Application to serve in the Armed Forces
Guidance notes

THESE GUIDANCE NOTES ARE DESIGNED TO HELP YOU FILL IN THE APPLICATION FORM.
THIS BOOKLET ALSO CONTAINS ESSENTIAL INFORMATION ABOUT JOINING THE ARMED FORCES.
PLEASE READ IT FULLY.

If you have any questions about the guidance notes or the application form please contact one of the Armed Forces Careers Advisers (CAs) in your local Armed Forces Careers Office, Reserve Forces or Territorial Army Centre. Further information is also available on the Armed Forces websites (at www.royalnavy.mod.uk, www.armyjobs.mod.uk or www.rafcareers.com).

CAUTIONARY STATEMENT

All applications are subject to Ministry of Defence approval. The Armed Forces cannot promise that your application for service in the Armed Forces will be accepted. The Armed Forces can refuse an application without giving any reason.

You may cancel the application process at any time up to entry in your chosen Service.

Please **DO NOT** give notice or terminate your current job until you have been given a written offer of entry. At this time the type of employment and your date of entry will be given.

*Applicants must bear in mind that joining the Armed Forces may lead to them serving in an armed conflict in any part of the world with the risks and responsibilities involved. You may also have to take life in the act of protecting life.*

The Armed Forces respect the value of every individual’s unique contribution, irrespective of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin or religious beliefs and without reference to social background or sexual orientation.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, the Ministry of Defence will collect, use, protect and retain the information on the application form in connection with all matters relating to our personnel administration and policies.
CONDITIONS OF STANDARDS AND BEHAVIOUR

Before filling in the application form you should understand the standards and behaviour that will be expected of you during service with the Armed Forces. If you require any further information or explanation, please consult your local Armed Forces CA.

Commitment
In joining the Armed Forces you will be entering a disciplined organisation that has different requirements from civilian life. There will be times when the requirements of the Service take priority over personal needs; for example, you will be liable for duty at any time of the day or night, seven days a week. In addition, you may be required to serve in any part of the world.

Discipline
Behaviour that does not amount to a crime as a civilian can be a disciplinary matter in the Armed Forces and will carry appropriate penalties. For instance, you can be disciplined for disobeying an order, being untidily dressed, being late for work or taking unauthorised absence from your place of duty.

Integrity
Dishonesty of any kind is unacceptable and can damage morale and trust.

Alcohol
Drunkenness is an offence under the Service Discipline Acts and is taken very seriously by the Armed Forces. Those who persistently offend may be administratively discharged.

Standards of behaviour
In the Service environment where men and women may live in close proximity, particularly high standards of behaviour are demanded. Where restrictions are placed on sexual activity, any breach may lead to administrative or disciplinary action.

Bullying
Ill-treatment and bullying are unacceptable. Disciplinary action will be taken against offenders.

Sexual and racial discrimination
Any form of sexual or racial harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated and disciplinary action will be taken against offenders. The Armed Forces respect the value of every individual’s unique contribution, irrespective of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin or religious belief and without reference to social background or sexual orientation. Your application will be rejected if you are (or have been) a member or supporter of – or associated with – any group or organisation whose purpose includes provocation to racial hatred and violence.

Equality and diversity
The Armed Forces diversity policy is to treat all personnel fairly, irrespective of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin or religious belief and without reference to social background or sexual orientation. The policy goes further than mere elimination of unlawful discrimination. It recognises and values individuals from diverse backgrounds, who bring fresh ideas, perceptions, skills and attributes. This enables the Armed Forces to recruit from the widest possible base, helping us to achieve and sustain our manning needs, and to maintain operational capability.

Conclusion
If for any reason you anticipate that it will be difficult for you to meet the required standards, you should consult your local Armed Forces CA who will be able to advise you on whether a service career is the right choice for you.
APPLICATION FORM GUIDANCE NOTES

The ‘Q’ numbers below refer to the question numbers in the Application Form (AFCO Form 4). The numbers in brackets refer to the page number in the application form.

When entering dates in the application form, please use the format requested. Where dates are asked for but you can’t remember the exact day (for example for periods spent living abroad), use ‘01’ as the default – e.g. 01/10/06.

Please complete the application form with a pen or biro using BLACK ink.

SECTION 1 – SERVICE AND TYPE OF ENTRY

Specific job, career or appointment (page 2)
The majority of careers, jobs, trades or branches within the Armed Forces are open to both men and women. However the following are NOT open to women (although women from other branches or cap badges may be attached to such units).

• Royal Marine Commando (Royal Navy)
• RN Submarine Service (Royal Navy)
• RN Diver (Royal Navy)
• Household Cavalry (Army)
• Royal Armoured Corps (Army)
• Infantry (Army)
• RAF Regiment (Royal Air Force)

Your CA will discuss your choice of job or career with you in more detail. Please give two preferences if possible. Your CA will also be able to give you full details about the bursaries and scholarships that are currently on offer.

Don’t worry if you are not able to fully complete this question. You will be given in-depth career information as part of the application process later on. You have no obligations to join a specific career, job, trade or branch at this stage.

SECTION 2 – YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

Q3. Surname/family name (page 4)
If your surname/family name is different from the name on your birth certificate, official supporting documents showing the change of name will need to be given to your CA before you can proceed to entry stage.

If there are any changes to your name during your application period, please inform your CA as soon as possible.

Q8. Date of birth (page 4)
The minimum and maximum ages for service are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age on application</th>
<th>Age on entry to service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>Lowest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Navy</td>
<td>15 years, 9 months</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Marines</td>
<td>15 years, 9 months</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Army Soldier</td>
<td>15 years, 7 months</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Army Officer</td>
<td>15 years, 7 months</td>
<td>RMAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Air Force</td>
<td>15 years, 9 months</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 years, 6 months</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserve Forces and Territorial Army</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>Dependent on service and specialisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defence Sixth Form College (Welbeck (officer only)):</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lowest on application: 14 years</td>
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<td>Lowest on entry: 15 years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highest on entry: 17 years 6 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholarships:</td>
<td>Different age limits apply. Please ask your CA for details.</td>
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</table>
Q17. Nationality (page 5)
The United Kingdom (UK) includes England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

For entry into the Armed Forces, you must meet the following nationality conditions.

- You must be a British or Commonwealth citizen or an Irish national.
- For some specialist positions within the Armed Forces, it is necessary for you to have been a British citizen for at least 10 years.

Q26. Bank account (page 6)
You will need a working bank or building society account once you enter initial training, as you will be paid by credit transfer. If you do not have an account at present, your CA can let you know when you'll need to set one up by. You will not need to do this until you have been given a firm job offer.

Q27. Religion (page 7)
The Armed Forces encourage enlistment by people of many differing religions and beliefs. However, it must be clear that you may be required to use aggression and/or to take life during your career within the Armed Forces. There are also certain rules and regulations that state what type of clothing or dress is compatible or not with operations and for health and safety. Other considerations may be the handling of certain types of food (as a chef) or the receiving of certain types of medical treatment.

If you have any doubts or questions, do not hesitate to ask your CA. They will either be able to give you or find out the appropriate information.

Q28. Languages (page 7)
If you speak any language other than English, but do not have an academic qualification in it, then please list it here. Please also indicate at what level you speak in the language (i.e. first language, fluent, basic, etc). If you have an academic qualification in a language, please list it in Section 6.

Q29. Basic medical requirements (page 7)
Unsuitable conditions
The conditions in the table below make a person permanently unsuitable for entry into the Services.

Note: This table is for general guidance only. Many conditions that are compatible with civilian employment and sport may be considered incompatible with military service. If you have a recurrent medical condition that is not mentioned below, or if you are unclear about the impact of your medical history, you should seek further advice from your CA.

Please note that Armed Forces CAs and their office staff are not medically qualified and that all final decisions regarding medical suitability for entry are made by selection centre medical staff.

| Ear, nose and throat | Ongoing ear, nose, throat or sinus disease. Deafness. Presence of grommets. Current |
Heart and cardiovascular disorders

Respiratory disorders
Asthma, wheeze or asthma symptoms or treatment within the past four years. Lung disease including chronic bronchitis, emphysema, bronchiectasis, cystic fibrosis. Active tuberculosis.

Abdominal and digestive disorders, including diet

Neurological disorders
Ongoing nervous system disease. Epilepsy or more than one seizure/fit after the age of five (although benign Rolandic epilepsy is acceptable). Single seizure/fit within the last five years. Multiple sclerosis. Complications following head injury. Hydrocephalus (with or without shunt). Severe or recurrent headache (including migraine).

Endocrine disorders

Skin disorders
Chronic eczema or dermatitis. Severe psoriasis. Severe acne.

Female reproductive disorders
Chronic breast pain. Chronic pelvic pain or inflammatory disease. Endometriosis.

Male reproductive disorders
Current cancer of the testicle or prostate gland. Chronic pelvic pain.

Musculoskeletal disorders
Any abnormality that interferes with the ability to undertake military training. Spinal abnormalities. Certain spinal operations. Recurrent back pain or sciatica. Joint disease, pain or limitation of joint movement. Hypermobility (laxity) of the joints. Bone or joint operations within the last 12 months. Anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction (subject to single Service policy). Recurrent joint dislocations. Severe deformity following fractures. Loss of a limb. Foot abnormalities (e.g. club foot or hammer toe). Complete loss of either big toe. Complete loss of either thumb. Arthritis and similar conditions.

Blood disorders
Certain blood diseases, such as G6PDD, sickle cell disease, congenital spherocytosis, haemoglobinopathy. Any bleeding disorder or abnormality of blood clotting.

Infections
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Carriers of hepatitis viruses.

Malignancy (cancer)
Most cancers are considered to place an applicant below the medical entry standard. Exceptions: some cancers in childhood or early adult life that have been successfully treated and are regarded as cured.

Allergic disorders

Conditions resulting from exposure to extremes of temperature
Heat illness. Frostbite and non-freezing cold injury.

Psychiatric disorders

Kidney disorders

Other
Transplanted organs.

Temporary conditions
The following conditions require the selection procedure and/or entry to be temporarily put on hold until you are fully recovered, discharged from hospital follow-up, and fit to undergo arduous training:

- Pregnancy
- Waiting list for an operation
- Temporary illness or injury

At the discretion of Service medical authorities, your application may be rejected due to other medical reasons.

If none of the conditions above apply, tick the YES box of the application form at Q29.

Q30. Weight and height (page 7)
Minimum weight and height requirements for individual Services:

Royal Navy and Royal Marines: The minimum height is 151.5cm. The minimum weight requirement is 60kg.
**Army (Soldier entry only):** The minimum height requirement is 148cm (except for driver trades, when the minimum height is 158cm).

**Royal Air Force:** Only certain trades have a minimum height requirement. This will be indicated to you if necessary.

**Q31–Q32. Vision (page 7)**
The minimum standards for both uncorrected and corrected vision are determined by selection centre medical staff and are dependent on the proposed employment and trade group. Spectacle or contact lens correction must not be greater than -7 dioptres or +8 dioptres in any meridian. Impaired colour perception (colour blindness) is not a bar to service, but may limit your career choices.

**SECTION 3 – ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS**

**Q41. Dependants (page 9)**
The Armed Forces (including the Volunteer or Reserve forces) often require you to serve away from home for extended periods. The Service you are applying for needs to be sure that your domestic arrangements will not prevent you from doing this. If you are married, or have children or family members who are dependent on you, then certain conditions of service apply. Your CA will provide you with the appropriate information.

**SECTION 4 – YOUR PERSONAL HISTORY**

**Q44. Tattoos and body piercings (page 10)**
The Armed Forces policies on tattoos, body piercing and the misuse of drugs are as follows.

**Tattoos**
Tattoos that are offensive, obscene or excessive in size or number will be a bar to entry or re-entry. Tattoos should not be visible on the head and neck. You may be asked to complete a form describing your tattoos.

**Body piercing**
For health and safety reasons, you will be asked to remove certain items of body piercing jewellery before undergoing physical activity as part of the application and selection process. You will not be allowed to attempt the physical activities if you do not remove the body piercing jewellery as requested. Once you have joined the Armed Forces, you will be advised by Service authorities of the rules for wearing body jewellery when on and off duty.

**Drug misuse**
The short-, medium- and long-term effects of the misuse of either illegal drugs or legally obtained drugs can have a damaging impact on mental and physical fitness and health. Drug misuse constitutes a direct threat to the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces; the security and safety of Service personnel; and, potentially, the security and safety of the civilians whom they protect. Illegal misuse of drugs by Service personnel also damages the reputation and standing of the Armed Forces. For all of these reasons, the misuse of drugs is not tolerated within the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces recognise, however, that drug misuse is increasingly common in civilian life, particularly among the young, and that you may have misused drugs yourself in the past. This will not necessarily prevent you from enlisting, as all applications are considered individually. Acceptance into the Services will depend on the frequency of use and the class and type of drug that has been misused. Criminal convictions for trafficking or supply of any class of drug will bar entry to the Services.

Once you have joined the Armed Forces, you are required to stay clear of drugs at all times and also to avoid association with drug misusers and suppliers. Once you have been enlisted, you will be liable by law to random compulsory drug testing throughout your Service career. If these tests show that you have misused drugs, it is Armed Forces policy that, with very few exceptions, you will be discharged.

**Q45. Unspent convictions (page 10)**
You may be prevented from entering or re-entering the Armed Forces if you have committed certain offences or have undergone certain types of sentence. Your CA will be able to help to clarify your particular situation. If you have civilian or military offences against your name, then please read the accompanying leaflet MOD Form 493 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This explains whether you have to give details of any 'unspent' convictions. Having an 'unspent' conviction does not necessarily mean that you will be unable to join the Armed Forces.

You are required to complete the certificate on page 4 of the MOD Form 493 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and (if applicable) you should provide the following information.

- Offence or allegation (including date and place)
- Name of court and date of hearing
- Final or interim result or sentence/fine
If you are awaiting a court appearance for a criminal offence (or in any capacity other than as a witness), you may not be eligible to apply until the outcome of the hearing is known.

Q47–Q48. Financial commitments – debts and bankruptcy (page 10)
A person who is declared bankrupt (and as a result does not have a working bank account), is insolvent, or has debts or loans that would be beyond their ability to meet from their Service pay without financial hardship, may be ineligible to join the Armed Forces. Your CA will be able to provide you with the appropriate information.

Note: There is a statutory requirement for applicants who seek to join certain branches or specialisations (those that work with children or vulnerable adults) to undergo suitability checks by the Criminal Records Bureau. These checks include the disclosure of a person’s criminal record. If appropriate, a Suitability Certificate will be issued. Your CA will advise you when and how this certificate is to be obtained.

Q59. Professionally Qualified Officer (page 14)
Those candidates who are applying to be a PQO are asked to list all their professional qualifications and in particular any specialisations within those qualifications.

SECTION 7 – YOUR EXPERIENCE AND INTERESTS

Q72. References (page 18)
All applicants for the Armed Forces are required to nominate a referee in order to assist the authorities in confirming your identity and character. Depending on your entry route or career/job choice, you may be asked for further referees at a later date as part of the selection process. The CA will contact the nominated referee(s) as appropriate.

Your referee should be:

- EITHER your head teacher or tutor (if you are currently in full-time education or within 12 months of leaving that school, college or university);
- OR your current employer (or most recent employer if you are not currently employed). (Please indicate if you do not want us to contact your current employer until you have had a formal job offer from the Armed Forces).

If neither of the above are possible, the referee can be a personal referee. They must have known you for at least 12 months and have had contact with you within the last six months. They must not be related to you, nor have had a close personal relationship or any financial arrangement with you. You must ask their permission before giving their name as a referee.

In all cases, you may have as an additional referee the Officer Commanding (if you are a serving member of the Reserve forces) or the County Cadet Commandant (if serving in a Cadet unit).

SECTION 8 – CONFIRMING YOUR APPLICATION

Q74–Q75. Ethnic monitoring and background (page 19)
The Armed Forces are obliged by law to survey the ethnic mix of each Service, using the categories as redefined in the Census 2001 guidelines, to ensure that the policy and practice of equality of opportunity for all personnel and potential entrants continues to be effective.

NOTE
Parent’s or guardian’s consent (page 21)
Applicants who are under 18 years of age, or are in care at the time of application, are to obtain the consent of a parent, guardian or person with parental responsibilities before the application can be considered. This consent will be required again on entry if the applicant is still under 18, or in care.

Certificate by civil employer (for Reserve forces only) (page 22)
If you are applying to join the Reserve forces or Territorial Army and are currently employed by a government department or are a member of the civil police, fire and emergency services, or ambulance services, then this section is to be completed by your employer.

END OF GUIDANCE NOTES
HM GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT ON VETTING POLICY

In the interests of national security, safeguarding parliamentary democracy and maintaining the proper security of the Government’s essential activities, it is the policy of HM Government that no one should be employed in the Armed Forces who is, or has been, involved in or associated with any of the following activities:

- espionage;
- terrorism;
- sabotage; or
- actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means; or

- is, or has recently been:
  - a member of any organisation that has advocated such activities;
  - associated with any such organisation (or any of its members) in such a way as to raise reasonable doubts about his or her reliability;
  - susceptible to pressure or improper influence, for example because of current or past conduct;
  - guilty of dishonesty or lack of integrity that throws doubt on their reliability; or
  - shown to demonstrate behaviour or is subject to circumstances that may otherwise indicate unreliability.

MOD Form 1109 – Security Check (SC)/Counter-Terrorist Check (CTC) questionnaire

You should be aware that during the recruiting and selection process, all applicants for the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, all Officer applicants for the Army and certain other applicants for the Army (depending on the job applied for) will be asked to complete a security questionnaire. It is government policy that (for certain jobs) a Security Check and/or a Counter-Terrorist Check is carried out on applicants to confirm their identity, suitability and trustworthiness.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

YOUR RIGHTS AND HOW WE PROTECT THEM

When it comes to the information we hold about you, your rights are set out clearly in the law. The Data Protection Act 1998 also provides that people who record and use personal data must be open about how it is used, and that they must obey the eight Data Protection Principles, which are listed below. In some instances, the law exempts us from these principles. This is normally where obeying the principles would damage the fight against crime, or be against the national interest in some way.

1. Process it fairly and lawfully.
2. Process it for specific purposes and not in any manner incompatible with those purposes.
3. Only process information that is adequate, relevant and not excessive.
4. Ensure that the information is accurate and up to date.
5. Ensure that the information is not kept longer than is necessary.
6. Ensure that the information is treated in accordance with your rights.
7. Take care of your personal information.
8. Ensure that your personal information is not transferred outside the European Economic Area unless there are suitable safeguards in the countries to which it needs to be sent.

If you want to know more about the Data Protection Act 1998, you can write to the following address.

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Or you can visit the website (at www.ico.gov.uk).