Workshop: Managing Defence OR
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Feedback to 31 ISMOR
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Aim

• Discuss practices, perceptions and experiences related to the management of OR groups that address defence issues
• Identify how these differ between the different environments within which groups operate
• Provide participants with food for thought
• (Possibly) generate ideas for papers / activities at future ISMORs
Managing defence OR – the key questions

- What capabilities and resources do we need?
- How do we acquire, maintain and develop them?

- What outcomes are we looking for?
- What are the implications of this?

- How do we get the taskings that we need, want or believe desirable?

- What’s different about a (defence) OR project?
- What are the implications of this?
Managing defence OR – the key questions

- What capabilities and resources do we need?
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- What's different about a (defence) OR project?
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- What outcomes are we looking for?
- What are the implications of this?
Plenty of feedback in this process!
What did we talk about?

- Capability & resources
- Tasking
- Project management
- Outcome
Some key themes: Capability and resources

• ‘Suitably Qualified and Experienced People’
  • Most groups rely heavily on recruitment of ‘new-to-OR’ at newish graduate / post-graduate level
  • Importance of soft skills and credibility when interacting with clients
  • Writing skills
Some key themes: Capabilities and Resources

• ‘Suitably Qualified and Experienced’
  • Most groups rely heavily on recruitment, new to UK, at newish graduate / post-graduate level
  • Importance of soft skills and credibility when interacting with clients
  • Writing skills

Contextual knowledge: military background, defence systems, current issues, client organization and processes …
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- Attend military staff courses
- Work in client organizations
- Receive ruthless feedback
- Do reviews of other people’s writing
- Read widely and well
- Value of PhD / post-doc experience
- Mixed results from courses
Some key themes: Capability and resources

- ‘Suitably Qualified and Experienced’
  - Most groups rely heavily on recruitment of ‘new-to-OR’ at newish graduate / post-graduate level
  - Importance of soft skills and credibility when interacting with clients
  - Writing skills
- Knowledge management
  - Innovative approaches using Sharepoint, wikis, social media, etc
  - Short, sharp sharing / briefing events
  - Audio / video records for staff ‘brain dumps’
Some key themes: Capability and resources

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• Knowledge management

• Strategic relationships and (in UK, at least) trend to consortium contracts
Taskings

• (Obviously) no magic formula to getting the right taskings; commercially sensitive area!
• Increased importance of bidding as consortia
Project management

• Not like building a bridge - we may not know what we really have to do until we’ve almost done it!
• Obviously, (again) no magic formula …
• … but plenty of experience in coping with this that could be teased out and structured
• Issues when working as part of a consortium
Working in a consortium

• Pros
  • Economy in bidding
  • Brings together best capabilities from range of organizations – no need for everyone to be able to do everything
  • Facilitates contributions from ‘non-standard’ players – e.g. universities, think tanks.

• Cons
  • Can promote stove-piping of capabilities and over-specialised staff – people and companies get used to just doing the same old bits and pieces; loss of ability to take the holistic view that is essential to good OR
  • Can result in isolation from direct interaction with client
In summary ...

• Some very interesting discussions, with range of perceptions and experiences ... as well as the airing of well established consensus

• Plenty of ground left to cover!

• Should future ISMORs continue to try to bring in topics related to the professional practice of OR? If so, what form should they take?