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How to use this guide

Section 1 provides an overview of Hong Kong 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 Hong Kong
Section 5 to 9 covers all core aspects and documents you will need once you arrive in Hong Kong
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 partners and the authorities in Hong Kong.

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: 10/08/2023
Country Overview

1 Spotlight on Hong Kong

Did you know that the British Council Language Assistants Programme first began back in 1905 with English masters heading over to France?

You are joining the next generation of this legacy strengthening educational and cultural links between the UK and Hong Kong through the British Council and our partners the Vocational Training Council.

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

1.1 Emergency Contacts

1.1.1 Emergency Services in Hong Kong

In any emergency: call 999

Medical assistance: call 999

Fire Brigade: call 999

Police: call 999

General enquiries to the British Consulate-General:
Tel: +852 2901 3000 / +44 20 7008 5000

Contact form for consular enquiries: www.gov.uk/contact-consulate-hong-kong

British Consular Emergency Service for any emergency queries at any time of any day. Leave a message and someone will normally get back to you within one hour of your call.

1.1.2 British Consulate-General Hong Kong

For up-to-date British Embassy and consulate contact details in Hong Kong please refer to: https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies. Please take note of the address of the British Consulate-General in Hong Kong 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 Hong Kong.

British Consulate-General Hong Kong
1 Supreme Court Road, Admiralty, Hong Kong, Hong Kong
Tel: +(852) 2901 3000

Contact form for consular enquiries: www.gov.uk/contact-consulate-hong-kong
If you are in need of urgent assistance (for example, you’ve been attacked, arrested or someone has died), call +(852) 2901 3000/+(44) 20 7008 5000, available 24/7 (even on public holidays). When calling, stay on the line and select the option ‘calling about an emergency involving a British National’ to speak to an officer.

If you’re in the UK and worried about a British person in Hong Kong, call 020 7008 5000 (24/7, 365 days a year).

1.2 Life in Hong Kong

If you’re keen to do some more research of Hong Kong or your region, check out these sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
<th>News</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Holiday Calendar</td>
<td>Overview of the SAR of Hong Kong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rough Guide to Hong Kong</td>
<td>BBC’s Hong Kong Profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely Planet Hong Kong</td>
<td>Hong Kong Government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.1 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 website and check it regularly as there is a lot of useful and up-to-date information provided.

As mentioned elsewhere in this document, ensure you regularly check the Hong Kong travel advice page and are aware of these key sections:

- Coronavirus
- 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.

1.2.2 Local laws and customs

As well as the information on the UK government site on Hong Kong laws and customs, make sure you are aware of the following:

- 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. From 1 February 2023 this includes Cannabidiol (CBD). Possession of these drugs can lead to imprisonment.
- on the spot fines for littering and spitting.
- political statements critical of the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities, including online and on social media, could attract the attention of the police. You are also advised to avoid bringing up sensitive political topics even in private discussions.

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

**Internet and Phone**

The Country code for Hong Kong is **+852**. To phone abroad from Hong Kong the code is 00 followed by the country code. When phoning Hong Kong from abroad the first 0 of the standard number must be omitted.

Be aware that calls to the UK from a mobile can be expensive. Previous assistants to other destinations have recommended using Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook messenger as alternatives.

Although the internet in Hong Kong is not as restricted as in mainland China, you may find that you are unable to access certain websites such as TikTok.

**Section 1 Recap**

- Sign up for email alerts for FCDO and read through guidance
- Save emergency contacts and information
- Read key information on life in Hong Kong
2 Language Assistants Programme Overview

Key Contacts

2.1 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. The programme team are active on social media and you can find them on Twitter.

2.2 British Council Hong Kong
British Council Hong Kong administers the Language Assistants Programme in Hong Kong. They liaise with the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and Adecco. They will contact you on general advice, training and social events throughout the year regarding your placement.

2.3 Vocational Training Council (VTC)
Vocational Training Council (VTC) is the largest vocational and professional education and training provider in Hong Kong. They are the official host of your placement, and you will be allocated to one of their campuses.

2.4 Campus Coordinator
Your host institution should identify a Campus Coordinator for you by 15 August. Your coordinator should provide pastoral care and support during your time in Hong Kong. Your coordinator can become an integral part of your support network in Hong Kong and you should invest time in building this relationship. Your campus coordinator will also be responsible for approving your timesheet each month.

If a campus coordinator is not identified at the start of your placement, you should try asking for one and then contact British Council Hong Kong for support as soon as you can.
Sending organisation: British Council Language Assistants team (UK-based)
Responsible for: application and pre-departure processes (ICPC)
- Kay Turnbull, Consultant
- Leah Coffey, Assistant Consultant
languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org

Partner organisation: British Council Hong Kong
Responsible for: coordination of programme in Hong Kong, pre-departure processes and liaising with the Vocational Training Council and Adecco
Anna Lee, Head of Education
Ivy Leung, Programme Manager
VTCLA@BritishCouncil.org

Employer: Adecco Personnel Limited
Responsible for: Adecco is the legal employer of English Language Assistants in Hong Kong. They are responsible for visa sponsorship, monthly payroll, enquires about HKID card and bank account etc.
Clara Kwok, Head of Staffing – Clara.Kwok@adecco.com
Vanessa Lee, Assistant Manager – Vanessa.lee@adecco.com
For monthly payroll, timesheet collection and enquiries:
Kelli Lam, Senior Account Servicing Executive – Kelli.Lam@adecco.com
For visa applications and enquiries:
Kylie Yuen, HR Executive – Kylie.Yuen@adecco.com

Support: Campus Coordinator at VTC institution
Responsible for: on campus support and first point of contact
Section 2 Recap

Understand role of the British Council LA team, British Council Hong Kong and Adecco

Establish and connect with your campus coordinator
3 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 our website for more information on your role as an English Language Assistant.

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 during your lessons.

3.1 Posting information

You will receive your institution allocation from the British Council Language Assistants team. The Language Assistants Team will allocate you to an institution but the final decision at which institution you are placed rests with our partners, the VTC.

You should confirm your post with UK Language Assistants team as soon as possible upon receiving your offer. You should not get in contact with your allocated institution at this stage. You should wait until you receive contact details from British Council Hong Kong to contact your institution.

You should ask them for some information about the institution(s) that you will be working in. For example, it may be useful to know the subjects taught at the institutions, 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 campus information.

3.2 Period of Appointment

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Hong Kong will be:

**Full-year: 21 August 2023 – 30 June 2024.**

Assistants are expected to work 40 hours a week over 5 days per week (including lunch breaks). Your exact working times will be determined and communicated by the campus coordinator at your VTC institution.

The normal working hours usually are any 8 hours (including 1 hour meal break) between 8:30am to 6:30pm from Monday to Friday. Time off in lieu will be given if there are any activities to be held on Saturdays or Sundays.
3.3 Holidays and Sick Leave

Assistants are entitled to the usual VTC institution holidays. You can find a copy of last year’s VTC institution holidays on the VTC website. 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.

Section 3 Recap

- Receive allocation details
- Accept post offer from Adecco
- Contact Campus Coordinator and ask for more details
- Save key contact information
Preparation before you go

Read before you go

4.1 Costs to prepare
You should prepare for the following costs:

- £75 ICPC
- Administrative costs
- Travel costs
- Accommodation costs
- Insurance costs
- Initial costs of moving abroad. Although we do not currently have figures for Hong Kong, assistants travelling to other destinations have reported that they had saved £800-£1000. Read more in Money Matters.

4.2 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 Hong Kong so that you are immediately notified of any important changes to the FCDO’s advice.

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-Hong Kong 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 Hong Kong. The guide sets out essential information for British nationals residing in Hong Kong, including advice on health, education, benefits, residence requirements and more. We recommend you read this guide thoroughly.

You can also contact the British embassy for advice in event of an emergency.
4.3 Passports and visas

You must meet the passport requirements for Hong Kong before leaving the UK and must check these here. 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.

If you do not hold the right to live and work in Hong Kong, you will be required to apply for a visa. You must be eligible to apply for a visa under the General Employment Policy. British Council Hong Kong will provide you with more information when you are required to apply for your visa.

4.4 Travel to and around Hong Kong

Language Assistants travelling from the UK will have a return flight to Hong Kong paid for and organised by British Council Hong Kong. If you are flying from another destination, you must organise your own travel but will be reimbursed for up to 7500 HKD.

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.

You will be responsible for the costs any to and from your place of appointment during your placement.

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 in Hong Kong are:

- TripAdvisor
- Klook
- OpenRice (for restaurants’ choice)

Other Travel Pointers:

Public transport in Hong Kong is generally very good and cheap. The city claims one of the world’s safest, most efficient and frequent public transport systems and there are multiple convenient payment methods in the form of cash, Octopus Card and e-Wallet. This website provides a lot of information about the public transport system in Hong Kong and how you can get around with ease.

You’ll find a lot of information on tourist destinations, events, food and heritage on this Hong Kong tourist information website.

4.4.2 Taking pets abroad
You need to consider insurance, pet passports and health certificates. The government advice page on [taking your pet to a non-EU country](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-your-pet-to-a-non-eu-country) details more.

Please note pets will not be allowed in the VTC accommodation.

### 4.5 Travel insurance

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.

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 UK Foreign & Commonwealth website offers additional advice on taking out Travel Insurance: [Foreign Travel Insurance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-insurance).

### 4.6 Graduates with student loans

If you have a student loan, you will need to let student finance know that you are going to Hong Kong. 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 Hong Kong. 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.

### 4.7 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 4 Recap

- Sign up to FCDO updates
- Ensure you have a valid passport
- Sort travel to Hong Kong after obtaining ICPC (non-UK flights)
- Get comprehensive insurance
- Inform relevant UK bodies you are leaving (student loans, UC)
5 Health and wellbeing

Before you go

Planning

At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest Hong Kong-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each Hong Kong-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.*

Medication

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in the UK can be different in Hong Kong. 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 high commission or consulate of Hong Kong.

If you’re on prescription medication, make sure you either bring enough with you or have access to a supply once in Hong Kong. Certain medicines may not be available in Hong Kong (including major brands readily available in the UK), and you may be prohibited from bringing some medicines into the Hong Kong. You can only get prescribed medication in Hong Kong after seeing a doctor, unless your prescription obtained from a UK doctor specifically states it will be required in Hong Kong so you may need to request a specific prescription for this. For more information and advice, check with your GP and the Hong Kong Consulate before travelling.

In Country

Once in Hong Kong

Please see the Foreign Commonwealth Office website for more information regarding healthcare in Hong Kong. The FCDO details more on the Healthcare for UK nationals in Hong Kong page.

If you require urgent medical attention in Hong Kong dial 999.
**Medication**

If your medicine is available from suppliers in Hong Kong, doctors may first want to conduct their own diagnosis before repeating a prescription issued elsewhere.

You can only get prescribed medication in Hong Kong after seeing a doctor, unless your prescription obtained from a UK doctor specifically states it will be required in Hong Kong.

It is also important to find out where your nearest doctor, dentist and hospital are as soon as you arrive. You should ask your institution for information about the facilities in your area and advise staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

**5.2 Health Insurance**

The medical plan (AIA – 15397 plan A) will be effective from the day 1 of your placement at your VTC institution.

You will be sent the policy by your employer, Adecco. Please refer to the policy for details and check that the policy covers your own specific needs. If you require additional cover for health or medical insurance, we strongly advise you to purchase your own medical insurance before travelling to Hong Kong.

There is no specific doctor network, you can visit any clinic with registered doctors, and do e-Claim via the below apps.

You do not need to visit any specific doctor or practice to use your insurance provided by Adecco. You can visit any clinic with registered doctors. You can download an app which allows you to make e-Claims (pictured below).

**Medical Insurance – AIA 15397 (A)**
5.3 Visiting a Doctor

In Hong Kong general practice is referred to as family medicine. As in many countries its role is to provide primary, continuing and comprehensive care in a patient's community. Family doctors are also responsible for coordinating care by other healthcare professionals.

People can choose to register with any family doctor in Hong Kong. Many people choose to visit a private family doctor. The Department of Health runs a Primary Care Directory to help people choose a family doctor or other primary care provider based on their needs and preferences.

For information and to access the Primary Care Directory, visit the Department of Health's website.

The Hong Kong Medical Association maintains a webpage which allows people to search for a registered doctor of any speciality. Information includes their details, how to contact them, the languages they speak and the times they are available. Many clinics and practices have English speaking doctors.

- Find a doctor in Hong Kong

It is usually easy, particularly in the private sector, to find an English-speaking doctor. Many doctors in Hong Kong completed their training in the west. It should be noted though that these doctors often charge more for their services than those who are equally competent but who gained their qualifications locally.

You can also find a list of hospitals in Hong Kong.

Public Hospitals Hong Kong

- Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (Chai Wan) 2595 6111
- Queen Mary Hospital (Pok Fu Lam) 2255 3111
  Kowloon
- Kowloon Hospital (Mong Kok) 3129 6033
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Jordan) 2958 8888
- Princess Margaret Hospital (Cheung Sha Wan) 2990 1210
- Tseung Kwan O Hospital (Tseung Kwan O) 2208 0111
  New Territories
- Prince of Wales Hospital (Sha Tin) 2632 2211
- Tuen Mun Hospital (Tuen Mun) 2468 5111

Private Hospitals

- The Canossa Hospital (The Peak) 2522 2181
- Gleneagles Hong Kong Hospital (Wong Chuk Hang) 3153 9000
- Hong Kong Adventist Hospital (Stubbs Road) 3651 8888
- Hong Kong Baptist Hospital (Kowloon Tong) 2339 8888
- Hong Kong Sanitorium & Hospital (Happy Valley) 2572 0211
- Matilda International Hospital (The Peak) 2849 1500
- OT&P Healthcare Medical Clinics (Central, Wan Chai, Repulse Bay, Clearwater Bay, Discovery Bay) 2155 9055 | otandp.com
5.4 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.

5.5 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. Hong Kong is a very culturally distinct place. If you do feel homesick or frustrated, please talk to your fellow teachers 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 Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office provides information about mental health and travel via the following links.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health
www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues

The leaflets hyperlinked below contain guidance on travelling abroad and mental health, and information about how the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) can assist British nationals with mental health needs abroad.

Mental Health Travelling Abroad
Mental Health Travelling Abroad Checklist

The NHS website 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 provide useful resources for mental health.
Section 5 Recap

Ensure you have the medication you need and can access this from Hong Kong

Ensure that you have full medical insurance
6 Outside of work: Arrival and settling in

6.1 Accommodation

6.1.1 General Advice

For those who are not staying at the VTC halls of residence, accommodation in Hong Kong is extremely competitive, so renting a house or an apartment can be rather pricy. This is especially noticeable in Kowloon, where the population density is the highest. The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Hong Kong can range from 12,000 to 20,000 HKD (1,200 to 2,000 GBP) or more per month.

On the upside, most apartments easily meet the highest standards of living. Older buildings are often renovated to offer their tenants the same comfort as new housing developments.

How to Find an Apartment in Hong Kong

When renting you can usually choose between a standard or serviced apartment (furnished and includes utilities and other commodities, e.g.: gym), the latter generally being on the pricier side. Standard apartments usually come unfurnished or partly furnished. Deposits are typically one month’s rent.

Online

If you do decide on renting in Hong Kong, you can start by searching for a place online or having a look at the classifieds section of the local newspaper. That way you will be able to deal with the owner directly. Please do not advertise that you are looking for accommodation in newspapers.

Estate Agent

The other option is hiring a licensed estate agent. For a foreigner who is renting in Hong Kong, this will probably be the better choice if you are unfamiliar with Hong Kong’s housing market and not fluent in Chinese/Cantonese. Make sure to clarify all details with your estate agent beforehand, such as your preferences and needs as well as the agent’s commission and the time of payment.

Tips

- Always insist on looking at the apartment or house before you sign anything or pay a deposit. Do not rely on pictures only because they can be misleading.

- Although it may be nice to have a place to live right when you arrive in Hong Kong, it is always safer to meet with the landlord and to visit the apartment in person. In this way, you will have a good idea of what you might be getting into if you sign the tenancy agreement.

- As a general rule of thumb, if something does not feel right, do not sign the lease.
When you go out looking for accommodation, take a dossier of papers with you including as many of the following as possible:

- Your contract
- Your passport or ID
- Visa
- Work and residence documents

6.1.2 Before Signing an Agreement

Always ask about additional fees such as Agency charges

Landlords may ask for 2 or 3 months’ rent as a deposit and 1-2 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 Hong Kong 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.

6.2 HKID application

As you will be staying in Hong Kong for longer than 6 months, you will be required to apply for a HKID (Hong Kong ID) card. You must make an application within 30 days of arriving in Hong Kong.

Once you receive your HKID card, you must take it out with you at all times. Before you have your HKID card, you are required to bring passport and landing slip/e-visa at all times to prove your identity.

Since it will be peak season for applying HKID card when you arrive, the nearest available date for an appointment may be end September to November 2023. According to the Hong Kong
Immigration Department, you are allowed to queue and wait for the appointment (please make reservations first!).

Please find the links below for your application of HKID:

Online Booking Appointment
Online Booking Status

6.3 Bank accounts

It is advisable to open a bank account once you arrive in Hong Kong, and Adecco can help you do this. More information can be found below in Section 8: Money Matters.

Section 6 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 registration information
- Open a bank account. See Section 8.
7 On campus: arrival, settling in and support

7.1 Induction

British Council Hong Kong will organise an in-person induction event at the beginning of your placement in August. They will contact you directly with the details so please check spam folders in case their email lands there.

The induction course will provide you with extremely useful information about your placement, opening a bank account and registering and advice on administrative matters and training details.

Attendance is mandatory.

7.2 Observation Period

When you first arrive at your institution(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 campus 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.

7.2.1 Settling into campus 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 and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the campus, such as sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Go to ‘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 campus 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.

7.3 Absence

Please remember that you are a member of staff and must therefore adhere to the holiday dates set by the VTC. If you cannot work because of illness you (or someone acting on your behalf) should inform your campus coordinator/supervisor on your first day of absence at the earliest possible opportunity. You will be required to give the reasons for your absence, state the first day of illness (including Saturdays and Sundays) and the estimated duration of absence. 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 your coordinator as soon as it is issued.

Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to the VTC and to the British Council. Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the coordinator who is within their right to refuse it. You are reminded that if you are absent 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 in writing of your intended departure to the campus coordinator, the VTC and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full.

7.4 Social media

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are a teacher in Hong Kong. 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 VTC’s internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside of work. 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.

7.5 Support networks
Even if you have been to Hong Kong before it is possible that you will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. On arrival, the thought of making friends and mixing with the locals can seem like a daunting task, but if you are prepared to put yourself out there; it is a part of the experience which previous assistants have found the most enriching.

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. 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
- 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 work**

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 busy 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.

**7.6 Concerns and Queries: Who to contact?**

Conditions in Hong Kong 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 campus coordinator 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 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 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.

**Support Services**

**International SOS** offer a 24-hour hotline and assistance app available for 365 days a year and 24/7 access to actionable updates on health & security risks, and assistance if you need. They answer all calls in English. A briefing and membership ID will be provided when you arrive.

**The Samaritans Hong Kong** offer a 24-hour hotline for 365 days a year. They answer all calls in English. They also have a befriending email service where they aim to respond to your query within 24 hours.

**Mind Hong Kong** also offer a list of resources and how to get help for those struggling with their mental health including some in English. They also provide information of helplines for those who have been victims of abuse and sexual abuse in English.

**Section 7 Recap**

- Attend induction
- 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
Money Matters

8.1 Bank Account

It is essential that you open a bank account soon after arriving in Hong Kong in order to receive your payments. You will be paid into your Hong Kong bank account in Hong Kong Dollars.

We recommend waiting until you arrive in Hong Kong allowing you to research all the local options, seek recommendations and receive help from your institution.

Things to consider:

- Do not open a savings account as your institution may not be able to pay your allowance into this.
- You may find this [website](#) gives some advice on opening a bank account in Hong Kong although it is not specific to language assistants.
- Check with local banks in advance to find out what kind of documents will be required. As a guide the standard documents required are:
  - Hong Kong Identification Card or passport
  - proof of Hong Kong address or address in home country
  - application form

8.2 Tax

Assistants often ask our team questions around tax issues but unfortunately, we are unable to assist in this area. We do not have the authority or passing knowledge of tax systems in the various countries we work with to answer any questions.

Enquiries regarding UK income tax should be addressed to a local Inspector of Taxes. Please check [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk) for information about who to contact.

We do recommend looking into the Double Taxation Agreement between the UK and Hong Kong and you can find out more at [https://www.gov.uk/tax-foreign-income/taxed-twice](https://www.gov.uk/tax-foreign-income/taxed-twice). It is important to note that the agreement only covers teaching jobs.

Adecco will provide further information regarding tax and completing a tax return at the end of your placement.

8.3 Monthly Salary

You will receive a monthly salary of 20,000 HKD.
You should be paid on the 7th of every month providing that you submit your timesheet to Adecco on time which has been approved by your campus coordinator. If you do not submit your timesheet on time, it may take longer to receive payment.

Please note that you may not receive the full payment until September or later, so you should ensure that you take around £800-£1000 (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.
Section 8 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

Document Recap

Prepare copies and documents prior to leaving:

- Passport
- Photographs
- Insurance cover
- Work contract
- Accommodation contract (if applicable)
- Another valid form of photographic ID
- Bank statements from your UK bank
- Proof of UK address
- Birth Certificate
- Degree Certificate(s)
- Passport sized photos

When in Hong Kong:

- All of above
- Payslips
- Rental agreement
9 Language learning and studies

9.1 For language learning

Memrise www.memrise.com. A sophisticated platform for language learning, with a large online community. App also available.

Duolingo https://www.duolingo.com/welcome. 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 www.ankiweb.net. An online platform for learning, focusing on memory-recall. Packs for specific levels of Chinese (Cantonese) available.
10 End of your placement

10.1 Administrative matters

Bank: Make sure you do not close your Hong Kong bank account until you have received final payments. You are advised to keep your account open for a month or so after the contract has ended to ensure that all outstanding payments have been received.

Ideally, accounts should be closed in person, but many banks will allow this to be done in writing or even online. It is common for banks to charge fees for closing an account. 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:

For those who are staying in halls of residence, please do follow the rules and regulation and be reminded if you need to terminate the accommodation contract in the halls of residence, please email British Council Hong Kong with at least 30 calendar days notice and give written notice to the Hall Management Office (HMO) concerned. All paid accommodation fees will not be refunded.

For those who are not staying in halls of residence, please make sure that you leave a good impression with your landlord – a future assistant may be depending on this. You should also consider the following:

- Leave a forwarding address with your landlord 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 your landlord 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.

Local Authorities: Anyone planning to leave Hong Kong for a period of three months or longer must notify the Registration of Persons Office. Hong Kong Identity Card holders may be required to surrender their ID card at that time.

Reference: Please liaise with your host institution 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.

10.2 Ambassador Programme

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 complete our end of year survey.

10.3 Getting 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: https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/
Wales: https://www.discoverteaching.wales/routes-into-teaching/
Scotland: https://teachinscotland.scot/
Northern Ireland: https://gtcni.org.uk/professional-space/professional-competence/getting-into-teaching