



Projects in
Central &
Eastern Europe

Chair of Trustees: Rachel Owens, Headmistress St George's School Weybridge

Director and Administrator: Dr Jonathan Wolstenholme

Student Coordinator: Gini Currie

Administrator: Chris Burrows

A Company Limited by Guarantee: Company No. 3636789. Registered Charity No. 1074491

From the Director: Jonathan Wolstenholme

SCHOLARSHIPS TO SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2025

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/projects.

The Schools

The schools which award HMC Projects scholarships are all located throughout the United Kingdom (except for two: one on 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

45 students from 12 countries won full scholarships in 2024. 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 income during 2024 must not exceed the equivalent of £30,000.

- Reduced Fee Scholarship Programme

23 students won reduced fee scholarships in 2024. Fees charged ranged from £6,000 to £12,000 *per annum*.

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 who perform very strongly in the selection process, but who cannot be offered a full scholarship may have their names added to a list of reserves. These candidates are offered **the opportunity to apply for a reduced fee scholarship** along with the small number of those specifically selected by the interviewers because parental income is between £30,000 - £50,000 p.a. Schools which have offered a

place or places will then choose their preferred applicants from those who apply. Reduced fee scholars pay partial fees to the school: typically, 20-25% of full fees. They do not pay an administration fee. We cannot guarantee that all recommended students who apply will be offered a place, but we expect that most will. In 2024, all the applicants were successful.

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, you may well feel homesick. 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 for boys only or for girls only. In your house there will probably be about thirty to forty or fifty other students, perhaps aged 13 to 18, perhaps all sixth formers. Most students will share a room with another student 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 situation. 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 – let alone forty others!
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 rules established for the House and will ask that you respect and obey them. A typical rule would 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. 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 fit in together 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, 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.

4. In most schools students wear a uniform during teaching hours and for special occasions. Typically this might be a grey suit for boys or a grey sweater and skirt for girls but 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 example**, a student wanting to specialise in Medicine might take Mathematics (and perhaps Further Mathematics), Biology and Chemistry as the main subjects. Another combination for a would-be engineer might be Mathematics, Physics and one other subject.

On the arts/humanities side all sorts of combinations are possible. For more detailed guidance please look at the document “*HMC Projects - Choosing subjects to study in the 6th Form*”.

A word of warning: English 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. The consequence is that you will think more deeply about the subject, rather than just study to absorb information. Of fundamental importance is the fact that you will be speaking, listening, reading and writing in English all the time, so that 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.

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 then Spanish as European languages and increasingly Mandarin or Arabic. 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 more 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. It is crucially important that you explore these opportunities for personal recreation and development. It is the easiest and quickest way of making friends with fellow students. 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 – although that is obviously important! You should also be able to enjoy yourselves 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.

8. All 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. 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 aware 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 now insist on their international pupils naming a guardian. The detail of this requirement will differ from one school to another. Typically, a suitable guardian must be resident in the UK, should be over 23 and live within two hours' drive of the school. Schools will not be able to provide a guardian for you and will be unable to advise. Schools will expect your nominated guardian to be able to provide accommodation if needed. For many schools providing the name of a relative or trusted close family friend, resident in the UK, who is willing to act as a guardian is often sufficient but

this must be agreed with the school. The alternative is to pay for the services of a guardian arranged through a reputable agency but this can be very expensive. In such cases, the schools will expect the guardian agency to be approved by Aegis (<https://aegisuk.net/>). If choosing a commercial guardianship service is your only option then you are advised to discuss this with HMC Projects first. *It should be noted that a few schools now require their international pupils to have an Aegis approved guardian even if a relative or family friend agrees to act as their guardian.*

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. 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 after the Christmas and Easter 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).

If you are selected for a scholarship, your digital application and requested files are retained by HMC Projects for the duration of the scholarship: normally two years. These documents 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, 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 make a special request for exceptional additional financial assistance while at your school.

If you are unsuccessful in being awarded a full scholarship but are invited to apply for a reduced fee scholarship then your application data may be passed on to the schools you are applying to in order to help them choose their preferred candidate and make an offer of a reduced fee scholarship. The confidential parental income declaration is not sent to any school. If you are successful and are offered a reduced fee scholarship and accept it, then your application data is retained by HMC Projects for the period of the scholarship. These application data and any associated files are normally sent on to the school with the exception of the confidential income declaration and any supporting financial documents. If you are not successful or decline the offer to apply for a reduced fee scholarship then your application data are kept for a period to enable HMC Projects to analyse trends in application data after which they are deleted or destroyed.

At the end of the scholarship period HMC Projects will retain your contact details in an alumni database 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.

You will see that we ask your parents or guardian(s) to sign a declaration that they have read and agree to what we have set out above about the use of your data and theirs.

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 have no quotas. We are meeting students (both within your own country and then across Europe from Estonia in the north to Armenia in the south-east) from all sorts of backgrounds and schools. Nor do we adopt any sort of points-based system (say for Olympiad performance, or school grades or performance on the violin etc etc....)

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*.

Dr EJ Wolstenholme
Director HMC Projects
September 2024