BRITISH COUNCIL

Language Assistants Programme 2026-27

ELA in Germany: The Guide

July 2026

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1. How to use this guide

Section 1 provides an overview of Germany and key country information

Section 2 indicates key contacts for your assistantship and their roles

Section 3 provides detail regarding the assistantship role and what this involves

Section 4 and 5 helps you to prepare the essentials before you arrive in Germany

Section 5 to 9 covers all core aspects and documents you will need once you arrive in Germany

Section 10 is for you to consider at the end of your placement.

Each section includes a recap at the end to highlight the key actions. These are not exhaustive but highlight the main takeaways.

You can consult this at any point in the year. Some assistants prefer to read it all in one go or you can focus on the specific section that applies to you. We encourage you to read the sections in full and do additional research on any aspects that are relevant to your assistantship.

Please ensure you have read through this document and carried out research yourself before contacting the Language Assistants Team with any questions.

This document should be read carefully, retained for reference and considered in conjunction with any papers issued by our German partners and the German authorities.

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in these notes. However, the British Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors which may exist or for any subsequent changes.

Date checked: 31st July 2026

Country Overview

2. Spotlight on Germany

Did you know that the British Council Language Assistants Programme has been running since 1905?

You are joining the next generation of this legacy strengthening educational and cultural links between the UK and Germany through the British Council and our partners the *Pädagogischer Austauschdienst* (PAD). You will be the 121st cohort of Language Assistants!

By this point, you should have fair knowledge about Germany. Here are our key points to consider.

2.1. Emergency Contacts

2.1.1. Emergency Services in Germany

- In any emergency: call **112**
- Medical assistance: call **112**
- Fire Brigade: call **112**
- Police: call **110**
- General enquiries to the British Embassy: Tel: +49 (0) 30 20 45 70
- For enquiries and consular assistance, visit: https://www.contact.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/posts/germany/british-embassy-berlin
  British Consular Emergency Service for any emergency queries 24/7. Leave a message and someone will normally get back to you within one hour of your call.

2.1.2. British Embassy and Consulate

For up-to-date British Embassy and consulate contact details in Germany please consult the GOV.UK website: Find a British embassy, high commission or consulate. Please take note of the address of the British Embassy in Germany below in case of emergency or loss of your passport. Assistants who do not hold British citizenship should check with their own Consulates/Embassies in Germany.

British Embassy Berlin

- Wilhelmstraße 70/71, 10117 Berlin
  if you are in Germany: +49 (0) 30 20 45 70
  if you are in the UK: +44 (0) 20 70 08 50 00
  Contact

If you are in need of urgent assistance call +49 (0) 30 20 45 70, available 24/7. When calling, stay on the line and select the option 'calling about an emergency involving a British National' to speak to an officer.

British Consulates-General are also provided in:

- **Düsseldorf**
  British Consulate General Dusseldorf
  Willi-Becker-Allee 10, 40227 Dusseldorf, Germany
  +49 (0) 211 94480 Contact
- **Munich**
  British Consulate General Munich
  Möhlstraße 5, 81675 Munich, Germany
  +49 (0) 89 211090 Contact

2.2. Life in Germany

If you're keen to do some more research of Germany or your region, check out these sites:

General	News
Public Holidays Calendar	Deutsche Welle
Rough Guide to Germany	Germany Profile - European Union
Lonely Planet Germany	German Federal Government

2.2.1. Personal Safety and Travel

Your personal safety is of paramount importance while living overseas and we strongly advise that you spend some time looking at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website and check it regularly as there is a lot of useful and up-to-date information provided.

Ensure you regularly check the website Germany travel advice page and are aware of these key sections:

- Safety and Security Page
- Sexual Assault Support
- FCDO advice for women travelling abroad.
- Lost Passport recovery

You can find more details on travel in section 4. Preparation before you go.

2.3. Local laws and customs

As well as the information on the GOV.UK site Foreign travel advice – Germany, make sure you are aware of the following:

2.3.1. Laws

Co-operating partners abroad have requested that the attention of British visitors be drawn to the severe penalties imposed for the following:

- Drug offences which may result in heavy fines and prison sentences.
- For taking part in unlawful political demonstrations which may result in heavy fines and prison sentences.

You are therefore strongly advised not to become involved in these activities.

2.3.2. Internet and Phone

- The Country code for Germany is **+49**. To phone abroad from Germany the code is 00 followed by the country code. When phoning Germany from abroad the first 0 of the standard number must be omitted.
- If you set up a phone line or internet connection, past assistants have warned to check phone subscription charges with Germany Telecom first. You may be charged for a full year's subscription even if you end your phone contract earlier than this.
- Past assistants often recommend getting a pay as you go mobile rather than one on contract as contracts are usually for 24 months.
- To avoid internet contracts you may want to explore other options of internet access such as dongles.
- Be aware that calls to the UK from a mobile can be expensive. Previous assistants have recommended using Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook messenger as alternatives.

2.4. The British Council in Germany

Please note: The British Council in Germany is ***not*** responsible for the administration of the Language Assistant programme in Germany - this is the role of the *Pädagogischer Austauschdienst* (PAD). Please do not contact the British Council Germany for Language Assistant programme issues.

The British Council develops and participates in many different projects themed around society, science, education and the arts. However, we encourage you to sign up for their newsletter to keep up to date with activities which may interest you.

Section 2 Recap

- Sign up for email alerts for FCDO and read through guidance
- Save emergency contacts and information
- Read key information on life in Germany
- Sign up for British Council Germany Newsletter

3. Key Contacts

3.1. UK British Council Language Assistants team

The Language Assistants programme has a dedicated team to provide support during the application and pre-departure process for each destination. Please note the British Council is not the employer of participants of the Language Assistants programme while abroad.

3.2. Overseas Partner Organisation

The *Pädagogischer Austauschdienst* (PAD) administers the Language Assistants Programme in Germany. They liaise with the educational authorities of the *Bundesländer* in Germany on the British Council's behalf. They will contact you throughout the year regarding your placement and other opportunities. The programme team are active on socials and you can find them on Facebook and Instagram.

3.3. Educational Authorities

Once the British Council have allocated you to a *Bundesland*, the educational authorities will then allocate you to the schools and are responsible for your contract. Each region differs as to when they organise appointments and send out information. They are responsible for your contract and grant payments during your assistantship.

3.4. Mentor Teacher

Your host school should identify a mentor teacher for you, usually in the English department. This mentor should provide pastoral care and support during your time in Germany. Your mentor teacher can become an integral part of your support network in Germany and you should invest time in building this relationship.

If a mentor teacher is not identified at the start of your placement, you should try asking for one and then contact the PAD for support as soon as you can.

Application, Allocation and Pre-Departure	**Sending Organisation: British Council** **Leah Coffey**, Consultant **Tamsin Hunt**, Assistant Consultant LanguageAssistants.UK@BritishCouncil.org Responsible for: Application and pre-departure processes
Arrival and Asssistantship	**Partner Organisation: Pädagogischer Austauschdienst (PAD)** **Mechthild Drzisga**, Project Coordinator **fsa-uk@kmk.org** Responsible for: programme in Germany and liaising with educational authorities
Assistantship in school	**"Employer": Regional Authorities** Responsible for: school allocations, contract and grant **Support: Mentor Teacher** Responsible for: In-school support and first contact

Section 3 Recap

- Understand role of the British Council, PAD and Bundesland
- Establish and connect with your mentor teacher

4. The English Language Assistant Role

The role of a language assistant is a very important one and one that we hope you will enjoy. Please remember that you are a paid member of staff with the responsibilities and required professionalism that this entails. Please refer to the British Council website Responsibilities of an English Language Assistant and What will a language assistant do for more information.

As a language assistant you are also an ambassador for the UK and its culture, influencing how those around you view the UK. You should endeavour to set a positive example and avoid any potential damage to the reputation of the programme and adversely affect the experience of future assistants.

Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is a key part of the cultural exchange and an excellent resource you should draw from during your lessons.

4.1. Posting information

Each region differs as to when they organise appointments and send out information. The British Council is involved in allocating assistants to a region (*Bundesland*) but has no control over choice of town, size of town, school environment or when information is sent out. We encourage each region to send information out as early as possible.

You should write immediately to your school(s) confirming acceptance of the post. If you do not receive a reply by mid-August it is a good idea to ring the school(s) to ask about accommodation and give them an idea of your anticipated arrival date. You should also ask them for some information about the school(s) that you will be working in. For example, it may be useful to know the age range of pupils, the average class size, the general level of ability, the social background of pupils, the facilities available and if you should bring any specific materials from home. It is also important to enquire about the dress code for teachers and any other general school information.

4.2. Period of Appointment

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Germany will be:

- **Full-year placements**: 14 September 2026–31 May 2026.
- **First-semester placements**: 14 September 2026–28 February 2026.

It is strongly recommended to check the dates given on the *Schulzuweisung* (contract) which you will receive directly from the school authority of your *Bundesland* before your arrival.

Assistants are expected to work **12 hours a week**. Those who have been appointed to more than one school will be asked to divide their time between the schools concerned. You can request information regarding how your timetable will be arranged from the head of the host school, however this information will most likely not be available until you arrive in Germany.

4.3. Holidays and Sick Leave

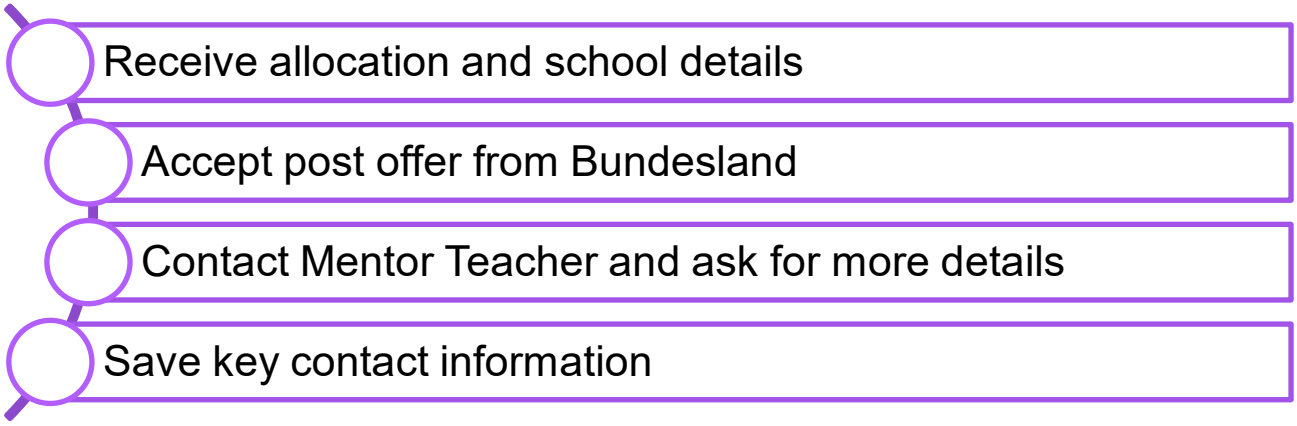
Assistants are entitled to the usual school holidays. The website of the *Kultusministerkonferenz* Ferienregelung has further details regarding the school calendar. You should not be absent on other occasions without prior permission. Attending the induction course does not give assistants the right to take leave at a later date.

You must obtain a medical certificate with dates if you are off work for illness at any time. Read more in section 5. Health and Wellbeing.

4.4. School allocation

The maximum number of schools to which you can be appointed is three. Please contact us if you have been appointed to more than three schools. If the different schools are several miles apart and you have to travel between two on the same day, you are entitled to ask for help towards travel expenses. Under no circumstances should an assistant be required to buy a car just to get to their schools. After contacting your school, if you establish that there is no regular public transport which serves your school(s), and there are no lifts available to your school(s) please inform us of the situation. Please do not contact us without contacting your school first.

Section 4 Recap



5. Preparation before you go

5.1. Costs to prepare

You should prepare for the following costs:

- International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC): £103
- Administrative costs
- Travel costs including additional requirements, if applicable
- Accommodation costs
- Health and travel insurance to cover your stay in Germany before the start of your placement
- Insurance costs for any conditions not covered by the health insurance provided by PAD and Bernhard Assekuranzmakler GmbH
- €1.000–1.500 for initial costs.

Read more in section 8. Money Matters.

5.2. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advice

During a crisis, official advice for British nationals will be published on the travel advice website and regularly updated. For your safety and to stay well-informed, we **strongly recommend** you subscribe to receive FCDO email updates for Germany so that you are immediately notified of any important changes to the FCDO's advice.

FCDO provide important information about particular topics, including but not limited to:

- Women travellers
- Disabled travellers
- LGBT+ travellers
- Solo and independent travel
- Volunteering and adventure travel

As international issues and subsequent advice can change often and rapidly, ***you must take responsibility for your own health and safety*** by staying informed of any changes to such advice. When responding to an immediate in-Germany danger or threat to your health and safety, you should always prioritise your own health and safety and make decisions in the best interest for your personal circumstances – do not wait for advice from the British Council.

The FCDO have published a comprehensive guide for Living in Germany. The guide sets out essential information for British nationals residing in Germany, including advice on health, education, residence requirements and more. We recommend you read this guide thoroughly.

You can also contact the British embassy in Berlin for advice in event of an emergency.

5.3. Passports and visas

You must meet the passport requirements for Germany before leaving the UK and must check these on the GOV.UK website Germany – Entry Requirements. These may vary depending on the type of passport you will be travelling on.

Those who are not in possession of a passport, or need a new one, should complete the application procedure as soon as possible either through a regional Passport Office or online, see GOV.UK Passports.

5.4. Visa D

If you do not possess an EU passport or have the right to live in Germany you are required to obtain the legal right to live in Germany to complete your assistantship. To acquire this right you can either apply for **a D-Visa** prior to arrival or a **residence permit** (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis*) after arrival.

You do not need to apply for both a D-Visa and a residence permit. You must only choose one option.

If you intend to apply for a residence permit, please see section 6.3 Applying for a residence permit.

If you intend to apply for a D-visa prior to arrival you must do so through your nearest Embassy or Consulate. Please note that only those living in Scotland can apply through the Consulate in Edinburgh, otherwise you must book your appointment through the German Embassy in London. Keep in mind that you will need to leave your passport at the consulate while your visa is processed. Please consult this guidance Visa information or contact the German Missions in the UK for more information.

5.5. Erweitertes Führungszeugnis (Enhanced Certificate of Good Conduct)

In addition to your International Child Protection Certificate which will be verified with the British Council, you are required to apply for an (Enhanced Certificate of Good Conduct) before you begin your placement in Germany. Further information will be provided on this over the summer by your individual Bundesland on how to apply for this certificate.

English Language Assistants are exempt from paying fees for the certificate.

5.6. Travel to and around Germany

You are responsible for the upfront cost of your own travel and any travel to and from your place of appointment during the year.

The British Council strongly advises against booking your travel until you have received your ICPC and are certain that you will be able to travel on your chosen date. In some instances, you may be able to pay the airline a small fee for flexible dates if you wish to book further in advance. The British Council is not responsible for arranging your travel.

Past assistants have advised that you check the baggage allowance for both outbound and return journeys when travelling by plane.

The most widely used travel sites are:

Flights	Train, Bus and Ferry
Skyscanner	Eurostar
British Airways	Rail Europe
easyJet	Eurolines
TUI	Interrail
Opodo	Direct Ferries
Expedia	Flixbus
Ryanair	In Germany:
Lufthansa	Deutsche Bahn

Other Travel Pointers:

Public transport in Germany is generally very good with even mid-size cities and large towns having their own metro or tram services, as well as local bus services.

You'll find a lot of information on tourist destinations, events, food and heritage on this German government-supported tourist information website.

Former Assistant recommendations:

If you are a student aged 26 or under look into getting a BahnCard when you get to Germany. It offers a reduction on rail travel and is generally valid for one year.

Regional *Länder-Tickets* are available for travel within individual federal states and can offer good calue for group travel on regional services.

The Deutschland-Ticket allows you to use all local public transport for €63 per month (excludes fast IC and ICE trains). Please note you must buy the ticket as a monthly subscription plan, and you must cancel before the 10th of the current month if you don't want to be charged for the following month.

International Student Identity Card or for non-students International Youth Travel Card can be used to obtain cheap entry into certain museums, theatres, cinemas and art galleries throughout Europe.

5.6.1. Taking a car abroad

You will need to research the laws on driving in Germany, including adapting your head lights for driving on the right and driving licenses. The GOV.UK website Driving abroad provides useful information about motoring abroad. It's also worth considering insurance and additional documentation you may require.

5.6.2. Taking pets abroad

You need to consider insurance, pet passports and health certificates. The GOV.UK website Taking your pet to an EU country details more.

5.7. Travel insurance

The British Council will not be responsible for you while you are in Germany, although we will offer support when necessary. You are therefore required to take out comprehensive insurance to cover you during your whole time abroad.

The British Council is unable to advise on insurance packages; you are recommended to consult professional advice, or to check whether you are covered by any existing family policy. Booking insurance should be carried out before any travel.

Undergraduate assistants should consult with their university to check what cover is provided for. It is important to check the small print of your policy.

Personal Accident Travel insurance is strongly recommended to cover medical expenses, air ambulance, repatriation, personal accident & civil liability, luggage & valuable items, and cancellation in extreme cases.

Personal Accident Travel policies are readily available on price comparison websites, or by using a search engine to search for 'travel insurance'. The GOV.UK website offers additional advice on their website Foreign travel insurance.

5.8. Graduates with student loans

If you have a student loan, you will need to let student finance know that you are going to Germany. Complete an Overseas Income Assessment Form to enable the Student Loans Company to calculate how much you need to repay.

You will be required to provide evidence of income or means of support. They will then send you a repayment schedule showing how much you need to pay each month. Your monthly payments will be based upon the earnings threshold for your destination Germany. The British Council UK team are not able to advise on student loans matters. For all questions relating to student loans please contact Student Finance directly.

5.9. Benefits and Universal Credit

If you are in receipt of government support in the UK, you must inform the authorities that you are moving to work abroad. Tell your local Jobcentre Plus or the office that pays your benefit if you're going abroad. If it's a temporary move, tell them when you're coming back. You must also tell HMRC if you're leaving the UK.

Section 5 Recap

- Sign up to FCDO updates
- Ensure you have a valid passport
- Sort travel to Germany after obtaining ICPC
- Get comprehensive insurance
- Inform relevant UK bodies you are leaving (student loans, UC)
- Contact former assistants and request details from host school

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1. Before you go

6.1.1. Planning

At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest Germany-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each Germany-specific page has information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, and factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad. Guidance is also available from NHS (Scotland) on the FitForTravel website.

General information on travel vaccinations and a travel health checklist is available on the NHS website. You may then wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you're abroad.

Make sure you have comprehensive travel and medical insurance covering healthcare and medical evacuation and repatriation for the duration of your stay.

6.1.2. Medication

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in the UK can be different in Germany. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of Germany.

If you're on prescription medication, make sure you either bring enough with you or have access to a supply once in Germany. Certain medicines may not be available in Germany (including major brands readily available in the UK), and you may be prohibited from bringing some medicines into the Germany. For more information and advice, check with your GP and the German Embassy before travelling.

6.1.3. EHIC/GHIC

UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs) are still valid, but you need to check the expiry date. If your EHIC will expire before the end of your assistantship, you must obtain a GHIC ***before*** you go to Germany.

The Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) gives you the right to access medically necessary state-provided healthcare during a **temporary stay** in the European Union (EU). ***The GHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance*** and does not cover private healthcare, all medical costs or repatriation to the UK. Comprehensive travel insurance is therefore strongly recommended.

If you are a student, you may wish to contact your university for advice surrounding the Student GHIC.

You can find out more online on the NHS website Get healthcare cover abroad with a UK GHIC or UK EHIC.

Please see the FCDO website for more information regarding healthcare in Germany. The FCDO details more on the Healthcare for UK nationals in Germany page.

If you require urgent medical attention in Germany dial **112**.

6.1.4. Medication

If your medicine is available from suppliers in Germany, doctors may first want to conduct their own diagnosis before repeating a prescription issued elsewhere. It is also important to find out where your nearest doctor, dentist and hospital are as soon as you arrive. You should ask your school for information about the facilities in your area and advise staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

6.1.5. German Medical Services

Please read carefully the FCDO advice on healthcare in Germany.

The Expatica website The German healthcare system may also contain useful advice.

6.1.6. German Health Insurance

You are covered by the PAD health insurance during the period of your contract. Remember that pre-existing conditions are **NOT** covered by this insurance. This was explained in your initial application and you ticked a box when applying to state that you have understood this. Therefore, please ensure you have your own health insurance policy to cover any pre-existing conditions.

Your German health insurance also applies to all EU countries, and trips to your home country for up to six weeks. This means if you fall ill or have an accident in another EU country you will be reimbursed for the costs of necessary medical care, medication and surgical dressings in accordance with the terms of the policy. It is however advised you take out comprehensive insurance (loss/damage to belongings, repatriation, personal liability, etc.) if you intend to travel to any EU or EEA countries.

You are also covered if you suffer damage to your health on account of a sudden event caused by a third-party. The insurance cover will not extend to any accidents caused by mental health disorders. It will cover you up to a maximum of €105,000 where total disability (100%) has been caused.

You can find the full conditions on the provider's website Reiseversicherungen für den Pädagogischen Austauschdienst PAD.

Our partners at the PAD will explain the health insurance details during their induction.

6.1.7. Visiting a Doctor

If you require medical assistance, you should go to your local health centre in Germany. It is likely that registration will be required, so it is a good idea to look into registering with a local doctor

soon after you arrive in Germany to avoid having to go through this process when you're ill. Health centres in Germany will have different processes and requirements when registering new patients. Please follow their guidance and instructions when registering.

As well as registering with a local doctor, it is important to find out where your nearest dentist and hospital are as soon as you arrive. You should ask your school for information about the facilities in your area and advise staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

If you have developed acute symptoms, you should arrange an appointment with a GP or a specialist doctor (e.g. ENT, eye specialist, gynaecologist, dentist, etc.) depending on what your symptoms are. You must show them your insurance card and the *Arztinformation* (information for doctors) so that the terms for settlement are clear.

After being examined you will receive a prescription for any necessary medication. You can then buy the medication from any pharmacy with your prescription.

You will have to pay for the medication yourself first. The insurance company will then reimburse you for the costs after you send them all invoices and prescriptions (originals only) with an application form for a cost refund (*Antrag auf Kostenerstattung).* Please be advised that only those costs that are covered by the insurance, in accordance with the terms of the policy, will be reimbursed. You will receive the application form for a cost refund at the beginning of your assistantship.

If you require in-patient treatment in a hospital you should also present your insurance card. You should ask for a shared room and general nursing care (i.e. not treatment as a private patient). The costs of hospital stays are very high so the hospital will generally settle bills with the insurance company directly. The hospital will submit a cost acceptance statement in advance to the insurance company where the doctor's fees are paid directly to the hospital.

The following cases are not insured:

- Pre-existing conditions (e.g. diabetes, allergies, etc.) so please take the appropriate measures in the UK to make sure you have enough medication to cover you
- Illnesses caused by alcohol or drug abuse;
- Orthodontic procedures,
- Regular antenatal examinations and costs incurred by childbirth or the treatment of new-born babies.

The following cases are partially covered:

- Pain-relieving dental treatment, simple fillings up to max €500
- Dentures, dental restoration: 50% of total cost up to max €500
- Aids following an accident (crutches, wheelchair, etc.) up to max €250
- Therapies required following accident/illness (massage, physiotherapy, etc.) up to max €250
- Mental health problem: first-time acute treatment only, up to max €1.200

6.1.8. Additional Cover

In addition to health insurance, it would be wise to consider insuring your personal possessions. You should also check your parents' household insurance as this sometimes covers possessions away from home. Furthermore, cover for personal liability is often overlooked but it is extremely important. If you were the cause of an accident of any kind –e.g. cycling on the road – the resulting costs, practical and legal, could be prohibitively high.

6.2. Mental health

Although working abroad can be enjoyable, it can also be challenging. Lack of familiar support, systems disrupted daily routines, language barriers, culture shock and unexpected situations can intensify stress levels rather than alleviate them.

It is important to remember that culture shock affects everyone. There is no shame in admitting that you are having a difficult time. Germany is a very culturally distinct place. If you do feel homesick or frustrated, please talk to your fellow assistants on the programme as they will understand how you are feeling better than anyone else. Also, be sure to keep up to date with your family and friends back home.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. It is advised to read this information even if you are not currently suffering from mental health problems.

The websites hyperlinked below contain guidance on travelling abroad and mental health, and information about how the FCDO can assist British nationals with mental health needs abroad.

- FCDO Guidance: Mental Health and wellbeing abroad
- NHS: Mental Health and Travel
- The NHS website Mental Health lists a couple of helplines that can offer expert advice to people with different mental health needs.
- Another useful resource is Better Help, but be aware that they charge $35 / week for their services, with a possibility to apply for financial aid.
- International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT) provide useful resources for Travel and Mental Health.

There is also local support available in Germany:

- Telefonseelsorge: available 24/7 and free of charge. They offer counselling via phone in German only, however, are also available via email and chat if you have some knowledge of German but do not feel confident speaking.
- Nummer gegen Kummer**:** offers a Germany-wide, free, anonymous helpline (in German) for children, youth, and parents. Children and youth can contact 116111 (Monday through Saturday from 2pm to 8pm). Parents can call the *Elterntelefon* at 0800 1110550 (Monday through Friday from 9pm to 5pm).
- Stiftung Deutsche Depressionshilfe: Offer different types of support such as counselling centres, national crisis hotlines, online forums, self-help groups and online courses. They also offer an online self-help depression workshop (available in English).
- NAKOS and Selbsthilfe Kontaktstellen: Offer contacts for self-help support groups.

Section 6 Recap

- Sort your EHIC/GHIC prior to leaving
- Ensure you have the medication you need and can access it
- Ensure that you have full medical insurance
- Follow PAD health insurance guidance
- Register with a GP
- Know where to get help for your physical and mental health

7. Outside of school: Arrival and settling in

7.1. Accommodation

The British Council is not in a position to help to find nor to provide accommodation. Equally, your school(s) are not obliged to provide or find you accommodation, but they may be able to offer advice, somewhere temporary to stay for the first few days or weeks, thus giving you some time to look for permanent accommodation. You should, however, not assume that your school will do this and should discuss your arrival and initial accommodation arrangements with them in advance. Please note that if your school does offer you accommodation, you are not obliged to accept it but remember, if you do accept it, you will have to abide by the school's rules.

7.1.1. General Advice



Accommodation Type	Useful Links
Temporary accommodation:	Hostelworld AirBnB
Permanent accommodation	WG Gesucht HousingAnywhere Immo Scout24 HomeCompany Quoka Kleinanzeigen (Auf Zeit & WG)

When you go out looking for accommodation, take a dossier of papers with you including as many of the following as possible:

- Your confirmation of appointment/your grant contract
- Proof of your grant payment
- Your passport or ID
- Work and residence documents

7.1.2. Before Signing an Agreement

- Always ask about additional fees such as Agency charges
- You may be asked for 1 month's rent as a deposit and 1 month's rent paid in advance.
- Get any agreements in writing, and obtain receipts for any transaction, keeping them secure.
- Confirm your period of notice you must give to move out – in Germany a minimum of three months' notice is usually the legal requirement. You may also have to give this notice in writing by registered mail.
- Take photos capturing the condition of your room and the flat before moving in to prevent unfairly losing any of your security deposit.
- Check health and safety issues (temporary and long term) such as fire alarms and exits, gas leaks, electrics, water etc.

When you have found somewhere to live, even if it has been arranged for you, do not sign any agreement you are not comfortable with and make sure that there is a period of notice written in the contract to avoid problems, should you decide to change your accommodation during the year.

7.2. Registration

Please cross-reference this information with any information our German partners give you.

All assistants must register (*anmelden*) with the authorities in the town, city or municipality where they live as soon as they have found accommodation and within 2 weeks of the start date of the lease. The municipal authorities may be called the *Einwohnermeldeamt* or *Bürgeramt* and are usually found in the town hall, city hall or municipal offices where you live.

You must bring with you the following:

- Your passport
- Confirmation of appointment letter/email (*Schulzuweisung*)
- Rental agreement from your landlord (*Mietvertrag, Wohnungsgeberbestätigung*)
- A completed registration form (*Anmeldeformular*), which you will be able to download from the internet or you can get this form from the authorities themselves.

In the *Anmeldeformula*r you will include your personal information and your new address. You should also tick *nicht erwerbstätig* (unemployed) on the form in the appropriate section. Officially you are paid through a grant from public funds and not directly by the school. This will therefore entitle you to a tax-free salary and exemption from social security deductions.

Note: please check with the authorities in advance what documents you should bring with you as this can vary in each Bundesland.

You will then be issued with an *Anmeldebestätigung* (certificate of registration), which you should keep safe as this is a document you are required to provide when applying for a residence permit, opening a bank account and other administrative tasks.

If you change your accommodation during your time in Germany, you must re-register (*ummelden*) with the authorities. At the end of your stay and before you leave Germany, you must unregister (*abmelden*).

7.3. Applying for residence permit

If you are a UK passport holder, do not have the right to live and work in Germany and are not applying for a D-Visa, then you are required to apply for a Residence Permit within the first 90 days of being in Germany. You should ask your mentor teacher for support with this process. Guidance on the process is provided on the PAD website under *Visum und Aufenthaltserlaubnis*. We recommend to ensure you have sufficient visa free days in the Schengen area left to ensure you have sufficient time to apply for the residence permit. You can find more information on the GOV.UK website Travelling to the EU and Schengen area.

If you do not have sufficient visa free days left, you may want to consider applying for a D-Visa instead.

If you are an EU or Irish passport holder, you are not required to apply for a residence permit, however, please ensure that you register your address (please see section Registration above).

7.4. Bank accounts

It is advisable to open a bank account once you arrive in Germany, and your mentor teacher can help you do this. More information can be found below in Section 8. Money Matters.

Section 7 Recap

- Prepare your accommodation documents
- Organise accommodation with notice period and insurance if required
- Organise accommodation with notice period and insurance if required
- Take pictures of accommodation
- Familiarise yourself thoroughly with the PAD registration and Residence Permit information
- Open a bank account. See Section 8.

8. In school: arrival, settling in and support

8.1. Induction

The PAD will organise an online induction webinar in August. They will contact you directly with the details so please check spam folders in case their email lands there. Please note, the British Council is not involved whatsoever in the organisation of these meetings.

The webinar will provide you with extremely useful information about your placement, the German educational systems, school life, and information and advice on administrative matters and teaching methods.

Attendance is expected.

8.2. Observation Period

When you first arrive at your school(s) you should ask for a period of observation. It may not be offered to you automatically. Observation will allow you to familiarise yourself with the school environment, to experience classroom management techniques as well as to get to know the names, faces and personalities of your pupils and gauge their level of English. Try to note the following:

- How the teacher starts and ends the lesson
- How the teacher speaks to pupils
- How the teacher involves all pupils, including shy ones, in the class activity
- What the teacher's attitude is to pupil errors and error correction
- How the teacher controls disruptive behaviour, lateness and lack of effort

This can also be a valuable opportunity to discuss with your mentor teacher about the following:

- How you are finding your experience and settling in
- If you have any additional requirements which may facilitate your placement.

8.2.1. Settling into school life

You can hear tips from former assistants in our settling in podcast.

Starting any new job can be a daunting experience, no matter how confident a person you are. It's completely normal to be unsure of where to go, what to do or who to talk to at the beginning.

Remember – it is not good practice to correct another teacher in front of students.

Apart from your work in the classroom you may be able to attend other classes in subjects which interest you. You will find that you become much more integrated into school life and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the school, such as sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Go to school 'open days' or parent evenings as these are also a good way of meeting people.

Teachers who are proactive and take the initiative often settle into school life much faster. Being a self-starter is a great way to make a strong first impression. Teachers are often very busy and will certainly appreciate your efforts to help and try to make an impact.

8.3. Absence from school

Please remember that you are a member of staff and must therefore adhere to the holiday dates set by the school. If you cannot work because of illness you should inform your school(s) and local education authority (if applicable) immediately by telephone. You may be asked to provide a letter from a doctor. This letter should cover the entire duration of the absence and must be sent to the school and, if applicable, local authority as soon as it is issued.

Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to the PAD and to the British Council. Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the school(s) who is within his/her right to refuse it. You are reminded that if you are absent from school without prior authorisation, your allowance will be discontinued from the first day of your absence.

If it becomes necessary to resign from your post, you must give sufficient prior notice (four weeks) in writing of your intended departure to the school, the PAD and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full. If you are an undergraduate, you must also inform your university/college in the UK.

8.4. Social media

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are a teacher in Germany. Keep your profile private so that it can only be seen by people you intend to see it. If you invite other teachers to be ‘friends’, remember to remain professional in what you post and be careful what you say about your employer.

You should not exchange personal contact details with students, invite them to be ‘friends’ or accept similar invitations from them. Check with teachers about the school’s internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school. It is exceptionally important that you understand issues around child protection, both to protect the students and to protect you from any damaging and potentially serious accusations.

8.5. Support networks

Give yourself some time to adjust – in the beginning, you will have a lot of administrative matters to deal with. Former assistants have recommended that you don’t spend all your free time with other programme participants, as you will not be able to integrate into your community and life in Germany. On the other hand, don’t feel that you must cut yourself off from them – your programme peers can provide a very good support network for each other, as you understand each other’s experiences.

Here are some other ways to meet people within the area:

- Enrol for an evening class, join a sports club, music group, choir etc;
- Join or set up a language exchange or
- Enquire about joining the local university and attending lectures;
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you couldn't join in the UK; and
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc.

Start at school

Showing that you are enthusiastic and keen to get to know staff will go a long way. Start with a simple hello or ask how their weekend went. Remember, though, that you will be working in a school environment therefore staff may not have a lot of free time.

Try introducing yourself to staff you may not directly work with, for example teachers in other departments, lunch time staff, receptionists, caretakers etc. If there are social occasions or team meetings try to make an effort to attend

If you hear about something happening which interests you, ask if you can become involved. Don't wait to be invited as people may assume that you're not interested.

Rural Posts

It should be noted that a lot of the posts in Germany are in rural areas. Past assistants to rural areas have had very positive experiences as they have been able to see "real Germany". Sometimes assistants posted to rural locations find it can be more challenging to adapt to, especially at the start, however it can be a very enriching experience on a personal development level and a real immersion in culture and language. Often assistants in rural postings comment that they receive much more support from their school which can help with setting into life in Germany.

8.6. Concerns and Queries: Who to contact?

Conditions in schools in Germany differ from those in the UK. We have come up with a Who-to-contact guide to assist you with who to ask if you have a query or concern regarding your placement. The British Council has a zero-tolerance policy approach to discrimination of any kind. If a serious incident occurs and the Who-to-contact sheet is not appropriate, please contact us.

Meeting regularly with your mentor gives the opportunity for them to feedback about your performance and for you to raise any concerns or issues. Do tell people if you have problems or if you need information as otherwise, they may assume everything is fine.

A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in Germany was the best year of their life. This can raise expectations and often leads to people feeling low, especially during the first few weeks until they settle in.

The assistantship year is a wonderful opportunity to absorb German language and culture and gain much in life experience and transferable skills. However, it is perfectly understandable that when abroad in a completely different environment there may be times when you feel homesick, have trouble with pupils or colleagues, or with your living situation and so on.

For confidential support services see section 5.2 Mental Health and Victim Support Service.

Section 8 Recap

- Attend induction webinar
- Carry out an observation period
- Make social media accounts private
- Join in: Staff room, societies, clubs
- Follow the Who-to-contact guidance
- Reach out if you need support

9. Money Matters

9.1. Bank Account

It is essential that you open a bank account soon after arriving in Germany in order to receive your payments. You will be paid by your *Bundesland* in euros.

We recommend waiting until you arrive in your town of appointment allowing you to research all the local options, seek recommendations and receive help from your school.

Things to consider:

- Assistants are usually entitled to open a normal current account *(Girokonto)* which provides a cash card; some banks also offer a 'student account'.
- Do not open a savings account as your *Bundesland* may not be able to pay your allowance into this.
- The website Banking in Germany gives some general advice on opening a bank account in Germany and German banking terminology which may be useful although it is not specific to language assistants.
- Check with local banks in advance to find out what kind of documents will be required.

9.2. Tax

A Double Taxation Agreement exists between the UK and Germany. Under this agreement UK assistants are normally exempt from German income tax for a period of up to 2 years. However, it is normally the case that 100% of the remuneration received abroad will be liable for UK tax. It is important to know that the agreement only covers teaching jobs.

You are reminded that the UK tax year extends from 6 April to 5 April and that income earned in the UK between April and the start of your assistantship may be taken into account when your own or your parents' tax liability is being assessed.

Enquiries regarding UK income tax should be addressed to a local Inspector of Taxes, *not to the British Council*. We cannot assist you in this area because we are not trained in tax, cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax, and for data protection reasons. Please check HMRC for information about who to contact.

9.3. Monthly Allowance

You will receive a monthly allowance *(Stipendium)* of €1.000 without any deduction or social security contributions. In addition, you will be provided with medical, accident and liability insurance.

Please note that you will not receive the full payment until October or later, so you should ensure that you take around £1.000–1.500 (though some assistants can manage with less) to cover initial costs. This amount may differ depending on your location and how much rent you are required to pay in advance.

You may wish to consider taking a credit card to cover initial costs. Be aware that you are often charged for using your British debit card to withdraw money abroad. You may wish to check what your bank will charge you to use this service. Your monthly allowance is adequate to survive on, but you will need more if you intend to travel.

Please note that most *Bundesländer* pay your allowance at the end of the month. This means, for example, that you will be paid on 31 January for the month of January.

Note: you will not be paid more for doing extra hours at your school.

9.4. Wohngeld

Foreign Language Assistants are entitled to apply for *Wohngeld*, a state-funded financial support to help with rent and accommodation costs. You can find more information on the BMWSB website Wohngeld. Please note that the PAD and British Council cannot assist you with this and you have to contact the local Wohngeldbehörde.

9.5. Additional Income

Non-EU assistants are able to take on private tutoring as additional work, however no other form of employment is allowed unless you are an **EU assistant**. If you wish to supplement your income by giving private tuition in English, you are strongly advised not to advertise in local papers or public places. In general pupils are easily found through school or private connections, i.e. by word-of-mouth. However, it is essential to check that the other English teachers in your school(s) do not mind, so that you are not perceived to be 'stealing' their private pupils.

Please ensure that any additional work does not conflict with your school timetable. Should you wish to obtain paid work in any other educational institution e.g. teaching work in the public or private sector, you must clear this with your education authorities.

Each authority has slightly different rules on what type of extra work you are permitted to take on, so it is imperative that you check with them before you accept any other work. If they do not allow it, you must abide by this ruling.

Document Recap

Prepare copies and documents prior to leaving:

- Passport
- Photographs
- Insurance cover
- Grant contract and school allocation (*Stipendienvertrag/Schlzuweisung)*
- Another valid form of photographic ID
- Bank statements from your UK bank
- Birth Certificate
- Certificates of school exams
- Passport sized photos

When in Germany:

- All of above
- Payslips
- Rental agreement

Section 9 Recap

- Gather documents to open your bank account once in country
- Consider your salary post social security and budget for this
- Check your tax situation
- Check with local authority if wanting additional paid work

10. Language learning and studies

10.1 For language learning

- BBC-Learn German: Offers a wealth of resources for learning Germany, including short guides, videos and the BBC World News service in Germany.
- Memrise: A sophisticated platform for language learning, with a large online community. App also available.
- Duolingo: A simplistic platform for language learning which is very easy to access. Bite-size lessons allow the user to practice for anywhere from 5 minutes a day. App also available.
- Anki: An online platform for learning, focusing on memory-recall. Packs for specific levels of German available.

11. End of your placement

11.1 Administrative matters

Bank: Make sure you do not close your German bank account until you have received final payments. You are advised to keep your account open for a month or so after the contract with your school has ended to ensure that all outstanding payments have been received. Please check on the conditions for transactions relating to your account. For example, it might be that you can only close your account in the same branch in which you opened it.

Accommodation:

- Please make sure that you leave a good impression with the property owner – a future assistant may be depending on this,
- Leave a forwarding address with the property owner so that they can forward any mail on to you.
- When you leave your accommodation, remember to cancel any personal contracts, e.g. internet or utilities.
- Discuss with the property owner what you need to do for them to return your deposit and terminate your rental agreement, as well as arranging the return of your belongings if you have already left.
- If you rent your flat through a property agency, they may want to carry out an inspection before returning your deposit; if possible, you should make sure that you are present during the inspection to avoid any potential disagreements at a later date. Alternatively, you may wish to take photos of your accommodation before leaving to document how it was left.

Reference: If you haven't already done so, please liaise with your ***host school*** to ask for a reference.

- This will be invaluable when it comes to an official record of your assistantship and for any future applications to be an ELA. This should ideally be on headed paper, stamped and comment on your performance as an assistant.
- Please note that as the British Council is not the employer and we are unable to provide references for language assistants, only a certificate certifying participation upon request.

11.2 Staying a consecutive year

To stay for a consecutive year as a British Council language assistant in Germany, you must apply through the PAD. They will provide guidance in due course.

Please note assistants cannot stay longer than two consecutive years on the programme in Germany.

11.3 Ambassador

Ambassadors play an essential active part in promoting this opportunity. By representing a British Council programme, former assistants will be able to develop their creative, organisational and professional skills and network with the future generation of assistants. To have an opportunity to be involved with this, you must have filled out our End-of-Year survey.

11.4Getting into Teaching

If you want to take your assistantship to the next level, find out more from the links below of how to get into teaching and inspire future linguists:

- England: Get into Teaching
- Wales: Educators Wales
- Scotland: Teach in Scotland
- Northern Ireland: GTCNI – Getting into teaching