

HCAP Gliding Scholarship 2026

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This past summer I had the opportunity to attend a 1-week gliding course at the London Gliding Club. As my very first time flying an aircraft, this scholarship was an incredible introduction to the aviation world, and a step toward my future career as a pilot.

We got started immediately after arriving Monday morning, learning how to do daily inspections using various acronyms, and tow gliders with buggies. My instructor, Simon, was incredibly encouraging. Before we took off, he debriefed the entire flight so that I knew exactly what to expect and when I would be taking over the controls. By breaking the flights down, I could focus on learning just 1 thing at a time.

Over the 5 days of flying, I was lucky enough to experience both aerotows and winch launches. On the first day, the aerotow gave me a smooth, prolonged introduction to being in the cockpit.

Meanwhile, the winch launching that we had on the remaining 4 days was quite a shock to see at first. When reading about the acceleration online, you can't truly grasp just how fast a glider goes up. Fortunately, being in the cockpit wasn't as scary as it looked, and it was similar to being on a very short rollercoaster.



Though the initial learning curve was steep, and I also initially had motion sickness, it quickly subsided as I spent more time in the air. With each flight steering the aircraft became increasingly more intuitive, and I ended the week having controlled the glider at each part of the flight: the winch launch, landing, thermalling, and hill soaring.

Beyond handling the aircraft, I learnt how to man the control tower and give commands to the winch. I got to learn about the different airspaces around the site, and what to do if

there was a call from Air Traffic Control (Luton was very close by). We did end up having to land all our gliders at one point due to Heathrow diverting a plane nearby because of poor weather.



I was incredibly lucky to have made 7 amazing friends on this residential. We clicked instantly, and it was incredibly enjoyable launching and collecting gliders together. We started off the week by getting caught in brambles on our first night, which led us to spend the later evenings mostly indoors chatting and going on the flight simulator. I was also able to talk to

regular members of the gliding club, all of whom were incredibly encouraging and easy to talk to. One in particular mentioned he also had motion sickness when he started, so it was quite a relief to know that it'll die down in the future.

This week at Dunstable really solidified my passion for aviation. I am incredibly grateful to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for organising it, and to the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust for sponsoring it. I strongly encourage anyone to apply, regardless of whether they're an Air Cadet or have had any sort of aviation experience.

