



Projects in
Central &
Eastern Europe

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From the Director: Ben Vessey

SCHOLARSHIPS TO SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2026

General Information for Applicants from all Countries in the Programme

The purpose of this paper is to describe the arrangements for the scholarships offered in the United Kingdom through HMC (The Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference) Projects in Central and Eastern Europe.

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

The Schools

The schools which award HMC Projects scholarships are all located throughout the United Kingdom (except for two: one in Switzerland and one in Poland). These 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 some boarders but consist mainly of day pupils. Scholarship students from Central and Eastern Europe take up boarding places in their schools.

Many of the schools are coeducational, but some take only girls and others take only boys. We allocate students to the most suitable schools taking account of particular talents. All the schools within the Programme have been selected because they are regarded as entirely suitable and because they are seen to be likely to offer a very valuable experience to the students who are their guests.

Sixth Form Scholarship Programmes

There are two parallel programmes:

- Full Scholarship Programme

41 students from 12 countries won full scholarships in 2025. The scholarship awarded by your school covers the cost of your tuition and also your accommodation and food and other basic requirements. To be eligible to apply your parents'/family net income during 2025 must not exceed the equivalent of £30,000.

- Reduced Fee Scholarship Programme

28 students won reduced fee scholarships in 2025. Fees charged ranged from £7,000 to £15,000 *per annum*.

This scheme is open to students whose parents' income has prevented them from consideration for a full scholarship, namely that their joint net annual income exceeds our threshold of £30,000 but is under £50,000. We also invite the participation of those strong students who, though meeting the financial threshold for a full scholarship, we are not able to place as Full Scholars.

There are differences in how each programme is organised:

- Scholars offered a full scholarship are placed by HMC Projects in a school which has offered a firm place on the programme.

- Students selected by HMC Projects are offered the opportunity to apply to a pool of schools offering reduced fee places. We cannot guarantee that all recommended students who take up this opportunity will be offered a place, but we expect that most will.
Successful reduced fee scholars do not pay an administration fee to HMC Projects.

Opportunity, Challenge, Commitment

You have already been enterprising in asking for details of the HMC Projects Scholarships. Imagine now that you win a scholarship! What would it really involve? Will the benefits match all the uncertainty and upheaval? Should you accept the scholarship?

Inevitably, some features of British schools will be very different from your school. For your time in the UK to be a success **you will need to be adaptable** and willing to accept your school's arrangements. The most important differences are as follows:-

1. You will be living away from home. Many of you will have been on student outings or camps away from home, but with your friends and in the knowledge that life will soon be returning to normal. Coming to the UK, and realising that you will not be seeing your family for two to four months, is different and needs careful reflection before taking that step. For a start the food will be different! Many students do miss their homes at first, but quite quickly they make friends and enjoy having the company of other young people for much of the time. How do you think that **you** would cope?
2. Once you arrive at the school you will be in the care of the school staff at all times when the school is in session. Students live in boarding houses. The houses are usually single sex for boys or girls only, even if the school is co-educational. Numbers of students in your house may range from thirty to sixty, possibly aged 13 to 18 but perhaps all sixth formers. Most students will share a room with another student, although you may have your own room, and usually this will be the place where they not only sleep but do their work and keep their personal belongings, clothes, books and other items. Most schools will expect their boarders to take their share in certain communal responsibilities within their houses. For young people who have always lived at home it takes some time to become accustomed to this community living environment. If you have no brothers and sisters you will be used to making your own noise at home but not to having to put up with the noise created by others which can take some getting used to. However, you will also be joining what will become a large extended family over time.
3. In charge of your house, there will be a House Parent (Housemaster or Housemistress), assisted by a House Tutor and a House Matron. You will find that your House Parent will attach great importance to the code of conduct which sets out expectations and rules established for the smooth running of House community, and will ask that you respect and obey them. This code will also link in with wider school rules and expectations around behaviour. Students in boarding schools are not normally permitted to seek or obtain paid employment outside school.

At home it is not usually necessary to make rules of this sort and they may well be more detailed and prescriptive than in your present school. 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. They are made to enable everyone to live and work together respectfully and to make it as easy as possible to ensure that all the students are safe and happy. Schools do not, of course, allow smoking or the use of illegal drugs.

If you do not think you could accept such rules, or live and work within such a framework, then coming to a UK school would not be right for you, as such tensions can only cause unhappiness for you and for the school. It is worth finding out more if you are uncertain on this matter.

4. In most schools students wear a uniform, or apply a dress code, during teaching hours and for special occasions. Schools will send full information about this to those who are selected for scholarships and there should be no need for parents to spend much money on these items before your departure.
5. An important difference is that you will specialise in 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. Students usually concentrate on three or possibly four main subjects (from a range of fifteen to twenty different possibilities), plus independent projects and/or a

general studies course. For more detailed guidance please look at the document ["HMC Projects - Choosing subjects to study in the 6th Form"](#).

A word of warning: English as taught subject will generally mean English Literature; it will very rarely mean English Language.

In other words, HMC Projects scholars will study a smaller number of subjects and in greater depth than you would have done at home. Of fundamental importance is the fact that you will be speaking, listening, reading and writing in English all the time, so your command of English will develop enormously during your time in the UK. Your new school will want to know which subjects you would like to study and will supply full information for that purpose. We are happy to advise as necessary. It is important to think carefully and take advice on subject choices as there may be implications for higher education options.

6. A note on languages. With a few exceptions the British are generally not that good at languages...! They get by with English.... But most if not all of you will speak and study a number of languages and these often include Russian and German. Very few UK schools teach German, and Russian is virtually non-existent. UK schools tend to teach French and Spanish as the main European languages. You may well be able to study a language or languages as one or two of your chosen A Level subjects, but please don't come to the UK if your top priority is to continue with German or Russian...! Clearly, your English will improve greatly while studying at school in the UK. However, **if your only reason for taking up the scholarship is to improve your English then you should not apply**. The experience is much deeper and broader than this.

7. Whereas most schools in your country aim to provide teaching in just the academic subjects, British boarding schools offer a wide range of other activities through which students can develop their talents and acquire new skills. You can expect high standards and excellent facilities in Music, Drama and Sport and a wealth of other opportunities. It is crucially important that you explore these broader activities for your personal development and fulfilment. It is also one of the easiest and quickest way of making friends with fellow students and settling in. Remember too that you will be in school during weekends, when there will be few classes to attend and many hours to fill. Students who **give** most to their boarding communities and to the sporting and cultural life of their schools **gain** most from all the opportunities that their schools offer them.

In other words, there will be much more to life than simply working hard academically – although that is obviously very important! You should also be able to enjoy yourself and be happy in the company around you. That way, you will take home lasting friendships and an enduring reminder of your time in Britain, as well as acquiring crucial transferable skills and transformational experiences which will shape your personal and professional life.

8. All UK boarding schools have an international outlook and will probably have a number of students from other countries – from Asia, Europe or Africa along with their British students. UK boarding schools are truly interconnected worlds and one of their great attractions is that they will prepare you well for a world where you may well live and work in a number of countries. But you will need to be sensitive to cultural differences as well as having awareness that attitudes towards social matters such as racism or gender equality may well be different to those at home.
9. Although there are a few exceptions, 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 parents cannot accept this requirement then you should not proceed with this application.**
10. 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.

11. The Scholarship is intended to be for **two years** and **you should not apply if you want to spend only one year in the UK**. Both full scholarships and reduced fee scholarships will normally be for two years, renewable for the second year on the same or similar terms. Schools will expect scholars to demonstrate high academic performance and make a valuable contribution to school life, and it should be noted that they reserve the right to withdraw a scholarship from any scholar if he or she fails to perform to the high standards expected. Whilst there is no absolute requirement for scholars to stay on for a second year, schools will be expecting them to do so. The two-year programme allows scholars to complete their education in the UK and to apply for a wide variety of universities across Europe and beyond. You should be aware that, as an international student, study at university in the UK is very expensive indeed. The scholarship therefore does not carry with it the opportunity to study at a university in the UK, except under exceptional circumstances. Many scholars do however secure places to study at universities in EU countries and beyond where the tuition fees and living costs are more affordable. You should also find out from local universities and from your own current school which examinations or courses of study (if any) will be necessary if you are to resume studies at home without disadvantage when you return.

Before applying, and certainly before accepting, make sure that you have researched this fully, with an eye to your own academic and career aspirations. (Bear in mind that these might change after a year or two at school in the UK!)

The Shape of the School Year

The school year in Britain is usually divided into three terms, with holidays at Christmas, Easter and in the summer. The school will ensure that you know the arrangements for travelling home and returning to Britain before and after school holidays. You will not remain in Britain during these holidays unless your school agrees to this and your parents have also given permission, made the necessary arrangements and communicated these to the School. It is not possible to stay at your school during the holiday periods.

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. Later in the school year the half term breaks are usually shorter.

Your data and how we use it

The information that you include in your 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 application for a HMC Projects Scholarship, you will enter your 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 you are called to interview, to assign the information contained in the application to our interviewer(s). Your personal data which you supply will be kept for no longer than 3 years, and will be deleted thereafter. If you are awarded a scholarship and complete your two years of study in the UK then HMC Projects will retain essential data as a member of our alumni network, in order to be able to maintain contact with you in the future and keep you connected with other scholars.

If you are selected for a scholarship, your digital application and requested files will normally be passed on to the school to which you 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. HMC Projects holds a copy of the financial documents in case you make a special request for exceptional additional financial assistance while at your school. At the end of the scholarship period HMC Projects will retain your contact details and we may contact you occasionally to keep in touch.

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

A Note about Selection

We like to think that we are good at selecting the right scholars.

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 discussion or correspondence subsequently with applicants who are not successful.

We look very carefully at your application form. You should therefore complete it **carefully and fully**. What you write in your essay is very important. We ask all the questions for very good reasons! We have references written about you by your teachers. And then we will interview you, either individually or in groups of three, to learn more about you as an individual but also to see how you interact with other students.

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 they will get you to talk about yourself, 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.

Accepting a Scholarship is a Commitment

Please re-read and think very carefully about the last sentence above! We are looking for students who understand and who will live out former President J F Kennedy's famous remark: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country". For "country" read "school"!

In this document we have tried to draw attention to some of the human realities involved in an HMC Projects scholarship. Each year we know that a few students apply for the scholarship mainly because they see it mainly as a prize to be won, but they have not given much, if any, thought to the personal challenges that will face them. Such students will not be selected.

Please don't forget that if you are offered and you accept a scholarship, which gives you the opportunity of studying in the Sixth Form at a school in the UK, then this means that someone else is not going to have that opportunity. We shall expect you to make a success of this opportunity academically and socially and to take a leading part in some of the huge array of extra-curricular activities offered by UK boarding schools.

You owe it not only to yourself, but also to your competitors, to be honest with yourself. You will be moving out of your own 'comfort zone'. If you know that you would find it personally very difficult to adjust to all the differences that I have mentioned, including especially that of living away from home, then you should not proceed with the application.

Please ensure that you have the full support of your family for your application. We do expect them to embrace and support this scholarship opportunity, if you are awarded it, and that they are fully aware of the cost involved including travel and visa costs.

Since the HMC Projects Scholarships started in 1992 there have been well over two thousand scholars. For the vast majority it has been [a wonderfully positive, fulfilling and enjoyable experience](#) – **because they have embraced the opportunities and the challenges with enthusiasm and commitment.**

Could you win a scholarship?

- Are you bright, able, adaptable, different, ambitious, interesting?
- Do you have consistently excellent school grades?
- Do you have a very good command of English, spoken and written?
- Are you a self-starter?
- Could you not only cope, but thrive in a new environment, away from home, immersed in a different approach to learning?
- Could you contribute to your new school academically, socially, culturally, in the arts, in sports? Will you inspire others in the classroom?
- Are you ready to make new, lifelong friends?
- Would you be a great ambassador for your own country?

If you can answer yes to all these questions, then apply....!

I hope that this paper has been helpful for you. Please read it carefully, along with the complementary document, *Information for the Parents of Applicants 2025*.

B A Vessey
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September 2025