BRITISH COUNCIL

Language Assistants Programme

2026-27

ELA in Switzerland: The Guide

July 2026

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How to use this guide

Section 1 provides an overview of Switzerland and key Switzerland 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 Switzerland

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

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 Swiss partners and the Swiss authorities.

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

Date checked: 21/07/2026

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Switzerland Overview

1. Spotlight on Switzerland

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 Switzerland through the British Council and our partners, Movetia. This year, you will be part of the 120th cohort of Language Assistants!

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

1.1. Emergency Contacts

1.1.1. Emergency services in Switzerland

- In any emergency: **112**
- Medical Assistance: **144**
- Fire Brigade: **118**
- Police: **117**
- Helicopter Rescue: **1414**
- 'Helping Hand' counselling helpline **143**

1.1.2. British Embassy

For up-to-date British Embassy and consulate contact details in Switzerland please refer to the website of the British Embassy in Berne.

Please note the contact details of the British Embassy in Bern below in case of an emergency or loss of passport. Assistants who do not hold British citizenship should check with their own Consulates/Embassies in Switzerland.

British Embassy

- Address: Thunstrasse 50, 3005 Berne, Switzerland
- Telephone:
  - In Switzerland: +41 (0)31 359 7700
  - In the UK: +44 (0) 20 7008 5000

Access to the Embassy is by appointment only. Call +41 (0)31 359 77 00 and follow the prompt for consular assistance.

1.2. Life in Switzerland

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

General	News
Swiss Canton Information	Swiss Info
Public Holidays Calendar	BBC's Switzerland Profile
Rough Guide Switzerland	
Lonely Planet Switzerland	

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 in section 3.1 of this document, ensure you regularly check the Switzerland travel advice page and are aware of these key sections:

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

You can find more details on travel in section 4.4 Travel to and around Switzerland.

1.3. Local laws and customs

As well as the information on the gov.uk site for Swiss laws and customs, make sure you are aware of the following:

1.3.1. Laws

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

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

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

1.3.2. Internet and Phone

- The country code for Switzerland is +41. When phoning Switzerland from abroad the first 0 of the standard number must be omitted (as when dialling an area code in the UK from abroad).
- To phone abroad from Switzerland the code is 00 followed by the Switzerland country code.
- Assistants often recommend getting a pay as you go mobile rather than one on contract.
- To avoid internet contracts, you may want to explore other options of internet access such as dongles.
- Be aware that calls to the UK from a mobile can be expensive. Previous assistants have recommended using Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook messenger as alternatives.

1.4. The British Council in Switzerland

Please note: The British Council in Switzerland is not responsible for the administration of the Language Assistant programme in Switzerland - this is the role of Movetia.

However, we encourage you to sign up for their Switzerland newsletter to keep up to date with British Council activities which may interest you.

Section 1 Recap



2. 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. You can follow us on Twitter to keep up to date with the programme.

Please note the British Council is ***not*** the employer of English Language Assistants.

2.2. Overseas Partner Organisation

Movetia administers the Language Assistants Programme in Switzerland. They liaise with the Cantons and host institutions in Switzerland on the British Council's behalf. They will contact you throughout the year regarding your placement and other opportunities. The programme team are active on social media and you can find them on Facebook, and Twitter.

2.3. Host Institution

Once the British Council have allocated you to Switzerland, Movetia will then allocate you to canton, and the canton will allocate you to your host institutions. Host institutions or in some cases, the cantonal authorities are responsible for your contract. Each region differs as to when they organise appointments and send out information. The host institutions/cantonal authorities are your employers during your assistantship and any employment issues should be dealt with through them.

2.4. Mentor Teacher

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

If a mentor teacher is not identified at the start of your placement, you should try asking the host institution for one and then contact the Movetia for support as soon as you can if this does not happen.

Application, Allocation and Pre-Departure	**Sending Organisation: British Council** **Leah Coffey**, Consultant **Tamsin Hunt**, Assistant Consultant LanguageAssistants.UK@BritishCouncil.org Responsible for: Application and pre-departure processes
Arrival and Asssistantship	**Partner Organisation: Movetia** **Edith Funicello**, Project Coordinator Edith.Funicello@movetia.ch Responsible for: Canton liaison and Swiss administration
Assistantship in school	**Employer: Host Institution/Cantonal Authority** Responsible for: Administration and HR **Support: Mentor Teacher** Responsible for: In-school support and first contact

Section 2 Recap

- Understand role of the British Council, Movetia, the Cantons and your allocated school
- Establish 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. 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: Responsibilities of 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

The British Council is involved in allocating assistants to either French-speaking or German-speaking Switzerland but has no control over choice of town, size of town, environment or when information is sent out. Our Swiss partners will send you further information by the beginning of July at the latest.

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

3.2. Period of Appointment

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Switzerland varies depending on the host institutions(s) you will be working in. You must confirm your start and end dates with your host institution directly. Assistants are expected to work a minimum of 12 hours and a maximum of 18 hours per week. Those who have been appointed to more than one institution will be asked to divide their time between the institutions concerned. You can request information regarding how your timetable will be arranged from the head of the host institution. The institution which initiates contact with you initially is usually your lead institution.

3.3. Holidays and Sick Leave

Assistants are entitled to the usual host institution holidays, details of which you can get from your host institution. 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.

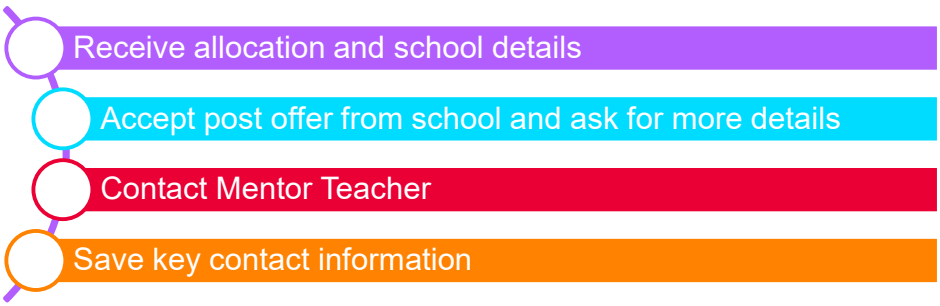
If you cannot work because of illness, you must inform your host institution immediately. You may be asked to provide a letter from a doctor. This letter should cover the entire duration of the absence and must be sent to the host institution and, if applicable, local authority as soon as it is issued. Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to Movetia and to the British Council.

Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the host institution, who is within their right to refuse it. You are reminded that if you are absent from host institution 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 host institution, Movetia and the British Council setting out your reasons in full.

3.4. Allocation

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

Section 3 Recap



Preparation before you go

4. Read before you go

4.1. Costs to prepare

You should prepare for the following costs:

- International Child Protection Certificate: £103
- Administrative costs:
  - Work and residence permit application (if applicable): CHF 100-400
  - Registration in Switzerland: CHF 100-170
- Travel costs
- Accommodation costs
- Insurance costs
- Initial costs: CHF 2500+

Read more in section 8. 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 Switzerland 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-Switzerland 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 Switzerland. The guide sets out essential information for British nationals residing there, including advice on health, education, 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 Switzerland before leaving the UK and must check these. 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 on the GOV.UK website Get a Passport.

4.4. Travel to and around Switzerland

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

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

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

The most widely used travel sites are:

Flights	Train
Skyscanner British Airways EasyJet TUI Opodo Expedia Ryanair	Swissinfo.ch: Public Transport in Switzerland SBB: Swiss Trains

Former Assistant recommendations:

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

4.4.1. Taking a car abroad

You will need to research the laws on driving in Switzerland, including adapting your head lights for driving on the right and driving licenses. This website provides useful information about

motoring abroad on the GOV.UK website Driving abroad. It's also worth considering insurance and additional documentation you may require.

4.5. Travel insurance

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

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

Personal Accident Travel insurance is 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.

4.6. Graduates with student loans

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



5. Health and wellbeing

5.1. Before you go

5.1.1. Planning

Before your trip, check the latest Switzerland-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) on the TravelHealthPro website. The Switzerland-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.

5.1.2. Medication

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

If you're on prescription medication, make sure you either bring enough with you or have access to a supply once in Switzerland. Certain medicines may not be available in Switzerland (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 Embassy of Switzerland before travelling.

5.1.3. EHIC/GHIC

In Switzerland, the EHIC/GHIC is only valid if you are visiting Switzerland for a short period as a tourist. Once you receive your residence permit, therefore, your EHIC/GHIC will no longer be valid. Please find further information here: Medical treatment in Switzerland | Gemeinsame Einrichtung KVG.

Due to the complexities surrounding the EHIC in Switzerland, we recommend taking out full comprehensive cover for the entirety of your stay.

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

5.2. In Switzerland

Please see the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website for more information regarding healthcare in Switzerland.

5.2.1. Medication

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

5.2.2. Swiss medical services

Please read carefully the FCDO advice on healthcare in Switzerland.

The Expatica website The healthcare system in Switzerland may also contain useful advice.

5.2.3. Health Insurance

By law, all assistants in Switzerland must have health insurance during their period of appointment which they need to arrange within the first 30 days of their arrival.

You have the freedom to choose the provider you want, provided they are approved by the Office of Public Health. A full list of health insurers is available on the Swiss Federal website Prämienrechner. Your employer (i.e., the host institution(s)) will not arrange this insurance for you and ***it is the assistant's responsibility to organise this within the time frame***. We recommend you start looking at purchasing insurance as soon as possible after your arrival.

You will be required to pay the insurance premiums as per the health insurance company's terms and conditions. Depending on the policy you opt for, the cost will vary.

Compulsory health insurance will cover the diagnosis and treatment of a sickness (examinations, treatment, and outpatient and inpatient medical care), medication and apparatus, and transport and rescue costs. You should check your insurance policy for full details on what is covered.

The health insurance cover provided to you starts on your policy start date and will end at an agreed time.

Exemptions

If you are insured privately in your home country, you may be exempt from taking on additional insurance in Switzerland. Please refer to the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health's website for more information.

5.2.4. Visiting a Doctor/Hospital

Depending on your insurance policy, you will be able to access certain healthcare through general practitioners and/or specialists. The compulsory Swiss health insurance may however exclude access to certain specialists and/or private clinics depending on where you live in Switzerland so it's always good to check where you can access care in your area well in advance. Your insurance provider and your colleagues should be able to point you in the right direction.

The services covered by compulsory health care include:

- The diagnosis and treatment of a sickness and its consequences – examinations, treatment and outpatient/inpatient care.
- Medication, analyses, aids and instruments used in examination or treatment, including prescribed hydro-therapy treatments and medical rehabilitation measures.
- Transport and rescue costs (these costs can vary, however, as a guide, contribution of 50% may be required, to a total of CHF 500 for transport costs and CHF 5000 for rescue costs per year).
- Certain examinations considered preventative medicine (e.g., gynecological examinations) – see your policy for more information.
- Maternity services

Please bring details of your insurance cover with you whenever you see a doctor for any reason, or you need to go to the hospital.

Please be aware that if you do fall ill or are injured, you'll need to consider the excess and share of costs you may be required to pay in addition to the monthly/yearly premiums for your health insurance plan. Depending on your insurance policy, the ordinary excess may be around CHF 300 per year. Share of costs are often 10% of the costs incurred above the excess of up to a maximum of CHF 700, however, these amounts may vary from year to year.

If you need to stay in hospital for any amount of time, you may be asked for a contribution to the hospital bill. This is generally around CHF 15 per day; however, these rates vary year on year.

Please note***, all of the above information is liable to change at any time so please do check with your insurer about exact costs if you do need to access healthcare in Switzerland***.

5.2.5. Accident Insurance

All workers in Switzerland receive accident insurance upon your first day of employment so you will be covered for accidents from the first day of your contract.

Compulsory accident insurance is provided by the Swiss Accident Insurance Fund (Suva) or by another approved insurer.

5.3. 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.

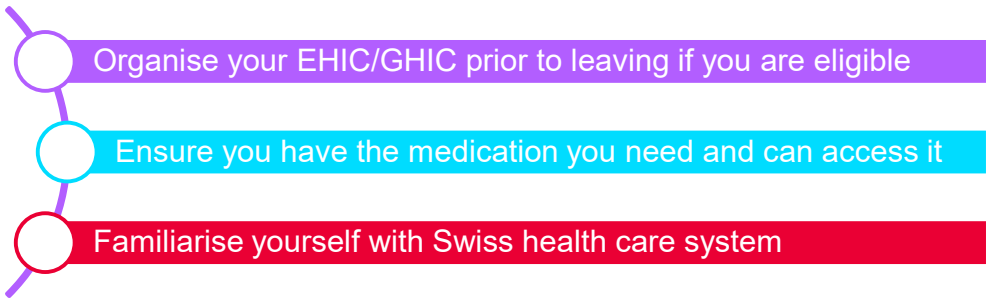
It is important to remember that culture shock affects everyone. There is no shame in admitting that you are having a difficult time. If you do feel homesick or frustrated, please talk to your fellow assistants on the programme as they will understand how you are feeling better than anyone else. Also,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

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

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

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

Section 5 Recap



In Switzerland

6. Outside of the classroom: arrival and settling in

6.1. Registration

All assistants must register in person with the municipal authorities where they live before they start working and within 14 days of their arrival to Switzerland. For full information, including locations of municipal registration offices, please visit the government's website Notification of departure and registration regarding registration.

You will need to apply for a residence permit which is a requirement of anyone working in the country for more than 3 months (if you are a UK-passport holder, you are required to apply before moving to Switzerland and guidance on the process will be provided by Movetia). You should do this at your local municipal authority. You will get more information about this from Movetia, your mentor teacher and at the induction.

Proof of address will generally be required. This can be an address for temporary accommodation if you have not yet arranged more long-term accommodation. Once you move into your long-term accommodation you must change your address with the same authorities.

When registering, you must bring with you the following:

- Your passport
- Confirmation of appointment letter/contract from your host institution
- Proof that you are covered by basic health insurance
- Proof of address, or rental agreement from your landlord (once long-term accommodation has been found)
- A completed registration form
- A passport photo
- Registration fee (see below)

For any assistants who are travelling with their partner/spouse/children, they must bring additional documents relevant to your family members, e.g., marriage certificate, birth certificates, etc. Your family members must be registered at the same time.

You will be liable to pay a fee of around CHF 100-170 upon registration. Fees can vary so please check with your municipality/canton what the exact amount will be.

Please note: if you change your municipality/*commune*/*Gemeinde* of residence during your time in Switzerland, you must de-register with the municipal authorities in the municipality you are moving from and register with your new municipality. It is not enough to simply register in the new municipality – you must de-register from your former municipality of residence too. This must be done within 14 days of your move and additional fees must be paid.

De-registration: When you are due to leave Switzerland, you must also de-register with the municipal authorities by completing a de-registration form a few days/weeks in advance. At that time, you will relinquish your residence permit and you may have to pay a fee.

6.2. Accommodation

6.2.1. General Advice



Accommodation Type	Useful links
Temporary accommodation:	Hostelworld AirBnB
Permanent accommodation:	Homegate Immostreet Immowelt Flatfox

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

- Your confirmation of appointment/your work contract
- Proof of your salary (which you should be able to get from your school)
- Your passport or ID
- Work and residence permit (if applicable)

6.2.2. Before Signing an Agreement

- Always ask about additional fees such as Agency charges
- A letting agency may also ask you to apply for a 'statement of absence of debt' which proves you have not been chased by debt collectors in Switzerland. You can find out more information on the Swiss government site.
- A formal contract to rent an apartment sometimes requires the signature of a guarantor. If you do not know anyone resident in Switzerland who is prepared to act as your guarantor (i.e., undertake to pay your rent/debts should you default), it may help if you have a formal letter from your parents, written in German or French, stating their financial guarantee. Alternatively, your mentor teacher or a friendly teacher might be prepared to 'take the risk'. It is worth trying to find a Swiss guarantor as a number of landlords are reluctant to accept a guarantor from outside Switzerland.
- Landlords may ask for 1 month's rent as a deposit and 1 month's rent paid in advance.
- Get any agreements in writing, and obtain receipts for any transaction, keeping them secure.
- Confirm your period of notice you must give to move out –a minimum of three months' notice is usually the legal requirement. You may also have to give this notice in writing by registered mail.

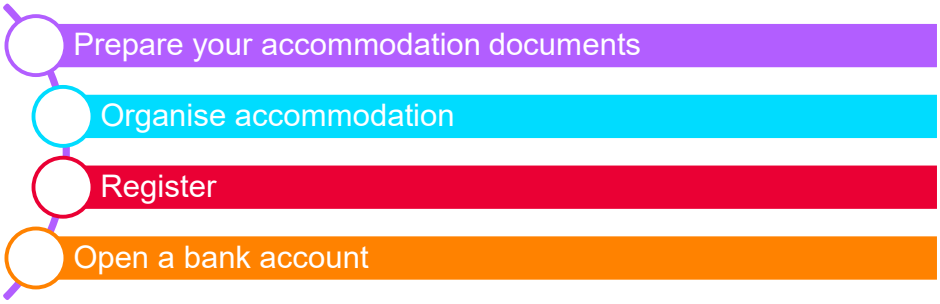
- Take photos capturing the condition of your room and the flat before moving in to prevent unfairly losing any of your security deposit
- Check health and safety issues (temporary and long term) such as fire alarms and exits, gas leaks, electrics, water etc.

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.

6.3. Bank accounts

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

Section 6 Recap



7. In school: arrival, settling in and support

7.1. Induction

Movetia organises an induction day before the start of your placement. Please note, the British Council has no involvement whatsoever in the organisation of these meetings. **Attendance is expected.**

7.2. Observation Period

When you first arrive at your host institution(s) you should ask for a period of observation of 1-2 weeks. It may not be offered to you automatically. Observation will allow you to familiarise yourself with the 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 classroom life

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

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

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

Apart from your work in the classroom you may be able to attend other classes in subjects which interest you. You will find that you become much more integrated into school life and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the host institution, 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 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.

7.3. Absence from work

Please remember that you are a member of staff and must therefore adhere to the holiday dates set by the host institution. If you cannot work because of illness, you should inform your host institution(s) and immediately.

Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to Movetia and to the British Council. Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the host institution(s) who is within his/her right to refuse it. You are reminded that if you are absent from work 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 host institution, Movetia and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full. If you are an undergraduate, you must also inform your university/college in the UK

7.4. Social media

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an assistant in Switzerland. 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 institution’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

Give yourself some time to adjust –in the beginning, you will have a lot of administrative matters to deal with. Former assistants have recommended that you don’t spend all your free time with other programme participants, as you will not be able to integrate into your community and life in Switzerland. 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
- Enquire about joining the local university and attending lectures
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs

- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc.

7.5.1. Starting at school

- Showing that you are enthusiastic and keen to get to know staff will go a long way. Start with a simple hello or ask how their weekend went. Remember, though, that you will be working in a host institution 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.

7.5.2. Rural Posts

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

7.6. Concerns and Queries: Who to contact?

Conditions in educational institutions in Switzerland 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. Please consult this guide for help on who to contact if you have a query or an issue. The British Council has a zero-tolerance policy approach to discrimination of any kind. If a serious incident occurs and the who to contact sheet is not appropriate, please contact us.

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

A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in Switzerland 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 French/German language and Swiss 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.

Section 7 Recap



8. Money Matters

8.1. Bank Account

It is essential that you open a bank account soon after arriving in Switzerland in order to receive your payments.

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

Things to consider:

- Assistants are usually entitled to open a normal 'salary account' (*compte-salarie/ Gehaltskonto*) which provides a cash card; some banks also offer a 'student account'. When opening a bank account, you can ask for a cheque book and a debit card.
- Do not open a savings account as your host institution will not be able to pay your allowance into this.
- You may find this glossary of French and/or German banking terms useful and the website Wise – How to open a bank account in Switzerland gives some advice on opening a bank account in Switzerland although it is not specific to language assistants.
- Check with local banks in advance to find out what kind of documents will be required. Previous assistants have advised that some banks will require proof of your residency/ proof of your residence permit application.
- Check for any hidden charges.

8.2. Tax

A Double Taxation Agreement exists between the UK and Switzerland. However, this agreement ***does not*** cover UK assistants during their time in Switzerland. Assistants will therefore be liable to pay income tax in Switzerland for your work as a Language Assistant. You will also be taxed for any non-teaching jobs. This does not include private teaching as a provider of independent teaching services.

You may be also liable to pay tax upon your return to the UK, but this is something you need to investigate yourself. You are reminded that the UK tax year extends from 6 April to 5 April and that income earned in the UK between April and the start of your assistantship may be taken into account when your own or your parents' tax liability is being assessed.

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

8.3. Monthly Salary

You will typically be paid between CHF 3.200 and CHF 3.800 per month, depending on the host institution and canton you will work in.

Switzerland can be an expensive country to live and work in, but your salary should cover your living costs. You are also liable to pay social security contributions and taxes, often up to 25% of your monthly salary. So, for example, with a salary of CHF 3.200 a month, your net income could be around CHF 2.600. Taxes can vary depending on your circumstances. Please note, health insurance costs are separate.

Please note that you may not receive your first payment until mid-November, so you should ensure that you have access to around CHF 3.000 (around £2.600, although some assistants can manage with less) to cover initial costs. This amount may differ depending on your location and how much rent you are required to pay in advance.

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

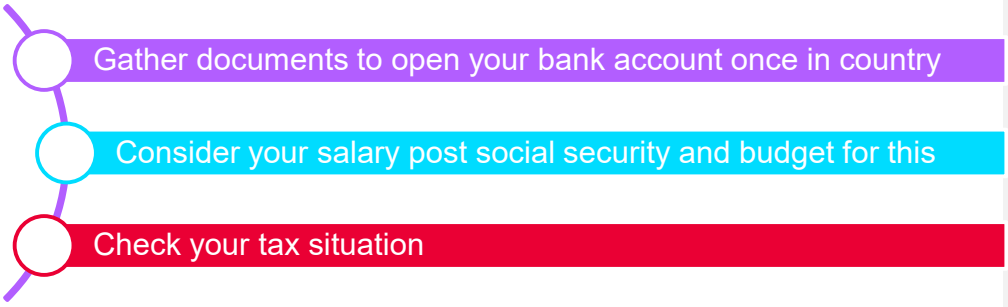
Please note that host institutions will pay your salary at the end of the month. This means, for example, that you will be paid on 31 January for the month of January.

8.4. Additional Income

If you wish to supplement your income by giving private tuition in English, you are strongly advised to check if this legally possible depending on your residence status. Do not advertise in local papers or public places. It is essential to check that the other English teachers in your host institution(s) do not mind, so that you are not perceived to be ‘stealing’ their private pupils.

The going-rate for private one-to-one tuition seems to be CHF 20–60 per hour depending on how much preparation for the lesson you plan to do and how much your pupils can afford. Please ensure that any additional work does not conflict with your timetable. Should you wish to obtain paid work in any other educational institution e.g., teaching work in the public or private sector, you must clear this with the host institution and/or educational authorities in your canton to which you are appointed beforehand. If they do not allow it, you must abide by this ruling.

Section 8 Recap



Document Recap

Prepare copies and documents prior to leaving:	When in Switzerland:
• Passport • Photographs • Insurance cover • Certificate of appointment • Another valid form of photographic ID • Bank statements from your UK bank • Birth Certificate • Certificates of host institutions exams • Passport sized photos	• Payslips • Rental agreement

9. Language learning and studies

9.1. For language learning

- BBC – Learn French and BBC – Learn German: Offer a wealth of resources for learning French and German including short guides, videos and the BBC World News service in French and German.
- Memrise: A sophisticated platform for language learning, with a large online community. App also available.
- Duolingo: A 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.

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- Anki: An online platform for learning, focusing on memory-recall. Packs for specific levels of French and German available.

10. End of your placement

10.1. Tasks and thinking ahead

Bank: You are advised to keep your account open for a month or so after the contract with your host institution 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.

Accommodation: Please make sure that you leave a good impression with your landlord – a future assistant may be depending on this:

- 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.

Reference: If you haven't already done so, 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, we are unable to provide references for language assistants, only a certificate certifying participation upon request.

10.2. Staying a consecutive year

To stay for a consecutive year as a British Council language assistant in Switzerland, you must apply through **Movetia**. Movetia will contact you about this in due course.

Due to residency restrictions, ELAs with only a UK passport are only permitted to work in Switzerland for a maximum of two years.

You will not be required to attend the induction course the following year, although you may be invited to attend as a former assistant.

You will be required to apply for a new ICPC for the consecutive year.

10.3. Ambassador

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

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