BRITISH COUNCIL

English Language Assistants programme

ELA in Spain: The Guide

2026-2027

www.britishcouncil.org

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How to use this guide

Section 1 provides an overview of Spain and key Spain information.

Section 2 indicates key contacts for your assistantship and their roles.

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

Sections 4 and 5 help you to prepare the essentials before you arrive in Spain.

Sections 5 to 9 cover all core aspects and documents you will need once you arrive in Spain.

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.

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.

Updated: July 2026

1. Spain Overview

1.1 Spotlight on Spain

Did you know that the British Council Language Assistants Programme has been running in Spain since 1936? You are joining the next generation of this legacy strengthening educational and cultural links between the UK and Spain through the British Council and our partners at the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes.

By this point, you should have a good level of basic knowledge about Spain. Here are our key points to consider.

1.2 Emergency Contacts

1.2.1 Emergency Services in Spain

- In any emergency: call **112**
- Fire Brigade: call **080**
- National Police: call **091**
- Local Police: call **092**
- Health emergencies: call **061**

1.2.2 British Embassy and Consulate

For up-to-date British Embassy and Consulate contact details in Spain please refer to the UK Government's guide on help and services in Spain. Please take note of the address of the British Embassy in Spain 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 Spain.

British Embassy Madrid
Torre Emperador Castellana
Paseo de la Castellana 259D
28046 Madrid

Tel: +34 917 146 300

The British Embassy in Madrid is open by appointment only, but 24/7 support is available by telephone for all routine enquiries and emergencies.

1.3 Life in Spain

If you are keen to do some more research about Spain or your region, check out these sites:

General	News
Rough Guide to Spain Spain's Official Tourism Site	El País El Mundo The Local BBC News - Spain

1.3.1 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. Sign up for email alerts via the FCDO Spain travel advice page and you will be notified any time a major incident occurs, or a key change is made to their guidance. FCDO guidance can directly affect travel insurance.

As mentioned in section 4.2 of this document, ensure you regularly check the Spain travel advice page and are aware of these key sections:

- Safety and security
- Natural disasters
- Sexual assault support
- FCDO advice for women travelling abroad
- FCDO advice for LGBT+ people travelling abroad
- Lost passport recovery

In addition to this, you can review the FCDO advice for Living in Spain and Travelling to Spain.

You can find more details on travel in section 4 of this guidance.

1.4 FCDO Foreign Travel Advice for Spain

As well as the information on the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) webpage about foreign travel advice for Spain, 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
- taking part in unlawful political demonstrations which may result in heavy fines and prison sentences

You are therefore strongly advised not to involve yourself in these activities.

LGBTQ+

The Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Trans, Bisexuales, Intersexuales y más (FELGTBI+) provides resources and information on LGBTQ+ organisations across the whole of Spain.

1.5 The British Council in Spain

Please note: The British Council in Spain is not responsible for the administration of the Language Assistants programme in Spain – this is the role of the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes and the regional authorities of the *comunidades autónomas*. You should not contact British Council Spain regarding the programme.

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

Section 1 Recap



2. Language Assistants Programme Overview

2.1 Key Contacts

2.1.1 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. Their main role is to support you in the lead up to the start of your placement in Spain. Please note the British Council is not the employer of participants of the Language Assistants programme while abroad.

2.1.2 Partner Organisation in Spain

The Spanish Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes) administers the Language Assistants programme on a national level in Spain. They then liaise with the regional educational authorities of the *comunidades autónomas* in Spain who administer the programme on a regional level.

The British Council works closely with the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes (MEFPD) but are not in contact with the regional education authorities; this is the role of the MEFPD. The British Council is also not in contact with individual schools in Spain; this is the role of the regional education authorities or the MEFPD.

Language Assistants in Spain are allocated to either a **Ministry** post or a **comunidad** post. The type of post indicates which organisation in Spain is responsible for your placement within Spain. It is therefore important that you understand whether you belong to the Ministry or *comunidad* group so that you know who to address for information or queries. If you are unsure which kind of post, you have been allocated to, please check the regional allocation email you received from our team.

1. **Ministry posts**

Posts overseen directly by the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes are available throughout all Spanish regions. The MEFPD can be reached directly on auxiliares.conv@educacion.gob.es and also have useful information on their website dedicated to Language Assistants.

2. **Comunidad posts**

Assistants allocated to *comunidad* posts will receive information directly from the educational authorities in their region of Spain. For guidance relating to your *comunidad* post, please reach out to your contact at the local educational authorities

2.1.3 Mentor Teacher

Your host school should identify a mentor teacher or tutor for you, usually a member of staff in the English department. This mentor should provide some pastoral care and support during your time in Spain. Your mentor teacher can become an integral part of your support network in Spain, and you should invest time into building this relationship. Read more on this in section 7.

If a mentor teacher is not identified at the start of your placement, you should try asking for one. Then, if the issue is not resolved within your school, contact the Spanish authorities for support as soon as you can.

Summary of responsibilities

Application **Allocation** **Pre-Departure**	• **Sending organisation: British Council Language Assistants Team** LanguageAssistants.UK@britishcouncil.org • **Responsible for: application and pre-departure processes**
Arrival **Placement**	• **Spanish authorities: MEFPD or *comunidad*** • **Ministry: auxiliares.conv@educacion.gob.es** • **Comunidad: contact details received directly from regional authorities** • **Responsible for: overseeing programme within country, allocating you to a school, in-country inductions, issuing monthly allowance**
In School	• **Support: Mentor teacher** • **Responsible for: in-school support and first contact**

Section 2 Recap

- Understand the role of the British Council and the Spanish authorities
- Establish contact and connect with your mentor teacher

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. As a participant in this programme, you are expected to demonstrate a high level of professionalism and responsibility. 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. Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is a key part of the cultural exchange and an excellent resource which you should draw upon during your lessons.

3.1 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 and passing on your placement preferences. However, generally the British Council has no direct control over choice of town, size of town, school environment, or when information is sent out by each regional authority.

3.2 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.

It may be that the different schools are several miles apart and you must travel between two on the same day, however under no circumstances should an assistant be asked to buy a car just to get to their school(s).

After contacting your school, if you establish that there is no public transport which serves your school, and there are no lifts available to your school, please inform us of the situation. However, please do not contact us without contacting your school first to try and resolve the situation.

3.3 Contacting your school

Once you have received your letter of appointment (*carta de nombramiento*) from the Spanish authorities, you should write to your school(s) to introduce yourself. If you do not receive a reply by mid-September, it is a good idea to call the school(s) by phone to ask about accommodation and give them an idea of your anticipated arrival date.

You can also take the opportunity to ask them for 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. You might also want to enquire about the

dress code and any other general school information.

3.4 Period of Appointment

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Spain will be from **1 November 2026 to 31 May 2027**. Check the details in your own *carta de nombramiento*.

Assistants are expected to have **14 to 16 contact hours a week** depending on the post. These hours refer to contact time in school and do not include the time you spend preparing for lessons.

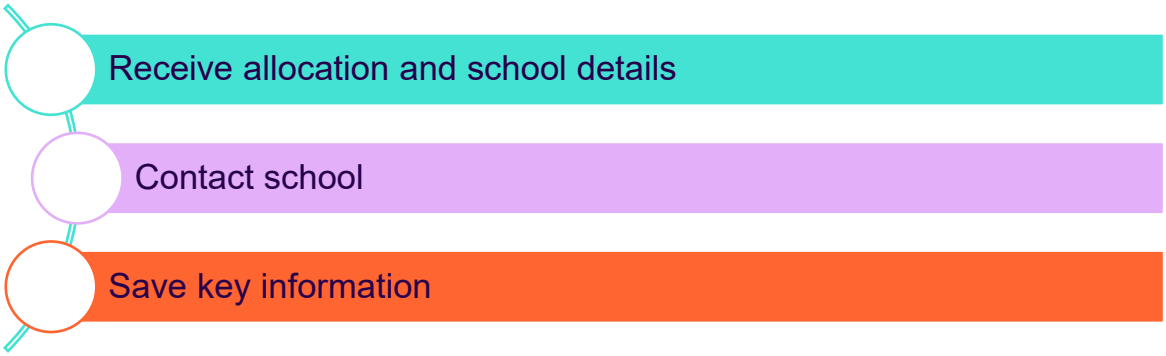
Those who have been appointed to more than one school will be asked to divide their time between the schools concerned. You can request information regarding how your timetable will be arranged from the head of the host school, which is usually the first one mentioned when you are sent details of your posting in the *nombramiento*; however, in many cases this information will not be available until you arrive in Spain.

3.5 Holidays and Sick Leave

Assistants are entitled to the usual school holidays. You should be able to obtain the dates from the school secretary or your mentor teacher. You should not be absent on other occasions without prior permission. Attending an induction course, if available, does not give assistants the right to take leave later.

You must obtain a medical certificate with dates if you are off work for any illness at any time. Please see section 7.3 for more information on absences during your placement. Sick leave processes must strictly be followed to avoid deductions to payment of your monthly allowance.

Section 3 Recap



4. Preparation before you go

4.1 Costs to prepare

You should prepare for the following costs:

- £103 ICPC (International Child Protection Certificate)
- Administrative costs of visa (Overview given in detailed visa guide)
- Travel costs
- Accommodation costs including deposit for rental agreements
- Insurance costs for personal travel and health insurance
- Additional savings to prepare for common monthly allowance payment delays in initial few months (see more in section 9).

4.2 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advice

During a crisis, official advice for British nationals will be published on the Spain 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 Spain 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 the FCDO's advice. When responding to an immediate in-Spain 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 Spain. The guide sets out essential information for British nationals residing in Spain, including advice on health, education, residence requirements, and more. We recommend you read this guide thoroughly.

You can also contact the British Embassy or the relevant representation in Spain for your nationality for advice in event of an emergency (please see section 1.2.1).

4.3 Passports and visas

You must meet the passport requirements for Spain before leaving the UK – please check these requirements here. These may vary depending on the type of passport you will be travelling on.

If you have a non-EU passport, to work in Spain you will be applying for a **long-term study visa (visado de estudios)**. This process requires your own investment of time and money. For further information please see the visa guidance which the British Council UK team have provided to all candidates via email. Information for EU passport holders is also provided although they will not require a visa.

Assistants cover the costs of this visa application, which can include sourcing documentation, attending visa appointments, and paying service fees to the Consulate or visa processing centre. Information on the costs involved is included in the visa guidance.

4.4 Travel to and around Spain

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

We advise against booking fixed travel until you have received your visa 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 as sometimes cheaper airlines have a low baggage allowance.

4.4.1 Travel tips from former assistants:

- Booking train or bus travel in advance online is often cheaper than paying for a ticket on the day of travel / at the station.
- Look into buying a Carné Joven Europeo if you think you will be travelling a lot – you can find out the process and requirements for each Spanish region on the European Youth Card webpage.
- BlaBlaCar is a website which offers car-sharing for people travelling throughout Spain, a great way to affordably see more of the country and practice your Spanish on the way. Please exercise the appropriate caution when travelling or car-sharing with people you do not know.

4.4.2 Taking a car abroad

You will need to research the laws on driving in Spain, including adapting your head lights for driving on the right and any additional requirements regarding driving licenses. The UK Government webpage on driving abroad provides useful information about motoring abroad. It is also worth considering insurance and additional documentation you may require.

4.5 Travel and health insurance

The British Council will not be responsible for you while you are in Spain, although we will offer support when necessary. You should therefore take out a comprehensive travel and health insurance policy to cover you **during your whole time abroad**.

We are unable to advise on specific insurance packages; we recommend you research the various options available and consult professional advice before purchasing a suitable policy. Any insurance you purchase should include cover for emergency treatment and repatriation, and you should ensure that the coverage offered is sufficient for visa application purposes, if applicable. Booking insurance should be carried out **before** any travel.

You may wish to check if you are covered by any existing family policy. It is important to check the small print of any policy.

Personal Accident Travel insurance is recommended to cover medical expenses, air ambulance, repatriation, personal accident & civil liability, luggage & valuable items, and cancellation in extreme cases. These kinds of policies are readily available on price comparison websites, or by using a search engine to search for 'travel insurance'. The UK Government website also offers additional advice on taking out travel insurance.

All assistants should ensure they have a GHIC or EHIC prior to travelling to Spain. However, please be aware that this is not a long-term solution and coverage is very basic.

In order to access public healthcare once in Spain for the duration of the placement, you will have to register at your nearest health centre using your GHIC or EHIC and obtain a Spanish health insurance card to be able register with a GP. You should do this as soon as possible after arriving in Spain, and you can find more information in this regard on the UK Government's webpage on healthcare for UK nationals living in Spain, including a link to find your nearest health clinic or hospital.

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 Spain. 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, based upon the monthly allowance you receive when in Spain.

Please note that the money you receive as a language assistant in Spain is considered a monthly allowance or grant, rather than a salary. This means that you are officially taking part in a **grant-funded mobility programme** rather than formal employment, and you should declare your assistantship as this to Student Finance to avoid complications. The British Council cannot sign third-party declaration forms.

The British Council UK team are not able to advise on Student Finance matters. For all questions relating to student loans please contact the Student Loans Company 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 live abroad. Tell your local Jobcentre Plus or the office that pays your benefit if you are going abroad. If it is a temporary move, tell them when you are coming back. You must also tell HMRC if you are leaving the UK.

Section 4 Recap



5. Health and wellbeing

5.1 Before you go

5.1.1 Planning

In the upcoming weeks before your trip, check the latest Spain-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC). Each Spain-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 is available on the NHS website. You may wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you are abroad.

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

5.1.2 Medication

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in the UK can be different in Spain. If you are 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 will need to contact the Embassy, High Commission, or Consulate of the territory you are travelling to.

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

5.1.3 EHIC / GHIC

The **Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)** allows UK residents to access state healthcare during temporary stays in European Union countries, including Spain. It replaces the EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) for most UK citizens post-Brexit.

When using a GHIC in Spain, you are entitled to healthcare on the same basis as Spanish nationals. This may include free or reduced-cost treatment for **medically necessary care**, such as illness or accidents.

However, the GHIC is not designed for long-term placements like the Language Assistants programme. It does not cover routine or private healthcare, ongoing treatment, or costs such as repatriation, travel disruption, or lost belongings.

For this reason, it is **strongly recommended** that you take out comprehensive travel and health insurance alongside your GHIC. This should include private medical cover, repatriation, dental care, and protection for travel and personal belongings.

You can find out more online about the free UK Global Health Insurance Card from the NHS.

5.2 Once in Spain

5.2.1 Accessing medical care

If you require medical assistance, you should go to your local health centre in Spain. It is likely that registration will be required, so it is a good idea to register with a local doctor soon after you arrive in Spain to avoid having to go through this process when you are ill.

Health centres in Spain will have different processes and requirements when registering new patients, however it is likely that you will need to provide key documentation such as your passport, *nombramiento*, rental contract, and GHIC / EHIC (if applicable). If your medicine is available from suppliers in Spain, doctors may first want to conduct their own diagnosis before repeating a prescription issued elsewhere.
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 consider advising staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

If you require urgent medical assistance, you should go to the emergency room of a public hospital or dial the emergency services on **061** or **112.**

Please see the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website for more information regarding healthcare in Spain. More information can be found on the FCDO's page on healthcare for UK nationals in Spain.

5.2.2 Apply for a *Certificado de Delitos de Naturaleza Sexual*

The Certificado de Delitos de Naturaleza Sexual confirms whether a person has any convictions related to sexual offences. **It is a mandatory document for anyone working or volunteering with children or young people in Spain**, including those placed in schools, NGOs, and summer camps. We advise that you check with your host institution whether they require this from you.

You can apply online, in person at a local office in Spain, or by post if you are abroad. The online process is usually the fastest, with certificates typically available for download immediately in PDF format.

You can apply in person or by post with a completed Modelo de Solicitud form and a valid passport. Details of the in-person application process are available on the Ministry of Justice website: In-person application for a Certificate of Sexual Offenses.

Alternatively, guidance on the online application process is available on the Ministry of Justice website: Application for a Certificate of Sexual Offenses for Individuals. However, please note that online applications can only be submitted with a valid **Cl@ve account**.

The certificate is **free of charge**, valid **only in Spain**, and typically considered valid for **up to 3 months**, depending on the organisation requesting it. Some employers may ask for a more recent copy if the certificate was issued some time ago.

5.2.3 Additional healthcare coverage

Some of the Spanish authorities offer their Language Assistants additional healthcare coverage provided by a private insurance company. If this is the case, details of this policy should be included on your *nombramiento*.

Even if the Spanish authorities do provide you with healthcare coverage for the duration of your post, it is important that you understand the terms and conditions of this policy. The coverage offered can vary between Spanish authorities, but generally includes access to healthcare in the event of an unexpected injury or illness during the period of your assistantship.

This coverage is, however, likely to not cover you for any pre-existing medical conditions and may also not be valid if you decide to remain in Spain after the end of your placement or if you visit another country during your placement. If you require more information about the coverage offered, you should enquire about this directly with the relevant Spanish authorities.

We would recommend that all assistants look into securing their own private travel and health insurance policy which covers medical expenses and repatriation, and which is appropriate to their own individual circumstances.

5.3 Mental health

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Read this information even if you are not currently living with or experiencing mental health problems.

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. We discuss this in our podcast which suggests useful ways to manage your wellbeing while abroad.

It is also important to remember that culture shock affects everyone. There is no shame in admitting that you are having a difficult time. 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. Be sure to also keep up to date with your family and friends back home.

Please see the links below for more guidance on looking after your mental health while travelling abroad:

- The UK Government website provides information on travel and mental health, including what the FCDO can do to assist British nationals with mental health needs abroad.
- NHS Scotland also provides useful tips and resources for looking after your mental health while travelling.
- The NHS website lists a couple of helplines that can offer expert advice to people with different mental health needs.

- Mind has some useful tips for looking after your mental health, including contacts for support services you can reach out to via email, text, or phone.
- From Spain, you can also call Samaritans in Spain to talk with an English-speaking volunteer about how you are feeling. You can speak with them in confidence.

Section 5 Recap



6. Outside of school: Arrival and settling in

6.1 Registering your residency – TIE/NIE

We have provided detailed information on this in separate guidance. Please back to previous correspondence from us or revisit the full information pack.

6.2 General Advice

The British Council is not able to help you find accommodation. Equally, your school(s) are not obliged to provide or find you accommodation, but they may be able to offer you 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 on-site accommodation, you will have to abide by the school's rules.

Accommodation Type	Useful Links	
Temporary accommodation	Hostel World Airbnb	Booking.com HI Hostels
Long-term accommodation	Idealista Piso Compartido Fotocasa	Mil Anuncios En Alquiler Pisos.com

6.2.1 Before you arrive

It is advisable to book temporary accommodation before you arrive. Staying in a local hostel or Airbnb will give you the opportunity to get to know the area and go to apartment viewings before arranging permanent accommodation.

You can ask your mentor teacher for advice on where to find accommodation. They may know a local family with a room to rent, or already have somewhere in mind for you to stay. If your school cannot help, there are some popular websites where rooms and flats are advertised (some of which are included in the table above). Use British Council Buddy Maps to reach out to other English Language Assistants located in your area for accommodation advice or to look for flatmates.

Consider going to your teaching location to arrange accommodation before starting your placement. Past assistants have emphasised the need to look for accommodation as early as

possible. The first weeks of your assistantship will be busy as you will be finding your way around an unfamiliar town, dealing with bureaucracy, and trying to make a good impression at school.

Do not take out a contract on your accommodation until you know the **specific location** of your school(s).

We recommend against signing a rental contract before you arrive – scams are sophisticated, and it is best to meet potential flatmates and landlords in person. It is also good to check you are comfortable in the area and the accommodation is as expected before committing money. Do not sign anything you are not comfortable with and ask a local Spanish speaker for help if you need it. Before departure you can still organise viewing appointments and research accommodation options so that you know where to start your search when you arrive.

6.2.2 Entry/Exit System (EES)

Since 2026, the EU's **Entry/Exit System (EES)** has introduced a digital system that records the entry, exit, and length of stay of non-EU travellers, including UK participants in Spain. The system enforces visa rules, automatically tracking time in the Schengen Area. Overstaying is flagged automatically and may result in entry bans of 1-3 years, so it is essential to stay within your permitted time.

If you travel with a non-EU passport, you must enter Spain with a valid visa and apply for your TIE (residence card) within 90 days. Travelling without a TIE, especially when your visa is close to expiring, can lead to problems re-entering Spain**,** even if you have proof of application (resguardo).

You can find more information on the EES System website.

6.2.3 When you arrive in Spain

You should be prepared to spend roughly at least a week looking for accommodation when you arrive. For this reason, you may wish to pre-book a hostel or hotel before you arrive. Some previous assistants recommend going out to your region a week earlier to find accommodation, get settled, and sort out any necessary administrative tasks (visa dependent!)

Once you get to Spain, the following suggestions may be helpful when looking for accommodation:

- Advertise on the school/staff notice board and ask other teachers.
- Search for a room or flat online via Spanish sites or social media groups, exercising caution while doing so.
- Call any local university halls of residence or check their flat share adverts and notices, or advertise on their notice board that you are looking for a room.
- Ask local friends' or acquaintances' landlords if they have any further accommodation to let.
- Accommodation agencies may be able to help but you should **be very wary** of paying large fees and deposits, and always read the small print on any leases or agreements to be signed; look for small agencies as often their fees are lower.

- When viewing a property, tell the homeowner that you need to be *empadronado/a*, as this affects which properties you will be able to rent.
- If you do not live in the same town/city as your institution, consider living near public transport locations.

6.2.4 Signing a rental contract

If you are living in a large town or city, you are likely to have to sign a contract. If you are in a smaller town, landlords may not bother with contracts, however we recommend that you ask for one.

Before signing a contract, bear in mind the following points:

- Always read the terms and conditions of your rental contract carefully and enquire about additional fees such as agency charges.
- Landlords may ask for one month's rent as a deposit, as well as one month's rent paid in advance. Getting a guarantor can be difficult as a foreigner.
- Get all agreements in writing and obtain receipts for any transaction, keeping them secure.
- Check your tenancy notice requirements. If you have lived in the property for more than six months, you may be able to give one month's notice. Notice may need to be provided in writing. Fixed-term tenancies may have different notice requirements, so check your tenancy agreement carefully.
- Enquire about the possibility of including a 'diplomatic clause' in the rental agreement to allow for a shorter notice period in case of early termination of your placement.
- 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.

6.2.5 At the end of your placement

We recommend that you take photos of your room and the flat when you move into your long-term accommodation and when you leave. This will help you get back any deposit you may have to pay, which is usually dependent on the accommodation being in the same condition as when you first arrived.

When you leave your accommodation, remember to also cancel any personal contracts like internet or utilities. You will also need to de-register yourself from the local *padrón* residency list.

6.3 Bank accounts

You must open a Spanish bank account as soon as possible after arriving in Spain. Your mentor teacher may help you do this, and more information can be found below in section 9.1.

Section 6 Recap



7. In school: arrival, settling in and support

7.1 Induction

Induction events are organised by the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes or the local educational authorities in each *comunidad autónoma*. The induction you are invited to will depend on whether you are allocated to a Ministry post or a *comunidad* post. Some inductions may be held in a virtual format.

Please follow any information you receive from the MEFPD or *comunidad autónoma* about your induction session, including their instructions on how to confirm your attendance. Please do not confirm your attendance with the British Council as we are not involved in the organisation of the Spanish authorities' induction events and cannot advise on any aspect of these events.

You are strongly advised to attend the induction event as you will receive essential information about your assistantship, and it will also be an opportunity to meet other Language Assistants in your area. If you choose not to attend the induction, you should inform the relevant contact at the Ministry or *comunidad* so that arrangements can be made for any important documents to be sent to you.

7.2 Observation period

When you first arrive at your school(s) you can ask for a period of observation of 1 to 2 weeks if you would like, although this is not guaranteed. 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. Remember – it is not good practice to correct another teacher in front of students.

Your observation period 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 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 is completely normal to be unsure of where to go, what to do or who to talk to at the beginning.

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.

Assistants 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.

Please note – some ELAs may be asked to teach and partake in classes other than English as part of an EU teaching framework known as Content and language integrated learning (CLIL). This is normal and you do not have to be an expert in these areas.

7.3 Absence from school

Please remember that you will be considered 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) immediately.

You will likely be asked to provide a letter from a doctor to justify your sick leave. This should cover the entire duration of the absence and must be sent to the school and, if applicable, Spanish authorities as soon as it is issued.

Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to the MEFPD or *comunidad* 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 their right to refuse them. You should ensure any permission of absence is provided in writing as evidence.

If it becomes necessary to withdraw from your post, you must give sufficient prior notice in writing of your intended departure to the school, MEFPD or *comunidad*, and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full.

7.3.1 Pay deductions

If you are absent from school without prior written authorisation, or without providing doctor's evidence for your illness, a financial penalty could be deducted from your monthly allowance. Deductions are usually calculated via a daily rate from the first day of your absence until your return to school. In some cases, these deductions may also span weekends or holidays during your period of absence.

In most circumstances, the British Council is unable to intervene in matters of pay deductions due to unauthorised absence. Assistants must make themselves aware of and comply with their own school's policy – these policies are often strictly applied and teachers will expect you to follow the same procedures as they do. Please be aware that your school may have a different policy to that of other assistants working in the same region, however you should refer to the Guía del Auxiliar from the MEFPD for the standard programme rules in this regard.

7.4 Social media

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are a Language Assistant in Spain. 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 placement.

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 online communication involving students both inside and outside school. However, ultimately, we strongly advise that you do not interact with students in any way via personal accounts.

It is exceptionally important that you understand issues around child protection, both to protect the students and to protect yourself from any damaging and potentially serious accusations.

Please familiarise yourself with the safeguarding code of conduct before departure and complete the safeguarding module that will be provided in an online Teaching English Course.

7.5 Building support networks

Even if you have been to Spain before, it is possible that you will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. Give yourself some time to adjust – in the beginning, you will have a lot of administrative matters to deal with.

7.5.1 Getting to know the locals / other assistants

On arrival, the thought of making friends and meeting 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.

Former assistants have recommended that you do not spend all your free time with other programme participants, as you will not be able to integrate into your community and life in Spain. On the other hand, do not 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. Do not forget that there might be language assistants from other countries in your area too.

If you have a hobby or passion that you pursue in the UK, see if you can pursue it in Spain too, as this can be a fantastic way to build your support network.

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
- Join the local Erasmus society through the ESN network
- Enquire about joining the local university and attending lectures
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you could not join in the UK
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc.

7.5.2 Getting to know your colleagues at school

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

Here are some tips for setting into school life and getting to know your new colleagues:

- 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 attend. Be proactive instead of waiting to be approached.
- Ask if you can get involved in activities organised by the school, such as after-school clubs, sports events, theatre/music productions, and open days.
- If you hear about something happening which interests you, ask if you can become involved. Do not wait to be invited as people may assume that you are not interested.
- Some colleagues might want to practice their English with you, which is a great way to integrate yourself into the wider school community. Socialising with colleagues is also a good opportunity to improve and practice your Spanish; however, keep in mind that some schools will ask you to speak only English around your students.

7.5.3 Rural posts

It should be noted that a lot of the posts in Spain are in rural areas. Past assistants posted to rural areas have had very positive experiences as they have been able to see “real Spain”.

Sometimes assistants posted to rural locations find that 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 Spanish culture and language.

Often assistants in rural postings comment that they receive much more support from their school which can help with settling into life in Spain.

7.6 Concerns and Queries: Who to contact?

Conditions in schools in Spain differ from those in the UK. We have a 'who to contact' guide to assist you with who to ask if you have a query or concern regarding your placement. This guide is included with your summer information pack, and you can consult it for help with who to contact if you have a query or an issue.

A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in Spain 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 Spanish language and culture and gain valuable 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. Moving abroad is challenging.

When you are feeling anxious or alone, it can be useful to know that there are confidential, free-of-charge services available to lend a listening ear. To talk to an English-speaking volunteer, you can call Samaritans in Spain on **900 525 100**. Please also see the other mental health resources listed in section 5.2.3.

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

Section 7 Recap

- Understand your school's policy for absence and sickness
- Make social media accounts private & read safeguarding code of conduct
- Get involved in school life - clubs, societies, staff room
- Familiarise yourself with the 'who to contact' guidance

8. Language learning and studies

Although there is no Spanish-language requirement for taking part in the programme, it is certainly a good idea to learn at least some basic Spanish before starting your placement. This will make it easier to complete the necessary administrative tasks and other day-to-day activities when you first arrive in Spain. If you are new to the Spanish language, make sure you put in the time now to begin your language learning journey and perhaps research how you will support your language learning whilst in Spain.

8.1 Resources for language learning

Memrise – Spaced repetition of flashcards to increase the speed of learning.

Duolingo – 'Trees' tailored to your target language. Exercises include written translation, reading and speaking comprehension, and short stories.

SpanishDict – A translation app with a 'word of the day' feature. Also includes vocabulary lists for certain occasions/locations, such as restaurants, and for specific categories of vocab, and interactive grammar lessons.

Lessons – Some universities and further/higher education colleges may offer short, non-specialist language courses, for students and non-students, for a fee. There may also be language schools in your area.

iTalki – Connects language learners and native speakers through one-on-one video chat. There is a small fee per video lesson.

Podcasts – There are several podcasts which can facilitate Spanish learning. These include: SpanishPod101, Coffee Break Spanish, News in Slow Spanish, and Duolingo's podcast.

Netflix – Try watching some Spanish shows in the original Spanish audio with English subtitles. Popular choices include Élite, Money Heist, and The Innocent.

Music – Listening to Spanish music can aid listening skills. You can find up-to-date Spanish chart music on Spotify.

YouTube – Easy Spanish has numerous informal videos to help you learn Spanish. Each video is less than 10 minutes, so can easily be fit into a busy schedule. There are several other free Spanish lessons that can be found on YouTube.

WordReference – A reputable online vocabulary tool.

Diccionario de la lengua española – Available as a smartphone app, this is the Spanish equivalent of the Oxford English Dictionary, created and updated by the Real Academia Española. This provides definitions of words in Spanish, so it is, perhaps, for more advanced speakers.

Language Exchanges – Research if there are language exchange meetings (sometimes called *intercambios*) local to you. These are great opportunities to socialise with native speakers and

swap language skills.

9. Money Matters

9.1 Bank Account

It is essential that you **open a bank account soon after arriving in Spain** in order to receive your monthly allowance from the Spanish authorities. The Spanish authorities are likely to set a deadline for you to submit your bank details to them (usually around mid-October, but this can vary). **Your initial monthly pay may be delayed** if you miss this deadline, so be sure to follow closely any instructions received from the authorities. Things to consider:

Check with local banks to find out what kind of documents will be required.

You are likely to need photocopies of all important documents such as passport, *carta de nombramiento*, visa, proof of your current address in Spain (temporary booking or otherwise), passport. You will need to ensure that you have received your NIE before you are able to open a Spanish bank account.

Choosing between an online and traditional bank

The most popular high street banks will vary region to region – banks such as Sabadell and Santander have been recommended by former assistants (not an endorsement). Online banking may be an option too, however you will need a **Spanish IBAN.** We are aware that N26 (online bank) have been commonly used by Language Assistants since they provide a Spanish IBAN and online customer support in English (not an endorsement of them or their services). Some online bank options are not suitable, we believe this is because they do not provide a Spanish IBAN.

Things to consider when opening a bank account:

- When opening an account, you should specify that you are taking part in an educational programme through which you receive a monthly stipend / grant – this will help to avoid commission charges.
- Check with local banks in advance to find out what kind of documents will be required – you are likely to need photocopies and originals of all important documents (e.g. passport, *nombramiento*, visa, rental contract, NIE).

9.2 Tax

As you are paid a stipend, you will not pay Spanish income tax on the money you receive as a Language Assistant. You may be taxed for any additional jobs you take on in Spain and should check how much you can earn per year without having to pay taxes.

Our team cannot assist you in this area for data protection reasons. We are not trained in tax and therefore cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax payments. Enquiries regarding UK income tax should be addressed to a local tax inspector –

please check with HM Revenue & Customs for information about who to contact.

9.3 Monthly allowance

Important note: During your time as a language assistant, you will be paid directly by the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes or the regional authorities in each *comunidad autónoma*, as they are responsible for the management of your placement during the year. The British Council do not administrate payments – the monthly allowance you receive is a grant from the Spanish government. Any issues or queries surrounding pay are therefore best resolved by getting in direct contact with the relevant party within Spain in the first instance.

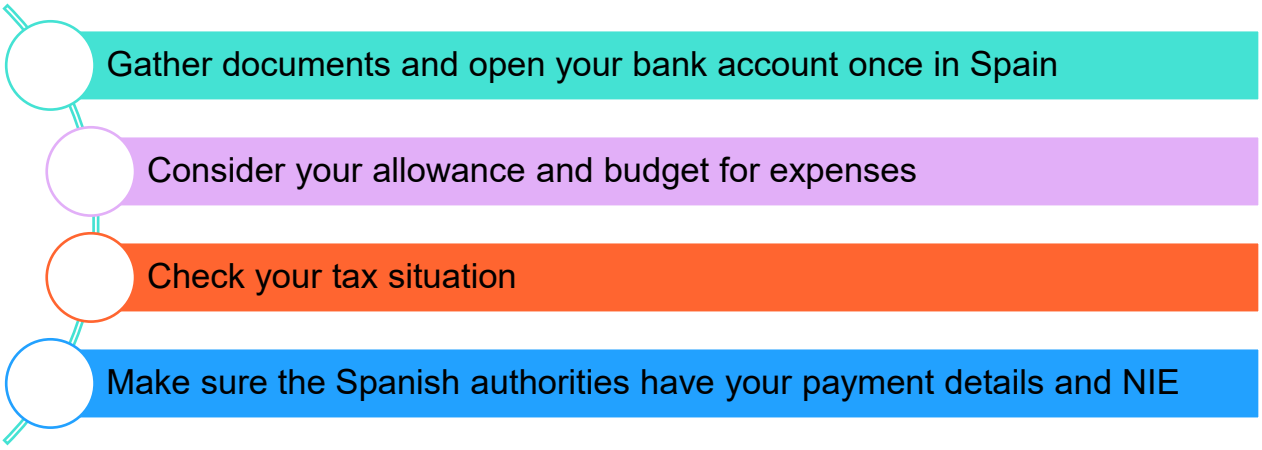
You will receive a monthly allowance (*ayuda mensual*) of between 800€ and 1000€. **The first payment of your allowance is likely to be delayed due to the initial administration on the Spanish side in getting all Language Assistants registered on their payment system**, so you should ensure that you take enough money to cover initial costs, budgeting for two to three months before receiving the first payment of the monthly allowance as a worst-case scenario.

The beginning of the placement is likely to be expensive as you will have to put down a deposit on accommodation and invest in things like mobile phone contracts, bus passes, etc., so you should take this into account when budgeting for the first months of the placement.

As noted above, you will need to open a Spanish bank account and obtain a NIE for the MEFPD or *comunidad* to be able to issue your monthly allowance. The Spanish authorities will set you up on their payment system once you arrive in Spain and it is very important that you follow all instructions received from them regarding any deadlines and forms you need to fill in.

It is also useful to have access to your UK bank account throughout the year in case there are delays to the allowance payment. Make sure you inform your bank before leaving the UK that you may use it in Spain so that they do not block your card. Be aware that you are often charged for using your UK debit card to withdraw money abroad. You may wish to check what your bank charges are.

Section 9 Recap



10. End of your placement

10.1 Administrative matters

10.1.1 Bank

Make sure you do not close your Spanish bank account until you have received the final instalment of the monthly allowance. You are advised to keep your account open for a month or so after the placement has ended to ensure that all outstanding payments have been received.

Please do 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.

10.1.2 Accommodation

Please make sure that you leave a good impression with the homeowner – a future assistant may be depending on this:

- Leave a forwarding address with the homeowner 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 homeowner 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 later. Alternatively, you may wish to take photos of your accommodation before leaving to document how it was left.

10.1.3 Reference

You should liaise with your host school to ask for a reference before leaving at the end of your placement:

- This will be invaluable as an official record of your assistantship and for any future applications to be a Language Assistant. This should ideally be on school letterheaded paper, stamped or signed, and should comment on your performance as an assistant.
- Please note that as the British Council is not the employer, we are unable to provide references for Language Assistants. We can only provide a certificate certifying dates of participation, upon request.

10.1.4 De-register from the *padrón*

You should have registered on the *padrón* at your local town hall soon after arrival (guidance provided separately). If you decide to leave Spain, you should de-register by requesting '*Baja por residencia'*. Please refer to your local town for further information regarding de-registering procedures.

10.2 Staying a consecutive year

British Council English Language Assistants who are currently in Spain in 2026-27 and wish to apply to stay at the same school, to a different school in the same region or to a different region of Spain for the 2027-28 academic year must apply for a consecutive year through the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, not the British Council. You will receive information from the relevant authorities directly in due course.

Some Spanish regions have limits on how many years you can participate in the Language Assistants programme in their region. All applicants who have previously completed a year in Spain must double-check their eligibility to apply to their chosen region of Spain by consulting the authorities in their region of choice.

If you want to renew your post in your current region / school, you must keep an eye out for communications direct from the local authorities in your region. Some regions may also ask you to submit additional information to them directly to renew your post. For further information on the renewal processes in your chosen region, you should contact the local authorities directly.

It is your responsibility to check that you are eligible to renew in your chosen region of Spain before submitting your application to the Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, and the final decision on placements within Spain lies with the relevant Spanish authorities. Non-compliance with their requirements could result in the rejection of your application and the Spanish authorities reserve the right to reject any applicants later in the year who have not met their eligibility requirements.

10.3 Ambassadors

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 which will be sent towards the end of your assistantship

10.4 Getting into Teaching

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

- England: Get Into Teaching
- Wales: Educators Wales
- Scotland: Teach in Scotland
- Northern Ireland: General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI)