armed Forces in Wales Awards' covenant award for the individual contributing the most to the delivery of the Covenant in Wales. His work includes delivering a project within Parc Prison's Endeavour Wing – the UK's first prison wing for former armed forces personnel and their families – using a sport psychology intervention model to address areas of perceived psychological weakness.
- A team of USW researchers have recently submitted a bid to the Forces in Mind Trust, in partnership with the Welsh Government, to explore Adverse Childhood Experiences in early service leavers.
- USW supports various armed forces charities and local government organisations via the Cwm Taf Local Covenant Partnership. USW's armed forces champion Ross Hall is the education representative.

Staffordshire University

Staffordshire University takes a range of steps to ensure armed forces personnel, veterans and their families are supported to study and succeed at their institution. Due to the support the university provides to tailor their provision to armed forces personnel, over 80% of their military students achieve a good degree at the end of study (2:1 or higher).

There are a number of specific ways in which the university supports personnel and veterans at the university:

- Courses are developed with consideration about specific challenges which armed forces personnel and veterans may face and have flexible delivery methods to accommodate specific needs.

- The university has established strong links with all arms of the services (British Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Royal Marines) and has mapped significant areas of military training enabling it to offer attractive levels of accreditation in recognition of military training and experience.
- Entry to degree courses is not always predicated solely on achievement in academic qualifications. The majority of entry points are based on rank, trade training and experience, thereby providing wider access to those who may have not met required grades at school but have strong potential to succeed at the institution.
- Offering discounted fees to both serving and former members of the armed forces and is an ELC-approved provider to support armed forces personnel to access opportunities for lifelong learning.
- Regular attendance of university representatives at military education open days across the UK and the university has developed strong relationships with RAF Learning Centres, Army Education Centres and Royal Navy Education Centres.
- Visits by university representatives to numerous military establishments annually to deliver bespoke presentations on higher education opportunities to encourage access among military personnel to their courses.

Brunel University London

Brunel University was the first London university to sign the Armed Forces Covenant in September 2016. Brunel was awarded a Silver Employer Recognition Scheme award later that year. In order to meet their obligations as part of the Covenant, the institution takes the following measures:

- The university works with the Career Transition Partnership (the Ministry of Defence's official provider of armed forces resettlement) to actively promote relevant job vacancies to service personnel leaving the armed forces.
- Armed Forces Day is celebrated and publicised across campus, encouraging reservists to wear their uniform.
- The university promotes opportunities to serve in the Reserve Forces during its staff induction workshops whilst having an armed forces presence at student careers fairs and employment events.

- Through its What's on Guide, the university communicates directly with military establishments across London and the South East, promoting Brunel's academic programmes, cultural events and other activities.
- Brunel continues to provide a range of opportunities for wounded, injured and sick military personnel and veterans to prepare for their competitive endeavours at the Invictus Games through use of its sports facilities and adapted on-campus accommodation.
- Brunel's Armed Forces Covenant Champion, a serving army reservist, has recently established an Armed Forces Network on campus. This network brings people with shared backgrounds and experiences together to meet, talk and create an informal community. The membership extends to reservists and veterans, students currently serving in the armed forces, adult cadet instructors and military spouses.

Edinburgh Napier University

Edinburgh Napier University has been awarded a silver award for the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme for supporting personnel, veterans and their families. Its links with the armed forces began during the First World War, when one of its campuses was used as a military hospital for officers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In order to honour its commitments related to the Covenant – and as part of its wider role in building strong links with the armed forces – the university has in place a number of specific policies and initiatives:

- Assisting those transitioning from the armed forces into civilian life with an Education Learning Pathway. The university already offers a number of higher education opportunities to those leaving the armed forces from all ranks through the university's business school and is registered on the Ministry of Defence's Principal Partner Supplier List as an education provider.
- The university is placing an increasing focus on supporting those leaving the army from the lower ranks to ensure they have the same educational opportunities available to them after service as more senior ranks. To this end, the university is collaborating with various organisations and education providers such as the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), West Lothian College, the MOD Education Centre and Glasgow Caledonian University to develop a learning pathway for those leaving the army who may not have a strong education background but wish to consider a route into education after resettlement.

- The institution is a key partner in Armed Forces Working Groups which the SCQF and the SFC have established to ensure the qualifications gained by lower ranking personnel are properly recognised and understood during admissions so they can benefit from college and university education.
- Working closely with Glasgow Caledonian University and veterans' groups to develop a higher education/further education Veterans Champion Network across Scotland to ensure all universities and colleges have Veterans Champions within their institutions. This network will have accurate information about educational opportunities in Scotland for the armed forces community.
- Supporting reservists and others who are joining their workforce from a service background and works with CTP Assist to provide employment placements to support ex-personnel who have suffered injury or illness. The university is also an active recruiter of ex-service personnel by promoting their (non-academic) vacancies on the CTP Job Portal.
- A number of different initiatives in place to support the families of those in current service, for instance, working with a nearby primary school where a high percentage of pupils have a family member in the services on an outreach programme (now in its third academic year). Edinburgh Napier hosts half-day visits to the university for older pupils in the form of various outreach activities and has introduced newer activities for the lower school classes.
- Introducing a mentoring service for ex-service personnel who work or study at the institution to help with the mental transition from military to civilian life, in collaboration with the community interest company Rock2Recovery.

© The copyright for this publication is held by Universities UK. The material may be copied or reproduced provided that the source is acknowledged and the material, wholly or in part, is not used for commercial gain. Use of the material for commercial gain requires the prior written permission of Universities UK.