

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS PROGRAMME**  
**AUSTRIA 2020-21**

# **AUSTRIA COUNTRY NOTES**

VERSION 1, AUGUST 2020

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## NOTES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS APPOINTED TO AUSTRIA IN 2020-21

This document is version one of the Austria Country Notes for the 2020-21 English Language Assistants Programme. Any country notes relating to previous years should be ignored for the 2020-21 academic year.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the [Leitfaden für Assistenten 2020/21 guide](#) produced by the *Bundesministeriums für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (BMBWF), which can be found [here](#) in German and in English.

**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.

## FOREWORD

Congratulations on your recent allocation to a post as an English Language Assistant in Austria. Every year, around 2,500 Language Assistants from the UK support the teaching of English in 14 countries around the world. Each one is taking part in a programme that traces its heritage back to 1905. It began as an exchange programme to allow graduates from France to help English students learn French, with 'young Masters in English secondary schools' heading to France to perform a similar role. Shortly afterwards, a similar agreement was reached with the government of Prussia.

Since those early days, the programme has endured major global events, two World Wars, and the Great Depression to name a few. But while the global political, social and economic landscapes may have changed over the years, the Language Assistants initiative has remained committed to increasing language skills across the world.

This document contains important information and advice regarding a variety of practical and administrative matters affecting UK assistants in Austria. This document should be read carefully, retained for reference and **considered in conjunction with any papers issued by our Austrian partners and the Austrian authorities.** It is important that you take this information with you whilst undertaking your year abroad in order to be able to consult it at all times when problems/questions arise, although it will also be available year-round on our website.

If your permanent (UK) home address, personal e-mail or phone number should change at any time from now, please inform us immediately by sending an e-mail to [languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org](mailto:languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org). We may need to contact you during the year with updates to these notes, invitations or urgent messages.

We hope that you find the following information useful and that you enjoy the year ahead.

Best wishes,

British Council Language Assistants Team

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# 1. CO-OPERATING PARTNERS

## 1.1 BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of [arts and culture](#), [English language](#), [education](#) and [civil society](#). Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Our work in English aims to bring high-quality language materials to every [learner](#) and [teacher](#) who wants them. In developing and post-conflict countries, we teach English and train teachers through radio, web and TV broadcasts. We offer more than three million UK [examinations](#) worldwide, helping people gain access to trusted qualifications to support their career and study prospects.

Our work in [education](#) and [society](#) helps transform national education systems, builds more inclusive and open societies and increases [young people's opportunities](#). We encourage international students to come and study in the UK, and British students to experience life abroad. We bring [schools](#) around the world together, so young people and teachers from different countries can learn from each other.

Our work in the [arts](#) involves the very best British and international artistic talent. We help increase audiences for international work in the UK and for UK work globally. We bring artists together and support the development of skills and policy in the arts and creative industries. Through this work, we ensure that culture in its broadest sense plays a vital role in connecting with and understanding each other.

In these ways, the British Council builds links between UK people and institutions, and those around the world, helping to create trust and lay foundations for prosperity and security around the world.

## 1.2 PARTNER ORGANISATION IN AUSTRIA

Team *weltweit unterrichten* administers the Language Assistants Programme in Austria on behalf of the *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (BMBWF) and is part of the *Österreichische Austauschdienst* (OeAD).

They liaise directly with schools and the local educational authorities in Austria on the British Council's behalf.

### Contact details

OeAD GmbH  
Universitätsstrasse 5  
1010 Wien  
Austria

Tel: +43 (0)1 431 5348

Web: [www.weltweitunterrichten.at](http://www.weltweitunterrichten.at)

Email: [sprachassistenz@oead.at](mailto:sprachassistenz@oead.at)

## 2. ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE ASSISTANT

The role of a language assistant is a very important one and one that we hope you will enjoy. Please remember that you are a **paid member of staff** with the responsibilities and required professionalism that this entails. Please refer to our website for more information on your role as an English Language Assistant: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/study-work-abroad/english-language-assistants/prepare-placement>

As a language assistant you are also an **ambassador for the UK and its culture**. The way you behave will influence how those around you view the UK and you should endeavour to be a positive example. If you set a bad example, you could damage the reputation of the programme and adversely affect the experience of future assistants.

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***“Be professional. It is a job so treat it as such. If you’ve got any problems, discuss them straight away and get the problem sorted out early on.”***

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Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is an excellent resource and you should draw on this during your lessons. We provide a lot of advice to help you incorporate cultural content into your lessons – see [section 11](#) in this document below.

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***“Suggest ideas and interesting cultural resources, such as videos/music etc. from your home country.”***

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### 2.1 TEACHING ENGLISH

It is important to be resourceful and use your initiative. If you do not think that you are being used sufficiently, make suggestions of topics that you could discuss with the students or activities that you could get involved with. This document contains a whole chapter about teaching English but to get started the following links are useful.

- [https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teaching/files/pub\\_whole\\_manual.pdf](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teaching/files/pub_whole_manual.pdf)
- [www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant/essential-uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant/essential-uk)



It is also important to make sure that you are familiar with the education system in Austria as it will help you know what to expect when you start teaching at your school(s). Please see the Eurydice webpage for specific information:

- [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/Austria\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/Austria_en)

## 3. POSTING INFORMATION

The British Council and the OeAD are involved in allocating assistants to schools in Austria. The British Council has no control over choice of town, size of town, or school environment. When school details are sent to allocated assistants, it is **the assistant's responsibility** to initiate contact with the mentor teacher(s) in their school(s).

You will find out your school details as well as your mentor teacher's contact details in late June or early July 2020 in an email from the British Council. You will also receive an email from the OeAD with log-in details to their online system. On this system you will also find your school details. You are asked to contact your school(s) **as soon as possible** after receiving this information to introduce yourself and find out more information about your post.

**Please note:** if you wait too long to initiate contact with the school(s) they may think you are not interested in accepting the post so please do not wait too long to do this. Those assistants who are working for the second semester only should also contact their mentor teacher(s) before the new academic year..

If you do not receive any communications from us with your school details, please get in touch.

When you have established contact, you should also ask for more information about the school(s). 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 important to enquire about the dress code for

teachers and how you should address staff and students (du oder Sie).

All posts will be in secondary schools or further education colleges. The names of schools in Austria can be quite long. With your school details we will send you a guide to Austrian school names so you can see what kind of school you will work in.

### 3.1 SCHOOL ALLOCATION

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

### 3.2 DATES OF APPOINTMENT

The period of appointment in Austria varies depending on the kind of post you applied for and maybe the *Bundesland* you have been allocated to.

**Full period of appointment**



For assistants working for the entire academic year in Austria, your post will start on **1 October** and end on **31 May**.

### First-semester only posts

For assistants working the first semester only, your post will start **1 October** and end in **early or mid-February**.

### Second-semester only posts

For assistants working the second semester only, your post will usually start in **mid- or late February** and end on **31 May**.

Regardless of the length of your post, you **must** confirm your exact start and end dates with your host school directly.

Assistants are usually expected to work 13 per week. Those who have been appointed to more than one school will be asked to divide their time between the schools concerned. You can request information regarding how your timetable will be arranged from the head of the host school.

## 3.3 HOLIDAYS

Assistants are entitled to the usual school holidays, details of which you can get from your school(s). You should not be absent on other occasions without prior permission.

## 3.4 STAYING A CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Those wishing to extend their appointment for a second year must reapply through OeAD, and **not** through the British Council. The OeAD will be in touch with you regarding this option at a later date but you can contact the team directly if you want to enquire about further details in advance (see [section 1.2](#)). You will have the opportunity to request a change of school or *Bundesland*, or you can remain at your school(s) for a second year,

where possible. Further information is available [here](#).

Consecutive year assistants are not required to attend the induction course the following year, although you may be invited to attend as a former assistant. You are otherwise asked to travel directly to your school to start on the first day of your contract.

## 3.5 PREDECESSORS

The British Council has already shared with you the contact details of assistants appointed to your area in 2019-20 if they have consented to this (due to GDPR rules). This list was included in the Summer Information Pack for Austria.

It should be noted that schools do not necessarily receive assistants from the same Anglophone country each year, and the British Council holds records of assistants from the UK only. Therefore, your host school(s) may be in a better position to offer you help with contacting former assistants and we would recommend contacting your host school to ask if they would be willing to ask their former language assistants to share their contact details with you. Past assistants have emphasised how useful it is to contact former assistants in their area and have described their advice as invaluable.



## 4. PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

### 4.1 FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Before travelling to Austria you should ensure that you check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) travel advice pages: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/austria](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/austria) and ensure that you have subscribed to updates so that you receive any important changes to the FCO's advice. During a crisis, advice for British nationals will be published on the travel advice website and updated regularly, so by [subscribing](#) you will ensure that you are aware of any updates.

We also recommend that assistants read the 'Advice for Travellers' documentation provided by the FCO.

### 4.2 PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Assistants must be in possession of a standard 10-year passport before leaving the UK and are advised to ensure that it will not need to be renewed before October 2021; see [here](#) for further information. Those who are not in possession of a passport, or need a new one, should complete the application procedure as soon as possible either through a regional Passport Office or online at:

[www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/passports](http://www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/passports).

Residents of the Channel Islands should check their individual situation with the nearest consulate.

Holders of a UK passport and nationals of other EU countries do not currently require a visa to enter Austria. This will apply until the Brexit transition period ends on 31 December 2020.

If you have dual nationality with another EU country, you may consider using this passport while travelling in Austria as it may help to avoid complications with paperwork and other administrative processes on arrival. You should

discuss any changes to the passport you are using with the Austrian partners before arrival.

**If you are on a second-semester placement:**

Please note that the current transition period ends on 31 December 2020. This means that from 1 January 2021 you will likely need a visa for your time as an English Language Assistant in Austria. At this point in time, we have not received confirmation from the Austrian authorities regarding what the process will look like if you start the assistantship after 31 December 2020. It is important however to keep in mind that obtaining a visa would likely be an administrative and financial commitment.

The British Council and our Austrian partners will advise on any further information as it becomes available. Please refer to the following section for further information on Brexit.



### 4.3 BREXIT

The United Kingdom has now left the European Union. The current transition period ends on 31 December 2020.

The UK Government has launched a new [website](#) to help businesses, organisations, individuals and families check what they need to do to prepare for the UK leaving the European Union. The section [UK nationals living in the European Union](#) contains specific advice for British Nationals in Austria.

Please note, the advice provided is based upon current government guidelines. Language Assistants have responsibility to keep themselves informed of any change to the [Austrian government](#) and UK Government's advice on Brexit and the impact this may have on British nationals living in Austria.

The government's website contains specific advice on [Living in Austria](#). The website contains links to sign up to email alerts on different topics relating to Brexit. We recommend that assistants sign up to these alerts and continue to check the government's website for any updates.

We also strongly urge you to read any advice and links related to Brexit which our Austrian partners have sent you. Please also follow the British Embassy in Austria on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for timely updates.

The [Withdrawal Agreement](#) sets out the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU and provides for a deal on citizens' rights. It sets out a transition period which lasts until 31 December 2020. During this time, you can continue to live, work and study in the EU broadly as you did before 31 December 2020.

If you are resident in Austria at the end of the transition period, you will be covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, and your rights will be protected for as long as you remain resident in Austria.

Any rights that are not covered by the Withdrawal Agreement will be the subject of future negotiations. Read the [guidance page](#) for more information.

In the meantime, make sure you are registered as a resident in Austria (see [section 7.2](#)). The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) will update this guidance as soon as more information becomes available.

You should also read the FCO's [guidance on living in Europe](#).

## 4.4 TRAVEL TO AUSTRIA

You are responsible for the cost of your own travel and any travel to and from your place of appointment during the year. Booking in advance for all forms of transport is highly recommended. Past assistants have warned to check the baggage allowance for outward and return journeys when travelling by plane as sometimes the cheaper airlines have quite a low baggage allowance. The following websites may help you when booking your travel.

- [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net)
- [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)
- [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk)
- [www.austrian.com](http://www.austrian.com)
- [www.eurolines.co.uk](http://www.eurolines.co.uk)
- [www.eurowings.com](http://www.eurowings.com)
- [www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)
- [www.easyjet.co.uk](http://www.easyjet.co.uk)
- [www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)
- [www.opodo.co.uk](http://www.opodo.co.uk)
- [www.expedia.co.uk](http://www.expedia.co.uk)
- [www.ryanair.co.uk](http://www.ryanair.co.uk)
- [www.interrailnet.com](http://www.interrailnet.com)
- [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com)

Working as a language assistant gives you a great opportunity to travel around Austria and you should make the most of your free time. Try to avoid coming home every holiday and experience as much of the surrounding area as possible.



## 4.5 TAKING A CAR ABROAD

You will need to research the laws on driving in Austria, including adapting your head lights for driving on the right. The website [www.gov.uk/driving-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/driving-abroad) provides useful information about motoring abroad.

If you plan to take a car to Austria for the period of your assistantship, please ensure that you take out adequate insurance for the full period and **be aware that many insurance companies will only insure you for periods of up to 90 days**. Past assistants have advised looking into insurance well in advance in order to have the time to shop around for a suitable policy. All UK motor insurance policies offer the minimum legal protection required by EU countries and Austria. This gives third party cover for bodily injury or damage to property. The British Council is unable to recommend specific insurance companies.

Many insurers offer 24-hour UK telephone numbers in case you need help in an emergency. Make sure you have these details with you when you travel abroad.

The website of the Association of British Insurers [www.abi.org.uk](http://www.abi.org.uk) has general information on driving abroad, including the document 'Motoring Abroad' which has useful information on Motor Insurance cover and Green Cards. A Green Card is an internationally recognised document that provides evidence that the policyholder has minimum insurance cover.

If you require information on driver licensing you should contact **Drivers Customer Services (DCS), Correspondence Team DVLA, Swansea SA6 7JL** (Tel: 0300 790 6801), or using the online email service which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla>. Information on vehicle licensing or registration can be obtained from **Vehicle Customer Services (VCS), DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1AR** (Tel: 0300 790 6802). There is also a website at [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk). UK licences are recognised in all EU countries plus Switzerland, for as long as they remain valid.

## 4.6 DRIVING AND THE LAW

**Toll stickers:** you must buy and display a *Mautvignette* (toll sticker) on the inside of your windshield when in Austria, which you can purchase online ([www.asfinag.at](http://www.asfinag.at)), in order to use motorways and express roads.

**Alcohol limits:** the alcohol limit in Austria is **50mg** of alcohol per 100ml of blood for drivers. Higher blood alcohol content carries heavier legal consequences. **Do not drink and drive**. Austrian police can breathalyse at random and drivers who test positive face fines, driving bans and/or prison sentences. Higher levels carry greater penalties and possible prison sentences.

**Mobile phones:** it is illegal to use your mobile phone whilst driving in Austria. Those in violation of this can face an on-the-spot fine.

You must be 18 to drive and 21 to rent a car in Austria.

Further advice on driving and the law can be found here:



- <https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/travel/country/Austria/>

## 4.7 INSURANCE

As an English Language Assistant, you will be enrolled in Austria's health and social security scheme. Your salary will be deducted accordingly (ca. €239 per month) to cover this.

The health insurance cover provided to you starts on **the first day of your assitanship**. More information about the health insurance provided can be found in [section 5.1](#). Please check your contract with your school as to which day this will be. It will subsequently end on the last day of your contract. You will not be covered for any health issues you might encounter before your start date or after your end date. Before and after these times you will need a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC; see [section 5.5](#)).

You will receive more information about health insurance and other administrative matters from our Austrian partners during the online inductions.

### Travel insurance

You are also strongly recommended to take out Personal Accident and Liability travel insurance for the period between leaving home and taking up your appointment, the time during your appointment, and also the period between ending your appointment and your return to the UK. This should include the following standard elements of cover:

- Medical costs for treatment in case of illness (incl. Covid-19) or accidental injury
- Benefits for permanent disabling injuries, e.g. rehabilitation and living costs
- Benefits for death and costs of repatriation
- Cover for loss or damage to your personal belongings
- Cover for cancelled flights, e.g. if the airline goes out of business or on strike
- Personal Liability cover: this provides legal support and covers financial costs if you cause injury or property damage to others and are found personally liable

- 24hr emergency assistance helpline

Many policies also have Legal Expenses cover, which is recommended in case you need legal assistance while overseas.

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: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-insurance](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-insurance).

Many insurers are excluding Covid-19 as a cause of travel delay or medical expenses. Please check carefully with potential insurers what their policies cover.

The British Council is unable to advise on private insurance packages; you are recommended to consult an insurance broker for professional advice and to check whether you are covered by your parents' insurance policy, if applicable. Undergraduate assistants should consult with their university to check what cover is provided for them and you may find that a 'study abroad' policy purchased online is an option. Please be aware that some insurance policies, usually 'backpackers' insurance, do not allow for trips home during the year and it is important to check the small print of your policy to make sure that you are covered.

The British Council will not be responsible for you while you are in Austria, although we will offer support when necessary. We recommend you research the various options available and consult other/former assistants before purchasing a suitable policy. Please note that it is unlikely that insurance companies will cover you in the event of a natural disaster (referred to as an 'Act of God' in insurance policies) or the outbreak of war.

Any package should cover repatriation, personal accident & civil liability, luggage & valuable items, and cancellation in extreme cases. Please note that you should organise your insurance before you leave the UK.

### Insurance for travel outside of Austria

Remember that normally your insurance only covers you within your host country during your allocated time there, therefore if you travel outside the country during or after that period, you may need additional insurance.

Experience from previous language assistants has told us that holiday periods provide the possibility for travel around or outside of Austria. If you do leave Austria at any point, it is highly advised to take out insurance for the country / countries that you visit if your policy does not cover you for leaving the country.

## 4.8 GRADUATES WITH STUDENT LOANS

If you will be overseas for more than 3 months, you will need to complete an **Overseas Income Assessment Form** to enable the Student Loans Company to calculate how much you need to repay. On the Overseas Income Assessment Form you should provide them with details of

your circumstances and prospective income. You will also 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 country. More information can be found online here: [www.studentloanrepayment.co.uk/portal/page?\\_pageid=93,6678653&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://www.studentloanrepayment.co.uk/portal/page?_pageid=93,6678653&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)



# 5. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Please see the [Foreign Commonwealth Office website](#) for more information regarding healthcare in Austria.

Please also refer to the Austrian partner's [Leitfaden](#) for further information on the social insurance during your assistantship.

## 5.1 Health Insurance

As previously mentioned, assistants working in Austria will be covered from the first day of their contract until the last day of their contract.

You are covered for all necessary medical and dental expenses under the Austrian Social Security Scheme. On your first day at school you should ask the school secretary for help in completing the necessary forms to apply for your *Versicherungsnummer* (insurance number) and accompanying *Versicherungskarte* (insurance card), also known as the **e-card**. You will need this

card should you ever require medical assistance or if you visit a GP.

Your health insurance will not cover you for care administered by private clinics or hospitals. If you wish to avail of private services, you will be liable to pay for any examinations or treatment.

More information can be found on the [Austrian government's website](#).

## 5.1 VISITING A DOCTOR OR HOSPITAL

If you need to see a GP or specialist, you can access services administered by the registered providers in your *Bundesland*. You should consult the [Austrian government's website](#) to find out more about the services in your area, which are provided by the *Gebietskrankenkasse* (regional health insurance fund). We also recommend you ask your mentor teacher(s) for more information

on where to access medical care. You should bring your **e-card**, or *Versicherungskarte*, with you, and inform your mentor teacher at the earliest convenience if you are going to miss work because of illness or an accident.

You will be liable to pay for certain services including orthodontic treatments and non-emergency dental treatment. However, you may be able to have part of those costs reimbursed by the health insurance fund (*Krankenkasse*).

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 a fixed cost per day spent in hospital.

*Please note, all of the above information is liable to change at any time so please do check with your local service provider about any recent changes if you do need to access healthcare in Austria.*

## 5.2 HEALTH INSURANCE OUTSIDE AUSTRIA

You should ensure you bring with you your EHIC card if you are travelling to an EU/EEA country (see [section 5.5](#)).

If you fall ill or have an accident in another EU country you will be reimbursed for the costs of necessary medical care, medication and surgical dressings. It is however advised you take out comprehensive insurance (loss/damage to belongings, repatriation, personal liability, etc.) if you intend to travel to any EU or EEA countries.

## 5.3 ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Your health insurance will cover you for accidents however you should **check with your school(s)** whether there is additional workplace accident cover available.

It is highly recommended you take out additional accident insurance cover, or *Freizeitunfallversicherung* (leisure time accident insurance), if you intend to ski/hike extensively during your

time in Austria or if you are involved with any other high-risk leisure activities. This cover can be expensive so please shop around to find the best option for you.

## 5.4 EHIC

**Please note:** Until 31 December 2020, you can use your UK-issued European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in Austria. Further details regarding the validity of your EHIC after the end of the Brexit transition period will be available [here](#).

Information on applying for an EHIC can be found at the following link: [www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card](http://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card). If you're planning to go abroad as part of your university degree, you can apply for a time limited Student EHIC. More information is available online [here](#).

For the time before, during and after your official period of appointment as an assistant, it is advised you have a UK-issued European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EHIC card will also be useful for any trips to other EU countries. It covers any medical treatment that becomes necessary during your trip, because of either illness or an accident. The card gives you access to state-provided medical treatment only. It provides no top-up on the cover of the national health scheme while you are in Austria during the period of your contract.

Residents of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are not eligible for the European Health Insurance Card. Residents of the Isle of Man need to take out fully-comprehensive insurance (which should include repatriation by air ambulance) before travelling to another country. Applicants from Guernsey should contact the Health and Social Services Department for advice. Applicants from Jersey should contact the Employment and Social Security Department for advice.

**Please note: the EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance.** It does not cover any private healthcare or costs such as a return flight to your home country or lost/stolen property. Assistants are therefore strongly advised to take out private insurance before beginning their placement.

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***“As for health insurance, make sure you bring your European Health Card, just in case it is asked for, or in case of emergency.”***

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## 5.5 MEDICATION

If you take regular medication, please ensure that you have a supply before you leave. It is also important to find out where your nearest doctor, dentist and hospital are as soon as you arrive. You should ask your school for information about the facilities in your area and always advise staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

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***“Bring medicines that are hard to get in the place you're going to (E.g. your specific contraceptive pill, branded things like day nurse / your preferred hay fever tablets - the brands I wanted were unavailable)”***

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## 5.6 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.

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

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office provides information about mental health and travel via the following link.

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues>

The leaflets linked below contain guidance on travelling abroad and mental health, and information about how the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) can assist British nationals with mental health needs abroad. The leaflets detail the type of assistance you may find in the country. The leaflet also explains some of the differences between UK law and practice and that of other countries.

### Travel and Mental Health

[www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues)

### Mental Health: Travelling Abroad Checklist

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/466425/Mental\\_Health\\_Checklist\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/466425/Mental_Health_Checklist_-_Final.pdf)

We also have a [Podcast episode](#) discussing the importance of Language Assistants looking after their wellbeing.





## 6. ARRIVAL

### 6.1 INDUCTION COURSE

Due to COVID-19 restrictions there will be no face-to-face inductions in Austria this year. Our partners hope to arrange gatherings later in the year. However, online inductions will be arranged in September so ***please read all correspondence from our partners.*** The course is not compulsory but highly recommended. Depending on the *Bundesland* you will work in, the date of the course may vary.

The webinar will provide you with incredibly useful information about your placement, the Austrian education system, school life, and information and advice on administrative matters and teaching methods.

## 7. SETTLING IN

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***“It was quite difficult to integrate at the beginning but if you keep trying it will eventually happen!”***

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### 7.1 ACCOMMODATION

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***“Always contact your mentor teacher to see if they have any advice before paying deposits/making plans etc., especially before you leave the country. My initial plan was to live elsewhere and commute to work, but I was informed that I'd be able to live on site, with no additional responsibilities, for an unbeatable price.”***

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The British Council is not in a position to provide or to help find accommodation. Equally your school(s) is 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 more permanent accommodation. You should however not assume that your school will do this, and you should discuss your arrival and initial accommodation arrangements with them in advance. Please note that if your school does

offer you accommodation you are not obliged to accept it but remember, if you do accept it, you will have to abide by the school's rules.

The first thing to do when looking for permanent accommodation is to ask your mentor teacher if they can recommend anything. For example, 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, your best contacts are your predecessors at the school or in the area. Previous assistants are also often able to offer advice on how to find accommodation locally. You can also ask your mentor teacher for the contact details of previous assistants at your allocated school(s) as they may have come from a different Anglophone country.

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 flat 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.

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. Remember that you will need your passport to check into hotels/hostels. Do **not** take out a contract on your accommodation until you know the location of your schools.

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***“Don't panic if you don't have accommodation before leaving the UK. I was really scared about having nowhere to live... but it's definitely easier to stay in an airBnB for a few days to properly visit houses in the country, rather than signing for a house before you've seen it and it being rubbish.”***

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Once you get to Austria the following suggestions may be of interest:

- search for a room or flat on the internet
- advertise on the school/staff notice board and ask around the staff; do **NOT** advertise in local papers or public places
- buy the local newspapers early in the morning and phone likely numbers immediately
- ring the 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'/acquaintances' landlords if they have any further accommodation to let
- write to or visit as soon as possible any student or youth organisation in the area that might have details of available lodgings: the local tourist office may have a list of such organisations
- find out about local religious organisations as they often know of rooms 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 in any leases or agreements to be signed. Look for small agencies as often their fees are lower

- families sometimes advertise for lodgers on noticeboards. If you are interested in this possibility you must clarify whether or not you will be allowed visitors and will be expected to help with housework or children (12-15 hours per week is typical)

Some websites you may find useful are:

Temporary accommodation	<a href="http://www.hihostels.com">www.hihostels.com</a> <a href="http://www.hostelbookers.com">www.hostelbookers.com</a> <a href="http://www.hostelworld.com">www.hostelworld.com</a> <a href="http://www.jungehotels.at">www.jungehotels.at</a> <a href="http://www.airbnb.com">www.airbnb.com</a>
Permanent accommodation:	<a href="http://www.wohnungsboerse.net">www.wohnungsboerse.net</a> <a href="http://www.oeh.ac.at">www.oeh.ac.at</a> <a href="http://www.jobwohnen.at">www.jobwohnen.at</a> <a href="http://www.easywg.at">www.easywg.at</a> <a href="http://www.wg-gesucht.de">www.wg-gesucht.de</a> <a href="http://www.studenten-wg.de">www.studenten-wg.de</a> <a href="http://www.immowelt.de">www.immowelt.de</a>

**Beware!** Some ads in papers do not make it clear if the rental is handled by an individual or an agency. Check when arranging a viewing; otherwise you may have to pay an agency fee which may be the equivalent of one month's rent.

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 or 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)

Landlords may ask, in addition to your first month's rent, for a security deposit, as well as proof of household insurance before you can move in. The security deposit can sometimes be as much as three months' rent in advance so

please check with the landlord/agent in advance. Always ask (insist if necessary) for a receipt for the money you pay, both deposit and rent. If you do live in privately rented accommodation, check your contract carefully to see how much notice you must give to move out. You may also have to give this notice in writing by registered mail.

You should check what the terms are regarding payment of utility bills before you sign any rental agreements.

A formal contract to rent an apartment sometimes requires the signature of a guarantor. If you do not know anyone resident in Austria 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, stating their financial guarantee. Alternatively, your mentor teacher or a friendly teacher at school might be prepared to 'take the risk'. It is worth trying to find an Austrian guarantor as a number of landlords are reluctant to accept a guarantor from outside Austria.

We recommend that you take photos of your room and the flat when you move into your long-term accommodation and when you leave to 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 cancel any personal contracts, e.g. internet or utilities.

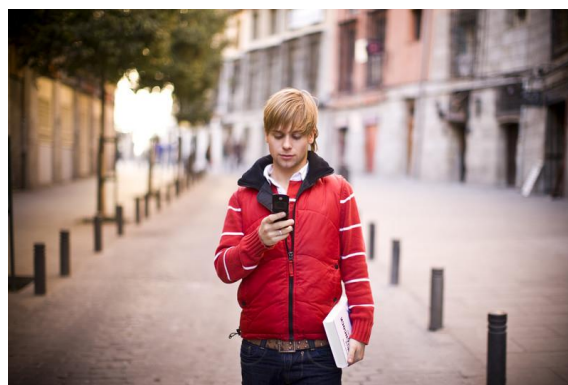
When you do find accommodation, please ensure that you have checked health and safety issues (temporary and long term) such as fire alarms and exits, gas leaks, electrics, water etc.

When looking for accommodation please follow the advice given in our [Personal Safety leaflet](#). 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.

Please also be aware of the **notice period** given in the contract. It is recommended to include a 'diplomatic clause' in the rental agreement to allow for a shorter notice period in the event that the rental agreement needs to be terminated prematurely due to force majeure (including in the event of a pandemic or a travel warning officially issued by a government. This is advised particularly in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Austrian partners have provided us with the following wording to be included in your rental contract. Please also refer to the partner's [Leitfaden](#).

*„Für den Fall des vorzeitigen Abbruchs des Fremdsprachenassistenzprogramms nachweislich von offizieller Seite (insbesondere wegen höherer Gewalt, u.a. im Falle einer Pandemie oder einer offiziell von einer Regierung ausgesprochenen Reisewarnung), oder sollte die/der Benutzer/in des Mietobjekts aus anderen triftigen Gründen Österreich dauerhaft verlassen müssen (etwa aus medizinischen Gründen), kann das Mietverhältnis mit einer Kündigungsfrist von 30 Tagen von der Mieterin/vom Mieter gekündigt werden.“*



## 7.2 REGISTRATION

### • Registering accommodation

All assistants **must** *anmelden* (register) with the *Meldestelle* at your local *Gemeindeamt* (or *Magistratischen Bezirksamt* in Vienna) **within three days of moving into your accommodation**. Please be aware that the office may only be open in the mornings.

You will find more information about the process on the [Austrian government's website](#).

You will need to take with you the following:

- A completed **certificate of registration** (*Meldezettel*) signed by your landlord
- Your passport

If you change accommodation at any point during your assistantship, you **must** *ummelden* (re-register) by following the same process.

You must retain all relevant registration documents until the end of your assistantship as you will also be required to *abmelden* (de-register) at the *Gemeindeamt* / *Bezirksamt*. You **must** do this up to three days before, or three days after, you move out of your accommodation.

PLEASE NOTE: Failure to register, re-register and de-register your accommodation properly can result in a **fine** of up to **€726** for the first offence, and up to **€2180** for any repeat offences.

### • Anmeldebescheinigung

In addition to registering accommodation, all assistants **must** apply for a **registration certificate**, or *Anmeldebescheinigung*, within 4 months of your arrival to Austria.

When applying for a registration certificate, you must bring with you the following:

- your valid passport
- a copy of your passport
- your contract from your host school
- proof that you are covered by Austrian health insurance (e.g. e-card)
- proof of address, or rental agreement from your landlord

- a completed registration form (*Antragsformular*)
- your *Meldezettel* from when you registered your accommodation
- registration fee (see *below*)

The registration fee is usually **€15**.

Further information on how to do this is found on the [Austrian government's website](#).

Please also follow any guidance provided by our Austrian partners during the induction webinars.

## 7.3 CREATING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Even if you have been to Austria before, it is possible that you will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. On arrival, the thought of making friends and mixing with the locals can seem like a daunting task, but as long as you are prepared to put yourself out there, it is a part of the experience which previous assistants have found the most enriching. Give yourself some time to adjust – you don't need to feel like a local within a week and in the beginning you will have a lot of administrative matters to deal with.

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***“Get involved in activities in your area. Going to the tourist information centre, looking online, walking around can be great ways to find out what's going on. Join a choir, orchestra, sports team, boules club, whatever - it may seem daunting but a great way to meet people (even if you don't see them outside of the context of the activity) and get in some language practice.”***

---

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

- Live with students/native speakers
- Enrol for an evening class; join a sports club, music group, choir, etc.
- Enquire about joining the local university and attending lectures as an auditor
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you couldn't join in the UK

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

Former assistants have recommended that you don't spend all your free time with other assistants, as you will not be able to integrate into your community and life in Austria. On the other hand, don't feel that you must cut yourself off from them – assistants can provide a very good support network for each other, as you understand each other's experiences. Don't forget that there may be language assistants from other countries in your area. You may wish to ask your employer if they have contact details for them.

As a golden rule, **try to say yes to every social opportunity presented to you that does not compromise your personal safety.** Accept invitations to places and activities even if they do not sound interesting as you might meet other people there who do share your interests; however at all times, please follow the advice given in our [Personal Safety leaflet](#).

- **Start at school**

The best way to start is with colleagues at school. Make sure that you always seem positive, enthusiastic and willing to learn. Socialise as much as you can with colleagues and accept all invitations to events, dinners, etc. Tell people what your interests are and ask them to let you know what's going on in the local area. Do keep in mind that teachers can be very busy, especially during exam periods.

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

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***“Get to know the teachers in your school(s) as they may offer to show you around a few different places and recommend things to do and places to go wherever you are based.”***

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- **Previous Assistants**

It is also a good idea to get in touch with other people in the area before you leave. One useful way to do this is to ask your school if they can share the contact details of any of their former assistants. You may also wish to look for previous or future assistants in the many **unofficial** Facebook groups online.

In the Summer Information Pack, you will also find a list of last year's English Language Assistants in Austria who have consented to share their details with you.

- **Languages**

Another excellent way to meet new people is to set up language exchanges with local people who want to practise their English. You could also enrol at a local language school, join Erasmus societies (at a local university), offer English lessons to colleagues/locals, join a club and join assistant groups on social networks such as Facebook.

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***“There are a lot of people who would love to learn English so the best way to integrate is to arrange Language Exchanges. This can be done by joining groups on Facebook or by asking friends/colleagues if they are aware of anyone who would be interested in an exchange. This way, you learn more about the culture and can seek advice from your language exchange buddy on activities and things to see and do around the city.”***

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- **ESN**

**Erasmus Student Network (ESN)** is a non-profit international student organisation. Their mission is to represent international students, thus provide opportunities for cultural understanding and self-development under the principle of **Students Helping Students**. ESN can sometimes assist with



finding accommodation in university towns and cities. Assistants completing their third year abroad can often affiliate to local ESN groups and register for an ESN student discount card. Often ESN groups run events and trips throughout the year which provide a great way to meet new people and explore Austria on a budget.

- **Social media**

There are often Facebook groups for people who are new to the city/town, which organise different events to help people make new friends - just search for 'new in "city name"'. Previous assistants have also suggested joining a local Couchsurfing group as they often organise social activities.

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an ELA. **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 say on your wall 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. This is likely to be regarded as inappropriate behaviour. Check with teachers about the school's internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school.

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

You are welcome to connect with your fellow assistants via Facebook and set up groups to keep in touch and share information. However, you must **not** use the British Council's name in the group name. Any group creators using the British Council's name will be contacted by us and you will be asked to change the name of the group. If you do not do this in a timely fashion, we will have to contact Facebook directly to intervene.

- **Rural Posts**

It should be noted that some of the posts in Austria are in rural areas. Past assistants to rural

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

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***"It's difficult at the start if you find yourself in a small town where life seems to be put on pause at 19h each night but you have to persist and look for any way you can to get out there and meet people."***

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It is important that the British Council and OeAD send assistants to rural as well as more urban settings both in the UK and Austria as pupils in both settings must be given the opportunity to benefit from exposure to other cultures and language learning.



## 7.4 SETTLING INTO SCHOOL LIFE

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.

You will have to make an effort to get to know your 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. Learning some simple conversation starters in the target language is always useful. Remember however that you will be working in a school environment therefore staff may not have a lot of free time. Don't be put off if a teacher doesn't have time to talk to you in the first instance, they may be in-between or preparing for a class. It doesn't necessarily mean that they don't want to talk to you.

Whilst it's important to get to know the colleagues you will be directly working with, it's always useful to get to know other staff too. 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. It's a great way to get to know colleagues in a different environment.

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***“Be enthusiastic, punctual, and make a good impression. Maybe ask teachers for advice/tips etc. to establish trust and better***

***relationships with them, it might be the start of a great friendship.”***

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Language Assistants that 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.

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***“Make an effort to speak to the staff you're working with and get to know them in the staff room. Don't be put off if it sometimes (or often!) feels like they don't have time for you. In general they mean well, even if they are busy people and perhaps have their minds occupied by other things. They'll always appreciate you making an effort.”.***

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## 8. MONEY MATTERS

### 8.1 MONTHLY ALLOWANCE

**Important note:** During your time as a language assistant, you will be paid directly by the responsible *Bildungsdirektion* in your *Bundesland* or directly by the BMBWF as they are your employers during the assistantship. **The British Council are *not* your employer** and do not administrate our assistants' payments. Any issues or queries surrounding pay are therefore best resolved by getting in direct contact with the relevant party within Austria.

You will typically be paid around **€1580** per month (before deductions) on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each calendar month by the Bildungsdirektion (local educational authority), or the BMBWF.

Each month social security contributions will be deducted from your wages (around **€240** per month) as well as income tax (around **€70** per month) leaving you with around **€1270** net salary.

Please note that you will not receive your first payment **until 15 November**, provided you have fulfilled all administrative requirements, so you should ensure that you have access to around **€1000 - €2500** to cover initial costs (although some assistants can manage with less). 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.

### 8.2 ADDITIONAL INCOME

If you wish to supplement your income by giving private tuition in English, you are strongly advised

**not** to advertise in local papers or public places (please read the relevant sections of our [Personal Safety leaflet](#)). In general pupils are easily found through school or private connections, i.e. by word-of-mouth. However, it is essential to check that the other English teachers in your school(s) do not mind, so that you are not perceived to be 'stealing' their private pupils. The going rate for private one-to-one tuition is approximately **€10 – €30** per hour depending on your experience, 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 school timetable.

Should you wish to obtain any other paid work, e.g. working at a festival, teaching work in the public or private sector, you must clear this with your school and/or educational authorities in your *Bundesland*. If they do not allow it, you must abide by this ruling.



### 8.3 ERASMUS+ GRANTS

Language Assistants who are completing the assistantship as a **year abroad** as part of their degree may be entitled to an Erasmus+ Traineeship grant. Individuals can benefit from an exchange abroad with Erasmus+ multiple times, either as a student or as a trainee, but the total time abroad (study abroad periods included) may not exceed 12 months within one cycle of study. An undergraduate degree is considered as one cycle. In some cases, students can go for



an Erasmus+ traineeship abroad as a **recent graduate**. In this case, the traineeship must occur within one year of graduation and individuals must apply while still being enrolled in their higher education institution. It is advised you discuss options with your university Erasmus+/International coordinator as soon as possible to see if you would be eligible for additional Erasmus+ grant funding as a Language Assistant in 2020-21.

Please note that the British Council is not the employer or traineeship provider of English Language Assistants. This means that we are unable to complete any Erasmus+ related documents and you should not put the British Council as the traineeship provider. You should put the name of your host institution (school) once you receive these details. Our understanding is that there is a one-month grace period following the start of your placement in which to submit any Erasmus+ documents, however individual universities and Erasmus+ coordinators will have their own internal deadlines. Please liaise with the Erasmus+ coordinator at your university should you have any questions.

## 8.4 CURRENCY AND BANKS

You are advised to wait until you arrive in your town of appointment in Austria before opening a bank account. This will allow you to research all the local options, seek recommendations and choose what will be most convenient for the rest of the year. Please be advised that some banks will charge a fee for their accounts so do shop around.

It is **essential** that you open a bank account soon after arriving in Austria in order to receive your salary. You will be paid by the local authority or the BMBWF in Euros.

Assistants are usually entitled to open a normal 'salary account' (*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.

**NB:** Make sure that you do not end up opening a savings account as you may not be able to pay your allowance into this.

You may find a glossary of banking terms useful: see [German banking terminology](#) online.

The following website gives some advice on opening a bank account in Austria although it is not specific to language assistants:

<https://transferwise.com/au/blog/opening-a-bank-account-in-austria>

The number of official documents required in order to open a bank account can vary from one bank to another, but you are likely to be asked for the following:

- **Passport**
- Your school **contract** and/or a **letter of recommendation** from your school

You may be asked for (where required):

- Proof of residence
- Your visa and/or residence permit
- Your national/international student identity card (for student bank accounts)

It is advisable to take with you photocopies of the documents listed above (including the relevant pages of your passport) as these may well be requested.

You will receive a **certificate** (*Antrag auf bargeldlose Bezugsanweisung*, or *Kontoerklärung*) which should be given to the school administration as soon as possible to ensure you are paid promptly.

If, at the end of your assistantship, you leave the country before your final salary is paid, you will need to arrange for your Austrian bank to transfer your money to your UK bank account and then close the Austrian account. You may be charged for this service.

## 8.5 LOST OR STOLEN CREDIT AND DEBIT CARDS

If a credit or debit card is lost or stolen, immediately call your bank to cancel it. If stolen, the theft should be reported to the police.

## 8.6 INCOME TAX

The Double Taxation Agreement which exists between the UK and Austria *no longer covers the Language Assistants programme*. You will be taxed on salary to the amount of around **€70** (see [section 8.1](#)). You will also be taxed for any non-teaching jobs.

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 income tax should be dealt with locally in Austria, **not** with 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. For UK guidance, please check [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk) and carefully follow the guidance which our Austrian partners give you.



# 9. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

## 9.1 ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Please remember that you are a member of staff and must therefore adhere to the holiday dates set by the school. If you cannot work because of illness you should inform your school(s) and local education authority (if applicable) immediately and within 24 hours by telephone. You may be asked to provide a letter from a doctor. This letter should cover the entire duration of the absence and must be sent to the school and, if applicable, local authority as soon as it is issued. Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to BMBWF/OeAD and to the British Council.

Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the school(s), who is within his/her right to refuse it. You are reminded that if you are absent from school without prior authorisation, your allowance will be discontinued from the first day of your absence.

If it becomes necessary to resign from your post, you must give sufficient prior notice in writing of your intended departure to the school, BMBWF/OeAD 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.

## 9.2 SOLVING PROBLEMS & LINES OF REFERRAL

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***“When you have a personal problem - be that at work, your health, or problems in the UK - talk to someone as soon as possible, even if it's not your mentor teacher, speak to any member of staff at the school.”***

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Conditions in schools in Austria differ from those in the UK. Any difficulties should be discussed with your mentor teacher and/or the teacher of the class concerned in the first instance. If the problem cannot be solved then talk to the head teacher or get in touch with your contact at the local education authority (if applicable).

Satisfactory solutions can usually be found through such consultations but if the problem remains unresolved, you may contact the BMBWF/OeAD (contact details can be found in [section 1.2](#)). The British Council in the UK will be happy to offer advice, but should only be contacted for advice when all other attempts to solve the issue have been made. Problems are dealt with most quickly and effectively locally and the British Council will instruct you to take the steps mentioned above.



To avoid problems at school, it is a good idea to form a good working relationship with other members of staff. You should introduce yourself to all members of the English department. It is important to be patient and polite, and to be aware of the work pressures of others. Please remember that it is not good practice to correct the teacher in front of students. You should always be punctual, responsible and prepare adequately for your lessons. Furthermore, 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 will assume everything is fine. The authorities will not be as sympathetic if you suffer in silence and then make a complaint months later. A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in Austria 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.

**Please refer to the Line of Referral document provided in the Summer Information Pack.**

The British Council has a **zero-tolerance policy approach to discrimination of any kind**. If a serious incident occurs and the line of referral is not appropriate, please contact us.

# 10. IN-COUNTRY ADVICE

## 10.1 PERSONAL SAFETY

It is very important to stick to the same health and safety rules as you would at home and always heed advice given by local people. Please refer to the [Personal Safety Leaflet](#) which provides an emergency telephone number as well as essential guidelines on how to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

We strongly advise that you spend some time looking at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website and check it regularly as there is a lot of useful and up-to-date information provided. We also recommend that assistants read the 'Advice for Travellers' documentation which can be found here: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

Ensure that you regularly check the Austria travel advice page: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/Austria>

Please also refer to the FCO website for information regarding sexual attacks: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad)

## 10.2 TRAVELLING AROUND AUSTRIA

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***“The 13-hour week is fantastic as you have time to travel and experience the culture.”***

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Working as a language assistant gives you the great opportunity to travel around Austria and you should make the most of your free time. Austria has a lot to offer and every region is different. You can go skiing or hiking in the Alps, explore Austria's national parks, go on a scenic journey along the Danube and discover lively cities such as Vienna, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Graz and Linz.

Try to avoid coming home every holiday and experience as much of the surrounding area as possible!

**Austria.info:** Austria's tourism portal. This is the country's national tourist information website and provides a lot of information about its tourist destinations, events, food and heritage.

Other useful travel websites are:

- [www.lonelyplanet.com/Austria](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/Austria)
- [www.roughguides.com](http://www.roughguides.com)
- [www.worldtravelguide.net](http://www.worldtravelguide.net)
- [www.tripadvisor.at](http://www.tripadvisor.at)

## 10.3 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport in Austria is excellent which means you can usually manage easily without a car. You should check the area you will be living in to find out more about the local transport available.

There are many different passes available at stops, stations, tobacconists and on board to help you save on multiple journeys.

You'll find a lot of information on how to get around Austria on their national tourism website:

<https://www.austria.info/uk/service-facts/getting-there-around>

Please note that in more rural locations, services could be more limited and may not run in the evenings or at the weekend so it's good to check in advance.

## 10.4 TRAINS

*Österreichische Bundesbahnen (ÖBB):* the national railway system in Austria. Their website is: [www.oebb.at](http://www.oebb.at)

Train travel can be expensive in Austria but there are ways to make it cheaper. There are many passes available which will make travel considerably cheaper. You can research these on the country's tourism website:

<https://www.austria.info/uk/service-facts/getting-there-around/austria-by-rail>

You should also receive more information from BMBWF/OeAD at the induction seminar.

## 10.5 CAR SHARING

In many Austrian cities there are systems of car sharing which can be ideal for one-way journeys. **Please be careful when using this system.** Searching 'car sharing Austria' in Google will show you which companies operate car sharing services.

## 10.6 ISIC CARDS

**International Student Identity Cards** cost £9 and are available online and from student travel agents such as STA and BUNAC. They can be used to obtain cheap entry into certain museums, theatres, cinemas and art galleries throughout Europe. They may also entitle you to certain travel concessions. Please see [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org) for further information. Please note that in order to obtain an ISIC card you need to be a full-time student.

For non-students who are under 26 there is the **International Youth Travel Card** (£12), which can be bought in the same way – see [www.statravel.co.uk/youth-identity-card.htm](http://www.statravel.co.uk/youth-identity-card.htm) for further information.

All assistants under the age of 30 (or 26 depending on the country of region), can also buy the **European Youth Card**. Holders of the card are eligible for discounts at a range of places and on a range of services. For more information on the discounts and where you can buy the card, go to [www.eyca.org](http://www.eyca.org).

## 10.7 PHONING HOME, MOBILES, INTERNET & TV LICENCES

The Country code for Austria is **+43**.

To phone abroad from Austria the code is **00** followed by the country code. When phoning Austria from abroad the first 0 of the standard number must be omitted (as when dialling an area code in the UK from abroad).

Previous assistants have recommended using pre-paid phone-cards to reduce costs phoning the UK. For mobiles, previous assistants have recommended pre-pay SIMs as contracts are usually for 24 months. Check the conditions of phone and internet contracts carefully before signing – and check the cancellation costs! You could take an unlocked handset to Austria and buy a new SIM once in-country. There are deals for calls and messages between phones on the same network so you might want to check which networks your closest contacts use so that you can avail of these deals.

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.

All households in Austria with devices that can receive radio and/or TV broadcasts are required by law to obtain a licence. Information is available online at: <https://www.gjs.at/>





# 11. TEACHING TIPS AND RESOURCES

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*“Always show a willingness to help out the students and the staff when possible. Be patient with any last-minute changes and always have something prepared for a plan B.”*

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## 11.1 OBSERVATION PERIOD

When you first arrive at your school(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 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; and
- How the teacher controls disruptive behaviour, lateness and lack of effort.

## 11.2 TEACHING MATERIALS

One way of making language learning real for your pupils is bringing authentic materials from the UK into the classroom. Take the opportunity to collect a variety of resources while you are still at home.

Past assistants have found that the following materials worked well: Photos of family and friends and your home town, lots of postcards, examples of UK coins and notes, train tickets and timetables, stamps, posters and tea towels to decorate walls, Christmas cards and crackers, posters and games, UK TV programmes and listings, magazines and local newspapers, CDs, photos of school uniforms, a school timetable and school report, flashcards, word searches, maps, tourist brochures, UK food (marmite, jelly, chocolate, custard, mince pies, gravy granules,

etc), adverts, menus, cartoons, comic books, DVDs (e.g. Ready Steady Cook for catering students), simple recipes e.g. scones, recordings of the weather forecast, London tube map, tapes of friends' accents and conversations, bingo, Taboo etc.

The more materials you can find the better. Think about what worked well for you as a language student and about which items you find interesting when you are in a foreign country. You can also ask your host school(s) whether there is something specific they would like you to bring and to find out about topics you are likely to be asked to cover during your assistantship.

## 11.3 BRITISH COUNCIL TEACHING RESOURCES

The British Council produces and co-produces a range of resources specifically for Language Assistants. Making use of these will help you greatly to deliver interesting and useful classroom activities and will support you in solving problems in the classroom. The British Council is also closely involved with the teaching of English abroad. Local branches develop useful resources and organise a range of cultural activities, which may be of interest to you and your school. For information on forthcoming events, go to [www.britishcouncil.at](http://www.britishcouncil.at).

## 11.4 LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS MANUAL

'Language Assistant' by Clare Lavery is a resource book designed for language assistants and provides information on all aspects of the role. Please read this carefully as it is extremely useful in preparing you for your assistantship.

<https://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/attachments/books-ela-manual.pdf>.

## 11.5 SCHOOL LINKING

Please note that many foreign schools are anxious to establish links with UK counterparts in order to share information and arrange pupil exchanges. Assistants are encouraged to help in whatever way possible in establishing such links and there is information and guidance on the British Council website:

<https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/partner-school>

You may also wish to find out if your school has any eTwinning projects or set up a project yourself. eTwinning can be accessed via [www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net). eTwinning is a free online community for schools in Europe which allows schools to find partner schools and collaborate on online projects within a secure network and platform. Through participating in eTwinning, your school will be able to:

- enrich learning and motivation of pupils (aged between 3 and 19) and staff;
- access high quality professional development and ready-made resources;
- raise standards across the whole school community;
- gain recognition for commitment through eTwinning awards; and
- search for an Erasmus+ partner to carry out projects with and apply for mobility funding.

## 11.6 BILINGUAL PROGRAMMES

Many schools in Austria are implementing bilingual programmes. You may find yourself supporting teachers who teach science or PE in English. In some instances students need to go through external exams in the school (PET from Cambridge University, GESE from Trinity College London, etc.). It is one of the roles of the language assistants to improve students' oral fluency and conversation skills.

[www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/preliminary-for-schools/](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/preliminary-for-schools/)

## 11.7 TEACHINGENGLISH WEBSITE

This year, we have taken the decision to provide all outgoing English Language Assistants with access to a free teacher training course. Normally participants would be required to pay a fee for access to a different course, however the British Council will cover the costs of this new course. There will be 6 self-access modules which each take a recommended period of 1 week to complete. The modules are as follows:

- 1 Getting started
- 2 Child protection
- 3 Understanding Grammar
- 4 Understanding Special Educational Needs
- 5 Understanding grammar teaching – focus on form
- 6 Engaging with learning technologies – developing reading skills with digital tools

You will be emailed directly and prompted to register for the training course. Although completion of the course is not mandatory, it is highly recommended. Meanwhile, completing the child protection module is mandatory for all allocated English Language Assistants.

You can find out further information on the Language Assistants Teaching English course on our [website](#), under the 'Preparing to teach' heading.

TeachingEnglish.org is another online resource centre, produced jointly by the British Council and the BBC: [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk). On the site you will have access to:

- Teaching tips
- Essential UK: Seasonal lesson plans based around UK topics
- Primary tips: Help getting started with primary-level students
- Classroom games

## 1 1.8 USEFUL TEACHING WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

[www.learnenglish.org.uk/kids](http://www.learnenglish.org.uk/kids)  
[www.learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org](http://www.learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org)  
[www.cartoonstock.com](http://www.cartoonstock.com)  
[www.tes.co.uk](http://www.tes.co.uk)  
[www.puzzlemaker.com](http://www.puzzlemaker.com)  
[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)  
[www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)  
[www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)  
[www.macmillanenglish.com](http://www.macmillanenglish.com)  
[www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)  
[www.eslpartyland.com](http://www.eslpartyland.com)  
[www.eslgold.com](http://www.eslgold.com)  
[www.esl-lab.com](http://www.esl-lab.com)  
[www.eslflow.com](http://www.eslflow.com)  
[www.eslflashcards.com](http://www.eslflashcards.com) [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com)  
[www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)  
[www.bogglesworldesl.com](http://www.bogglesworldesl.com)  
[www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)  
[www.projectbritain.com](http://www.projectbritain.com)  
[www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc)  
[www.developingteachers.com](http://www.developingteachers.com)  
[www.lyrics.com](http://www.lyrics.com)  
[www.busyteacher.org](http://www.busyteacher.org)  
[www.letssingit.com](http://www.letssingit.com)  
[www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com)  
[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)  
[www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)  
[www.eslprintables.com](http://www.eslprintables.com)  
[www.cambridgeesol.org/teach](http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach)  
[www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com)

## 1 1.9 BOOK LIST

You are not obliged to purchase any materials, however some assistants have commented that some of the books below are useful for English Language Assistants; particularly those who may wish to engage in private tutoring or pursue a career in language teaching in the future. Also look out for the series of handbooks and source books for language teachers published by CUP, Longman, Macmillan and OUP.

### Dictionaries

- BBC English Dictionary (BBC English/Harper Collins)
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Longman)
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Oxford University Press)
- Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (Longman)

### Grammar Reference Books

- A Practical English Grammar (A.J. Thomson & A.V. Martinet, Oxford University Press)
- Current English Grammar (S. Chalker, Phoenix)
- Basic English Usage (M. Swan, Oxford University Press)
- Practical English Usage (M. Swan, Oxford University Press)
- Discover English (R. Bolitho & B. Tomlinson, Macmillan Heinemann)
- English Grammar in Use (R. Murphy, Cambridge University Press)
- Advanced Grammar in Use (R. Murphy, Cambridge University Press)
- How English Works (Michael Swan and Catherine Walter, Oxford University Press)
- Learner English (Michael Swan & Bernard Smith (eds.) Cambridge University Press)

### Basic Methodology Books

- The Practice of English Language Teaching J. Harmer Longman
- How to Teach English J. Harmer Longman
- How to Teach Grammar S. Thornbury Longman
- How to Use the Internet in ELT D. Teeler & P. Gray Longman
- One to One Peter Wilberg Language Teaching Publications



## 12. SPOTLIGHT ON AUSTRIA

Austria, officially the Republic of Austria, is a landlocked country in Central Europe which borders 8 other European nations. It has a population of around 8.8 million people living within its 9 federal states, or *Bundesländer*, a quarter of which live in its capital, Vienna. The Euro is the official currency.

Austria is famous for its mountains and skiing with the Alps covering around 60% of the country. Großglockner is its highest peak at nearly 3800m in height.

Although written German in Austria is close to the Standard German variety in Germany, the Bavarian and Alemannic dialects of German are widely spoken in the country. There are also some minority languages spoken in the east (Hungarian, Slovene and Burgenland Croatian).

### 12.1 BUNDESLÄNDER

Austria is divided into 9 federal states (or *Bundesländer*) with each state having its own rich history. Together they make up the Republic of Austria.

Whereas there are some matters decided on a devolved level, including some educational matters, some public health matters, legislature, and environmental matters, most decisions are made on a federal level. *Bundesländer* in Austria are a lot less autonomous than the similarly named states in Germany. However Austrians tend to strongly identify with their home *Land*.

See below a list of the *Bundesländer* (in German) with their abbreviations:

- Burgenland (Bgld.)
- Steiermark (Stmk.)
- Kärnten (Ktn.)
- Tirol (T/Tirol)
- Niederösterreich (NÖ)
- Vorarlberg (Vbg.)
- Oberösterreich (OÖ)
- Wien (W/Wien)

- Salzburg (Sbg.)

### 12.2 NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

Austria has many official public holidays every year, most observed nationwide, some local (see parenthesis). In all cases you ***should check public holidays with your school***. The following holidays will be observed in 2020-21:

- 24 Sept: Rupertikirtag (Sbg. only)
- 26 Oct: National Day
- 1 Nov: All Saints' Day
- 15 Nov: St Leopold's Day (Wien only)
- 8 Dec: The Immaculate Conception
- 25 Dec: Christmas Day
- 26 Dec: St Stephen's Day
- 1 Jan: New Year's Day
- 6 Jan: The Epiphany
- 22 Apr: Easter Monday
- 1 May: Labour Day
- 30 May: Ascension Day
- 10 Jun: Whit Monday
- 20 Jun: Corpus Christi

### 12.3 EMERGENCY SERVICES IN AUSTRIA

In any emergency	call	112
Medical assistance:	call	144
Fire Brigade:	call	122
Police:	call	133
Mountain rescue:	call	140

Urgent assistance from the **British Embassy**:

Tel: +43 (1) 716 130

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

## 12.4 BRITISH EMBASSY

For up-to-date British Embassy and consulate contact details in Austria please refer to:

[www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy).

Please take note of the address of the British Embassy in Austria below in case of emergency

or loss of your passport. Assistants who do not hold British citizenship should check with their own Consulate/Embassies in Austria.

### **The British Embassy Vienna**

Jauresgasse 12  
1030 Vienna, Austria

Tel: +43 (1) 716 130

Email: [press@britishembassy.at](mailto:press@britishembassy.at)



## 13. OTHER INFORMATION

### 13.1 DRUGS& POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS

Co-operating partners abroad have requested that the attention of British visitors be drawn to the severe penalties imposed for drug offences and partaking 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.

### 13.2 FACE COVERING IN AUSTRIA

Since 1 October 2017, it is illegal in Austria to wear in public any form of clothing or object which conceals the face and makes facial features unrecognisable. This includes national/ethno-religious clothing and costumes which conceal the face. It does not include head coverings where facial features can be easily discerned. In certain circumstances, face masks, medical masks, costumes and protecting the face in cold weather will be allowed.

Those in violation of this law may face an on-the-spot fine of up to €150. Those failing to uncover the face after being asked to do so may be required to attend a police station.

For full information please check the [Bundesministerium Inneres's website](#).

### 13.3 SPOUSES / PARTNERS / DEPENDANTS

Assistants should note that the allowance is intended to provide for one person only. However, if an assistant's spouse remains in the UK and is unemployed, he/she may be barred from income support or be required to refund whatever was received as such since the start of the assistantship. Enquiries should be made well in advance in order to prevent financial difficulties from arising during a period of appointment.

### 13.4 REFERENCES

Please note the British Council is not the employer of UK assistants abroad and should not be given as a referee in future job applications. In general the head of the school would be the most appropriate referee.

### 13.5 SOCIAL MEDIA

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an ELA. 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 say on your wall 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. This is likely to be regarded as inappropriate behaviour. Check with teachers about the school's internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school. It is exceptionally important that you understand issues around child protection, both to protect the students and also to protect you from any damaging and potentially serious accusations.

### 13.6 USEFUL WEBSITES/INFORMATION

You can read a case study written by former assistants on our website here: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/how-many-languages-do-you-need-learn-year-abroad>

Other useful websites include:

- [www.thirdyearabroad.com](http://www.thirdyearabroad.com)
- [www.gov.uk/government/world/Austria](http://www.gov.uk/government/world/Austria)
- [www.britishcouncil.at](http://www.britishcouncil.at)
- [www.orf.at](http://www.orf.at)
- [www.google.at](http://www.google.at)

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

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