

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS 2014–15



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INFORMATION BOOKLET
FOR LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS IN THE UK
AND THEIR EMPLOYING SCHOOLS



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2	The role and responsibilities of language assistants and host schools	15
1.01 Terms and conditions of the job – frequently asked questions.....	2	1.16 General school life – frequently asked questions.....	15
Getting prepared	3	1.17 Induction meetings/observing classes.....	17
1.02 Familiarisation with the UK education systems.....	3	1.18 The role of a language assistant.....	18
1.03 Thinking ahead about the role of an assistant.....	4	1.19 The role of the host school: how to make the best use of your assistant.....	18
Preparing for the assistant’s arrival	6	1.20 Use of the internet.....	19
1.04 Sharing arrangements.....	6	1.21 Professional associations and online resources.....	20
1.05 First contact between host school and assistant.....	6	Life outside work	22
1.06 Legal matters: police clearance and immigration.....	8	1.22 Settling in.....	22
1.07 Bringing a car to the UK.....	10	1.23 Extra-curricular activities.....	22
1.08 Planning the assistant’s arrival: travel matters and personal insurance.....	10	1.24 Some (more) useful tips for language assistants.....	22
Arrival in the UK	11	1.25 Travel.....	22
1.09 Police registration – for assistants from non-EU countries only.....	11	1.26 Saving money.....	22
1.10 Accommodation.....	11	Appendix I: Tax matters	23
1.11 Medical care and Statutory Sick Pay.....	12	Appendix II: Clarification of terms	25
Money matters	13	Appendix III: Embassies/consulates in the UK	26
1.12 Payment, Income Tax and National Insurance.....	13	Appendix IV: Acronyms	27
1.13 Pensions.....	14		
1.14 Council Tax.....	14		
1.15 Banking.....	14		

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this booklet. However, the British Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors which may exist or for any subsequent changes post-print.



INTRODUCTION

This booklet is intended to help assistants and host schools prepare for the assistantship and to provide a source of reference and information for both assistants and their employers during the year.

Most of the information applies to assistants from every country. Where the information is specific to any one country, this is clearly indicated. For simplicity we use the word 'school' for all kinds of institutions to which assistants may be appointed.

The main school that assistants work in, which is most likely the school making the first contact with them, is referred to as the host school. If assistants have any queries about entitlement to medical insurance or unemployment benefit in their own country following their assistantship in the UK, they should remember to check with the relevant organisation(s) in their home country before they leave home.

1.01 Terms and conditions of the job – frequently asked questions

How long is the assistantship contract?

Apart from assistants from China, the assistantship appointment runs from 1 September (posts in Scotland and Northern Ireland) or 1 October (posts in England and Wales) to 31 May unless an earlier starting date and/or a later finishing date has been agreed with the assistant's local authority/host school. Assistants from China usually work from mid-September to 30 June.

What is the status of an assistant?

Assistants do not have the status of a student except in the matter of Council Tax ([see Section 1.14](#)). In all other respects the status of an assistant is that of a paid employee.

Who is an assistant's employer?

Assistants are employed by either the host school, the local authority, or, if working in Northern Ireland, the school or Education and Library Board. Assistants are not employed or paid by the British Council. Employers have the same right of dismissal over their assistant as over other members of staff, but it is hoped they will not exercise it except in the case of a grave breach of the rules or of conduct highly prejudicial to the welfare of the school. Should any problems arise with the assistant, employers must ensure the British Council is informed immediately. The British Council is responsible for informing the appropriate authorities abroad whenever

disciplinary action is to be taken against an assistant, and it is therefore essential that the correct procedure be followed. Local authorities and/or schools are asked to provide professional and administrative inductions to their assistants and to monitor their progress on a regular basis.

How much is an assistant's allowance?

The current rates for 2014–15 will be available on our website as soon as they are available.

How many hours do assistants work per week?

Assistants normally work 12 class contact hours each week. If an assistant is asked to work additional class contact hours, and they agree, they should be paid for the extra hours on a pro rata basis, up to a maximum of 18 hours per week. Lesson preparation time is in addition to the 12 contact hours. In the case of assistants from non-EU countries, under the Home Office's immigration rules, permission for additional hours must also be sought from the British Council. Where possible, the timetable should be blocked to allow reasonable free time and one full day free each week.

Do assistants get an official contract?

Assistants should receive and sign a Statement of Employment which constitutes their employment contract from either their host school or local authority. It is a legal requirement (Employment Rights Act 1996) that this information is given to an employee in writing within two months of their start date. The best practice is for this to be signed as soon as the assistant arrives at school, and for two copies to be printed, each of them signed by each party.

How many schools can an assistant work in?

Assistants may be required to work in more than one school: assistants are often shared between two or three neighbouring institutions depending on the sharing arrangements. If an assistant works in more than one school, one of them acts as the 'host school' and will be responsible for co-ordinating a timetable and providing administrative support. A named member of staff will be designated as the assistant's mentor, and will normally be based in their host school.

Does an assistant get holidays?

Assistants will have the same (paid) holidays as the other teaching staff in their school, and are expected to be present during term time.

Can assistants extend their contracts for a second year?

The British Council and our overseas partner agencies abroad only allow assistants from France to remain for a second year, as for all other countries there is a long waiting list of candidates every year wanting to gain experience in the UK and we must give priority to these first-time applicants.

Getting prepared

1.02 Familiarisation with the UK education systems

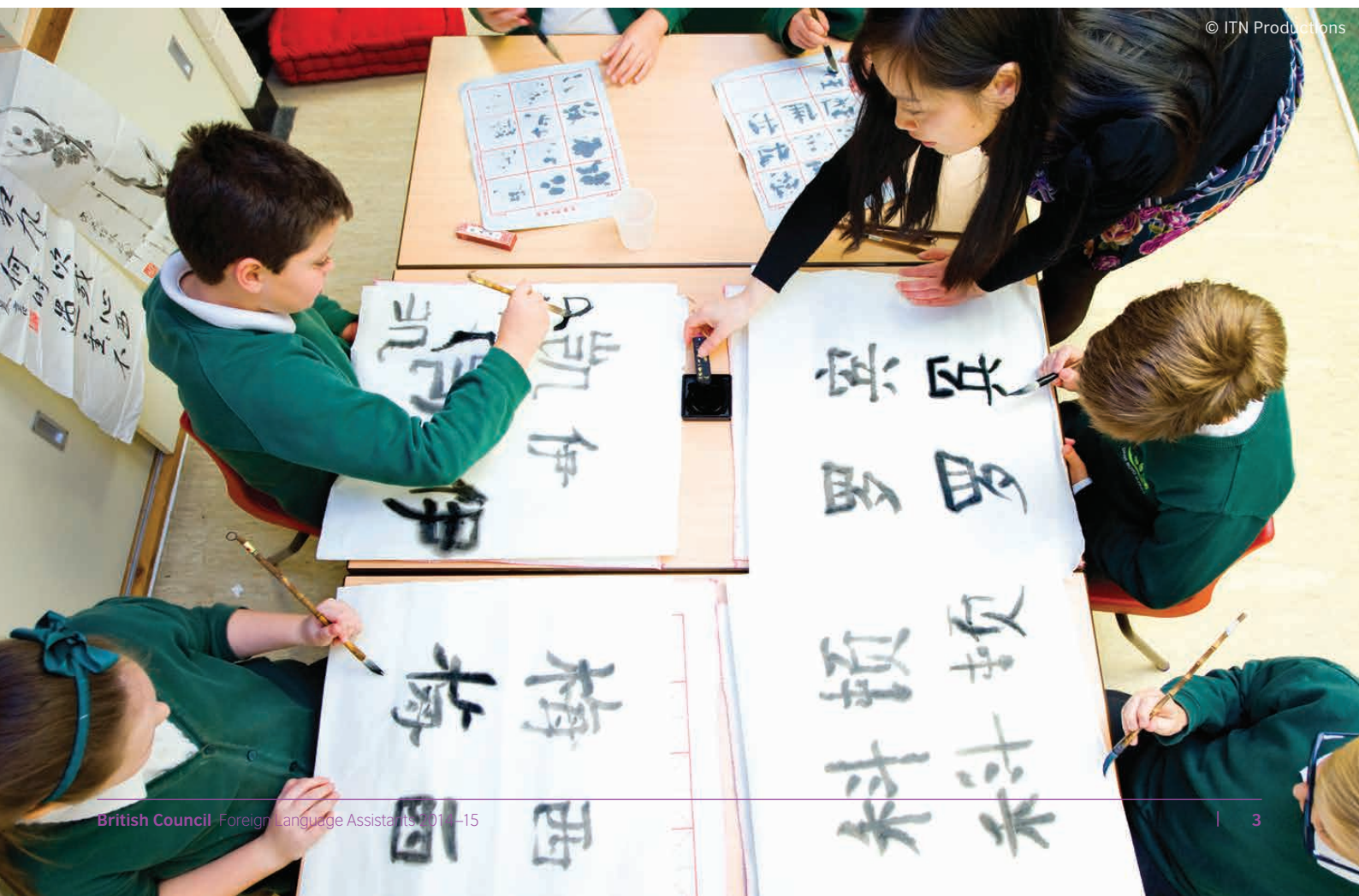
The United Kingdom is comprised of the four countries England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, each with their own education system. We recommend that assistants familiarise themselves with the system of the country to which they are allocated.

For up-to-date information visit the following websites:

[Understanding the National Curriculum](#) (England and Wales)

[Understanding the Northern Ireland Curriculum](#)

[Curriculum for Excellence](#) (Scotland)



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Below is a brief comparison of the different stages currently in use in primary and secondary schools in the UK:

National Curriculum, England, Wales, Northern Ireland	Ages	Description/stages	Education sector
Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)	3–5	Reception (ages 4–5)	Pre-school
Key Stage 1 (KS1)	5–7	Years 1 and 2	Primary
Key Stage 2 (KS2)	7–11	Years 3, 4, 5 and 6	Primary
Key Stage 3 (KS3)	11–14	Years 7, 8 and 9	Secondary
Key Stage 4 (KS4)	14–16	Years 10 and 11	Secondary
	16–18	Years 12 and 13	Secondary/Tertiary
Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland			
Early Level	3–6	Pre-school years and Primary 1 (P1)	Pre-school/Primary
First Level	6–10	To the end of Primary 4 (P4)	Primary
Second Level	10–12	To the end of Primary 7 (P7)	Primary
Third and Fourth Level	12–15	Secondary 1–3 (S1–S3)	Secondary
Senior Phase	15–18	S4–S6/college or other	Secondary/Tertiary

1.03 Thinking ahead about the role of an assistant

Assistants are native speakers who bring the language and culture of their country to the classroom. They should therefore use every opportunity to help make language learning relevant and fun for their pupils. Keep in mind that some – maybe all – of the pupils with whom assistants will be working may never have visited the target language country or met a young person from it, so the more ‘real’ an assistant can make their language learning experience, the better. Although it will depend on the class teacher(s) and the age of the pupils, assistants can expect their tasks to include working together with a teacher in the classroom, working independently with small groups of pupils, helping to prepare pupils for oral examinations and contributing to cross-curricular work in collaboration with other subject areas.

However, since assistants are unlikely to be trained teachers they should not be asked to, and should not, take sole responsibility for a whole class, supervise, deal with pupils’ discipline problems or take responsibility for marking pupils’ work or exam papers.

Compiling resource materials for lessons

One way of making language learning real for pupils is by bringing authentic materials from the target country into the classroom. Assistants should take the opportunity to collect a variety of resources before leaving their home

country. There are a lot of authentic materials that will come in useful for lessons, such as:

- photographs – the assistant’s house, street, town or village, region, family, pets
- maps (for example of the assistant’s home town and/or of countries where the assistant’s language is an official language)
- tourist information – hotels, campsites, monuments, price lists, opening and closing times, museum tickets, tourist brochures and postcards
- music – popular and traditional
- easy to understand textbooks related to social themes or illustrating grammar points (for example, conditional tense)
- audio-visual aids – weather information, quiz shows, word games, soap operas (especially those known in the UK), adverts, cartoons
- television/cinema listings and reviews
- local newspapers, teen magazines with horoscopes, weather forecasts, minor news items, problem pages
- games
- photographs and character portraits of well-known actors/singers
- a school timetable/a school report
- transport timetables and tickets
- real menus from restaurants, price lists from bars
- empty packets – toothpaste, soup, chocolates, etc.

The more materials assistants can find the better. Assistants should think about what worked well for themselves personally as a language student and about which items they find interesting when in a foreign country (assistants should keep in mind that the language level of their pupils may not be the same as the level of English of students in their country). Assistants may wish to contact their school(s) before leaving their home country in order to find out if there is anything specific they should bring and to find out about topics they are likely to cover during their assistantship.

The British Council also provides online pedagogic support for assistants. Assistants and teachers are able to download teaching materials from the British Council website, our site is also linked to other relevant internet sites.

In addition, there are some guides produced by various cultural organisations, which also give information about aspects of life and education in the UK and are available in a variety of languages:

[Consolato Generale d'Italia, Londra](#)
([Consolato Generale d'Italia](#))

[Mallette pédagogique pour les assistants \(French Institute\)](#)

[STEPS, Leitfaden für Fremdsprachenassistent\(inn\)en](#)
([Goethe-Institut](#))

[Information pages for Auxiliares de Conversación Español](#)
([Consejería de Educación](#))

What will the role involve?

Assistants will usually be working in a secondary school either assisting the language teacher with the language classes or teaching small groups independently. We have a small number of posts in primary schools, sixth-form colleges and in colleges of further education. The role of an assistant will be to improve students' confidence in communicating in the target language and to help classes to become more interactive and fun by discussing contemporary aspects of youth culture in the target country, such as current affairs, education, sport, fashion, films, television, lifestyles and celebrations. Assistants will do this by planning activities, games, using photos, travel guides and maps as well as texts from newspapers or the internet. At the same time, assistants will improve their own language skills, learn how to become more effective communicators and experience living and working in the UK.

What will the job be like?

Although the role of an assistant is fairly standard, every assistant will have different experiences depending on the type of school they work in, the teachers, the students' backgrounds, and the local area. Assistants who are enthusiastic, keen and have lots of different ideas for activities and lessons are likely to benefit the most from their experience. However, a strong teacher support network is also crucial.

What is the UK like to live in?

The UK is a very diverse country. Most big cities have a multicultural population and a lot of people do not have English as a first language. Cities are usually lively with a lot to do, but are expensive to live in and can be impersonal at times. Smaller towns are cheaper to live in and often easier to make friends in. The UK is quite densely populated, so even in a small town, it is usually possible to reach a larger place quite easily, except in areas such as Cumbria and Northern Scotland.

Who do assistants work with?

Assistants will be assigned a mentor teacher who will probably be a teacher in the modern foreign languages department. However, assistants are also likely to work with other teachers in the department. Teachers in the UK tend to be very busy and don't always have a lot of time to chat between lessons, but if assistants make the effort, it is usually easy to make friends in school.

Do assistants work in more than one school?

Possibly! Remember that it is not the British Council or the UK government but the school or local education office that pays an assistant's allowance. Assistants may work in up to three different schools and some secondary schools may send their assistant to work at a local primary school for a couple of hours a week.

What are the conditions like in schools in the UK?

Conditions vary from school to school and place to place. For example, if assistants work in two schools, they may find one easier to work in than the other for a number of reasons. A lot of schools in inner-city areas may have more students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds whose first language is not English. Some schools have more discipline problems than others, so it is impossible to generalise. It will depend on the teachers and students in each and every school. Assistants will almost certainly teach some classes together with the teacher and take some small groups independently. Assistants are not responsible for overall discipline, but it is a good idea for assistants to try to command respect from their students, while trying to be friendly at the same time.

What will the students' level of ability be like?

Again, it is impossible to generalise, but the situation regarding foreign language learning is not the same in the UK as that of English in other countries. English is, in a sense, a world language and it would be more appropriate to compare the teaching of the second foreign language (after English) in the assistant's country to the teaching of foreign languages in the UK. Assistants should probably not assume that the language level of their pupils is the same as the level of English of students in their own country. Some schools employ their assistants to help the most able students prepare for university entry-level examinations; others employ

assistants to help prepare for oral examinations of the relevant school-leaving qualifications. The role of the assistant will be to make language learning more interactive and fun, whatever level(s) they end up teaching and to build students' confidence in communicating in the target language.

What is the climate like?

The climate is fairly similar from place to place within the UK, but northern areas tend to be a few degrees colder than southern areas. Current temperatures can be checked on the [BBC weather website](#).

Is the allowance enough to survive on?

The UK is fairly expensive compared to most European countries, but the allowance is quite generous for the number of hours worked (usually 12 per week). There are additional allowances for London, but living in London is still very expensive. Rent varies depending on the size of the town/city and the standard of the accommodation. Assistants may be able to supplement their income by giving private lessons or doing a part-time job as long as these do not affect their working hours in school. However, this may affect their tax-exemption status. Also, if an assistant is not from an EU country, they can only work extra hours if they are working in a school and teaching; this cannot exceed 20 hours for non-EU assistants. Assistants should make sure that they bring enough money to live on (approximately £1,500–£2,000) until they receive their first payment, which should be at the end of the first month.

What is the situation regarding accommodation?

Assistants should understand that finding accommodation is ultimately their own responsibility. However, schools are encouraged to advise assistants concerning accommodation queries. Advice regarding local areas and transport links, etc. is greatly appreciated. The assistant's settling-in period will be a lot smoother if schools are able to assist them in finding accommodation, even if only on a temporary basis, at a reasonable cost before their arrival.

The type of accommodation will vary. If living in a house with a family or renting someone's room while they are away for a few months, assistants will probably not have to provide their own bedding and cutlery, pots and pans etc. However, if renting a room in a shared house with other assistants, students or workers, assistants will probably have to provide their own. It is best to check this before moving in.

Will assistants have the opportunity to travel?

Yes. Assistants will have half-term holidays as well as two weeks' holiday at Christmas and Easter. The [VisitBritain website](#) can provide useful advice on what to see and do whilst in the UK. Schools are encouraged to compress working hours into a four-day timetable for assistants, in order for them to benefit from a long weekend which provides them with a chance to travel and discover the UK.

Preparing for the assistant's arrival

1.04 Sharing arrangements

Where an assistant is shared between two or three establishments, it is essential that a single host school be identified. The host establishment should:

- be the principal point of contact for personnel matters
- co-ordinate requests for the assistant's presence
- draw up the assistant's timetable and assist with travel arrangements
- arrange full payment for assistant(s) and request reimbursement from partner schools – this is very important in order to avoid tax implications for the assistants.

When drawing up sharing arrangements and timetables, schools are asked to ensure that travel between schools does not become unreasonable for the assistant. Where local public transport is limited, it may be possible for school teachers to consider offering lifts to or from school. Where assistants are required to travel to more than one school on the same day, the schools involved (or the local authority where applicable) should reimburse the assistant's additional travel expenses.

1.05 First contact between host school and assistant

Assistants should receive a letter or email in June or July from their employer, which will be the local authority or host school and not the British Council.

To secure the job assistants should reply immediately to this letter with the following information:

- a brief introduction to themselves, their interests and any previous teaching experience
- the address, telephone number and email address where they can be contacted until one month before they are due to start work (i.e. end of August or September)
- the dates of any examinations during the academic year for which they may be obliged to return home.



Assistants should ask the following questions:

- When should I arrive in the UK? (Assistants will probably be expected to be in school on Monday 1 September 2014 (Scotland/Northern Ireland) or Wednesday 1 October 2014 (England/Wales) unless they have agreed another starting date with the school. Assistants will need to arrive earlier than these dates in order to settle in, and in some cases, secure accommodation.
- Can schools help me find accommodation, or give me advice? (Assistants should tell the school if they have any special dietary requirements or if they smoke or will have a car. However, assistants should be realistic and remember it may not be possible for schools to meet all their requirements. It may be possible for schools to arrange temporary accommodation, for example in a hostel, in order to give assistants time to find something more permanent). If the school has indicated that it is able to provide accommodation, assistants should ask for the address and telephone number. See also the notes on finding accommodation in [section 1.10](#).
- What are the address and telephone number, email and website of the school?
- What are the contact details of my mentor teacher throughout the summer?
- Will I be working in one school or more than one?
- How many hours will I work?
- What will my allowance be?
- What type of school(s) will I be working in?
- How big is the school? How many pupils? How many teachers? How many teachers of my language are there?
- What is the social environment of the school?
- How old are the pupils? What is the age-range and language level of the pupils I will be working with?
- Does the school have a link with a school in my country?
- Would the school like me to bring any authentic materials such as photographs, maps, postcards, posters, etc., that I could put up in the classroom, or tourist brochures, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, information on festivals in my country?
- What is the name, address, telephone number and email address of the previous assistant, i.e. my predecessor?
- How do I get to the school or my accommodation from the airport/station/port of arrival?
- What type of clothing will I be expected to wear in school?

1.06 Legal matters: police clearance and immigration

(A) Police clearance – from abroad

If assistants come from an EU country and have not included a police certificate in their original application, they must apply for a police certificate from their country of origin and give it to their local authority or school on their first day or earlier if requested. The police certificate must be dated in the last six months when assistants present it. **This is a very important document: schools – please make sure to request this from your assistant(s) as soon as possible.**

(B) Police clearance – from the UK authorities

It is an offence for an organisation to knowingly offer work in a childcare position to anyone who is on the children's barred list. Therefore, a criminal record check must be carried out by the assistant's employer (host school or local authority). The type of criminal record check which will be carried out will vary depending on which region of the UK assistants have been allocated to – please see the sections below for further information.

For this reason it is important for assistants to comply with any requests from their employer and to provide the necessary information for this criminal record check. This applies to all assistants, regardless of whether or not they have a history of previous residence in this country. This is in **addition** to the police certificate from their own country.

Schools that are the employer should:

- a. verify an assistant's identity on arrival (see below for acceptable documents)
- b. give the assistant the appropriate form to apply for an Enhanced DBS with children's barred list (**England and Wales**), a criminal history disclosure through Access NI (**Northern Ireland**) or for membership of the PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) Scheme (**Scotland**)
- c. ensure that the assistant's form is fully completed and is accurate
- d. submit the form to the appropriate authority (Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales, Access NI in Northern Ireland, or to Disclosure Scotland), together with the fee, if applicable (**note: some schools cover the cost of the DBS check but sometimes assistants must pay this fee themselves**).

Assistants will require the following documentation:

- | | |
|--|---|
| EU Nationals (including Switzerland): | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• valid passport and EU national ID card• bank/building society statement which has been issued in the last three months (UK or EEA) if no EU ID card• bank/building society account opening confirmation letter with UK address. |
| Non EU Nationals: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• valid passport• visa• bank/building society account opening confirmation letter with UK address. |

England and Wales (DBS check)

Only original documents are valid for the identity verification check: photocopies are not acceptable unless certified by a notary public. A foreign driving licence is not acceptable. All documents in the box above must be in the assistant's current name. At least one document must confirm the assistant's UK address at the time of application for the DBS check, and at least one document must confirm the assistant's date of birth. In Section C of the DBS application, assistants must also provide (but not prove) all addresses where they have lived in the last five years, ensuring that there are no gaps in the dates between addresses. An application that has gaps in the dates between addresses will be rejected. Documents such as bank and credit card statements cannot be used unless they show the assistant's UK address at the time of application for the DBS check, very few assistants will be in a position at the start of their placement to offer these for their identity check. However, upon opening a bank account in the UK, the assistant will receive a confirmation letter which will contain their UK address; therefore this letter can be used instead.

The assistant's 'current' UK address cannot be the address of the school unless they live at the school. However, the document required to show the address could be a letter from the head teacher (at the host school), on headed paper, confirming the assistant's address on the basis of a letter from the landlord. Q21 in section A of the form can be left blank. It is not mandatory information since assistants may not have a permanent National Insurance number at the start of the academic year. Q62 in the DBS form should state the host/lead school, NOT the British Council.

Northern Ireland (AccessNI)

Only original documents are valid for the identity verification check: photocopies are not acceptable unless certified by a notary public. A foreign driving licence is not acceptable.

All Group 1 documents must be in the assistant's current name. At least one document must confirm the assistant's UK address at the time of application for the AccessNI check, and at least one document must confirm the assistant's date of birth. In section E of the application form assistants must also provide (but not prove) all addresses where assistants have lived in the last five years, ensuring that assistants leave no gaps in the dates between addresses. An application that has gaps in the dates between addresses will be rejected.

Documents such as bank and credit card statements cannot be used unless they show the assistant's UK address at the time of application for the AccessNI check, very few assistants will be in a position at the start of their placement to offer these for their identity check as they will not have had sufficient time to open a bank account.

Assistant's 'current' UK address (Section D of the form) cannot be the address of the school unless they live at the school. However, the document required to show the address could be a letter from the head teacher/principal (host school), on headed paper, confirming the address on the basis of a letter from the landlord.

Question B11 can be left blank. It is not mandatory information since assistants may not have a permanent National Insurance number at the start of the academic year.

Section H (Responsible Body Information) should state the host/lead school, NOT the British Council.

Scotland (PVG Scheme)

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (PVG scheme) came into force on 28 February 2011 and replaced enhanced disclosures for those working with vulnerable groups. Like its predecessor, it is designed to ensure that people who have a known history of harmful and abusive behaviour are not put in positions of trust with vulnerable people. It is managed by Disclosure Scotland. This applies to all assistants, regardless of whether or not they have a history of previous residence in this country. This is in addition to the police clearance from their home country.

The procedure for this must be undertaken by the employer: a local authority or independent school. It is assumed that these are already registered bodies with Disclosure Scotland. The employer should:

1. verify the assistants' identity on arrival (see below for acceptable documents)
2. give the assistant the form to apply for membership of the PVG scheme
3. ensure that both the assistant and the employer have completed the relevant parts fully and accurately
4. submit the form to Disclosure Scotland together with the fee.

It is up to the employer to decide what constitutes sufficient evidence of identity. The code of practice issued by Scottish ministers recommends three forms of identification, one of which should be photographic, one with proof of address, and one other.

Documentation that has been cleared with Disclosure Scotland as acceptable includes any of the following, of which THREE are required:

- passport
- national ID card (EU or non-EU) – please note that while ID cards are acceptable, employers should be aware of potential forgeries and value the ID card based upon the country of origin
- birth certificate
- driving licence (including foreign driving licence)
- school leaving exam certificate or university exam certificate
- letter from landlord or hostel confirming address
- marriage certificate
- work permit/visa (less than 12 months old)
- UK National Insurance card (if the assistant has previously worked in the UK)
- UK utility or Council Tax bills (if a second year assistant from France)
- (for Chinese Language Assistants only) letter from Chinese head teacher confirming the assistant's identity and position within their school.

It is strongly recommended that employers ask for all documents to be originals, or copies certified by a notary public. Please inform assistants whether documents in the original language will be acceptable, bearing in mind that it can be very expensive to have these translated. At least one document must confirm the assistant's date of birth, and one must include a photograph. Employers should also be satisfied of proof of current address at the time of application in the UK. It is at the employer's discretion what proof is required for this.

Please note these documents need only be shown to the employer, and should not be submitted to Disclosure Scotland unless requested by them. Disclosure Scotland has a service-level agreement to produce 90 per cent of all types of disclosure for a correctly completed application with no further enquiries, within 14 calendar days. A turnaround time of approximately nine days should be expected for a correctly completed Police Act

Disclosure application with no further enquiries.
PVG Scheme applications with no further enquiries should expect a turnaround time of approximately 15 days. This is measured from the day they receive the application to the day of despatch. Applications that are sent via a registered body or an umbrella body can spend time being processed by these organisations prior to being received at Disclosure Scotland. For the period between the assistant's arrival and the obtaining of disclosure, it is at the discretion of the employer what working practice they wish to follow but we recommend that assistants start work in a supervised situation, for example team teaching with class teachers. Regardless of what practice employers adopt for this period, assistants should continue to be paid at the full normal rate. For further information, see the [Disclosure Scotland website](#)

Language Assistants from countries within the EU/EEA and Switzerland

These assistants will be allowed to enter the UK on presentation of a valid passport or national identity card.

Language Assistants from countries outside the EU/EEA

All language assistants who are non-EU nationals (those from Canada, China, Latin America and Russia) must obtain a visa to enter the UK. The British Council will act as their visa sponsor for the Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) Government Authorised Exchange Visa, issued under the UK Border Agency's points-based system. As Visa sponsor, the British Council will assign each non-EU assistant a Certificate of Sponsorship and T5 Confirmation of Maintenance form. This certificate has a unique reference number, which we will send to the relevant assistants by email during the summer before they begin their assistantship.

Assistants cannot apply for their visa without the unique reference number and T5 form, but it is essential that they apply for their visa as soon as they have these as the Certificate of Sponsorship will expire within three months of receipt/issue and their visa application will be refused if the certificate is not used within that time.

Non-EU assistants will be sent full instructions on how to complete the online visa application process by the national agency in their own country. Non-EU assistants must be particularly aware of visa processing times and the start and finish dates of their placement. It is the assistant's responsibility to ensure that their visa is valid for the full duration of their placement. They will have their fingerprints checked on arrival to ensure they match those in their biometric details.

It is also the assistant's responsibility to ensure that their travel to and from the UK is within the period stated on their visa. It is an offence to stay longer than the period given on their visa.

For the attention of Chinese language assistants only

A letter from the head teacher at your school in China confirming your identity and position within the school is required. Alternatively, please provide your host school in the UK with an alternative employer reference or university reference from a tutor who knows you well. Please remember to ask your UK employer about which documents you should bring to the UK if they do not advise you.

1.07 Bringing a car to the UK

Normally, EU vehicles circulating temporarily within or between EU countries are limited to visits of six months in a 12-month period. If the vehicle remains in the UK for more than six months in a 12-month period, one is required by law to register it (UK number plates, UK insurance, fees to pay), and failure to register can lead to a substantial fine. However, assistants appointed for a specific duration of eight or nine months may be exempt from the normal six-month rule, provided HM Revenue and Customs grant an exemption. This would be an exemption from customs relief but as a result assistants will also qualify for an exemption from registering and licensing the vehicle in the UK. The procedure on arrival for bringing one's car into the UK depends on whether the home country is in the EU or not. [Further information is available online.](#)

Assistants who wish to bring a car to the UK with them should obtain a copy of The Highway Code as soon as possible. These can be purchased in most bookshops and there is also an [online version](#).

1.08 Planning the assistant's arrival: travel matters and personal insurance

For travel to/from the UK and for the assistant's time in the UK

We strongly recommend assistants take out personal travel insurance to provide cover for both themselves and their possessions, in particular personal items of value for their journey to and from the UK, and for their stay in the UK. This should also include cover for emergency medical repatriation and personal liability (civil responsibility).

Assistants should be included in the employer's insurance policy for public and professional liability. In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, mentors should check on the whereabouts of their assistant(s) to ascertain that they are safe and well while in the UK.

For all assistants outside of the EU – please visit the [HM Revenue and Customs website](#) and look at: 'Bringing your belongings from outside the EU' for further information and guidance.

For holidays outside the UK during the assistantship period

If assistants take holidays in other countries during the time of their residence in the UK, they are advised to take out additional travel insurance for these periods.

Transport

Assistants arriving to the UK by plane, especially if arriving during a school day, must be aware that it may not be possible for someone to meet them at the airport. If this is the case, they should ask their school for directions and local train stations.

Assistants need to bring sufficient money with them to the UK or have access to funds to pay for rent (and perhaps a deposit) and other initial expenses before they receive their first month's salary. Assistants should expect to need around £1,500–£2,000.

Arrival in the UK

1.09 Police registration – for assistants from non-EU countries only

If assistants hold a passport from a **non-EU country** they may be required to register with the police **within seven days of their arrival in the UK**, and to re-register (within seven days) if they change their address during the year.

If assistants do need to register, this requirement will be written in their passport, so we advise assistants and mentor teachers to check for this stamp carefully.

Assistants should contact the local police service for details of the nearest police registration office. When registering with the police, assistants will need:

- passport (including visa) and two passport photographs
- T5 registration of maintenance form.
- A registration fee of £34 (this is non-refundable, but only paid once regardless of the number of times an assistant may move residence). Please note: the payment can sometimes only be made in cash.

If an assistant is required to register at the police station and fails to do so, this is an offence and the police have the right to consider prosecution.

Language assistants posted to Northern Ireland

In the first instance language assistants in Northern Ireland should contact the Foreign Nationals Unit in Belfast on +44 (0)845 600 8000 and ask to be put through to the Foreign National Unit. They will then advise the assistant on how to proceed.

If the assistant is a holder of any other non-EU passport from a country NOT on the Language Assistants Programme, they should contact the Foreign Nationals Unit to check if registration is required.

Assistants must remember to check what immigration officers have stamped on their passport or what is written in relation to their visa. Immigration rules are continuously being revised.

Opening hours are Monday–Friday 09.30–12.30 and 14.00–16.00 (closed on bank holidays and weekends).

1.10 Accommodation

Although an assistant's school may be able to help with finding accommodation, assistants are in fact responsible for finding accommodation themselves. We therefore recommend that assistants arrive in the UK **at least a week before they are due to start work** (longer if coming to a larger town) so that they have time to find somewhere to live. It may be easier to move into temporary accommodation in the short term.

Assistants can also try the following:

- if possible ask the school's previous assistant if they can offer any advice
- ask around at school and advertise on the staff notice board
- check university or other student notice boards
- look online on websites such as www.gumtree.com or www.flatshare.com

Note: When moving into long-term accommodation we recommend assistants take photographs of the room and the flat. This is to help retrieve any deposit they may have to pay, which is usually dependent on the accommodation being in the same condition as when the tenant first arrived.

Assistants should not:

- advertise telephone numbers in public places
- sign any contract with an agency without finding out if there are any fees to pay.

Note: host schools will not pay for transport costs between accommodation and school, so assistants must make sure they do not arrange accommodation too far away as travel could be expensive. However, if assistants are working in more than one school and have to travel to both schools in one day, and have to pay higher transport costs, the schools should make a contribution to these costs.

If assistants share accommodation with people other than assistants or students, they may have to pay Council Tax. [See section 1.14.](#)

1.11 Medical care and Statutory Sick Pay

Assistants from countries within the EU/EEA

Assistants from countries within the EU or EEA are entitled to treatment under the National Health Service (NHS) on the same basis as UK nationals. However, like other UK citizens and depending on which part of the UK they are posted to, they may have to pay for the following:

- prescriptions (each item on a prescription costs £8.05 in England, but is free in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland)
- dental treatment (note: it can be extremely difficult to register with a dentist that will provide NHS treatment, which is less costly than private dentistry services, so we strongly advise assistants to have a dental check-up and any follow-up treatment in their home country prior to travelling to the UK)
- eye care or treatment, purchasing contact lenses or glasses, except in Scotland where eye tests are free.

Assistants will need to prove their identity and work status, so taking their passport or ID card, offer of appointment letter and any other useful documents is a good idea.

Schools are asked to inform their assistants about local medical services and to recommend that they register with a doctor as soon as possible. Assistants from countries within the EU/EEA are entitled to everyday medical care on the same basis as UK residents. However, it is at the discretion of individual GPs whether they accept assistants from countries outside the EU/EEA. Assistants from Canada, China, Latin America and Russia may therefore be advised to take out private insurance. All assistants receive free emergency treatment. However, repatriation is

not covered by the NHS – assistants must check that their own insurance covers this. All assistants are liable for prescription charges.

Every assistant is entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), and to the full range of benefits once they have worked continuously for the same employer for 12 weeks. Assistants should be made aware that SSP is significantly below their monthly allowance (currently £86.70 per week), which may be subject to change.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

If EU assistants have an EHIC from their own country, they should bring it with them. The amount deducted from their salary each month for National Insurance will also entitle them to an EHIC issued in the UK. (The application form for this is available from any UK post office or online). A UK-issued EHIC will entitle assistants to free emergency treatment (not to full healthcare) when they return to their home country or visit another EU state while they are in official employment in the UK.

Assistants from countries outside the EU/EEA

Assistants from countries outside the EU/EEA are allowed free emergency treatment but some doctors may not offer other medical services free of charge. Assistants are strongly advised to take out private medical insurance before leaving their home country or they may need to pay for private treatment in the UK, which is very expensive.

All assistants

All assistants should register with a local NHS health centre as soon as they arrive in the UK. Staff at the school may be able to recommend where to go. Note: the NHS does not cover emergency repatriation in the case of severe illness or accident.



Money matters

1.12 Payment, Income Tax and National Insurance

Assistants will receive a gross monthly payment directly from their host school – please refer to the grid below for further details.

As soon as the assistant has opened a bank account they must give their account details to the person in their school or local authority in charge of staff pay. This may be a colleague working in Human Resources (HR) or the school bursar. Assistants will usually be paid at the end of each month and will receive a payslip that shows their gross allowance (before deductions) and net allowance (after deductions). The host school should arrange full payment for the assistant and request reimbursement from any partner schools. This avoids tax complications.

Payment and period of appointment

The rates of pay for 2014–15, including all London weightings will be posted on [our website](#) as soon as they are available.

The official period of appointment for Chinese Language Assistants in the UK is mid-September to end of June.

For all other language assistants, the period of appointment is as follows:

- England and Wales: 1 October to 31 May (eight months).
- Northern Ireland: 1 September to 31 May (nine months).
- Scotland: 1 September to 31 May (nine months).

The salary paid to assistants is adequate to support one person only. Assistants should remember to keep their payslips for reference in case they have any queries about pay or the deductions made. Assistants may also need them in the future to prove to their home authorities – for pension purposes – that they spent a year working in the UK.

Income Tax

Following the raising of the tax-free personal allowance across the UK and due to the fact that the assistantship contract is split across two financial years, most assistants should now be exempt from paying Income Tax on their standard salary, as they will earn below the threshold in each financial year (£10,000 per annum).

It is still essential, however, that assistants are issued with the correct tax code from the tax office and they must complete **form P46** as soon as possible after arrival in the UK. The assistant's local authority or school should have the forms. The form gives the UK tax authorities information about who the assistants are and whether

they should pay tax or not. The assistant's local authority or school should send the completed P46 form to the local tax office.

Language assistants from countries which have a double taxation agreement (with Teachers' Article) with the UK – see list in Appendix I – should complete the covering letter for HM Revenue and Customs (provided by the British Council and available to download from [our website](#)), attach it to their completed P46 form, and return it to their local authority or school. The assistant should keep a photocopy of the completed form and accompanying letter in case of a future query regarding a possible tax refund. For more information please read [Appendix I](#) carefully. Only the employer's tax office can deal with problems and refunds: no other tax office can access the information. Please note that the British Council is not permitted to contact the HM Revenue and Customs on behalf of language assistants.

National Insurance (NI)

(A) National Insurance payments

National Insurance has nothing to do with Income Tax. It is the UK equivalent of social security in other countries. It entitles assistants, for example, to treatment under the National Health Service (NHS). Every employee in the UK has to pay National Insurance and this applies to assistants too, even if they have insurance from their home country. If assistants have any problems relating to their NI payments, they should speak to their local authority or school as their employer.

Assistants should remember to check any queries about entitlement to healthcare or unemployment benefit in their own country following their assistantship in the UK with their own authorities before they leave home.

(B) National Insurance number (NI number)

If the assistant already has an NI number from previous work in the UK, they can use it again as it is valid for life.

If not, they need to apply for their insurance number as soon as possible on starting work. The card provides the assistant with a unique number, which all employers must have in order to offer the assistant work and ensures that the assistant does not pay too much tax on their wages.

Currently, an amount of around £50 is deducted from an assistant's monthly allowance. This amount is slightly higher for assistants based in London. All assistants have the right to a National Insurance number to enable the contributions they pay to be registered in the system. Assistants need to apply for their NI number as soon as possible on starting their job. Assistants should visit their local job centre for advice on the procedure to obtain one. Employers are no longer recommended to give assistants temporary NI numbers as these cannot be used on the HM Revenue and Customs online tax-return system.

Language assistants posted to Scotland

Assistants should check with their local authority co-ordinator to see if a group booking has been arranged for them in their area in order to obtain an NI number. If not, they will need to contact JobCentre Plus on +44 (0)845 6000 643 to arrange an appointment. If assistants are from a non-EU country and are applying for their NI number individually, they should mention their nationality and that they have a Tier 5 Visa when phoning for an interview, as it may be possible to apply by post instead of attending the interview.

Assistants should expect to travel up to an hour for an interview, but if they are more than one hour's travelling distance from one of these sites they may be entitled to a 'rural appointment' at a JobCentre Plus office which is within a reasonable travelling distance. Assistants should emphasise to the JobCentre Plus staff when booking an appointment that they would prefer a rural interview if they are located in a more remote area. When making an appointment, they should check what supporting documentation they will be required to take to the interview. Waiting times for interviews vary across the country, but the average time is around ten working days from phoning. Assistants should then receive their permanent National Insurance number around ten days after the interview. More information on National Insurance is available on the [HM Revenue and Customs website](#).

1.13 Pensions

Assistants are eligible for membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and will automatically be enrolled into the scheme through the payroll section of their employer. **However, they have the right to opt out of the scheme or not to join it at all.** The host school or local authority must give you a guide to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

If assistants join the scheme, they will have money deducted from their salary each month as contributions towards their pension.

The employer must give the assistant a guide to the LGPS. If the assistant does not wish to join the scheme, **they must complete an opting-out form prior to their first month's payroll run.** If they join, they can opt out of membership and receive a refund of contributions provided they opt out within two years. Once the assistant has two years' membership they are not entitled to a refund; instead they are entitled to a deferred benefit in the scheme, payable at pension age unless the person decides before then to transfer the accrued benefits to another scheme (which could be to a qualifying recognised overseas pension scheme). A guide to the LGPS, together with the relevant membership forms should be sent to the assistant with their offer of appointment letter or given to them with their statement of employment (contract).

Note: some local authorities process refunds via the payroll for those who opt out within the first month, whereas others process all refunds (including those for people who opt out with less than one month's membership) via the pension fund.

1.14 Council Tax

Council Tax is a property tax based on both the value of the property (house or flat) and the number of adults living there. Assistants are exempt from paying Council Tax as they are regarded as a student for Council Tax purposes when enrolled on the British Council programme. We will send every assistant a British Council Certificate of Registration in their first month of employment so that they can prove their status as a language assistant as well as their exemption from paying Council Tax. Assistants may need to show this certificate to their landlord, or send it to their local Council Tax office if they receive a letter from them demanding Council Tax payment.

No one in the assistant's property should be required to pay Council Tax providing everyone living there is a student or British Council language assistant. However, if the assistant lives with anyone who is employed, they will be liable to pay Council Tax, and a Council Tax bill will be sent to the property. Assistants are not legally required to pay any of this bill, but may wish to help their flatmate(s) by contributing something towards the cost. If there is only one working person in the property, apart from the assistant, they can apply for a Disregard Discount, which means that they are only required to pay 75 per cent of the full normal bill.

If assistants have any queries about Council Tax when they are in the UK, they should ask their school or local authority, depending on who their employer is, for the address of the local Council Tax office, where they can go for further advice. They may also wish to consult the [Citizens Advice website](#) and select the appropriate country.

Note: if assistants rent property before their assistantship contract starts or after it finishes, they will be liable to pay Council Tax for any days outside the exact dates of their contract. Council Tax is not applicable to assistants based in Northern Ireland.

1.15 Banking

The assistant's allowance will be paid directly into a UK bank account, so they must open one as soon as possible after their arrival and give the account details to the appropriate person in their local authority or school (for example, the finance officer or bursar). Opening a bank account can be a difficult process for assistants, as they are regarded as short-term clients. Please note that a decision on what is acceptable is often at the discretion of the individual branch. If a member of staff can accompany the assistant when they first visit the bank,

this may be helpful. When opening an account the following must accompany the assistant:

- passport or national identity card
- a letter of introduction from the local authority or host school. The letter of introduction should be on headed paper and if possible addressed to the specific bank and branch concerned. It should confirm:
 - the name, address and telephone number of a contact person who is responsible for the assistant (for example the person writing the letter; most likely the mentor teacher)
 - assistant's name, address in their home country, address in the UK (even if a temporary address, such as a hostel), their position as a foreign language assistant, details of place of work and conditions of employment.

The British Council has been told that the above documents will normally be enough to open bank accounts with major UK-based banks.

Please note that a decision on what is acceptable is often at the discretion of the individual branch. If the assistant has any other documentation such as their lease if they have already moved into accommodation, birth certificate, photograph driving licence, a letter or recent statement from their bank at home or even their British Council Certificate of Registration, they should take this with them. Any recommendations for a local bank where it is known former assistants or members of staff have banked successfully would be of great help to the assistant.

The role and responsibilities of language assistants and host schools

1.16 General school life – frequently asked questions

What is a mentor teacher?

Schools must appoint a mentor teacher for each assistant – this does not need to be a principal teacher or head of department; it could be a young teacher who is not overcommitted elsewhere. Whoever the mentor teacher is, they should have a short meeting with the assistant every week or two to ensure they are able to support them both personally and professionally, within reason.

Assistants should be contacted by their mentor teacher before their arrival to arrange to meet on their first day at school or even beforehand. Mentor teachers will almost certainly be a member of the Modern Languages Department in the school. He or she will be the assistant's initial contact for any queries or problems they may have. If the school has not employed a language assistant previously, both assistant and

mentor should meet to discuss what language assistants can and cannot do, and to work out their role in the school. This should help avoid misunderstandings and encourage co-operation with staff.

How can assistants meet people at school?

An assistant's mentor teacher should introduce the assistant to key staff in school: the head teacher, deputy head, school secretary, bursar (finance officer in independent schools), principal teacher of modern languages or faculty head, and other teachers. Assistants are just as much a member of staff as any other employee at the school and should be treated accordingly.

How can assistants find their way around school?

Assistants can ask to be shown around the school – even those areas where they might not normally teach. Assistants should note the code of conduct for each classroom to see how pupils are expected to behave and can ask for a plan of the school buildings.

How can assistants link their work with that of colleagues' work?

Assistants and school colleagues should discuss how the language assistant's lessons fit into the relevant education curriculum in operation. Assistants can ask for copies of the course books as these could help to develop linked topics. Preparation and communication between language assistants and key colleagues is vital.

School holiday dates

Assistants should be informed of the school's diary and be aware of all holidays and training days.

How can assistants borrow equipment for their classes?

Assistants should ask their mentor about the procedure for using a CD player, television, DVD, overhead projector, computer or interactive whiteboard for their lessons. These media will give the language assistant's classes more variety. It may be useful for the mentor teacher to show the assistant where to make photocopies, well in advance of classes.

What are the rules regarding discipline or aggressive behaviour in class?

Mentor teachers should explain to assistants what the school policy is on disruptive or aggressive behaviour. This will ensure that any action the assistant takes is understood by the pupils and supported by the school. If one child is very disruptive in the assistant's class, the usual teacher for that class should be able to advise and support the assistant appropriately. Please remember that language assistants are members of the school staff and deserve the same status and respect as other teachers.

Relationships with pupils, use of the internet and personal safety

Assistants should be made aware of important issues regarding child protection under the relevant country's legislation. The mentor teacher or other relevant member of staff is strongly advised to inform assistants of their responsibilities in this area. Each school has a designated teacher for child protection who should be able to provide assistants with a copy of the relevant school policies. Further information may also be obtained from the appropriate government department. It is the local authority's/school's responsibility to explain that it is not appropriate for any reason at any time to touch a child.

Any complaint will be taken very seriously and assistants must take care that they do not behave in a way that could be misinterpreted by pupils or staff. If any accusations were to be made against an assistant, it could end in dismissal or even a court hearing. Should any such issue occur, please ensure the British Council is informed immediately.

We would ask schools to allow assistants to use the internet as a source of up-to-date material for the classroom, for helping with school projects and similar. It is also helpful if assistants can access information on the UK that will help them to make the most of their stay. Schools are asked to ensure that assistants are aware of, and fully understand, the school's policy on the use of computers, and particularly that they are aware of any restrictions on access to certain internet sites or on the content of emails sent from school computers. Assistants must be told that it is a sackable offence to access pornographic and other unsuitable sites. They should also be given clear guidelines regarding the use of social-networking sites (for example, Facebook) and be advised against sharing personal contact details with pupils.

Both assistants and host schools must be sensitive to cultural differences at all times and be aware that some types of behaviour may be seen as unusual, or inappropriate in a school context. Comments or gestures that are intended to be funny may cause offence and, exceptionally, may even be seen as threatening violence or constituting sexual harassment. If assistants wish to select discussion topics with political, religious or sexual aspects, they must ask their mentor teacher for advice before introducing the material in the classroom. Similarly, assistants must seek advice from teachers before involving pupils in communication with others on the internet. Some students may be of a similar age to the assistant but please remember that language assistants are to be treated as a respected member of school staff.

England and Wales

Assistants must be aware of the issues regarding child protection under The Children Act 1989 and should consult the [Department for Education \(DfE\) website](#).

Northern Ireland

Assistants must be aware of the issues regarding child protection under the [Department of Education Northern Ireland](#). It is known as the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Scotland

Assistants must be aware of the issues regarding child protection under The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 and should consult the information on the [Scottish government website](#) on this subject.

Assistants may be instantly dismissed from their post if they interact with pupils in any way that is seen as inappropriate. Such concerns should be raised with the British Council immediately.

What are the rules regarding sick leave?

The assistant's mentor teacher can explain what the school procedure is regarding absence in the case of illness and when a doctor's certificate would be required. Assistants must telephone their school to inform them as soon as possible if they are sick. If assistants fall ill within the first 12 weeks of starting work, they will only be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (currently £86.70 per week, though this may be subject to change). The amount is unlikely to cover the living costs of an assistant. It is therefore expected that if an assistant is ill for an extended period they will return home. If assistants do not return to their home country because of illness, they may not be paid for this period. Assistants should check any arrangements for sick pay with their school before returning home. If an assistant has to return home for any reason during the year, they must let the school know in advance and as soon as possible.

What about examinations assistants may have to take at their home university?

If assistants have to return to their home country at some point during the year to take examinations, they must inform their mentor teacher prior to their arrival in the UK. On arrival, they must show their mentor teacher the official request from their university. French assistants may be able to take exams at the French Institute in London or Edinburgh and should enquire about this possibility before arranging to return home. Schools are asked to be sympathetic to reasonable requests by assistants for time off to take examinations but assistants should ensure that they are absent for as little time as possible, and they should offer to make up the hours they miss during their absence. If they work the same number of hours missed once they return, they should be paid the same as in a normal month where they are there all the time.

Teachers are always so busy but how can assistants interact with them?

We encourage language assistants to stay in the staffroom occasionally when they have free periods between lessons as they may meet teachers of all subjects. Perhaps having lunch with staff members will also provide the opportunity for social chat. If assistants have particular interests or would like to get involved in local activities, colleagues are encouraged to invite them to such events and try to find the time to talk to them as a new life in the UK may prove daunting and rather lonely at first. Often there are organised school trips to theatres and other towns in which assistants could easily be included. Insurance for such trips must be looked into as assistants may not be fully covered by the school's insurance policy.

Should assistants be given fixed timetables?

All assistants must have a timetable for their classes. Most timetables are weekly but some may be for ten-day (i.e. two-week) periods. The assistant's timetable has to fit in with the rest of the school timetable, so although schools may try to arrange for the assistant to have one free day during the working week, this cannot be guaranteed. Assistants must receive a fixed timetable by their third week in school.

1.17 Induction meetings/observing classes

Some local authorities arrange induction meetings for assistants appointed to schools in their area. Assistants will also be invited to meetings organised by their embassy or cultural institute alongside the British Council. Assistants are strongly advised to attend as they will be given lots of useful information and will meet other assistants working in the area. If schools can permit the assistant to take a day off work for such induction meetings, it would be most beneficial for all parties involved.

Observing classes

Before assistants begin to work closely with pupils they should be given the opportunity to observe the class teacher. Observation will allow assistants to experience classroom management techniques as well as to get to know the names, faces and personalities of their pupils.

We ask assistants to note the following:

- how the teacher starts and ends the lesson
- how much the target language is used
- what the teacher's attitude is to pupil errors and error correction
- how the teacher controls behaviour, lateness and lack of effort
- how the teacher speaks to pupils
- how the teacher involves all pupils in the class activity.



1.18 The role of a language assistant

Depending on teachers and the age of the pupils, assistants may be asked to:

- work with the teacher in the classroom
- work on their own with small groups of pupils
- help prepare pupils for oral examinations
- make recordings in their own language that the school can use as an example of native-speaker speech
- introduce and contribute to group discussions and role plays in their own language
- work on specific topics with small groups of older students
- contribute to cross-curricular work in collaboration with other subject areas
- help set up links with schools in their home country
- contribute to an international project.

Language teachers may wish to talk to language assistants in their own language for practice. We advise assistants to avoid using too much English in the classroom. Teachers should meet with the school's language assistants on a regular basis in order to plan work. Feedback will be helpful to both assistant, staff members and eventually to pupils.

Experienced teachers can sometimes forget that assistants need time to prepare a lesson and cannot do a good job if asked to cover a specific topic only a few minutes before going into the classroom. Please make sure regular communication and sufficient support is offered so that assistants and teachers can develop a good working rapport.

Language assistants are not employed as teachers. They should not be asked to:

- take sole responsibility for whole classes
- supervise or discipline pupils regularly
- take responsibility for marking pupils' work or exam papers
- give classes in a language other than their own.

In class, a good first impression will help and assistants should try to establish themselves from the start as well-organised, professional and motivated people.

1.19 The role of the host school: how to make the best use of your assistant

In order for your assistant to feel welcome and settle in quickly, we would recommend that you:

- make your offer letter as comprehensive as possible: provide travel information, a what-to-bring list, local area and climate information and school prospectus
- remain in contact with your assistant over the summer period
- meet your assistant on day of arrival
- introduce your assistant to relevant members of staff, MFL team and other colleagues (especially the younger ones or those with similar interests)
- upon arrival, ensure your assistant's tax code and National Insurance are set up
- pass on helpful information from previous assistants
- give your assistant the same information as you would give to a student or probationer: school site plan and introduction to the relevant school system which is likely to be very different for them; this will include exam system and curriculum guidelines – you may want to use handbooks, websites, personal introductions and meetings
- remember assistants often come from very different, more formal school cultures: it may take time for them to understand the relationship between staff and pupils in the UK
- help with finding permanent accommodation if relevant
- help with signing up with a doctor and getting an NHS number
- support with understanding their role, status and discipline – assistants are colleagues and should be treated as such
- ensure they understand issues surrounding child protection and have access to a copy of the school's child protection policy
- make arrangements for lesson observation
- allow them to spend as much time in a learning environment as possible, especially in the first term, so that they understand how children learn language and how to use authentic materials/resources; your assistant may not know much about the practicalities of language teaching and may need some guidance – when/if your assistant teaches groups independently, ensure an appropriate room is available

- if possible, provide your assistant with a display board
- make sure your assistant has a fixed timetable by the third week – rolling timetables can give flexibility
- involve your assistant in their department – staff meetings, parent evenings, etc.
- find out about their interests and how these can be put to good use in school (e.g. sport, music, drama, art)
- encourage involvement in interdisciplinary and out-of-school activities – music, drama, sport, trips, etc.
- appoint a mentor for regular support
- provide opportunity for contact with other assistants in neighbouring schools: it would be helpful if you could give them the appropriate contact details
- EFL – mention Cambridge Proficiency or other courses
- the first few weekends are the most difficult ... try to arrange for the assistant to be invited by younger members of staff to join outings (October break – should they really want to rush home?).
- the importance of games (including grammar games) and competitions
- the importance of pictures and sources – magazines, calendars, clip-art
- how to approach a new topic with higher classes without frightening them
- how to tackle a sophisticated text in which there is a lot of new vocabulary
- planning to go from familiar to unfamiliar and from easy to harder, and the need for planning (give a template format?).

The best way for assistants to understand the above is for them to be in the classroom with the teacher and to see these concepts in practice. Team teaching, at least initially, is very valuable as it exposes the assistant to the methodology and establishes their status as a member of the teaching staff. It also ensures regular, pre-planned and structured teaching, as well as authentic use of language.

Language assistants need to know:

- what you, the teacher, expect of them in good time before each lesson
- about the pastoral system and discipline procedures your school might use
- about the shape of the school year and Standard Grade and Higher exams, etc.
- about teaching groupings/sets, etc.
- where to access services (for example, photocopies) and who to speak to about financial problems (for example, pay)
- where to find departmental resources – teachers' books, supplementary books, flashcards, scissors, card, glue, OHTs, VCRs, DVDs, tape recorders, computer schemes of work, smart board or other classroom equipment, dice, etc.
- about useful sources of support: for example, www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistants

With regard to teaching, language assistants need to understand basic, essential concepts like:

- using authentic resources
- how to set up pair work
- information-gap exercises
- receptive versus productive language
- how to stay in the target language
- promoting discussion in the senior years (for example with Advanced Higher or A-Level students)
- fun ways of practising role plays and other creative activities

1.20 Use of the internet

Assistants are encouraged and expected to use the internet for professional purposes, and they can usually do so at school. However, they should check with their mentor when they can and cannot use the internet. Assistants should try to use the internet for personal matters outside of school.

Assistants should be very careful about how they use social networking sites (such as Facebook) while they are an assistant on the programme. They should keep their profile private so that it can only be viewed by people they intend to view it. Assistants must always remain professional in what they say on their profiles.

Assistants should never swap personal contact details with pupils or invite them to be 'friends', or accept similar invitations from them, as this is likely to be regarded as inappropriate behaviour and could lead to disciplinary action. Advice from teachers regarding this would be very useful, especially if assistants want to get pupils involved in online work, for example for projects.

1.21 Professional associations and online resources

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Association for Language Learning (ALL)

Once assistants have arrived in the UK they may be invited by an ALL member in their area to a meeting with local MFL teachers and other language assistants. They should go along to meet people and to find out how the Association can be of benefit to them as well as their school.

Association for Language Learning University of Leicester University Road Leicester LE1 7RH	T: +44 (0)116 229 7600 F: +44 (0)116 223 1488 info@all-languages.org.uk www.all-languages.org.uk
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CILT, the National Centre for Languages

CILT works to convince people of all ages, at all stages of learning and in all walks of life, of the benefits of learning and using more than one language. It does this by using its expertise as the National Centre for Languages to influence policy, spread best practice and to support the development of language professionals. It now operates as part of the CfBT Education Trust.

CfBT Education Trust 60 Queens Road Reading RG1 4BS	T: +44 (0)118 902 1000 F: +44 (0)845 612 5995 info@cilt.org.uk www.cilt.org.uk
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CILT Cymru, the National Centre for Languages in Wales

CILT Cymru is the national centre of expertise on language teaching in Wales. Established in 2002 as part of the CILT network, CILT Cymru has been given a key role in implementing 'Languages Count', the Welsh Assembly Government strategy for Modern Foreign Languages.

WJEC 245 Western Avenue Cardiff CF5 2YX	T: +44 (0)2920 265400 F: +44 (0)2920 265411 info@ciltcymru.org.uk www.ciltcymru.org.uk
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Northern Ireland

NICILT, the Northern Ireland Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research

NICILT is a partnership between CILT, the National Centre for Languages, and Queen's University Belfast with funding from the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DE). NICILT aims to serve all sectors and stages of education in Northern Ireland and support the implementation of national objectives in language learning and teaching. This includes, where appropriate, support for early language learning, for the post-16 sector and for adult education.

NICILT School of Education 8 College Green Belfast BT7 1LN	T: +44 (0)28 9097 5955 F: +44 (0)28 9097 6571 w.phipps@qub.ac.uk www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEducation/nicilt
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Teaching in Northern Ireland

If assistants are interested in training to become a teacher in Northern Ireland they can consult the following [website](#).

Scotland

SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages

SCILT provides information on and promotes the learning and use of languages in Scotland. It also offers professional development and conducts research in support of language teachers and professionals.

SCILT works in partnership with the British Council in Scotland to support the professional development of language assistants, and encourages them to implement a project during their stay. You can sign up for their weekly news bulletin for information on languages and language learning in Scotland. SCILT also has responsibility for the Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS).

For more information visit:

SCILT
LH-232 Lord Hope Building
University of Strathclyde
141 St James Road
Glasgow G4 0LT

T: +44 (0)141 444 8163
scilt@strath.ac.uk
www.scilt.org.uk

Teaching in Scotland

If assistants are interested in training to become a teacher in Scotland, they can consult the following [website](#).

Scottish Association for Language Teaching (SALT)

Once assistants have arrived in the UK they may be invited by a SALT member in their area to a meeting with local teachers of modern foreign languages and other assistants. Assistants should go along to meet people and to find out how the association can be of benefit to them as well as their school. They hold a popular annual conference in early November. For more information please consult the following [website](#).

Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence is a Scottish government initiative to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge and skills they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning, and work, both now and in the future. By identifying and developing four main themes – to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor – Curriculum for Excellence aims to improve the quality of learning and teaching and increase the attainment and achievement of all children and young people in Scotland, including those who need additional support in their learning.

Scotland China Education Network (SCEN)

SCEN is a group of individuals, national agencies, schools and associations keen to promote the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in Scottish schools. For more information, please visit this [website](#).

Education Scotland

The national body supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education by:

- leading and supporting the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence
- increasing the capacity for self-evaluation and self-improvement among education providers and practitioners
- promoting high-quality professional learning and leadership
- identifying and stimulating innovation, sharing successful approaches widely with others
- providing independent external evaluations of the quality of educational provision at individual provider, local authority and partners, and national levels
- supporting the development and implementation of policy at national level. For more information visit the following [website](#).

Life outside work

1.22 Settling in

Even if assistants have been to the UK before, it is possible that they will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. Assistants should tell people if they are having any problems or if they need information, but mentor teachers and other colleagues in school should make sure they are approachable and willing to help where possible. Assistants should try to accept invitations to places and activities as much as possible as they might meet new friends and gain new interests.

1.23 Extra-curricular activities

The people assistants meet in school initially will be members of the MFL department. By getting involved in other activities, assistants will have the opportunity to meet other members of staff. Apart from their work in the classroom, assistants may be able to attend other classes in subjects that are of interest to them. Assistants will become much more integrated into school life and gain considerably more from their stay if they become involved in activities organised by the school, for example, sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Assistants should try to go to school 'open days' or parent evenings, as these are also a good way of meeting people.

Private study

Assistants should have lots of time during the year for private study, as well as for preparing and giving lessons at school. They could investigate the possibility of doing a part-time course at their local college of further education (also a good way to meet people). If assistants are interested in taking the Cambridge English: Proficiency exam, visit their website for further information. However, assistants must remember that their school work, timetable and role as a British Council language assistant must take priority. Assistants must not arrange any classes for personal study until they have a fixed timetable at their school(s).

1.24 Some (more) useful tips for language assistants

- Smoking is banned in all public places in all parts of the UK. This usually includes the area immediately outside school buildings.
- It is illegal to carry a CS gas canister in the UK, even for personal protection. CS gas is a riot-control agent used by police and is classified legally as an offensive weapon. The maximum penalty on indictment is four years' imprisonment or a fine, or both.
- Child protection laws in the UK are very strict, and may also apply to situations outside of the classroom, for example on school buses or at private parties.
- Inviting your students to join blogs or online discussions could lead to an offence against child protection regulations. Consult your colleagues before doing so.

1.25 Travel

If assistants intend to do a lot of travelling, they should ask in their own country if there are any cheap tickets or passes for UK travel which are available to buy there but not in the UK.

Coach (long-distance bus) travel is cheaper than rail but assistants can get cheaper rail tickets by booking in advance.

Rail travel is usually more expensive at peak times from Monday to Friday, but some assistants are entitled to a [Young Person's Railcard](#). These cost £30 and save a third off train travel. For more information, please visit the [website](#) to get more information or to buy a card online. Assistants from a non-EU country who are considering travel to other European countries at Christmas or Easter should apply for a Schengen visa, which allows travel to 15 European countries on a single visa. There is more information available [here](#).

1.26 Saving money

Assistants should look into getting an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) before coming to the UK. With this card you are eligible for discounts in shops, restaurants and tourist attractions among other things. Additionally, assistants should ask at their school if there are 'cheap days' for activities in their area; for example, cinemas are often cheaper on Wednesdays. A number of shops and supermarket chains offer loyalty cards which may prove useful.

Appendix I: Tax matters

Information about Income Tax and double taxation agreements

<p>(A) If language assistants are from</p> <p>Austria</p> <p>China</p> <p>France</p> <p>Germany</p> <p>Italy</p> <p>Spain</p>	<p>Language assistants may not have to pay Income Tax in the UK on their allowance because there is a double taxation agreement, with an article for teachers, between their country and the UK (in the UK language assistants are considered as teachers for payment purposes). Please note, language assistants may still be eligible to pay tax in their home country.</p> <p>A list of agreements can be found on the HM Revenue and Customs website. Find the relevant country in the list and then the article relating to teachers. This agreement lasts only for two years (for three with China).</p> <p>If language assistants do any teaching work in the UK after this time, they will start paying tax and will also have to pay the tax back for their first two years.</p> <p>In addition, if they have worked in the UK before, or if they have been living outside their home country for a long time, they may have to pay Income Tax anyway.</p>
<p>(B) If language assistants are from a country not listed in point A above and do not work in the London area</p>	<p>They may have to pay Income Tax because no double taxation agreement (with Teachers' Article) exists. Your Revenue and Customs office should calculate the correct amount for language assistants to pay each month allowing for the fact that they start work halfway through the tax year. However, sometimes Income Tax may be deducted so they should contact them to claim this back.</p>
<p>(C) If language assistants are from a country not listed in point A above and do work in the London area</p>	<p>They will have to pay a small amount of Income Tax because the London supplement takes them over the 'no tax' threshold. However, they pay tax only on the amount they earn in excess of the 'no tax' threshold.</p>
<p>(D) All language assistants</p>	<p>Language assistants may be subject to tax (emergency tax) in the first month or two as it takes time for their Income Tax form, P46, to be processed. They should automatically receive a refund with their next salary (usually in December).</p>

What you have to do regarding Income Tax

<p>On arrival</p>	<p>All language assistants must fill out form P46 section 1 and ask their employer to fill out section 2 on the same form. This is the form employers need when recruiting a new employee who has not worked in the UK recently. The P46, when completed, must be sent to the employer's tax office (schools or local authorities as appropriate).</p>
<p>On arrival</p>	<p>If the language assistant's country has a double taxation agreement (with Teachers' Article) with the UK – a covering letter and a printout of the relevant Teaching Article must be attached to the completed tax form. Otherwise, the language assistant may be taxed</p>
<p>January</p>	<p>If the language assistant's country has a double taxation agreement (with Teachers' Article) with the UK – and if they are still paying tax, they should call their personal Revenue and Customs office to ask if the figures are correct. If they have made a mistake, the assistant should get the money back with their next payslip.</p>
<p>April/May</p>	<p>For language assistants who pay Income Tax in the new tax year (from April onwards) – since they will normally work for only two months of the new tax year, they should be able to claim back the tax. Language assistants need to fill out the Income Tax form P85 just before they leave the UK. As they will no doubt leave the UK before they receive the money, language assistants must keep their bank account open and when the tax refund arrives in their account, they should ask their bank to transfer it to their home account.</p>

Income Tax is specific to each person, so each language assistant must find out what applies to their personal situation. **If language assistants do non-teaching work, they would normally have to pay tax on it.** If assistants have a question about their own Income Tax situation, they should ask their personal Revenue and Customs office: details are available from school or [online](#) – sometimes the nearest office is not the one used by the assistant's school.

Note: The British Council is unfortunately unable to help with individual enquiries. This is because we are not trained in tax, do not know about each individual's background and current financial situation, and for data-protection reasons we are not allowed to contact the tax office on behalf of a language assistant; the tax office will only speak to the individual involved so assistants have to call them directly – no one else can do this for them.

Possible questions relating to Income Tax – for the language assistant

- 1. I think I have paid too much tax – what should I do?** It takes time for forms to be processed, so you may be paying emergency tax (which is a high rate). Don't worry: you should get the money back with your next salary or by December at the latest. Only your personal (i.e. your employer's) tax office can deal with this matter: no other tax office can access the information.
- 2. There is a double taxation agreement with my home country but I'm still paying tax. What should I do?** There are agreements with some countries that do not include teaching work. In this case you will have to pay Income Tax.

3. My school can't help me with my Income Tax problems. What should I do? Income Tax is very complicated and your situation is different from that of normal teaching staff as you are not from the UK and are working at the school for only a few months. It is better to contact your personal Revenue and Customs office to check your situation.

4. I haven't been paying Income Tax on my salary but I have worked in a bar/restaurant and paid tax on that salary. Can I get it back? Possibly. It depends on how much you earned. Before you go home, fill out [form P85](#), send it to your Revenue and Customs office and they will investigate.

5. I'm going back home soon and I'm worried I won't get my tax back before I go. Make sure you fill out form P85 before you leave. Revenue and Customs will not send you the money in your local currency, so you will either have to cash a cheque at home or keep your UK bank account open so that the money can be paid into it after you leave. You can ask your UK bank at that point to send the money to your bank at home and then close your UK account. There is usually a fee for this service.

6. I've tried everything, but I'm certain I'm paying too much tax. There is a procedure for making a complaint to the Revenue and Customs office. Information on this can be found on the [website here](#).

Please do not call the British Council with regard to Income Tax enquiries, as we cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax.

Appendix II: Clarification of terms

There is sometimes confusion over terminology.

The following is intended to clarify.

- British Council language assistants are not classroom assistants. These are two completely different roles with different terms and conditions, but unfortunately the terms are often used interchangeably.
- Classroom assistants (generally) have permanent contracts while language assistants always have temporary contracts. Language assistants are in the UK as part of an international exchange programme; their contract is for eight, nine or a maximum of ten months and they are not paid during the summer holidays. The few who stay in the UK for a second year are simply starting a second temporary contract.
- Language assistants should not be used as teachers or teaching assistants.

Appendix III: Embassies/consulates in the UK

All embassy websites are available [here](#).

Country	Address	Telephone
ARGENTINA	65 Brook Street, London W1K 4AH	+44 (0)20 7318 1300
AUSTRIA	18 Belgrave Mews West, London SW1X 8HVU	+44 (0)20 7344 3250
BELGIUM	17 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EE	+44 (0)20 7470 3700
CANADA	Macdonald House, 1 Grosvenor Square, London W1K 4AB	+44 (0)20 7258 6600
CHILE	37–41 Old Queen Street, London, SW1H 9JA	+44 (0)20 7222 2361
CHINA	49–51 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL	+44 (0)20 7299 4049
COLOMBIA	3 Hans Crescent, Knightsbridge, London SW1X 0LN	+44 (0)20 7589 9177
ECUADOR	Flat 3b, 3 Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LS	+44 (0)20 7584 1367
FRANCE	58 Knightsbridge Road, London SW1X 7JT	+44 (0)20 7073 1000
GERMANY	23 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PZ	+44 (0)20 7824 1300
ITALY	14 Three Kings Yard, Davies Street, London W1K 1EH	+44 (0)20 7312 2200
JAPAN	101–104 Piccadilly, London W1J 7JT	+44 (0)20 7465 6500
MEXICO	16 St George Street, London W1S 1FD	+44 (0)20 7499 8586
PARAGUAY	344 Kensington High Street, 3rd floor, London W14 8NS	+44 (0)20 7610 4180
RUSSIA	6–7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QP	+44 (0)20 7229 3628
SENEGAL	39 Marloes Road, London W8 6LA	+44 (0)20 7938 4048
SPAIN	39 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8SB	+44 (0)20 7235 5555
SWITZERLAND	16–18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ	+44 (0)20 7616 6000
VENEZUELA	1 Cromwell Road, London SW7 2HW	+44 (0)20 7584 4206

Appendix IV: Acronyms

		Applicable in
AifL	Assessment is for Learning	Scotland
AS	Advanced Subsidiary Level	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
A2	Advanced Level	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board	Northern Ireland
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence	Scotland
CILT	The National Centre for Languages	England
CT	Chartered teacher	Scotland
DfE	Department for Education	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
DHT	Deputy Head teacher	UK
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	England and Wales
DTA	Double Taxation Agreement	UK
DTS	Determined to Succeed	UK
DVLA	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	UK
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions	UK
EEA	European Economic Area	UK
EFL	English as a Foreign Language	UK
EHIC	European Health Insurance Card	UK
ELB	Education and Library Board	Northern Ireland
ERC	European Resource Centre	Northern Ireland
EU	European Union	UK
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
GP	General Practitioner (doctor)	UK
GTC	General Teaching Council (for England and Wales)	England, Wales
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland	Scotland
GTP	Graduate Teacher Programme	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
HOD	Head of department	UK
HT	Head teacher	UK
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	UK
ISA	Independent Safeguarding Authority	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
ISIC	International Student Identity Card	UK
IT	Information Technology	UK
IWB	Interactive White Board	UK
KS	Key Stage	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
LA	Local Authority	UK
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
MLA	Modern Language Assistant	Northern Ireland only

		Applicable in
ML/MFL	Modern Languages/Modern Foreign Languages	UK
MLPS	Modern Languages in the Primary School	Scotland
NEELB	North Eastern Education and Library Board	Northern Ireland
NHS	National Health Service	UK
NI	National Insurance	UK
NICILT	Northern Ireland Centre for Language Teaching	Northern Ireland
NIRU	National Import Reliefs Unit	England, Wales
NQT	Newly qualified teacher	UK
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
OHT	Overhead transparency	UK
P1–P7	Primary 1 – Primary 7 (pupils aged 5–11)	Scotland
PBS	Points-based system	UK
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
PGDE	Professional Graduate Diploma in Education	Scotland
PT	Principal Teacher	Scotland
PVG	Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme	Scotland
QTS	Qualified teacher status	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
S1–S6	Secondary 1 – Secondary 6 (pupils aged 12–18)	Scotland
SALT	Scottish Association for Language Teaching	Scotland
SCEN	Scotland-China Education Network	Scotland
SCILT	Scotland's National Centre for Languages	Scotland
SMT	Senior Management Team	UK
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority	Scotland
SSP	Statutory Sick Pay	UK
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools	England, Wales, Northern Ireland
WELB	Western Education and Library Board	Northern Ireland

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this booklet. However, the British Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors that may exist or any subsequent changes post-print.

Language Assistants in England and Wales

British Council
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London SW1A 2BN
T: +44 (0)20 7389 4596
Assistants.UK@britishcouncil.org

Language Assistants in Scotland

British Council
Waverley Gate (4th Floor)
2–4 Waterloo Place
Edinburgh EH1 3EG
T: +44 (0)131 524 5717
Assistants.UK@britishcouncil.org

Language Assistants in Northern Ireland

British Council
7th Floor
The Boat
49 Queens Square
Belfast BT1 3FG
T: +44 (0)28 9019 2222
Assistants.UK@britishcouncil.org

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The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

www.britishcouncil.org/language-assistants