Dear Gavin,

Thank you for your letter of 14 March in response to mine of 26 February about the Defence Engineering and Science Group (DESG) scheme.

The Committee still finds it difficult to understand why the Department would not seek to provide an exception for individuals who have recently graduated but were medically discharged before being commissioned. The Department would surely benefit from keeping a link with such young people during this transitional period despite them not yet being serving members of the Armed Forces. We would not want to see the triumph of process over outcome in this regard, especially considering Mark Lancaster’s written statement on 11 March, which highlights the MoD’s strong commitment to recruit and develop STEM graduates into defence.

You have told us that there is no exception within Civil Service recruitment principles for your Department regarding medically discharged graduates. Nonetheless you have been able to show flexibility for those still studying who are medically discharged. We would ask you to extend this flexibility on a case by case basis to these recent graduates by reviewing and revising current policy in line with your efforts to recruit and retain the brightest and best young people.

Yours sincerely,

Julian