

The Next Generation



Preparing and maintaining the excellent structure of the Cadet School in the Curragh is an ever evolving task. Comdt. Kieran Butler and Capt. Neil Nolan explain the structure and training ethos which they employ as the 77th class of cadets received their commissions.

The Cadet School

The Cadet School mission is to conduct a standard cadet course of training for cadets for appointment as officers of the permanent Defence Forces, explains Commandant Kieran Butler. The first Cadet Class entered the Cadet School on the first of February 1928, and was commissioned in 1929, so obviously the school has its own slice of history. As of 2002, in excess of 2000 graduates will have passed through the school. The class sizes average 30-35, but at present there are 52 in the senior class (the 78th Cadet Class) and 72 in the junior class (the 79th Cadet Class), and the indications are that future classes could be of a similar size. The average aid of a cadet on entry is 19, and in each class university graduates may account for up to ten per cent. (Non graduate cadets on commissioning spend 15 months in their units before going to University)

In October of each year a new class enters the Cadet School, consisting of Army, Naval, and Air Corps cadets. The Cadet School is the central base for initial cadet training, with Naval cadets completing their first three months training here before going to the Naval College in Haulbowline, while the Air Corps cadets undergo seven months of training before going to the Air Corps Training Wing in Baldonnel. The Army cadets complete their full 21 months of cadetship training in the School, which consists of three distinct stages, each of seven months duration, during which they are continually assessed and sit formal examinations.



Standing to attention: resident international students of the UN school at the ceremony.



A graduating cadet receiving lapel pins and sword.

We seek to inculcate a deep respect for truth, honour and loyalty and indeed patriotism.

Stage one in addition to providing instruction on the basic military skills, also focuses on imparting the ethos, structure and discipline of the Defence Forces to newcomers. In the first few days and weeks everything that the cadet does is designed to

assimilate him/her into military methodology. In this basic period of induction the learning curve is extremely steep, and it involves aspects such as military socialisation, in which the norms and traditions of the Cadet School and the Defence Forces are inculcated. This period can be quite difficult for many cadets as it does involve a huge culture shock in many cases. Senior cadets are used to assist the junior cadets during the induction period, via the 'Comhairleoir' system, in which senior cadets are appointed to act as advisers or mentors to the new cadets. This comhairleoir system has proven to be of great assistance to new cadets in assisting with their familiarisation with the military environment, and help foster an adherence to the old adage of 'attention to detail.'

Stage two consists of a junior/subordinate leadership approach where cadets are taught the techniques to become instructors and leaders, and in which they get opportunities to apply their fledgling leadership skills in tactical training and exercises. The application by cadets of the lessons learned, and the focusing on their ability to instruct and lead others is at the very core of this stage. Stage three hinges very much on leadership skills and training, and is devised to develop their ability to command in various environments. At this stage

of the training cadets must assume a lot more personal responsibility and demonstrate initiative coupled with an analytical approach to problem solving, with the subjects in this stage reflecting this approach.

Cadet training by its very nature is very intensive physically, mentally and emotionally. On the successful completion of the course, cadets will have gained a broad range of skills and qualifications. In addition to the Diploma

munitions and devices. They are trained as physical education leaders, which allows them to lead and instruct others in physical education and training. In addition, they are qualified in occupational first-aid, and they complete an ECDL computer skills module.

The Cadet Training Ethos

“Basically the aim of the cadet course is to develop the qualities of leadership and to

develop a broad foundation of military knowledge in every cadet, prior to commissioning.” In addition, on an intellectual level, instructors provide a platform for further education, because it is Defence Forces’ policy that all officers be educated to third level degree standard.

While the cadet course is intensive, arduous and at times strenuous, the support structures for cadets are also a major concern



Cadets at the oath swearing ceremony during cadet graduation formalities.

in Military Studies awarded by HETAC (Higher Education Training and Awards Council), cadets will possess the professional qualifications of instructor status in both Light Infantry Support Weapons, and in AFV (Armoured Fighting Vehicle) recognition (the skill of determining the type and identity of armoured vehicles at a distance).

provide the knowledge and skills necessary for a professional military career,” Captain Neil Nolan explains. This aim is actually quite intricate and it has a number of detailed subsets. For example, we seek in every individual to enhance their character and personality as they undergo their training. Also, we seek to inculcate a deep respect

for the Defence Forces. Kieran Butler explains: “If at any stage of the course a cadet experiences difficulty in a particular area of instruction he/she will receive extra tuition and if required, counselling to deal with whatever that difficulty might be. Every assistance is provided to ensure that cadets meet the required standard. However, there are always cases where this is not possible, where cadets don’t make the grade. This could be because a cadet feels that military life is not for him/her, or because a cadet may not reach the standards required by the organisation. In such cases a cadet may resign his cadetship or else their discharge from the Defence Forces may be sought.” According to Captain Neil Nolan, on average in each cadet class, between five and ten per cent would not complete the course.

Everything that the cadet does from day one is designed to induct them into the methodology of the college.

They are also qualified in range safety management, which permits them to plan, conduct and assess live firing practices and exercises, an essential skill for a young officer, and are also trained to dispose of unexploded

for truth, honour and loyalty and indeed patriotism. We also need to develop awareness and a necessity for analytical thinking, this is a skill which we refine through a series of many exercises. We also need to

The Selection Process

It is believed that the selection process is one they key factors in maintaining a high pass

rate amongst the cadets. It commences with a preliminary “competency based” interview, which are held in regional areas. From those interviews, the candidates that are deemed most suitable are allowed to proceed to the final interview, which again is competency based. Capt Neil Nolan who has been involved with the Cadet School for some years before becoming the Company Commander or Class Officer of the 77th Cadet Class, explains the final interview process further. “Prior to reporting for final interview, each candidate undergoes a psychometric test. This is a new dimension that has been added to the recruitment and assessment system. This test is carried out at a test centre, it’s not a pass or fail aspect of the interview but it helps us build a more comprehensive profile of the candidate and how they might react in certain circumstances. The final interview for the cadetship is an intensive two-day process. First there is a mandatory medical examination and basic fitness test, both of which must be passed. If the candidate is successful in both of those they then proceed to the final interview.”

The Training Model

The training model that the Irish Defence Forces use to train its junior officers is an infantry-based model; a model that those in charge believe has served the Defence Forces well. “It provides the best foundation in military skills and also in practical leadership, which are so important for a junior leader. This model is also the most popular internationally, as infantry-based training provides the best cross-section of basic military skills. “Here we provide a broad level of basic training, but that is then complemented with professional experience when the cadet begins their unit life. Our purpose here is to provide the Defence Forces with the well developed but unfinished product, an officer ready to participate in a unit. However, the learning never stops.” Depending on the unit that the officer is assigned to, an Artillery or Cavalry unit for example, supplementary training may be required. The success of the Irish cadetship course is reflected not only in calibre of the graduates working within the Irish Defence Forces, but also in their performances in international competition. In March of this year, cadets from the 77th class competed in the ‘International Law of Armed Conflict’ competition in San Remo in Italy. There were 11 teams from eight countries, including USA, Russia and China. Our cadet team finished second overall and one of our cadets was a



Minister for Defence, Michael Smith awarding scrolls to cadets.

member of the winning international mixed team. “We feel that that sort of achievement and that sort of experience validates our training here,” says Kieran Butler.

The constant analysis and revision of the cadet’s syllabus is something which Comdt Kieran Butler explains is a vital component

further qualification that will be of use to an Officer, particularly in terms of overseas service in the future. Another example of this ongoing updating is the increase in instruction and training FIBUA operations (Fighting in Built up Areas), as this type of military operations has increased in impor-



The syllabus is reviewed for every cadet class and is in a constant process of evolution.



to keep the training current and relevant to the challenges facing the Irish Defence Forces today, and is also in the best interests of the cadet. Examples of this evolving syllabus would be the introduction this year of the study of a European language. This study is completed after duty hours, and principally involves French and German, with the cadets undergo relevant tests by language institutions. The reason for this addition is to add a

tance over the last decade, particularly in the aspect of peacekeeping and peacemaking.

The work of the Cadet School in imparting the necessary skills for leadership is one of the most crucial and fundamental roles of the Irish Defence Forces. The ability of the cadets to deploy these skills successfully is the best way to pay tribute to this training, a training system which has paid dividends in Irish military and business life for generations.