HMC Projects in Central & Eastern Europe
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From the Director: Ben Vessey

FULL SCHOLARSHIPS TO SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2027

Information for Parents of Applicants from Moldova

Students are asked to translate this paper for their parents if necessary in order to ensure that it is fully understood.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the arrangements for the full scholarships offered in the United Kingdom through *HMC Projects in Central and Eastern Europe*.

You will find further details of the nature and work of HMC Projects at www.hmc.org.uk/projects.

HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference) is an association of the Headteachers of many of the leading independent schools in the United Kingdom. HMC Projects is a registered charity and is a company with limited liability. Its specific purpose, since its inception in 1992, has been to enable young students from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to study in the UK and, in doing so, to make contacts and friendships with British young people, to gain a better understanding of what the United Kingdom stands for, to perfect their mastery of the English language and to strengthen links between their countries and the UK. In consequence, some two thousand students have received scholarships to spend up to two years in British schools. Quite apart from the benefit to the students, the British schools have also greatly enjoyed their presence and have gained much. The scholarship application process is run by *HMC Projects,* but students are placed not only in schools belonging to HMC but also in some other independent schools and even one in Poland.

The British schools are of various types. Some are schools mainly for boarding pupils (boys and girls who live at the school during the school terms). Other schools have both boarding pupils and day pupils. Scholarship students from Central and Eastern Europe take up boarding places in their schools. The schools are located throughout the United Kingdom. Many of the schools are coeducational but some take only girls and others take only boys.

Scholarships for students in Moldova are arranged through cooperation between three parties:

- **HMC Projects**

  HMC Projects coordinates the general programme in the UK and liaises with **the International Study Centre for Educational Opportunities**.

  Once the student has arrived at the school, formal responsibility for each student transfers to the school. Even so, our Deputy Director, Chris Burrows, is available as a point of contact for students and able to offer support and advise as needed. On the recommendation of the Deputy Director financial help may be given to students confronted with exceptional expenditure (*for instance a non-compulsory academic trip, say, or for other purchases to support their studies or co-curricular activities*).

- **the International Study Centre for Educational Opportunities**

  the International Study Centre for Educational Opportunities administers the programme in Moldova, organises student interviews and provides support and advice for the scholars before their departure to the UK.

- **The School:**

  Your son or daughter will become a full member of the school chosen by HMC Projects and you will be asked to sign the home-school agreement signed by all parents. The School provides a full scholarship, covering all costs of tuition, food and accommodation, and accepts responsibility for the students at all times when the school is in session.

  We match our scholars with schools best suited to their individual talents, but I should emphasise that all the schools within the scheme have been selected because we see them as entirely suitable and because we know that they will offer a very valuable experience to the students who are their guests. The award of the scholarship is confirmed by the school accepting the student assigned to it by HMC Projects and, once this acceptance has been given, a change cannot be made.

A different way of life

Students need to be ready to adapt to the boarding way of life and to desire positively to support the school's philosophy and rules. Inevitably our scholars do find that some features of British schools are very different from their schools at home – for example:

1. Students live in boarding houses. Normally about thirty to forty students live in one house, supervised by two or more members of staff. The houses are usually for boys only or for girls only. For young people who have always lived at home it takes some time to become accustomed to this situation. Of course our scholars miss their homes, but they quickly make friends and enjoy being members of their house and school communities.

2. Most students will share a room with another student, where they sleep, study and keep their personal belongings, clothes, books and other items. Most schools will expect their boarders to undertake communal responsibilities within their houses.

3. All boarding schools have rules designed to protect the needs and interests of each one of their members. For example, one rule will be that students will be expected to be in their own rooms by a particular time at night and will be required to be quiet so that others may sleep. Another rule will be that students are not allowed to smoke or consume alcohol. Students in boarding schools are not normally permitted to seek or obtain paid employment outside school. At home rules of this sort are probably unnecessary. Our experience is that these rules do not usually create difficulties for students, but we must emphasise that students need to be willing to accept them – otherwise they should decline the scholarship.

4. In most schools (but not all) students wear a uniform during teaching hours and for special occasions. Schools will send full information about this to those who are selected for scholarships and there is no need for parents to spend much money on these items before the students leave for the UK.

5. An important difference is that students in Britain study far fewer academic subjects. This applies to all the present examination systems in the UK – A Levels, the IB (International Baccalaureate), and Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers. Most of our schools will teach A level courses and pupils usually take three or possibly four main subjects (from 15-20 different possibilities).

In other words, HMC Projects scholars will study a smaller number of subjects in greater depth than they would have done at home. The consequence is that they will think more deeply about the subject, rather than just study to absorb information. Of fundamental importance is the fact that they will be speaking, listening, reading and writing in English all the time, so that their command of English will develop enormously during their time in the UK. When they are selected and assigned to their schools, they will become actively involved in the selection of their course of studies, with full information supplied by their school.

6. Another important difference is that, whereas many European schools aim to provide only teaching in the academic subjects, British boarding schools offer also a wide range of other activities which give opportunity for students to develop sporting or other talents. All schools offer excellent opportunities for music with orchestras and choirs; they offer drama and debating. Facilities for sport are excellent. Scholars can be assured that they will be able to enjoy themselves besides working hard. It is indeed important that they do make time for these other activities since these contribute to the lasting friendships which are for many one of the most important features of being in the UK.

7. UK boarding schools have an international outlook and will probably have a number of students from other countries – from Europe, Africa or Asia … along with their British students. Students need to be sensitive to cultural differences as well as aware that attitudes towards social matters such as racism or gender equality may well be different to those at home.

8. There are a few exceptions, but almost all UK boarding schools have a religious heritage and require their students from time to time to attend what may be called “chapel” or “prayers” or a “religious-style assembly”. This is actually also the law of the land and applies to all British schools. Boarding schools see this as an important and intrinsic part of communal life and of the all-round education they offer as well as a valuable cultural experience. The Church of England is as broad-minded a church as any in the world and schools will go out of their way to ensure that services or “prayers” are inclusive. Those leading such occasions know that in a typical British boarding school there will be students from many cultures and of many faiths as well as of none; they shape what they offer accordingly. Students are expected to attend (not least out of courtesy); schools do not normally allow students to opt out of such events. **If you or your son or daughter cannot accept this requirement, then you should not proceed with this application.**

9. All UK boarding schools will insist on their international pupils naming a guardian. A guardian is an approved UK adult resident that undertakes to accommodate and look after a student during the holiday periods and respond in the event of term time emergencies.
With the agreement of the school, a known relative or close family friend, resident in Britain, can be designated as guardian, in which case you will not incur the extra expense of engaging a professional guardianship service. However, the rules around a known relative or close family friend have recently been tightened by the UK authorities. *For more detail see our Expenses Calculator document*. Due to the changes in rules, more schools are insisting on the use of professional guardianship services. Given that HMC Projects might place you in a school with that policy, even if you do have a family member or friend able and willing to act as a guardian, it would be sensible to budget on the assumption that if offered a HMC Projects scholarship you will need to use a professional guardianship agency.

10. The Scholarship is intended to be for **two years**, and an application should not be made if the intention is to spend only one year in the UK. Therefore, scholarships will be for two years, renewable for the second year on the same or similar terms. It should be noted that schools do, however, reserve the right to withdraw a scholarship from any scholar, if they fail to perform to the high standards expected, both academically and socially. The two-year programme allows scholars to complete their education in the UK and to apply for a wide variety of universities across Europe. Schools will expect scholars to demonstrate high

academic performance and make a valuable contribution to school life. There is no absolute requirement for scholars to stay on for a second year, but schools will be expecting this.
In the past, some former scholars have then gone on to university in the UK. However, the scholarship does not carry with it the opportunity to study at a British university and the cost of study in a university in the UK is extremely expensive in terms of both tuition and living costs. All scholars, as international students, would have to pay tuition fees at the higher rate at UK universities; this is normally over twice as much as UK students pay. Taking account of living costs, the annual cost of studying at a university in the UK for international students will start at about £30,000. Obtaining scholarships to offset these fees is very difficult and the competition for these is fierce. This is the case regardless of whether scholars hold an EU passport or not. Many scholars now secure places at universities in EU countries where the tuition fees and living costs are more affordable. All schools offer very helpful advice about university choices
Applicants should find out from local universities and current schools which examinations or courses of study (if any) will be necessary if scholars are to resume studies at home without disadvantage when they return.

Eligibility

1. To be eligible for the HMC Projects Scholarship Programme a student should be sixteen years old and not older than seventeen years and six months on 1st September 2027, i.e. a student's date of birth must be between 1st March 2010 and 1st September 2011.

2. The applicant (student) should complete the majority of the application form. There are specific 'checklist items' e.g. Financial Declaration that should be completed online by a parent and a portal access code will be issued for that purpose.

3. HMC Projects Full Scholarships are intended to benefit those whose parents cannot afford to pay full United Kingdom boarding school fees. Schools participating in the Scheme consider this to be part of how they offer public benefit. HMC Projects has therefore decided that the combined parental net income of applicants must not exceed £30,000 as assessed during 2026.

   The parents of applicants for a full scholarship must sign a declaration that their combined net annual income during 2026 will not have exceeded the equivalent of £30,000.

   Please note that net income means total disposable income after tax has been paid.

   Applicants, whose combined parental income exceeds £30,000 (and falls between £30,000 and £50,000) during 2026 and so who are not eligible for full scholarships, are welcome to apply for a Reduced Fee Scholarship. If family income exceeds £50,000 then applicants are ineligible for both programmes.

4. The parents of applicants invited to interview must also complete a Financial Declaration form online and will be asked to provide supporting evidence for that declaration.

5. A student may not apply for an HMC Projects scholarship if he or she is currently attending another school in the UK or has already been accepted to do so for September 2027.

After Selection

a) Full Scholarship Programme:

We shall aim to inform successful candidates that we intend to offer them a scholarship by the end of February 2027 or the beginning of March 2027.

Two more things have to happen:

1. Students must accept the offer;
   and
2. We have to wait until the school has agreed to accept our nominated scholar.

Until both have happened we cannot guarantee that a scholar offered participation in the programme will be placed.

Scholars will therefore normally not learn which school they will attend before April 2027, since we have to await the outcomes of all the interviews before we select the right school for each of the selected scholars and also obtain the agreement of the schools to accept our nomination. In April we shall write with the details of the school and with further procedural information. The school will also get in touch at this time and will normally send formal documents for signature along with further information.

b) Reduced Fee Programme:

Each year we have a number of students recommended by our interviewers for consideration for a reduced fee scholarship. These will be students who on merit are judged to be of scholarship standard, but who are nonetheless ineligible for a full scholarship because their parents' net income exceeds £30,000 during 2026. They and any full scholarship reserve candidates are offered the opportunity to apply for a reduced fee scholarship. There is a degree of choice of school for these students and the schools will choose their preferred applicants from those who apply. Reduced fee scholars pay partial fees to the school: typically, 20% of full fees (in 2026 between £5500 and £15,000). They do not pay an administration fee. **We cannot guarantee that a recommended reduced fee applicant will be offered a place, but we expect that most will.**

In 2026 there were 84 new HMC Projects scholars selected from 13 countries: 51 students won full scholarships and a further 33 students were awarded reduced fee scholarships.

A Note on Selection

We receive a very large number of applications from students in 13 countries. There will therefore be very many high achieving students who are not selected. Our decisions should be viewed as final, and we regret that we are not able to enter into any subsequent discussion or correspondence with the parents or guardians of applicants who are not successful.

We look very carefully at a student's application form and so this should be completed **carefully** and **fully**. We ask all the questions for very good reasons! What a student writes in his/her essay sections is very important. We strongly encourage students to include links in their application form to additional online evidence to enable them to demonstrate particular talents like art, dance, drama, music or sport. We also seek confidential written references from an applicant's teachers. At interview we normally meet applicants in groups of three. During the interview we want to learn more about them as individuals but also see how they interact with each other.

Our interviewers are all highly experienced. They are either serving or retired heads or senior teachers who work or have worked in UK boarding schools. At the interview we get students to talk about themselves, talk with others and discuss topics or play intellectual games. We find that students enjoy the experience – at least afterwards! – and often we are told that they have never done anything like this before….

We use our judgment and do our best to view all applications in the round. We select students who, in addition to being very good indeed in their academic studies, are sociable, adaptable, interesting and interested in other people and in ideas; they need to have charm and, above all, be ready to give of themselves to their new communities. We try to make judgments about both what an applicant

will gain from this potentially life-changing experience of coming to study in the UK as well as what a student will bring and contribute intellectually, socially and personally to the school that is hosting him/her.

Travelling to the UK and to the new School

Once a student has been accepted by a school there will be communication between the school and parents. You will probably be asked to compete the school's standard entry papers. The school will publish its term dates well in advance and tell you when your son or daughter should arrive for the start of term and what the entry and induction arrangements are.

UK boarding schools are well experienced in admitting international students and they will have excellent welcome and induction procedures. You will receive advice from your school about travel.

The Shape of the School Year

The school year in Britain is divided into three terms, with holidays at Christmas, Easter and in the summer. At the end of each term the school will ensure that the student knows the arrangements for travelling home and for returning to the UK after the holiday. Parents or guardians have full responsibility for our scholars during school holidays.

In addition, most schools close for a half-term break in the middle of the term. In the first (autumn) term this will probably be a two-week break (taking in three weekends in late October/early November) and most HMC projects scholars fly home – with careful planning costs can be kept down.

Medical

HMC Projects asks parents of applicants to complete and sign the online Health Declaration, which forms part of the 'checklist items' within the application.

Schools will ask parents to provide information relating to any previous or current medical condition, physical or psychological, from which their child suffers. Schools will hope to be able to welcome students with any controllable condition but must be informed of it beforehand. Schools have the right not to accept students into a residential community if the medical condition could cause extreme difficulties and had not been declared in advance. Parents should not worry about this, but schools may wish to seek further information in some cases so that they can be sure that they can give the necessary medical support to students.

Schools will expect all new students to be adequately and currently protected by immunisation against MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella), Polio and Tetanus.

Financial

Full Scholarships. We charge an **administration fee of £750**, payable to HMC Projects by parents of HMC Projects scholars.

The latest date for payment is **1st July 2027. Thereafter, this fee is not refundable.**

To this must be added the cost of a Child Student visa and the UK immigration health surcharge (IHS) which together will now cost in the region of **£2700** for the two years.

We must also emphasise that the cost of living in Britain is much higher than at home including travel within the UK.

(Reduced Fee Scholarships. There is no administration fee payable by parents.)

The full scholarship awarded by the school to your son/daughter will cover all tuition fees and residential boarding fees including meals and laundry during term time. However, there are likely to be some extras that will be added to a termly account presented to parents by the school at the end of each term, to be paid before the start of the following term. This might include such things as weekend trips away from the school site, certain stationery requirements and specialist activities which are not part of the school's core curriculum. It is impossible to give a precise figure for such items, as much will depend upon the individual school and the choices of your son/daughter. On average parents might expect this termly account to be in the region of £100-£150 per term. Students should receive advice and guidance both from their school and from HMC Projects as to how they can keep such costs to an absolute minimum.

At the end of each term all students are expected to return home. This will mean that parents will need to budget for return flights per year. Schools also have a half term holiday in each of the three terms when the school will close for at least a week – normally a fortnight in the autumn term. The precise dates for the main and half term holidays vary from school to school but are generally closely aligned, except in Scotland. In addition, some schools have what are called weekend leave or exeat weekends.

All HMCP students are expected to travel home during the main school holidays. We also encourage HMCP students to return home during the half term holiday – particularly during the autumn term as this holiday in the second half of October/early November is usually two weeks long. With the agreement of the school, if you have friends/relatives in the UK, it may be possible that your son/daughter stay with them over the half term holiday (*see section on guardianship*) Therefore, in terms of flights and travel to and from school, this can involve up to six return flights when considering the start and end of each term and half-term breaks as well. It is important therefore to be aware of the potential cost of all this international travel.

Travel costs to and from school to the nearest airport will also need to be taken onto account. Travel costs can normally be kept to a minimum by booking tickets well in advance. Internal travel in the UK is cheaper with the purchase of a Young Person's Rail or Coach Card. Your son/daughter can easily research this. The school will also be able to offer advice.

Your and your son's/daughter's data and how we use it.

The information that you and your son/daughter include in his/her application for a scholarship is essential to us and we undertake to handle it responsibly and keep it secure. It is therefore important for you to know how we use it and who sees it.

To process your son/daughter's application for a HMC Projects Scholarship, you son/daughter will enter their data directly via an online application portal allowing our HMCP administrative team to manage your data, make it accessible to our country coordinator in your country and, if your son/daughter is called to interview, to assign the information contained in the application to our interviewer(s). Your son/daughter's personal data which they supply will be kept for no longer than 3 years, and will be deleted thereafter. If your son/daughter is awarded a scholarship and completes his/her studies in the UK then HMC Projects will retain essential data as a member of our alumni, in order to be able to make contact with your son/daughter in the future.

If your son/daughter is selected for a scholarship, their digital application and requested files will normally be passed on to the school to which they will be going. The information in the confidential parental income declaration, however, is not routinely disclosed to the school. The confidential

financial declaration along with any evidence supplied to support it, is not passed on to the school, but will be seen by our coordinator in your country who is tasked to reassure us that the information in the income declaration is accurate. The coordinator does not retain a copy of the financial documents; any such documents passed to the coordinator will be disposed of securely. HMC Projects holds a copy of the financial documents in case you or your son/daughter make a special request for exceptional additional financial assistance while at the school. At the end of the scholarship period HMC Projects will retain your son/daughter's contact details and we may contact them occasionally to keep in touch.

It is important that you understand how HMC Projects uses your son's/daughter's information as described above and that you and your son/daughter agree to this. At all times HMC Projects undertakes to hold all the data on its scholarship applicants, scholars and alumni securely.

You will see that we ask you to sign a declaration that you have read and agree to what we have set out above about the use of your son's/daughter's data.

A Commitment for scholars and parents alike

We must emphasise that acceptance of the HMC Projects scholarship represents a commitment, not least **because it is a scholarship which would otherwise have been won by another very deserving candidate. It also represents a very substantial amount of money given that full boarding fees at an independent boarding school in the United Kingdom now cost between £45,000 and £55,000 p.a.**

It follows that parents must fully support their child's application. Being separated for a large part of the year will, in most cases, be a new experience for parents and children alike. Every HMC Projects scholar is entitled to come to the UK confident that he or she is there with the full support of his or her parents.

For the vast majority of our students, the HMC Projects scholarship has been a wonderfully positive, fulfilling and enjoyable experience. This is because they have met the opportunities and the challenges with enthusiasm and commitment.

Summary of Responsibilities (Full Scholarship Programme)

- **the International Study Centre for Educational Opportunities**
  - Administers the scholarship programme in Moldova.
  - Provides support and advice before departure.
  - Is responsible for communicating financial arrangements to parents.

- **The School**
  - Provides a full scholarship for tuition, food and accommodation.
  - Accepts responsibility for the student when the school is in session.
  - Has full authority in regard to the student when the school is in session.
  - Will normally communicate with parents about any major decision being made regarding their child's education or welfare.

- **HMC Projects**
  - Coordinates the programme in the UK.
  - Selects and places Scholars in appropriate schools.
  - Works closely with the International Study Centre for Educational Opportunities.
  - Can, in cases of genuine financial hardship, share the additional cost of expenditure incurred in connection with academic studies with parents and/or the school.

- **Parents**
  - Sign an agreement with the School accepting the normal conditions of the School.
  - Declare that their combined net annual income during 2026 will not exceed **£30,000** (or £50,000 in the case of a Reduced Fee application).
  - Complete a separate financial declaration form if their son/daughter is invited for interview.
  - Parents are responsible for all costs in connection with travel, the visa application and IHS surcharge.
  - Parents will pay the termly ‘Extras’ bill charged by the School and meet such personal costs of their son/daughter as are not funded by HMC Projects.
  - Parents pay a fee of £750 to HMC Projects. This payment is due by 1st July 2027 at the latest. Thereafter the fee is not refundable.