



**A GUIDE TO TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

**FOR**

**INDIVIDUALS SERVING**

**AS OFFICERS**

**IN THE**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

**Issued by – RAF Employment Policy**

# **A Guide to Terms and Conditions of Service for Individuals Serving as Officers in the Royal Air Force**

## **Introduction**

1. This document summarises the Terms and Conditions of commissioned service in the Royal Air Force (RAF) (except for officers of the Specialist branches<sup>1</sup>). The RAF reserves the right to alter the terms and conditions described in this document as a result of changes to Ministry of Defence (MoD) policies and the detailed regulations which govern them, but you will be notified of any variation in your final offer of commission (F308 series). It is not possible to give all the details you might want to know about commissioned service in the RAF in this document; Branch Information Sheets for the individual branches are available from your local Armed Forces Career Office (AFCO). The RAF Careers website at <https://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment> also provides detailed information on all of the roles within the RAF.

2. As soon as you have been enlisted by the Recruiting Officer you will be subject to Service Law (under the Armed Forces Act 2006) and you will be required to carry out whatever duties may be ordered by those in authority over you, including (if you are medically fit) duty in the air in any type of aircraft. You may be required to spend a significant period of time operating with the Royal Navy and/or the Army. Consequently, you may be required to serve at sea or be deployed in the field and you may be required to serve in any part of the world.

## **Young Entrants**

3. The RAF has special responsibilities for the welfare of young recruits who enlist below the age of 18. If you are enlisting below the age of 18 the written consent of your parent or guardian is required. If you are over the age of 18 and subject to an Adult Care Order the written consent of your guardian/care worker is required.

## **Conditions of Entry**

4. You must satisfy the RAF authorities that you remain properly motivated towards the Service, and that you continue to meet all the necessary eligibility and suitability requirements. If you are unsure about your continued suitability and eligibility, your Armed Forces Careers Office (AFCO) will offer advice.

## **Residency**

5. As part of the application process you were required to provide details of any time spent outside the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to ensure you met the residency requirement. To ensure you continue to meet the residency requirement, if you intend to spend any time outside of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland between any Offer of Service and Enlistment at RAF Cranwell, you should seek advice and guidance from your nearest AFCO.

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<sup>1</sup> Medical, Dental, Legal, Chaplain, Nursing, Medical Support Officer (Physiotherapist) and Directors of Music. For Specialist Branches, see PAM(Air) 429a.

## Types and Lengths of Service

6. **General.** For the duration of the Initial Officer Training Course (IOTC) you will be enlisted to serve in the Royal Air Force under Airmen's Terms and Conditions of Service. Following successful completion and graduation from IOTC, you will be awarded an Initial Commission (IC). However, your engagement in the RAF will be for the period of time defined by your commission but will include your airman service during IOTC.
7. **Initial Commission (IC).** Officers appointed to an Initial Commission will normally be required to serve in the RAF for a period of 12 years Regular service followed by 4 years in the Royal Air Force Reserve of Officers. However, the initial period of service required may vary dependent on the branch; for example, those joining the Flying Branch on an IC will be required to complete 12 years Regular service followed by 4 years in the Reserve, which will be extended to an Early Departure Payment Commission (EDPC) (see para 8) on successful completion of OCU/QFI/QHI training as appropriate.
8. **Early Departure Payment Commission (EDPC).** An EDPC is initially based on the completion of a period of paid service that provides immediate financial benefits. Officers appointed to an EDPC will serve to the 20/40 point. The 20/40 point is defined as the date on which an individual reaches the age of 40 or the completion of 20 years reckonable service from the date of enlistment, whichever is later.
9. **Previous Service.** If you have previous non-commissioned air force service, or have transferred from the RN, RM or Army, you will be commissioned in the Royal Air Force following your successful completion and graduation from IOTC. Candidates with previous service in any of the UK Regular Armed Forces will normally be required to serve on an IC for a period of 12 years from the date of re-Joining or to their previous Engagement Expiry Date if that is longer, to a maximum of the Mandated End of Service (MEOS) at age 60.
10. **Further Service.** Subject to their continued fitness for service, on promotion to the rank of Squadron Leader (Sqn Ldr), Ground Branch officers will be required to accept Further Service to Length of Service (LOS)30, and Flying Branch Officers will be required to accept Further Service to Mandated End Of Service (MEOS) at age 60. Once in productive service, officers serving on an IC will be eligible to apply to transfer to an EDPC. Officers serving on an IC who are not promoted may apply to extend their Service by any period of whole years up to a maximum of 4 years at one time.

## Rank on Entry

11. During IOTC recruits will hold the rank of Officer Cadet (Airman). Rank following successful graduation from IOTC and time promotion to flight lieutenant (flt Lt) is dependent upon branch. Previous whole-time commissioned or non-commissioned service in any of the Armed Forces may also be taken into consideration. Details of rank, seniority and time promotion to flt Lt are shown at Annex A.

## Branches

12. **General.** It is not possible to give all the details you might want to know about each individual RAF branch within this document. Detailed information about each individual

branch is contained in the Branch Information Sheets available from your AFCO or <https://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment>.

13. **Choice of Branch.** When you join the RAF, you join in a particular branch and you will normally be expected to remain in that branch for the duration of your service. Therefore, it is very important that you make the right choice of branch before you enter the RAF. However, in certain circumstances, and only where the needs of the Service are met, there may be opportunities to apply to transfer to an alternative branch. If you have any concerns about your current branch choice you should contact your nearest AFCO for advice and guidance.

## Training

14. **Initial Officer Training.** The IOTC lasts 26 weeks (3 terms of 8 weeks with periods of 2 weeks leave in between) and is undertaken at the Officer and Aircrew Cadet Training Unit (OACTU), RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire. The aim of the course is to give you a good level of General Service Knowledge, to prepare you for your responsibilities as an officer and give you a sound platform for your future development. In addition to the purely Service subjects, the syllabus includes leadership training, management studies and physical education. IOTC is both physically and mentally demanding and it will be much easier if you are used to physical exertion. Failure to complete this course successfully will lead to your discharge (exit from the Service).

15. **Basic Professional Training.** After IOTC, most will be required to undertake a period of training in the professional duties of the branch for which they have been selected. The length and location of these training courses differ from branch to branch, and some are undertaken with personnel from the Army and Royal Navy, particularly where the branch exists in all 3 Services; AFCO staff can give you specific details. For all officers, retention of their commission is subject to the satisfactory completion of the basic professional training course. Officers who fail, or voluntarily withdraw themselves from their basic professional training will, ordinarily, have their commission terminated. However, depending on Service need at the time, they may be considered for re-selection to an alternative branch provided that a vacancy exists, and they meet the entry criteria for that branch.

16. **Training Return of Service (Trg RoS).** All officers incur an initial Trg RoS of at least three years following completion of basic professional training. A Trg RoS is defined as 'a period of time that an individual who has undertaken a course of training shall be required to serve in order to give a reasonable return on the investment made by the MoD'. Some branches such as the Flying Branch incur longer RoS periods. Some types of additional training undertaken during the course of an officer's career may incur a further Trg RoS.

## Personal Development Opportunities

17. **Personal Study.** The RAF, as far as practicable, supports all personnel who wish to undertake further development opportunities, by providing access to courses of study, some financial assistance, and other practical support. Service personnel have the opportunity to enrol on courses and work towards qualifications through local colleges or by distance learning, and special arrangements exist for study with the Open University. In addition, most stations have a Learning Centre, which will provide additional learning opportunities for RAF personnel.

18. **Adventure Training (AT).** There are two adventurous training (AT) schemes which are available to RAF personnel: the RAF Adventurous Training Scheme (RAFAT) which covers expeditions worldwide and the Joint Service Adventurous Training Scheme (JSAT) which encompasses AT qualification courses and expeditions which are open to personnel from all three Services. Further opportunities exist within RAF Force Development Training which often uses the medium of AT. The RAF has several AT Force Development Training Centres around the UK and Germany and also runs an AT related 'Eagles Scheme' which offers various personal development training exercises which are held globally.

## Promotion

19. Promotion to the rank of Sqn Ldr and beyond is by competitive selection and is based on merit and individual performance. The performance of officers is reported upon by their line management on an annual Appraisal Report and this report forms the basis of assessing their suitability for promotion. All officers are eligible to be considered for promotion to the rank of sqn ldr; however, promotion to the substantive rank of sqn ldr will be conditional upon acceptance of service to LOS 30 for Ground Branch officers and MEOS for Flying Branch officers.

## Pay and Allowances

20. **General.** Full details of the rates of pay, which are reviewed annually, are available at <https://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment>. On initial entry into the RAF, cadets will be paid the New Entrant Rate of Pay (NERP) for the duration of IOTC. Thereafter personnel will progress to the next pay level appropriate to their branch, as determined by the RAF.

21. **Recruitment & Retention Pay (RRP).** Certain types of duties attract RRP, for example RRP (Flying) and RRP (Parachute Jump Instructor). To attract the payment Service personnel, have to qualify for the duties and have a continued liability to undertake them.

22. **Allowances.** A range of allowances are available to reimburse Service personnel for expenditure incurred in the course of duty, to compensate for specific circumstances arising from military service, such as separation, and to provide partial reimbursement of expenditure incurred for a particular activity, e.g. continuity of education allowances.

23. **Uniform.** Uniform and essential items of kit are issued free on entry. Replacement uniform is at the cost of the individual whenever it becomes unserviceable through fair wear and tear. Operational kit is issued free with proof of a deployment order.

24. **Get You Home (Early Years).** Personnel serving in the UK who are under 18 years of age or who are undertaking IOTC may be granted return travel journeys to restricted destinations in the United Kingdom or Irish Republic, subject to an annual maximum entitlement.

## Food and Accommodation Charges

25. Personnel who live in accommodation provided by the Service are required to pay to live there. Personnel occupying either Service Family Accommodation (SFA) or Single

Living Accommodation (SLA) are charged at a rate which is determined by the type and/or grade of accommodation occupied. Personnel will be required to live in SLA during IOTC and in most cases during basic professional training and will also pay a standard food charge for the meals that are provided. Both the accommodation charge and the standard food charge are deducted directly from an individual's pay.

26. After initial training, personnel who live in Service accommodation will continue to pay for their accommodation and, depending on the unit they are assigned to, will either continue to pay a standard food charge or will pay for their meals at the time they are taken. Personnel who are married but serving unaccompanied and living in SLA will not incur an accommodation charge.

## Leave

27. Leave may be taken when and in what periods the individual chooses, subject to the approval of the Chain of Command: however, the demands of operations sometimes mean that leave may be cancelled, or dates amended. The main types of leave available are as follows:

- a. **Annual Leave.** The normal allowance for annual leave for all personnel is 38 working days. This includes the 8 UK-wide Public Holidays.
- b. **Post Operational Leave (POL).** POL is a period of leave awarded to personnel to recognise the stresses and strains that Operational Deployments bring to them, their families, and friends and is granted in addition to the Annual Leave Allowance. Personnel are awarded one working day of POL for every 9 calendar days deployed.
- c. **Relocation/Temporary Relocation Leave.** Relocation Leave is an authorized period of absence granted to Service personnel posted between locations on non-operational tours of duty to facilitate the settling in/relocation process for themselves and for their dependants and is in addition to annual leave.
- d. **Terminal Leave.** Designed to assist resettlement, Terminal Leave is granted to qualifying Service personnel at the end of their service. Those leaving prematurely may, at the discretion of their Commanding Officer, be granted some leave depending on the amount of time they have served.
- e. **Miscellaneous Leave.** Other leave that may be available to eligible personnel includes maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave or a career break of up to 3 years. Further details will be available from your Unit Human Resources section at the appropriate time.

## Termination of Service

28. **Statutory Right at Commencement of Service.** All cadets who have not previously enlisted in the RAF have a statutory right to claim their discharge (exit from the Service) within their first 6 months of service from their date of enlistment, known as Discharge as of Right (DAOR). This is subject to a requirement to give 14 days notice in writing and to have completed 28 days service.

29. **Voluntary Withdrawals (VW).** Those personnel who have passed the point of DAOR (paragraph 28) but who have yet to complete Phase 2 Training may apply for VW from their training with a view to exit from the Service. Personnel who fall into this category have no right to leave the Service in this way. However, if by exception it is deemed in the interests of both the individual and the Service, authority to exit may be granted.

30. **Discharge for Compassionate Reasons.** Where the RAF accepts that there are extreme compassionate reasons which make it essential for an individual to leave the Service, exit will normally be granted.

31. **Early Release.** Officers may request to be released before the end of their period of commissioned service. However, this is not a right and the RAF may impose waiting periods (of up to 12 months), depending on the prevailing manning situation at the time of application. Early release will not normally be granted where a Training Return of Service (Trg RoS) has been incurred and has not yet been fulfilled.

32. **Pregnancy.** In recognition of the particular challenges that may be faced by pregnant Servicewomen, the Armed Forces offer supportive arrangements to enable them to accommodate pregnancy and maternity absence within their careers. Full details of the maternity scheme run by the Armed Forces are available from Unit Human Resources staff. An officer who becomes pregnant will be given the option of either:

- a. a period of maternity leave before returning to duty, or
- b. exit from the Service.

In either case, the officer will normally be allowed to remain on duty prior to the start of maternity absence. The Health and Safety of the pregnant officer and unborn baby, and subsequently the mother and newborn baby, are paramount and will be safeguarded in accordance with UK law through the processes contained in the current maternity regulations.

## **Pension, Terminal and Resettlement Grants**

33. **Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2015.** Personnel who enter RAF service on or after 1 Apr 15 automatically join the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2015 (AFPS 15) unless they choose to opt out. AFPS 15 is a non-contributory scheme. Your pension entitlement starts accumulating from your first day of paid service and you will be eligible to receive pension benefits provided you have completed at least 2 years qualifying service. Your pension is calculated using a system called Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE). Every year, the MOD adds an amount equal to 1/47th of your annual salary for that year, to your individual 'pension pot'. Your pension pot starts to accumulate from your first day of paid service and is carried forward into each year where it grows slightly to ensure that it tracks inflation and maintains its value. This growth, known as indexation, is based on the Average Weekly Earnings index and is similar to money in a bank account earning interest. This process is repeated every year until you leave the Armed Forces.

34. **Resettlement Grant.** The Resettlement Grant is paid to Regular members of the Armed Forces who leave the military after 12 years relevant service but before they qualify for any other form of immediate pension or Early Departure Payment (EDP) benefits. It is not linked to your pension entitlement, but it is intended to help you adjust to civilian life.

35. **Early Departure Payment (EDP).** Regular service personnel who reach the age of 40 and having completed a minimum of 20 years relevant service, qualify on discharge for an EDP. The EDP consists of a tax-free EDP lump sum equivalent to 2.25 times the Deferred Pension (see para 36) and a monthly taxable EDP income. The EDP monthly income is 34% of the value of your annual Deferred Pension. For each year served beyond the 20/40 EDP point, the value of the EDP will be increased by 0.85% of your Deferred Pension. EDP increases annually in line with an inflation index, currently this is the Consumer Price Index. The EDP remains in payment until your State Pension Age, when it ceases, and the Deferred Pension comes into payment.

36. **Deferred Pension.** If you leave the Armed Forces having completed at least two years qualifying service or because a transfer value payment has been accepted by the Scheme Administrator, you will be entitled to a Deferred Pension. This is paid at the Deferred Pension Age (linked to your State Pension Age). Your Deferred Pension will increase annually in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) when you leave Service. Providing you are aged 55 or over you can apply to have your Deferred Pension paid early, subject to an actuarial reduction, which reflects the fact that the pension will be paid over a longer period.

37. **Full Pension (serving to age 60).** If you have at least two years qualifying service and you serve until age 60 you will be entitled to claim your pension immediately. Once in payment, your pension will increase annually in line with CPI. You will not receive an EDP because your pension benefits will be payable immediately upon leaving the Armed Forces. AFPS 15 will not automatically pay you a pension lump sum, however, you can create a tax-free lump sum by 'surrendering' a part of your annual pension. This is known as commutation. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) currently allow up to 25% of your overall pension benefits to be taken as a lump sum.

38. **Transferring Benefits to AFPS 15.** If you were a member of another registered and unconnected occupational pension scheme with another employer before joining the Armed Forces, or if you have a personal pension, you can request to transfer the value of some, or all of those benefits into AFPS 15. Any transfer request must be made within 5 years of leaving the previous employer and within 12 months of becoming a member of AFPS 15. Further conditions will apply, dependant on your specific circumstances. More information can be found in the booklet "Your Pension Scheme Explained - AFPS 2015".

## **Resettlement**

39. To assist personnel leaving the Service, the RAF, together with the RN and Army, operate a resettlement service in partnership with Right Management (formerly Coutts Consulting Group plc). The full provision, which is generally available to those who have served for 6 years or more, includes one-to-one counselling and advice, briefings, job related training and a job finding service. Those who have served for 4 or more years are eligible for job finding support. Personnel are generally entitled to resettlement advice (but not training or other support) whatever the reason for exit or length of time served with the RAF. Furthermore, subject to completing at least 12 years relevant service personnel may also receive a tax-free Resettlement Grant.



## **Reserve Service**

40. Where their terms of service include a reserve commitment personnel will, on completion of RAF Regular service, be transferred to the Royal Air Force Reserve. Full details of the reserve commitments are contained in RAF Form 308a/ 308c, which is issued on enlistment. During Reserve service personnel may be required to attend training for not more than 16 days each year. In addition, individuals may be required to attend for prescribed periods of non-continuous training, none of which will exceed 36 hours without their consent.

41. At the end of RAF Regular service, all personnel have a liability to be recalled for permanent service under section 68 of the Reserve Forces Act 1996, when it appears to Her Majesty that national danger is imminent or that a great emergency has arisen, or in the event of actual or expected attack on the UK. This recall liability continues for 18 years from the date personnel are discharged, or transferred to the Royal Air Force Reserve, or until age 55 if this is sooner. This 18-year period includes any time spent in reserve service.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

42. The Royal Air Force's Diversity and Inclusion Policy, commensurate with the MoD Unified Diversity Strategy, maintains that all personnel should be treated fairly, irrespective of race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation or social background. The Policy goes further than the mere elimination of unlawful discrimination. It recognises and values individuals from diverse backgrounds who bring fresh ideas, knowledge, experience and talent. This enables the Armed Forces to recruit from the widest possible base, helping to achieve and sustain our manning needs and maintain operational capability and combat effectiveness.

## **Enlistment**

43. If you wish to be enlisted you will be required by the Recruiting Officer to answer the questions, take the oath and to make and sign the declaration on the Royal Air Force Enlistment Paper (RAF Form 75a) – or make an affirmation to the same effect – and you will become subject to Service law. Under Regulation 12 of the Armed Forces (Enlistment) Regulations 2009, if you knowingly make a false answer to any question contained in the Enlistment Paper you commit an offence. If any irregularity comes to light after you have enlisted, you are liable to punishment under the Armed Forces Act 2006 which may include dismissal from the Service.

### **Annex:**

A. Standard Junior Officer Rank Progression in the Functional Branches.

**Standard Junior Officer Rank Progression in the Functional Branches.**

Serial No	Cohort	Branch(es)	OC	Plt Off	Fg Off						Overall Time to Flt Lt		
			Pay Level <sup>1</sup>										
			5		6		7		8				
1	Flying Branch	Flying (Pilot/RPAS(P)/WSO)	✓	→	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Officer cadet service + 2 ½ years		
2	Ground Branches (excluding Engineer Branch)	Ground Branches	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Officer cadet service + 3 ½ years		
3	University graduate - BEng or equivalent	Engineer Branch (AS and CE)	✓	→	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Officer cadet service + 2 ½ years		
4	University graduate - MEng or equivalent	Engineer Branch (AS and CE)	✓	→	✓	✓	✓	→			Officer cadet service + 1 ½ years		

**Notes:**

1. All entrants complete IOTC as officer cadets (OC) enlisted on Airmen's terms and are commissioned upon graduation.

<sup>1</sup> Each column, except that of officer cadet, represents a 6 mth period. Officer Cadet equates to the length of time spent on IOTC.