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SCHOLARSHIPS TO SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2014 – 2015

Information for Applicants.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the arrangements for the scholarships offered in the United Kingdom through HMC (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 scholarships are located throughout the United Kingdom. These 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 try to fit students into the most suitable schools taking account of particular talents but, once the school has accepted the student proposed, no changes can be made. All the schools within the scheme 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. There are also likely to be a few scholarships offered to British International Schools in Switzerland and Thailand.

The HMC Projects Scholarship

The scholarship awarded by your school covers the cost of your tuition and also your accommodation and food and other basic requirements. You will be entitled to all the benefits of the UK National Health Service.

Opportunity, Challenge, Commitment

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

Inevitably, some features of British schools will be very different from your school. For the year 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 parents for two to four months, you may well feel homesick. 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 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 are 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 the use of drugs.

If you do not think you could accept such rules, then the year 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 is 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), Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers and the Cambridge Pre-University Examination. Students usually take only four or perhaps five main subjects (from a range of fifteen to twenty different possibilities), plus a subsidiary subject and/or a general studies course. **For example**, a student might take Mathematics, Physics, Biology and Chemistry as the main subjects, with German as a subsidiary subject.

Another combination might be German, History, French and Economics as the main subjects, with Information Technology as a subsidiary subject.

In other words, HMC Projects scholars will study a smaller number of subjects, 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 to that end. We are happy to advise as necessary.

6. Whereas many European schools aim to provide only teaching in 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.

7. **The Scholarship is for one year only.** You should have no expectation that you will be able to stay for a second year. The scholarship does not carry with it the opportunity to study at a British university. You should 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. In general this has not been a problem for students in the past but a few students have needed an extra year on their return to their own schools.

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 in the UK!)

Journey to the UK and to your School

Unless your school year starts earlier, you will travel to the UK on Friday 29th August 2014. You will be met at the airport and taken to Cambridge for three days for a short Orientation Course. We make special arrangements for those whose school terms start before then to travel to Cambridge from their schools.

The Orientation course is the one occasion in the year when all the students on the scheme gather in one place together with the members of the Working Group. Mr Tony Lawrence, our Scholars' Co-ordinator, will explain his key role in helping students during their time in Britain. We explain also the ways in which the schools function and you will have the opportunity to ask your own questions.

At the end of the course careful arrangements are made for you to travel on to your school. You will be fully informed as to how to make the journey and who will meet you on arrival.

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. At the end of the first two terms 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.

In addition, most schools close for a half-term break in the middle of the term. The length of this break will vary from school to school – from a few days to a maximum of two weeks - and at these times a 'Contact Person' appointed by the school will assume responsibility for making suitable arrangements for you during the half-term break. This member of staff will contact your parents to ensure that they agree with these half-term arrangements. (Parents are occasionally able to nominate family friends or relatives to act as guardians but this is not usually feasible.)

Accepting a Scholarship is a Commitment

We like to think that we are good at selecting the right scholars! **We do our best to choose students who, in addition to being very good in their academic studies, are sociable, adaptable, interested and interesting and, above all, ready to give of themselves to their new communities.**

But you will know yourselves better than anyone else does. In that sense, you are the most important judge of where your best interests will lie.

In this letter, I have tried to draw attention to some of the human realities involved in an HMC Projects scholarship. A few students apply for the scholarship because they see it as a great honour and a prize to be won, but without reflecting on the personal challenges that will face them. **Please don't forget that your acceptance of a scholarship, which gives you the opportunity of spending a year at a school in the UK, means that someone else is not going to have that opportunity. When you arrive next August, we will expect, and you should be sure, that you will honour your scholarship by completing a full year of academic studies in your new school.** You owe it 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.

Since the HMC Scholarships started in 1992 there have been just on thirteen hundred 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.**

I hope that this paper has been helpful for you. Please read it carefully, along with the complementary document.,

September 2013