



Ministry
of Defence

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STUART ANDREW MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER
FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

MSU/4/8/1/2/ap

May 2019

Dear Julian

Thank you for your letter dated 11 March 2019 addressed to the Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Defence, in which you requested information on the UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) following a recent BBC radio documentary. I have been asked to reply as this subject falls within my portfolio.

As you may already be aware, the UKMFTS is the biggest transformation of military aircrew training in a generation. When fully complete this modernisation of the flying training system will deliver training that will better prepare our aircrew for the next generation of military aircraft. The transition to UKMFTS is well underway, with student aircrew in training and throughput increasing as the new aircraft, simulators and other state-of-the-art training aids bed in.

Turning to the questions that you raise, I will answer each of them in turn.

1. How many trainee pilots were 'on hold' at 31 December each year since the launch of the United Kingdom Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) in 2012.

There will always be holds in the flying training pipeline to ensure courses are fully utilised. Information on the number of pilots on hold in each year since 2012 is unavailable due to the way in which this information was recorded historically. In 2018 the Ministry of Defence (MOD) recognised the requirement to change the way this information was recorded to ensure that it could monitor students on hold in the flying training system more efficiently. The number of students on hold changes on a regular basis as they begin their individual courses. However, as at 6 March 2019, the number of students on hold between courses was 124 and the number of students that had completed Initial Officer Training and were awaiting Elementary Flying Training is 203.

For reference there were 242 tri-service (and 30 international) students on flying training courses on the same date. The number of students on hold has stabilised and will now decrease, initially by 10% in Financial Year (FY) 2019-20.

The Rt Hon Dr Julian Lewis MP
Chair, House of Commons Defence Committee
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a. What are the main reasons for the bottlenecks, and to what extent is the result of the move from the legacy system to MFTS?

The increased requirement for frontline aircrew directed by the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) 2015 meant that there was a requirement to increase recruiting and expand UKMFTS capacity over its originally designed throughput. The increased recruiting has been successful; however, the complexity of the transition to the new training system, the introduction of five new aircraft types and the Government's commitment to International Defence Training has impacted student training progression. We are working actively with our training partners to reconfigure the flying training pipeline and expand the contracted throughput for the new training requirement. In the meantime we have implemented several mitigation measures to improve training throughput, such as utilising the NATO training system in the US, utilising capacity on the Hawk T1 and outsourcing Multi Engine training to train up to 100 Multi Engine students during a three year period. The MOD is also working with key international partners to explore other innovations in flying training development.

b. How much has MOD spent each year since 2012 on salaries of pilot trainees who were on hold.

Students on hold are employed and paid as serving officers within the Service headcount and are filling productive personal development roles close to aviation or, where they have requisite skills, developing Service capability. In FY 2018-19 the salaries for RAF student aircrew employed on productive duties in areas such as Air Safety Assurance, Air Traffic Control, Air Worthiness Management Office teams and providing support to outer offices amongst other things away from flying training for greater than three months was approximately £8.5 million.

2. How long did you expect multi-engine, rotary wing and fast jet trainee pilot officers to become combat ready for the start of initial officer training under the MFTS contract?

The UKMFTS Flying Training Programme sets out the average target time for students to complete their flying training for each of the requested platforms as follows:

Multi Engine:	2.5 years
Rotary Wing:	3 years
Fast Jet:	4 years

These timescales include Initial Officer Training but do not consider any periods of hold between flying training, planned programme gaps or other factors such as pre-employment training or annual leave in excess of the working time directive.

a. How long is it currently taking pilots to become combat ready, and how has this changed each year since 2012.

The current training time for students to reach the front line on each platform is:

Multi Engine pilots:	4.2 years
Rotary Wing pilots:	5 years
Fast Jet pilots:	approximately 7 years

These times will reduce as mitigation measures take effect and the transition to MFTS reaches full capacity.

3. Does the UKMFTS have the number of aircraft, simulators and instructors it requires to meet the UKs current demand for aircrew?

MFTS is being delivered in two tranches: The first tranche is aligned with the requirement defined in SDSR10 for which all aircraft have now been delivered. Student and instructor training has commenced and, to date there has been no impact on the availability of aircrew for operational conversion training on the frontline.

The second tranche will increase the training capacity required as a result of SDSR15. That increased requirement has been funded and a solution has been designed. We expect to see Business Cases submitted for approval this year.

a. How many Hawk T2 are required to meet the UKs military advanced fast jet training needs, and how many are currently available?

The MOD has a total fleet of 28 Hawk T2 and we require 18 aircraft to be available each day to meet the Fast Jet training output. There is currently an average of 10 aircraft available for flying each day. The MOD is working closely with its industry training partners to increase aircraft availability and an Availability Campaign Team comprising the MOD and industry partners has been established to review and improve this situation.

b. What safety alterations must be made to the T-6 Texan II aircraft for them to be certified, and will they be available for basic flying training when required?

The Texan aircraft has already gained Military Certification and instructor training has commenced.

Three additional safety modifications are planned in order to continue to ensure that the risk to life should a pilot eject over the sea is both tolerable and as low as reasonably practicable in line with UK best practices. Student courses will commence on schedule in November 2019.

4. How much has the MOD paid Ascent each year since the contract began?

Payments are in the table below:

Payments to Ascent¹ (FY)	(£ million)
2018-19	129.541
2017-18	75.331
2016-17	56.643
2015-16	26.479
2014-15	25.083
2013-14	25.469
2012-13	27.503

¹ These payments relate to the annual payments for delivery of training and exclude the procurement of assets.

2011-12	33.713
2010-11	21.586
2009-10	16.836
2008-09	18.956

The payments relate to the annual payments for delivery of training. The increase in payments from FY 2016-17 reflects the commencement of new training pipelines, namely Fixed Wing and Rotary Wing. The value of the service payments has incrementally increased as the new training services have come online over the past 24 months. In addition to covering the cost of delivering the training service, the payments against the Fixed Wing pipeline also covers the repayment of debt under the Private Finance Initiative arrangement.

And how much has been:

a. Deducted since 2015 from payments to Ascent for provision of services not fully meeting requirements?

To date the MOD has delayed or withheld approximately £20 million of payments. £7.4 million has not been paid for failings in the delivery of the training system and lower than expected student throughput. Where Ascent are clearly responsible for non or late delivery, payment is withheld in accordance with the remedies available under the terms of the UKMFTS contract.

b. Deducted from its Training Service Availability Payments for late delivery of assets?

To date the MOD have deducted £5.9 million from its Training Service Availability Payments for delivery for late assets.

c. Forgone from course completion incentive fees for late delivery of training courses?

To date Ascent has forgone £1.5 million for Course Completion Incentive Fees.

5. How many courses have Ascent run each year since 2012, and how many have been cancelled?

Since 2012 Ascent has run 245 courses. These are broken down by year in the table below:

Financial Year							
2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
8	20	21	29	25	30	38	74

Over this period 52 courses have been cancelled for a number of reasons including, but not limited to: changes in demand, aircraft availability, infrastructure issues such as runway maintenance and delays in future courses meaning that a course could not be run.

a. How many courses were not run because of reasons related to MOD, and how much has MOD paid Ascent for there?

Of the 52 cancelled courses, 21 were related to the MOD. Ascent do not get 'paid' for these courses; the incentive fee is instead spread across the remaining courses in year, incentivising Ascent to deliver student output on time and to cost.

b. Can you elaborate on Air Commodore Simon Edwards' statement during file on 4 that paying Ascent for courses that are not run because of reasons related to MOD provides value for money?

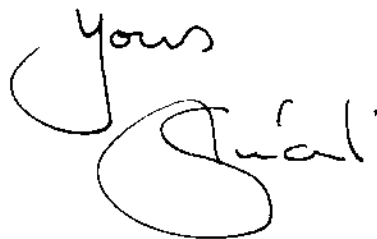
The MOD placed a contract with Ascent through fair and open competition to ensure Value for Money. Ascent are not directly reimbursed for cancellation of courses where it is the fault of the MOD. There is a cancellation clause meaning that the MOD are still financially responsible for any occurrences of cancelled courses via an incentivisation fee, which is then spread across the rest of the courses to incentivise Ascent and the MOD to deliver student output on time and to cost.

6. Since 2012, how many personnel have left the Armed Forces each year before completing their flying training, and what were the reasons for their departure?

Information on the number of personnel that have left the Armed Forces in each year since 2012 before completing their flying training is not available. However, I can tell you that in 2018 fewer than 10 personnel left the Armed Forces before completing their flying training.

The flying training pipeline continues to offer sufficient trained aircrew for our current front-line commitments and I can assure you that UKMFTS is on course to deliver a world-class military flying training system to meet the needs of Defence. The MOD will continue to work closely with our training partners to increase student throughput and deliver sufficient trained aircrew for our frontline.

I hope this clarifies the current position and I have been able to allay your concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yours Stuart'.

STUART ANDREW MP