A Guide To Initial Officer Training





OACTU Mission Statement



"Contribute to the operational effectiveness of the Royal Air Force by producing competent junior officers and non-commissioned aircrew in order to enable the undertaking of initial specialist training."

Introduction To Initial Officer Training

nitial Officer Training (IOT) at Royal Air Force College (RAFC) Cranwell is the gateway to becoming an officer in the RAF. Training is conducted over 6 months and includes:

- 1. Leadership & Teamwork
- 2. Written & Verbal Communications
- 3. Airpower Studies
- 4. Physical and Mental Development

Those who have been selected to undertake IOT must be physically fit and mentally prepared for the challenge if they wish to succeed. Upon successful completion of the Course, a prestigious graduation parade is conducted in front of College Hall Officers' Mess where the officer cadets finally march up the steps to be commissioned as officers. The graduating officers are then deemed suitably qualified to undertake their next phase of training in their chosen specialization.











BACKGROUND Officer And Aircrew Cadet Training Unit

RAFC Cranwell, Lincolnshire, is the spiritual home of the RAF and it is fitting that this is where Initial Officer Training is conducted. The officer cadets carry out the majority of their training in Whittle Hall, a bespoke building named in honour of the inventor of the jet engine who spent many years at the College. The officer cadets spend the majority of the Course accommodated within College Hall Officers' Mess itself, which is steeped in history and sits alongside Whittle Hall.

The Officer and Aircrew Cadet Training Unit (OACTU) consists of 4 cadet squadrons. A Squadron, is charged with training the short courses at OACTU for specialist recruits such as doctors, nurses and lawyers, Reserve Officers, commissioning Warrant Officers and direct entry Senior Non-Commissioned Officers. B, C and D squadrons deliver training to the IOT officer cadets who are on the 24 week course.

OACTU is commanded by a Wing Commander and each squadron is commanded by a Squadron Leader. The squadron of officer cadets is then broken down into groups of around 30 to form a flight. In charge of each flight is a Flight Lieutenant and a Flight Sergeant, who manage the day-to-day training requirements and are responsible for the welfare and duty of care of their flight. Squadrons are no larger than 120 cadets.

The learning environment provided by OACTU is safe, appropriate and has been graded 'Outstanding' by OFSTED. All OACTU staff and trainees are subject to the RAFC Cranwell Welfare & Supervisory Care Directive which aims to ensure welfare issues are dealt with sensitively and effectively and gives direction on the conduct of training, care of recruits, specific care of personnel under 18 and Service discipline.



Becoming An Officer – The Training Environment

INITIAL OFFICER TRAINING OVERVIEW

Basic recruit training for officers is Initial Officer Training (IOT) and is designed to prepare you for life as a leader. It is a 24 week course comprising three, 8-week terms. The Course is delivered by experienced and highly trained RAF personnel who will challenge you intellectually, mentally and physically but cadets are often surprised by the coaching and mentoring ethos of the department which aims to train you through rather than select you out. The Course aims to prepare you effectively for your specialist training, regardless of branch. Once graduated, you will have also earned the opportunity for a Level 5 Diploma from both the Institute of Leadership and Management and the Chartered Management Institute plus gain valuable credits towards a further education qualification.





Term 1

The first phase of Term 1 is intended to effectively transition you from civilian to Service life and includes the issue and preparation of uniforms, medical and dental assessment, drill and regular inspections of your dress, equipment and living quarters. There are also team building activities with your course mates and an intensive fitness programme to help prepare you for the physically arduous nature of the Course.

The first term focuses heavily on the introduction of military skills such as weapon handling, field craft and first aid training, culminating in an end-of-term military skills exercise where you will practically demonstrate the skills you have learnt and to expose you to some of the mental and physical challenges of military life.

Term 1 also includes an introduction to the academic elements of IOT, such as Air Power Studies, Written and Verbal Communications. Additionally, the cadets will commence The Beliefs, Values and Principals programme, Essential Service Knowledge and Customs, Etiquette and Social Responsibilities packages. Leadership fundamentals, including leadership theory, are taught and practiced where you will be able to refine some of the knowledge and skills you will have learnt.

Reinforcement training is available to those who require it, but if you have met the standard then you will progress to Term 2.

Term 1							
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
ESK, Medicals, Drill, Nav, Kitting, Verbal Comm's Leadership Fundamentals, Weapon Handling Exs , DYNAMIC EDGE, FIRST STEP			Exercise SHARP EDGE	Force Protection	Leadership Field Skills	Confirmatory Practical Training	











Term 2

The second term focuses heavily on leadership starting with a week of practical leadership experiences within an adventure training environment at one of the RAF's Force Development Training Centres. You will have an opportunity to learn more about yourself and your team through adventurous activities such as climbing, abseiling or mountain-biking and to put some of the basic leadership skills learned in Term 1 into practice in a different and challenging environment.

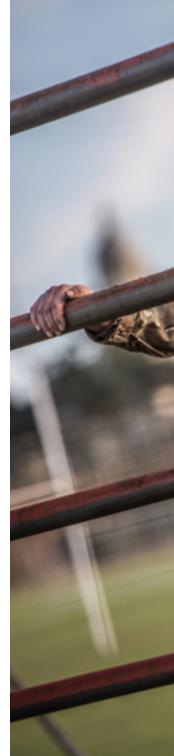
Leadership development continues with Exercise MILAID, a more advanced practical leadership exercise which builds on the foundations of Term 1 with longer leads, more difficult tasks and more arduous conditions. The syllabus culminates in a summatively assessed practical leadership exercise to test your assimilation of leadership theories, skills and style, known as Exercise VITAL EDGE.

Term 2 also concentrates on Air Power Studies through a programme of lectures, self-study sessions and tutor-led discussion groups which aim to educate you on military doctrine, the ethics of warfare and critical analysis through a number of air power topics and case studies which is tested through an end-of-term exam and the submission of an air power related essay.

Term 2 also includes the continuation of other academic elements from Term 1 and you will be given the underpinning knowledge of the principles of effective physical training and nutrition to support your through-life physical development.

At the end of Term 2, if you have met the required standards, you will progress to Term 3 or be given appropriate reinforcement training.

Term 2							
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Adventure Training	Air Power Media Aware	Exercise MIL AID	Air Power Studies Sports	Drill Medicals Academics	Exercise VITAL EDGE	Air Power Cyber Security	Briefs Leadership theory Interviews









TERM 3

Term 3 is intended to give you the opportunity to develop from an officer cadet to a junior officer. The term includes the Basic Air Warfare Course, the Care in Leadership package, a management workshop and a further week of Force Development to really explore your own leadership style in a different environment. This carousel period finishes with Ex DECISIVE EDGE, a pinnacle leadership exercise in which cadets deploy to a simulated headquarters facility and conduct a large scale air operations planning exercise.

At the end of Term 3, a Performance Review Board will decide whether you have reached the standard expected to graduate and, if successful, your recommendation to graduate will be confirmed, and you will begin the start of an intensive period of graduation preparation. The graduation itself includes a parade at which the Course Prizes are awarded and is presided over by a senior officer or a representative of the Royal Family. A short church service and formal lunch follows at which the Commandant of the RAF College will officially welcome you and your family to the Service. The Graduation Ball takes place that evening and is considered by many newly graduated officers to be one of the most symbolic elements of the day as, in addition to the festivities, you will gather in the College Hall rotunda just before midnight to hear your name read out from the Graduation Scroll along with your commissioned rank, confirming your transformation to a Commissioned Officer in the RAF.

Term 3							
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Basi Air Warfare Course Amport House AT (Mission Command) BAWC		BAWC Amport House	BAWC Amport House	Air Power Studies,	Sports Graduation	GRADUATION	
		BAWC	AT (Mission Command)	AT (Mission Command)	Leadership, Drill, PEd	preperation	GINDONTON



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BEING AN OFFICER

Being a commissioned officer in the RAF is a considerable undertaking which comes with great responsibility, and the rewards can be equally great. As an officer, there is a wide variety of branches and specializations to choose from, which offer many challenges and opportunities for development.

For some, the prospect of being an Engineering Officer on a front line squadron with aircraft like the Typhoon or F-35 and the responsibility of whether they are airworthy, as well as managing and leading a large team of technicians, is very exciting. Others may find the opportunity, as an Aerospace Battle Manager, to control aircraft and secure Britain's skies from the back of an E3-D Sentry aircraft, just as exhilarating. IOT is just the start to an exciting career and it is where all officers begin- where personnel from all branches and specializations are mixed together to form teams to develop together and learn from one another.

Officers are expected and required to be utterly trustworthy, diligent and conscientious and to demonstrate the highest standards and levels of integrity. Very soon after training, officers could be required to lead and manage personnel who could be older than themselves, or have many more years of experience; therefore officers must demonstrate consistently high levels of personal and professional standards.





BEING AN OFFICER

A fter the Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre has deemed an applicant has the potential to become an officer, they will be given a course date for IOT. To be accepted onto IOT, it means that a candidate will have demonstrated various attributes such as the ability to inspire and motivate others, leadership qualities and teamwork skills, self-discipline and confidence. These are qualities within an individual that can be developed and enhanced; IOT is about training and improvement. Officers graduate with good communication and organizational skills with the potential to continue to increase their skillset. Whilst on IOT, recruits will receive world class training as part of an on-going through career development package. It is during IOT that a culture of camaraderie and a sense of individual responsibility within a wider team of exceptional individuals is formed.

The RAF seeks officers from all backgrounds to bring varying leadership styles, skills, attributes and qualities; one size does not fit all. The RAF's mantra 'Thinking to Win' encourages forward thought and innovation from all levels to make it a stronger and more flexible organization, inclusive to all. An officer needs to be open minded and understand the needs of the Service and their people. That's why the RAF wants to attract the best, and in turn, ensure they are well taken care of during and after their service in the RAF.





Leadership Attributes

A commissioned officer is required to display the 9 common leadership Attributes of the RAF. Other members of the team will look to the officers for leadership, inspiration and standards. IOT prepares potential officers for such demanding responsibility and as such, IOT is the first step towards becoming an effective and credible leader. The training is graduated and progressive and continues throughout an officer's career long after they have graduated from IOT.

- **1.** WARFIGHTER COURAGEOUS
- 2. Emotionally Intelligent
- 3. WILLING TO TAKE RISKS
- 4. Flexible And Responsive
- 5. Able To Handle Ambiguity
- 6. TECHNOLOGICALLY COMPETENT
- 7. Able To Lead Tomorrow's Recruit
- 8. MENTALLY AGILE AND PHYSICALLY ROBUST
- 9. POLITICALLY AND GLOBALLY ASTUTE AIR POWER MINDED





WARFIGHTER COURAGEOUS

All our personnel, commissioned or non-commissioned must be warfighters first and foremost and specialists second, though they may be second to none in their specialization. The distinction between the front line and the support area will become increasingly blurred and all need to be military minded and of a determined fighting spirit to overcome the adversity of circumstances that any of us may face on operations. Physical courage is expected of all leaders, as far as each is able to give, but we must nurture moral courage to do the right thing.

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT

Self-awareness and awareness of your team are key foundations of effective leadership. Leaders who know themselves will be able to develop self-control and subsequently understand the needs of others. This will enable them to manage relationships at all levels better and remain calm under pressure. Thus individuals will be able to function as part of a wider team, invariably multidisciplinary, increasingly joint and often multinational, in the delivery of military capability.





WILLING TO TAKE RISKS

The RAF needs leaders who understand the difference between a gamble and a risk and are willing to take measured risks in appropriate areas without abdicating responsibility. This will be achieved if leaders at all levels achieve two things: they must themselves set the example in this regard and must develop an ethos where a failure to act is considered a more serious fault than making a mistake.

FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE

n a world that is now changing faster than ever, where technology is advancing rapidly, the RAF needs leaders who are flexible in approach and able to consider new ways of doing things. RAF leaders must be open minded, responsive to change, constantly looking for the opportunities that change brings and be able to cope with the discomfort that is associated with change.









Able To Handle Ambiguity

A mbiguity pervades our lives and becomes prevalent the fog of war. At the more junior levels of leadership, there may be little ambiguity but at the highest levels it is considerable; our leaders must be able to handle it. In uncertainty there is opportunity as well as risk and if possible, turn it to their advantage.

TECHNOLOGICALLY COMPETENT

The culture of the RAF has always been to embrace new technology. It behoves all members of the RAF to be competent within their specialisation and many, at various stages of their career, will need to display considerable expertise. Yet, in the age of Network Enabled Capability, cyber security and Remotely Piloted Air Systems, this may not be enough. Leaders must strive to keep pace with technological advances on a broad front, through a focus on continual personal development, so as to ensure its most effective application.





Able To Lead Tomorrow's Recruit

As society develops, each new generation of recruits to the RAF is different. Leaders must recognise the qualities the new generation brings and must learn the leadership skills that will allow them to maximise their potential. Everyone in the chain of command needs to understand the new generation, be able to lead and inspire them so that in their turn they will lead the RAF to new heights of excellence.

MENTALLY AGILE AND PHYSICALLY ROBUST

Our leaders need to be able to handle complex and multifarious problems and have the creativity and mental agility to move quickly between various concepts. Their thinking must be innovative and their minds receptive. They must be physically robust and able to withstand the strain of operations, so that their mental capacity does not fail them under stress.





POLITICALLY AND GLOBALLY ASTUTE - AIR POWER MINDED

Leaders will be more effective depending upon their aptitude in two areas. The first is their ability to understand and thus cope with the politics of their immediate environment and, hence, their ability to influence those around them. Secondly, a leader's awareness of much wider issues at a national and international level, and their ability to put their actions and decisions into the context of air power and air warfare, is crucial.



Syllabus

During IOT, the officer cadets will be taught a wide range of subjects and they will become competent in various disciplines. For many, these new fields of study are challenging, thought provoking and extremely rewarding. These disciplines lay the foundations which are built on throughout an officer's career.

LEADERSHIP

The RAF needs leadership at every level and officer cadets will spend many theoretical and practical sessions honing their leadership skills. The RAF is strongest and most efficient and effective when teamwork is utilized to best effect. The RAF relies upon strong and cohesive teams to achieve tasks and to look after its people. The RAF would simply not function without teamwork, followership and its people at its core and in everything it does.





PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Officer cadets are given an excellent programme of progressive and structured lessons which include cross-country running, circuits and swimming to increase their fitness and inspire them to keep themselves fit and healthy for life. After graduation, officers will be expected to maintain their levels of fitness themselves.

AIR POWER STUDIES

World renowned lecturers and intellectuals in their field of study cover topics such as the law of armed conflict, ethics, international politics and Air Power.

Force Protection and Military Skills

This is provided by the RAF Regiment to prepare recruits for future deployments around the world. It covers a wide variety of skills including first aid, weapon handling and field craft. They also teach Drill and Ceremonial which remains the bedrock of military discipline and is used to instill standards, teamwork and pride. These skills are used at specific events such as Remembrance Sunday Parades and the Graduation Ceremony on completion of IOT.





VERBAL COMMUNICATION

A n officer must be able to articulate and present ideas and orders to varying sizes of groups and personnel. Additionally, Written Communication is a vital tool to help an officer evaluate and pass information and ideas concisely, effectively and in a manner understood by colleagues. This package gives the officer cadets the skills to be able to do so.

Essential Service Knowledge

Understanding the environment commissioned officers are to find themselves in is vitally important as there are organizational differences compared to civilian life.

Beliefs, Values and Principals

An extremely valuable element of the IOT syllabus which is conducted by the highly trained and experienced Padres who themselves have passed officer training.

CUSTOMS, ETIQUETTE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Officers in the RAF may find themselves at a range of social functions and engagements on station and in their local communities. The ability to be a positive ambassador for the Service and to help people feel at ease with interpersonal skills, which aids the building of relationships, is important because some of the most valuable assets to the RAF are the people who work with and alongside the Service.





Exercises, Force Development & Visits During IOT

Throughout the 3 terms there are various milestones which the officer cadets pass on their way to graduation. During Term 1, recruits are taught field craft and force protection and use these new skills on Exercise FIRST STEP where they spend 36 hours away from Cranwell living in small shelters, cooking on personal stoves, building interpersonal relationships and a better understanding of each other.

"The exercise is rightly called 'First Step' but also for some, including myself, I found it was the 'biggest step' too. Having never properly experienced what was expected of us, particularly standards in the field, there was a massive learning curve. That being said, whilst the Exercise is one of the shorter ones, it has a lot of potential value to all cadets, including ex-rankers, and one I came away from with a lot of practical experience."

At the end of the term they deploy on Confirmatory Practical Training which is a similar but longer exercise, to prove to themselves that they can utilize their new skillset. The recruits are now working as bonded teams with a sense of belonging and cohesion that many have never experienced outside of military life.



A highlight for many during IOT are the Force Development weeks away in the mountains of Wales or Scotland. These are amazing opportunities for activities such as mountain biking, climbing, caving and canoeing which promotes and enhances teamwork and leadership; these weeks occur during Terms 2 and 3. The recruits plan and organize the activities, finding a common purpose for every individual to feel part of something bigger and achieve goals together.

"... your chance to use leadership in a real environment. What was extraordinary was seeing people grow in confidence in these conditions as it is a big mental test."

"... the second half of the week is spent executing your expedition and staying out overnight. It is designed to challenge you physically and provide a stretching environment in which to lead your peers and make real life decisions in order to mitigate risk and complete your objectives. Day 5 will culminate in a presentation explaining what your plans and contingencies were, what happened during the expedition and, crucially, what you have learned and can take away to apply to your future careers."









The practical elements of leadership training are spread out across the Course with Exercise SHARP EDGE halfway through Term 1 and Exercise MILAID early in Term 2, which further progresses the officer cadets' knowledge of leadership theory.

"Exercise SHARP EDGE is the best opportunity for the cadet to test out different leadership styles or learn their own leadership style in a safe learning environment... a real experience of managing a group of people with different roles and really getting to grips with managing the needs of the individual, team and task."

"I found Exercise SHARP EDGE really interesting because it was the first time we got to use the leadership principles we had been taught."

The recruits are tested towards the end of Term 2 on Exercise VITAL EDGE which puts into practice all they have learnt on the Course.

"The most important thing for each cadet to take into the exercise is the will to work hard for every other cadet in their section, and they should expect the same in return. When the tiredness and hurt eventually set in this is what could make the difference between a pass or a fail."





Term 3 commences with 'Carousel' where the officer cadets rotate through Exercise DECISIVE EDGE which simulates a deployed air operations centre.

"The whole exercise runs as a simulation with key decisions being made by IOT cadets acting within all required Combined Air Operations Centre roles from Administration and Plans to Force Protection. Cadets must think on their feet during this exercise and consider the consequences of their actions."

"Exercise DECISIVE EDGE forces you to think on a much bigger scale than I had before on IOT."

The recruits augment their knowledge of Air Power with the Basic Air Warfare Course which is an in depth study of how its influence has been used over recent years. The Care in Leadership package cements the appreciation of the wider RAF family and that as a group, we support and depend upon each other and must use empathy and emotional intelligence for the benefit of all within the Service.





OACTU FITNESS AND PHYSICAL TRAINING

Being physically fit is a requirement to be an effective officer in the RAF. Physical fitness is emphasized at OACTU as all recruits need to be physically robust enough to undertake the training and be credible as an officer in the RAF. The physical training programme is carefully designed to minimize the risk of injury and to increase aerobic fitness, physical strength and endurance. For more information on the required fitness levels, look up "Fit For Action", which can be found on the RAF careers website.

Recruits are to commence IOT able to adhere to the minimum standards required for their gender and age group. Once commissioned and throughout their career, officers are looked to by their subordinates and peers to set an example. The physical education programme includes the principles of effective physical training and nutrition to instil knowledge and a positive outlook to take with them for life, taught by highly qualified physical training instructors. Gym facilities and opportunities for force development are readily available once commissioned and personnel are encouraged to partake in both; opportunities are available throughout an officer's career.



A positive attitude together with an intrinsic motivation and a determination to do one's best is what the physical training instructors want to see. Officer cadets who apply themselves before and during IOT to the Physical Education syllabus reduce the risk of injury, increase their chances of success and give themselves greater mental capacity across all areas of the Course. Other than the specified physical education lesson syllabus, other sporting opportunities occur throughout the Course such as Inter-Flight Games, Inter-Squadron Games and Intercollegiate Games against the reciprocal colleges of the Royal Navy and British Army as well as some European counterparts.

Regular fitness assessments will be undertaken throughout the Course, for which the standards are achievable and the officer cadets are prepared for in advance. Nevertheless, if a recruit fails to reach the required standard or sustains an injury, it is highly likely that they will temporarily be removed from training to undertake bespoke rehabilitation or fitness training. Whilst every effort is made to reduce the risk of injury, OACTU has a world class rehabilitation facility and support process in place to assist recruits' recovery in order to return them to mainstream training.







Additional Training

S ometimes recruits do not achieve the successful outcome they want on their first attempt; they may take a little longer. Those officer cadets who require some extra coaching and guidance are assisted by the OACTU tiered review process. The aim of the process is to identify factors affecting the officer cadet's performance, allowing closer mentoring by staff and provide additional support if appropriate, in order to allow them to continue on their original course and graduate. Recruits who respond positively to additional support may be moved back down through the tiers, or be removed from review altogether.

Just like with the rehabilitation programme for fitness, OACTU offers bespoke packages to reinforce and revise training for those officer cadets who need some additional counselling and assistance. These reinforcement packages, delivered by Delta Flight, provide very close supervision and support for the officer cadets, which is a reason why OACTU is so successful in bringing recruits up to the required standard.

"Delta reinforcement training is an extremely valuable medium for building both confidence and competence. The pace of the schedule, which requires a more independent approach to time-management, prepares officer cadets brilliantly for their onward path into the wider Air Force."

"The Delta packages give you an excellent chance to reflect on both your strengths and weaknesses. With this self-awareness as ammunition, there are then numerous chances to develop through the practise of public speaking, office simulation and the chance to run a deployed headquarters."

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GRADUATION AND BEYOND

For the officer cadets who are successful, a major milestone on their officer career path is Graduation Day. This formally marks the occasion they transition into a Commissioned Officer in the Royal Air Force. Each course chooses their own theme for the Graduation Ball held that night in College Hall Officers' Mess. One of the highlights for many is at midnight when everybody gathers in the central Rotunda of College Hall when the names of the graduating officers are read out by the youngest person on the Squadron. Many months of hard work culminate in a very special moment with friends old and new.

Whilst this is a momentous occasion to be shared with friends and family and should be celebrated, this is a stepping stone to the next stage of training. Throughout an officer's career, there are opportunities for professional courses and for personal development. Being a commissioned RAF officer is more than a job, it is a lifestyle. The RAF wants individuals to challenge their boundaries and perceptions, try new activities and expand their horizons; this makes for more effective officers and better leaders.





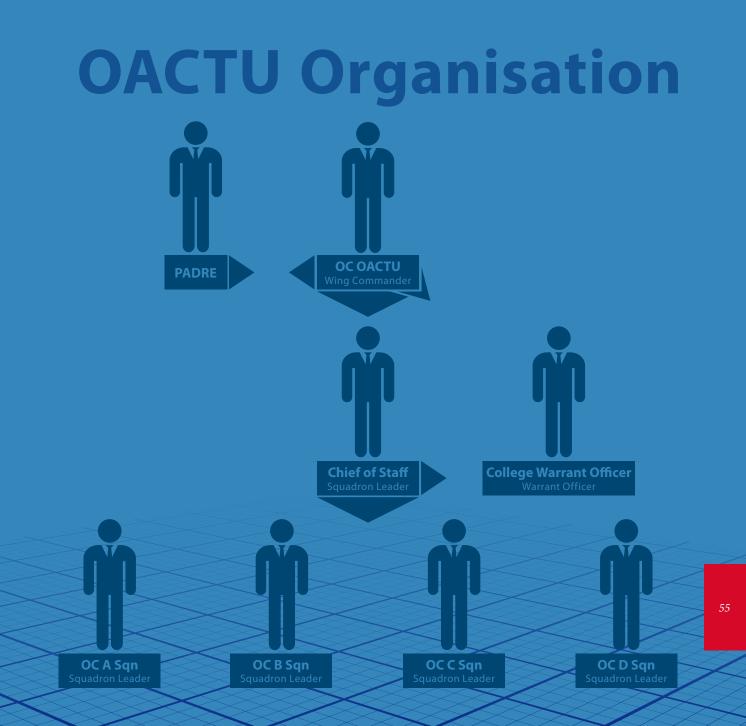
SUMMARY

What may initially appear to be a formidable task, IOT is the first step to a rewarding and fulfilling career. The training is progressive with opportunities for reinforcement, coaching and mentoring throughout to allow the applicants to realize their potential. Along the way, friendships and bonds are forged which last a lifetime and new experiences are shared; personal boundaries are pushed and enduring memories are made. On graduation day, every recruit should feel a great sense of achievement.

A career as an officer offers excellent pay and pension benefits, options for higher education and qualifications plus an expansive opportunity for challenging and varied jobs around the military. The RAF is actively seeking people who want to do more with their lives, who want to progress and develop throughout their career and enjoy the benefits of a wide range of opportunities. Applying to be an officer is applying to be part of one of the world's most respected organizations and having the ability to make a difference and have a positive impact on those around them.

IOT may push recruits' perceived limits further than anything they have done before, but they are part of a team and surrounded by experienced staff that will guide and support them throughout the process. OASC has seen the potential within every individual whom they select to progress onto IOT. A good attitude and an unwavering commitment is what is required from every recruit to give them the greatest chance of success. Completing IOT is the gateway to a fulfilling career full of challenges and achievement surrounded by likeminded people. IOT is not the end of the journey, it is the beginning.

There has never been a better time to become a member of the RAF family. Apply today.





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Produced by Media Services Royal Air Force College Cranwell CRN-20170615-33_511

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