Commercial Graduates

Defence Commercial Graduate Programme
Imagine being responsible for products that think, fly, break the sound barrier, orbit the earth, cross the oceans undetected, fight disease, end droughts, keep flood waters at bay, repair roads, rebuild homes, strengthen communities, provide hope and save people’s lives all over the world.

These are just some of the opportunities a career in procurement and contracts management in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) can offer. As a member of the Defence “Commercial” team you will play a key part in helping to equip and support the armed forces for everything from disaster relief to reconstruction and from peacekeeping to humanitarian aid.
As MOD Chief Commercial Officer I am delighted to present you with this opportunity to be part of the Defence Commercial Graduate Programme (DCGP).

The portfolio of MOD’s business is unique. We acquire and support a huge range of equipment, services and infrastructure; this could be anything from the latest vehicles used on the front line to new accommodation blocks for service personnel.

The commercial function is a key enabler within acquisition, and one of the top 3 priorities for the Civil Service. MOD commercial staff currently manage around 6,000 contracts with a total value of circa £245 bn. There are over 2,150 commercial staff within MOD involved in the sourcing, awarding and managing of contracts to ensure that the equipment the MOD purchases is fit for purpose and provides the best value for money for the Department.

Commercial staff also work closely alongside other functions including finance and project management, with representatives from Industry, and with other Government Departments.

The aim of the two year Defence Commercial Graduate Programme is to develop you into commercial officers with excellent professional skills and Industry recognised qualifications. The Programme will provide you with rapid exposure to many areas of the business. You will receive support from senior mentors, with your knowledge and experience being enhanced through academic studies.

We’ll make sure you are well prepared to progress your career as a commercial officer in the MOD and wider Civil Service, with its exceptionally wide range of opportunities.

Whether it be developing a commercial strategy for the next generation of battle fighting systems, or the local purchase of food and water for the Armed Forces on operations, our commercial officers are key to what we do, ensuring the Armed Forces are provided with world class equipment, complex services and leading-edge technology.

If you’re looking for first-class professional development, “hands-on” learning and training, and the opportunity to work across the MOD and wider Civil Service on a variety of procurement activities, then a career as a commercial officer is for you.

We look forward to welcoming you to the programme.

Do you have:

- The vision and foresight to work in a team managing major defence projects of the future?
- The ability to plan, organise and solve complex problems and produce innovative ideas?
- A passion for your own personal development and the potential to lead people?
- Excellent communication, negotiation and team working skills?

Are you looking for:

- First Class training and professional Chartered Institute membership?
- A competitive remuneration package?
- Opportunities to work in a diverse range of commercial based roles and with major Industrial partners?
- Opportunities to develop the commercial skills of the future?
Why the Ministry of Defence?

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Armed Forces work together to defend Britain’s interests at home and overseas, and to act as a force for good by strengthening international peace and stability. A civilian role within the MOD allows you to make a vital contribution to this effort while enjoying levels of variety and challenge that can’t be found anywhere else.

What is the Defence Commercial Function?

The Defence Commercial Function handles all the procurement and contract management activities of the MOD, under the strategic leadership of the Chief Commercial Officer. This involves everything from servicing submarines to purchasing medical supplies.

Working at the MOD can also give you exposure to a huge range of commercial related activities, such as improving supplier relations, dealing with Intellectual Property Rights matters, and providing commercial policy guidance. This reflects the fact that the MOD is the UK manufacturing industry’s biggest customer.

What is a Commercial Officer?

Our Commercial Function is made up of commercial officers whose role is to establish contracts that deliver equipment and support for the Armed Forces. Once trained as a Commercial Officer you will use innovative purchasing strategies to secure best value for money, while at the same time safeguarding the Department’s interests and minimising risk.

Getting to know the underlying objectives of your customers is an important part of the role so you will work with a range of people, including serving members of the Armed Forces and other MOD civil servants. You will use that knowledge to provide advice on the right purchasing strategy and form of contract. You will also get involved in the tendering, negotiation and pricing procedures, and in managing the contract once it is in place.

Supplier relations is another key focus of the role. As well as using intelligent market information to choose the right suppliers, you will then build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with them, continually encouraging them to improve their performance.
What will you be doing?

You will complete a two year programme in a range of Procurement and Contract Management roles across different business areas of the MOD.

During your time on the programme you will be sponsored by a Business Area, and line managed by a dedicated Sponsor Line Manager (SLM) within that business area. You will undertake your first and last placements at your permanent duty station within your Sponsored Business Area, and at least one other placement within another Business Area during your time on the Programme, which may be based in another location and possibly overseas.

Placements are of varying lengths, and you will initially undertake two 6 month placements in the first year, to give you immediate hands-on experience of the fundamentals of contract drafting and placement. In the second year there is more flexibility, and placements are between 3 to 6 months duration to aid development of the full set of the required competences, whilst delivering specific outputs for individual teams within various organisations including the front Line Commands (FLCs) of Air, Fleet, Land and Joint Forces; the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO); the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl); and the Head Office and Corporate Services (HOCS) and Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) organisations.

You will be provided with real experience in:

- Developing appropriate contracting methods and strategies
- Agreeing and evaluating against tender specifications
- Negotiating with Industry, including pricing and payment considerations
- Adherence to European Union Procurement and Intellectual Property Law
- Supplier relations and contract management
- Risk mitigation and management

The Graduate Programme is intensive, providing a succession of challenging placements tailored to giving you the widest possible experience across the Defence Commercial Function. It also provides the opportunity to develop the personal and professional competences that will prepare you for potential early promotion.

Support

In addition to formal training, you will be entitled to study leave and you will receive ongoing support from your placement line managers, past and present scheme members, professionally qualified Mentors, and the graduate programme Management Team.

And beyond?

At the end of the programme, provided you have met the required performance standard, you will be offered the opportunity to be promoted and deployed into a professional commercial post. Beyond this you will be supported during the next phase of your commercial career as you aim towards roles in the senior leadership team.
I graduated University in 2016 with a Masters in History and had no real idea of what I wanted to do as a career. I saw the DCGP Scheme advertised and it instantly intrigued me. I had considered procurement, and the MOD offered me the most interesting and varied procurement opportunities that there was!

I started the programme in September 2017. I have so far completed three placements across the various areas of the MOD. My first placement was with Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) on a £1.5 billion contract replacing the Air Traffic Control Equipment over RAF, Royal Navy and some Army bases in the UK and abroad. I was trusted and given responsibility of commercial projects within the contract. I worked closely with the wider delivery team and the supplier to solve complex commercial issues. It was a great introduction to my career as a Commercial Officer.

My second placement was at Air Command at RAF High Wycombe working with their Rapid Capabilities Office. This team focused on innovation and was largely made up of military personnel. Working within command was hugely valuable to me as a Commercial Officer. It drove home that what I was procuring was helping the front line.

The work was fast passed and challenging – I loved it! The projects varied from Unmanned Air Vehicles, to satellites, to flares.

I am currently working with Land Equipment’s Market Intelligence Team, a whole new area of Commercial that I hadn’t even considered! I attend exhibitions and conferences about key areas of defence and new technologies, provide market intelligence to the delivery teams about what industry can provide. It is hugely beneficial to see the work that I produce has an impact on the procurement of delivery teams. This team has highlighted how varied the work of a Commercial Officer can be!

The Graduate Programme has given me many opportunities. I have visited military bases, MOD Main Building, tested equipment that I have procured and equipment that is in current operation use, as well as attending trials and demonstrations. I have met senior civil servants, worked for Air’s Director of Resources and met astronaut Tim Peake! I am also currently working to my CIPS qualification and have attended many training courses at the Defence Academy that has developed my understanding of public procurement.
I had been working in the NHS for a Foundation Trust within Bristol for 5 years, working my way up to a managerial position without any formal development training. I had found myself in a senior position, completing challenging work but not feeling like I held a “career”, there was no recognition of my post and no career pathway. I had heard that if I was looking for a job that came with supportive training and the chance for external recognition, the MOD/Civil Service was a perfect fit.

Procurement was always an unknown to me at my role within the NHS and when I was asked to get involved in the purchase of equipment I followed simple instructions with no understanding of what I was really doing. I combined my curiosity of the procurement process and my want to further my knowledge and found the MOD Commercial Graduate Programme. Having been born and raised in Bristol I was fully aware of Abbey Wood and the work it did for the MOD. It posed a challenging and interesting role, one of importance within its industry, one that held external recognition and where there was a breadth of opportunity, with numerous opportunities to learn locally and afar.

I graduated in 2011, with a First in Acting and Technical Theatre and I was surprised how many transferrable skills I had from my degree to the role as Commercial. I also had the academic know how to complete the recognisable qualification of CIPS Level 4 within my first year of the Graduate scheme and achieved Level 6 by September 2018, which after another year’s experience, allows me to apply for the external recognition of MCIPS. I also attended numerous training sessions, both locally and away at other venues (Defence Academy @ Shrivenham as one example), each course providing me with more understanding of the Commercial role and of the Procurement Process within MOD and Civil Service.

Whilst on the Programme I had five placements, twice working for ISS (Information Systems and Services) in Corsham and three placements at DE&S (Defence Equipment and Supplies) Abbey Wood, Bristol. The opportunity to go to different areas within MOD, a great way to increase the experience and knowledge in a small timeframe such as 2 years. By being able to see how different teams approach the same ultimate outcome of “Value for Money” is extremely helpful in your development as a Commercial officer. I’ve worked commercially to buy email services, Life-saving Soldier Technology and Weaponry; these are just a few examples of the unique challenges which you will problem solve with a supportive team whilst also having your Graduate cohort to converse with as a support tool to succeed.

Throughout the two years, I was also supported by an experienced Commercial member acting as my mentor who, now I have graduated, continues to support me, meeting monthly to establish any issues I’m having and how to guide me towards the future career I seek. I am grateful for the programme for providing me with the opportunity to move around and to gain a broad experience, which I otherwise wouldn’t have been able to do. I have now regraded at ISS in Corsham where I am now able to utilise the relationships I developed within my two placements here, and am enjoying the new opportunity to be a line manager, developing new skills and apply all the commercial skills I’ve learned whilst on the programme.
After graduating in 2013 with a 2.1 degree in Psychology, I was unsure as to what I wanted to pursue as a career. Immediately after Uni, I did a number of jobs ranging from waitressing to working as a freelance Production Management Assistant at the BBC!

Eventually I realised I needed to embark on a fixed career – one which would allow me to build on the skills I’d already developed and also help to establish new skills and abilities. I had always had an interest in Politics, and having come from a military family, knew the importance of the work that the Civil Service undertakes – which is how I ended up applying to the Commercial Graduate Scheme!

During my time on the scheme, I undertook four different placements over three different Operating Centres, and one away from Abbey Wood, Bristol. My first placement was based in Air and was in a fast paced and busy team. I was lucky to be given lots of work in this placement and I very quickly built up my Commercial knowledge, whilst also being given a huge amount of autonomy in the way I approached the tasks.

My second placement was within Submarines in a delivery team tasked with management of very high value contracts. This allowed me to see a completely different variation of the work carried out by DE&S, and touched upon issues that are specific and more distinguished in their content. I worked with an incredibly motivating, caring and supportive team who constantly inspired me to deliver to the best of my ability.

I also undertook a placement with a third party Industry partner, Leidos, where I enjoyed an autonomous and self-starting role exclusively focussed at Sourcing and running competitions – again a completely different Commercial discipline.

My final placement on the scheme was with the Market Intelligent Team, sitting under Land Equipment. This called for a consolidation of the learning and experiences I’d been exposed to over my time on the scheme and allowed me to understand what good Commercial practice looks like.

I have now successfully regraded off the scheme and am enjoying my new role as a C2 with the Strategic Supplier Management Team sitting under the MOD main domain within HOCS.
Mentoring

Gareth Fisher and David Greaves
Mentee and Mentor

The Mentor View - David

Being a mentor can be a highly rewarding experience, seeing the mentees start in an organisation and steadily gain experience through a variety placements and opportunities, that will develop them both as individuals and commercial officers. I met Gareth whilst he was on his first placement working in the ISS Gateways and Messaging commercial team.

This mentor/mentee relationship has to be a two way process. Gareth has gathered a lot of commercial experience to date and I feel my role is to help him funnel this to develop his portfolio of evidence. For any gaps that remain I try to find a suitable piece of work by engaging with other teams and his line management. It should however be remembered that it is personal drive that delivers and Gareth has that in abundance.

The Mentee View - Gareth

When starting my journey on the DCGP it took a little time to appreciate the significance, velocity and sheer gradient of the learning curve I had embarked upon. I was in a new organisation, learning a new function, whilst having to learn a new language (There are many MoD acronyms!).

What makes this journey possible is the support network that the Graduate Team places around you; ranging from your Line Management and Placement Line Manager to your Buddy, Mentor and fellow graduates. All of which allow you to grow your professional network and gain access to invaluable experiences and guidance.

The relationship I have with my mentor has been key to my personal development on the Programme and is built on trust and mutual respect, not only has David been crucial in guiding me through the myriad of placements, but he also provides a temperature check for ideas and thoughts I have on my experiences on the Programme.

David and I meet monthly to discuss my progress against my objectives, and often use the time to debate successes and development opportunities in the past month. The relationship we have built will far outlive my time on the Programme and I see him as a continual source of support, advice and professional development.

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

SUPPORTER
COLLEAGUE
LEADER
GUIDE
NETWORKER
FRIEND
ADVISER
COUNSELLOR
CHAMPION

Role Model

Role Model

Role Model

Role Model
I think the buddy scheme is invaluable when joining the MOD, as it can seem very daunting at times, due to its size and complexity.

Having a buddy means there’s always someone there to answer the myriad of questions you have when you first start a new job. Having been in exactly the same position as my buddy a year ago, means I have first-hand experience of the likely questions they have, and the support they may require.

Being a buddy has enabled me to share the knowledge gleaned during my time on the Graduate scheme – and it has made me realise how much I have actually learnt since I joined the MOD, and that I too now talk in acronyms!

The buddy scheme really helped me to settle in and become comfortable within my role.

As a recent graduate, I had not received much professional experience within procurement but my buddy has been able to answer the queries I have, not only surrounding the scheme, but also about the inner workings of MoD and questions regarding some of the locations MoD operates.

The buddy scheme has created a culture of sharing of knowledge and experience which has enabled a real sense of community and contributed to a great experience so far. In addition the graduates within my cohort have become great friends and we help each other out as best we can with any work related queries, and we organise social gatherings outside of the place of work as well.

Buddies have helped throughout the whole process from the initial training and still continue to do so. Although buddies are allocated, if for some reason a buddy is unable to respond to a query or offer advice, all buddies are very approachable and happy to help where possible.

I highly recommend the DCGP due to the amount of support we receive and the real encouragement to reach our potential.
Salary and Benefits

As a MOD Civil Servant, your starting salary will be £25,967*

Pension
You will be entitled to choose between a defined benefit pension scheme and a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. See Civil Service Pensions website link for further details.

https://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/

Holidays
25 days annual leave, rising to 30 days after 5 years’ service, plus 9 days public holidays.

Locations
Andover
Bristol
Corsham
Glasgow
High Wycombe
Portsmouth
Salisbury

* As @ August 2019.

Other Benefits

- Professional and personal development
- Professional training via the CIPS Level 4 Corporate Award Practitioner (CAP) and CIPS Level 5/6 Corporate Award Advanced Practitioner (CAAP). Successful completion of this training programme results in full membership of CIPS (MCIPS), after 3 years’ experience in a responsible procurement role.
- Promotion based on merit, and you’ll enjoy all of the support you need to speed your progress.
- Flexible working hours and alternative working practices
- A generous maternity and paternity package (after a qualifying period) and workplace Nurseries at most major locations
- Optional Sports and Social Club membership
- Study leave
The Application Process

How do I apply?

The vacancy advert for the DCGP will be advertised on Civil Service Jobs during March 2020 and will close at the end of March 2020. To apply please go to the Civil Service Jobs website and narrow the search criteria to “Ministry of Defence” (department) “Commercial” (job category) and “Bristol” (location):

https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/index.cgi

It will be advertised as the ‘Defence Commercial Graduate Programme’

Security

Successful candidates must meet the security requirements before they can be appointed. The level of security needed is

Before appointment can be confirmed, we will undertake background security checks (BPSS). As part of this you will need to confirm your identity, employment history (or course details if you were in education), nationality and criminal record (unspent convictions only). In addition, you will be required to undergo security clearance and should usually have been continuously resident in the UK for five years immediately before clearance is launched. If you have lived overseas or travelled in this period, this may affect the length of time taken to obtain clearance and therefore may affect your offer of employment.

Medical

Successful candidates will undergo an Occupational Health assessment via completion of a form and if required, a follow up by telephone or face to face.

Allowances

The post does not offer any assistance with relocation expenses. Programme members will be expected to live within commuting distance of their permanent duty station, and may be eligible for an allowance to cover additional costs incurred when undertaking placements elsewhere.

Eligibility

To join the Defence Commercial Graduate Programme, you must have British nationality and normally have been resident in the UK for the past five years. If you have dual nationality, you may be eligible to apply if one of those nationalities is British, you are eligible to hold a British passport, and you are free to work in the UK.

Degree

Before you apply you must be in receipt of, or are predicted a 2:2 degree in any subject. Those with the following degrees may be particularly interested in applying: business management, law, politics, science, engineering or defence related disciplines. You should also have an interest in working for the public sector.

Contacts

For queries on the application process please contact Defence Business Services.

Telephone: 0800 3457772

Email: peopleservices@dbs.mod.uk

For queries about the programme please

Email: DefComrcIExternalRecruitment@mod.uk

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Eligibility

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Indicative Timeline

Please note that these dates are only indicative at this stage and could be subject to change.

The anticipated timetable is as follows:

- **Advert closing date:** 23:59 hrs Monday 30 March 2020
- **Invitations to top 440 candidates to complete a Candidate Statement:** Tuesday 7 April 2020
- **Deadline for return of Candidate Statements:** 23:59 hrs Tuesday 14 April 2020
- **Assessment Centre starts:** Tuesday 26th May to Thursday 4th June 2020
- **Assessment Centre Outcomes issued:** Mid June 2020
- **Programme Commences and Induction starts:** Monday 2 November 2020
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The Ministry of Defence is an equal opportunity employer and is fully committed to equal opportunities policies. Applications from all sectors of the community, irrespective of racial origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability are positively welcomed.