



Projects in  
Central &  
Eastern Europe

Chair of Trustees: Rhiannon Wilkinson, Headmistress Wycombe Abbey  
Director: Andrew Boggis; Student Coordinator: Wendy McLachlan;  
Administrator: Jonathan Wolstenholme

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## HMC PROJECTS – HOW THE PROGRAMMES WORK

STUDENT QUALITY, PHILANTHROPY ON THE PART OF SCHOOLS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH FOURTEEN CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (ALL FORMER EAST BLOC) ARE AT THE HEART OF BOTH PROGRAMMES.

### 1. KEY DATES FOR BOTH PROGRAMMES

- October 2019 – the Director contacts Schools to seek offers of places on both programmes.
- December 2019 – Schools confirm offers of (a) place(s) by returning the Scholarship Offer Forms to the Director.
- January & February 2020 – selection interviews take place in the 14 countries.
- End of February 2020 – the Director contacts Schools with details of the full scholar(s) HMC Projects wishes to place at the School and/or with detailed information about the reduced fee process, whereby recommended students apply to the School.
- By the end of the Spring Term 2020 (end of March) – places on both programmes are confirmed.
- April 2020 onwards – Schools are in touch with their scholar(s).
- August/September 2020 – Scholars start at their new schools.

### 2. HMC PROJECTS – WHAT WE ARE (& WHAT WE ARE NOT!)

- HMC Projects is not an agency – with all that implies!
- HMCP is a small non-profit-making charity with two main purposes: i) to seek offers of scholarship places from schools; and ii) to identify talented 16/17 year-olds from non-affluent backgrounds in 14 former east bloc countries who take up those places for their Sixth Form studies.
- HMCP flies under the HMC flag, but it is supported by all school associations linked to ISC.
- HMCP is run by three retired people who work part-time – with the help of trustees and others. Much of the work is done *pro bono*.
- David Gibbs' very readable *The New Europeans, a History of HMC Projects* was published last year and has been made widely available to schools. It tells the story very well. Further copies (hard or electronic) can be had from the Director.
- The short article published in *Insighta* couple of years ago gives a good introduction too.

### 3. BOTH PROGRAMMES

- This September 93 new HMC Projects Scholars (35 boys and 58 girls) started at some 55 schools (HMC, GSA, State Boarding and Society of Heads) across the UK and abroad – 56 Full Scholars and 37 Reduced Fee Scholars. They have come from 14 countries in all:

Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

- They are the latest cohort of now over 1800 students who have come as scholars since the programmes started in 1993.

#### 4. OUR COUNTRY COORDINATORS – WHO THEY ARE & WHAT THEY DO

- They are not simply agents. These are people with whom HMC Projects has established good links over many years through school or university contacts, through the British Council and the Soros Foundation; some run language schools; one is a former HMCP scholar. In all cases they are very well informed about the UK and British boarding schools, about the sorts of HMCP scholars we are seeking and about what HMC Projects is trying to do with the programmes.
- They advertise the programmes, invite and process applications, pre-select through English Languages tests, organise the interview schedule and welcome and help host the interviewees. They provide support and advice to scholars before they start at their new schools.
- Our coordinators receive a small honorarium to cover costs, but their work is largely done *pro bono*. Their energy, idealism, experience – and many have extraordinary stories to tell of their younger days under Soviet rule – and sheer hard work are crucial in maintaining the numbers and quality of applicants and the competitiveness of the programmes.
- Their organisations: Gaudeamus LLC Armenia, Association PLUS Bosnia-Herzegovina, The Bulgarian Reading Association, The Forum for Freedom in Education Croatia, The Open Society Fund Czech Republic, The Tallinn University Language Centre Estonia, Unique Learning Georgia, The Open Society Fund Slovakia, The National High School Debate League Moldova, London Bridge Montenegro, KFON Poland, Tine de Noi Romania, Edu-Link Serbia, The American University, Kiev, Ukraine.
- In five of the countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia) HMC Projects works in collaboration with ASSIST [www.assist-inc.org](http://www.assist-inc.org) (American Secondary Schools for International Students & Teachers).

#### 5. THE FULL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

- This remains very much our ‘gold standard’. We are targeting very able 16/17 year-olds from non-affluent backgrounds. By ‘non-affluent’ we mean families whose combined net income does not exceed the equivalent of £30k *per annum*; and by ‘very able’ we mean students with a proven academic track record who in our judgment will excel in the Sixth Form.
- We take very careful steps to protect the integrity of the financial criteria. Parents complete a detailed finance and assets form as part of their son’s/daughter’s application. Our country coordinators can also provide very useful background information. In many cases parental income even of professional people is way below this threshold – and the state of the pound since the referendum doesn’t help either....
- Applicants complete a detailed application form, seek guided confidential references from their teachers, sit pre-interview tests and are then interviewed by experienced interviewers in groups of three.
- In approaching schools the Director is seeking firm offers of a place or places. Schools are asked to indicate whether their offer is for a girl or boy (or either) and then to be as prescriptive as they wish (about talents and interests, choice of academic programme and subjects, country of provenance etc. etc.). Some schools are very prescriptive – others are not.
- Come mid-February 2020 the Director has a list of offers from schools and a corresponding list of recommended full scholars. These he and his colleagues then match up (taking in to careful account all school requests) and he asks the School to accept the recommended scholar(s).
- Schools are asked to confirm their acceptance of the recommended scholar promptly.

- Parents of applicants offered a full scholarship pay an administrative fee to HMC Projects of £700 if they have a non-EEA passport and £1500 if they have a EEA passport. Under present arrangements non-EEA students need a visa and healthcare insurance which together cost at least £800+.
- HMC Projects returns £300 in the form of a bursary (made out to the School but for the scholar's use). In this way we know that a scholar has ready access to some money for necessary initial purchases as well as travel.
- Our and the scholar's assumptions will be that the scholarship is intended to be for two years (i.e. both Years 12 and 13). Clearly (as with any student in the School) progress in to Year 13 will be dependent on satisfactory performance and conduct, but we should not wish to place a scholar on the programme at a School, which intended all along to offer only one year.

## 6. THE REDUCED FEE PROGRAMME

- Students who perform very strongly in the selection process, but who cannot be offered a full scholarship have their names added to a list of reserves. They are very high-quality students. These candidates are then offered the chance to apply for a reduced fee scholarship along with the small number selected by interviewers who set parental income exceeds £30k p.a. but is below £80k. (If parental income exceeds £80k, then they are ineligible for this programme.)
- Reduced fee scholars pay partial fees to the School: typically 15 – 25% of the fees. They do not pay an administrative fee to HMC Projects nor do they receive a bursary from HMC Projects.
- In 2019 schools charged fees ranging between £5k and £10k p.a. I can say that offers from a school of say a 50% reduction will simply be out of reach of the students we are targeting.
- We need to stress that we are targeting students from non-affluent families for both programmes. Just because a scholar accepts a reduced fee place, that does not mean that therefore the family necessarily has much money. We know that in many cases the extended family is contributing towards the fees – just as happens with many UK families.
- The Director seeks initial expressions of interest in the programme and invites schools to indicate the number of places likely to be offered.
- Dr Jonathan Wolstenholme, the HMCP Administrator, masterminds the application process rather like a mini-UCAS in that applicants are invited to apply to up to four schools. He will be in touch with schools in good time to confirm fee levels and number of places offered as well as the timescales by which offers need to be made and accepted. It is unhelpful – to put it mildly – if a school withdraws from the programme at a late stage or reneges on the offer of a place or places. That is simply not fair to students who apply in good faith.
- Parents of students offered a reduced fee scholarship pay no administrative fee to HMC Projects, but HMCP asks Schools to pay a one-off placement fee of £1250 per student.
- As with the full scholarship programme our and the scholars' assumptions will be that the scholarship is intended to be for both Years 12 and 13 – and on the same or at least a very similar financial basis.

## 7. CARE OF SCHOLARS – GUARDIANSHIP MATTERS & CARE OF STUDENTS WHEN THE SCHOOL IS CLOSED....

- I do not need to tell people in boarding schools that there is an increasing focus on and tightening of regulations regarding guardianship, but I can also state from experience that schools continue to approach these matters in quite a variety of ways.
- For HMC Projects there is quite a conundrum here. If we are successful in identifying suitable scholars from non-affluent backgrounds (i.e. their parents earn less than the equivalent of £30k p.a. – and for many it is way below this figure) – and that is of course our prime aim – then these students (their parents) are in no position to pay the costs of guardianship arrangements normally required for overseas students.

- Most schools now require all international students to have a guardian (although some still make a distinction between EU and non-EU students). The appointment of a formal guardian is therefore primarily a matter for the school and the costs of such a service may have to be met by the School.
- However HMCP can help in various ways:
  - a) Where a School feels that in all fairness its generosity cannot extend to paying for guardianship services – in addition to offering full or very generous scholarships – then HMCP may be able to contribute towards those costs. Further information from the Director.
  - b) The HMCP Student Coordinator's main role is to act as a link between the students and HMCP and to offer pastoral support should this be required. She cannot act as a formal guardian, but she (and the Director) can offer advice and assistance to schools and parents to help fulfil their duty of care. We can tell you how other schools approach these matters.
  - c) HMCP can organise a limited number of homestays during half terms and during the Spring Term Half Term it also organises a supervised stay in a Youth Hostel – probably in Liverpool.
  - d) HMCP can offer financial assistance to students towards extra travel costs – where circumstances warrant it.
  - e) Exeat weekends. Practice at schools varies here, but HMCP can take no responsibility for the care of students during exeat weekends if the School closes for these weekends.
- So-called light touch (and therefore cheaper) guardianship arrangements may well be suitable for HMCP scholars. Furthermore *in extremis* trustees or those associated with HMC Projects can sometimes help out. (All involved with HMC Projects have enhanced DBS clearance.)

Finally,

- It still remains a big – often an enormous – step for 16/17 year-olds from former east bloc countries to come to the UK, so HMCP continually considers how best to support students particularly in their first few weeks. We want to keep human contact at the forefront of our operations....

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Director – Andrew Boggis [aboggis@googlemail.com](mailto:aboggis@googlemail.com) or [director@hmcprojects.org.uk](mailto:director@hmcprojects.org.uk)

07963 282406 or 01308 861176

Administrator – Dr Jonathan Wolstenhome [administrator@hmcprojects.org.uk](mailto:administrator@hmcprojects.org.uk)

01579 364018

Student Coordinator – Wendy McLachan [studentcoordinator@hmcprojects.org.uk](mailto:studentcoordinator@hmcprojects.org.uk)

01969 623931