

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS PROGRAMME
MEXICO

MEXICO COUNTRY NOTES 2019-20

Document compiled by British Council: Information correct 27/06/19. We are aware that information can change throughout the year. Please inform us should you discover any errors.

NOTES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS APPOINTED TO MEXICO IN 2019-2020

This document is Country Notes for the 2019/20 English Language Assistants Programme in Mexico. Any previous country notes relating to previous years should be ignored for the 2019/20 academic year.

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 change

FOREWORD

Congratulations on your recent allocation to a post as an English Language Assistant in Mexico. 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 Mexico. This document should be read carefully, retained for reference and considered in conjunction with any papers issued by British Council Mexico. 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.

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. 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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Mexico's vibrant culture is evident wherever you look. You can find lots of murals, galleries, paintings and folk-art tradition. The country also is famous for its ancient civilisations, architecture and writers. It offers rainforests and beaches, deserts and snow-capped volcanoes. Almost 90% of Mexico's just over 126 million inhabitants are Roman Catholic. The official language is Spanish, but around 68 or more indigenous languages are also still spoken.

1.0 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 COOPERATING PARTNER

The Language Assistants Programme in Mexico is administered by Dalia Carrizosa and Cristina Rodriguez at the British Council in Mexico City:

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2.0 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](#).

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.

Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is an excellent resource and you should draw on this during your lessons. Please see the section entitled 'Teaching' for classroom tips and resources.

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.

- www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/whole_manual.pdf
- www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant/essential-uk

Conditions in Mexico 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. You should then follow the line of referral sent to you if the problem cannot be solved in this way. The British Council in the UK will be happy to offer advice but should only be contacted when all other attempts to solve the issue have been made. Problems are dealt with most quickly and effectively locally and if contacted, the British Council in the UK will instruct you to take the steps mentioned above.

Consider these steps to avoid problems:

- Form a good working relationship with other members of staff
- Introduce yourself to all members of the English department
- Be patient and polite and be aware of the work pressure of others
- Do not correct the teacher in front of students

- Be punctual, responsible and prepare adequately for your lessons
- Meet regularly with your mentor. This gives them the opportunity 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 OK. Your institution will not appreciate it if you suffer in silence and complain six months later. A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in Mexico 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.

2.2 OBSERVATION PERIOD

When you first arrive you should ask for a period of observation of 1-2 weeks. It may not be offered to you automatically. Observation will allow you to familiarise yourself with the environment, to experience classroom management techniques as well as to get to know the names, faces and personalities of your pupils and gauge their level of English.

Try to note the following:

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

3.0 ALLOCATION

3.1 PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Mexico this year will be for from September 2019 until June 2020. The number of hours worked will be around 14 per week (this does **not include preparation for your classes and hours between classes**) but please check your contract carefully. Please check whether or

not you will be paid for any extra hours worked.

3.2 HOLIDAYS

Assistants are entitled to the usual school holidays, details of which you should be able to obtain from your institution. Government offices and businesses are closed during public holidays.

There will be a break in December and one during Easter (Semana Santa), and you will be paid during this time. Please check the exact dates with your host institution before you book any travel.

You should not be absent on other occasions without prior written permission.

3.3 STAYING FOR A CONSECUTIVE YEAR

ELAs in Mexico can stay for a consecutive year if they wish and have performed satisfactorily. Details about the application process will be sent to you in December.

3.4 PREDECESSORS

Contact details of assistants appointed to your area in 2018-2019 have been sent to you. Past assistants have emphasised how useful it is to contact former assistants and have described their advice as invaluable

4.0 PRE-DEPARTURE

4.1 FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

The FCO has a wealth of resources we recommend you utilise. Before travelling to Mexico you should:

- Check the FCO's [travel advice pages](#) and subscribe 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.
- Read the 'Advice for Travellers' documentation provided by the FCO, which can be found [here](#)
- Follow the FCO social media pages for up-to-date alerts and information

4.2 PASSPORTS & VISAS

Before leaving the UK you must be in possession of a full passport, valid for the duration of your stay in Mexico. Your visa can only be issued when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico City has sent authorisation to the Mexican Consulate in London or wherever you selected to collect your visa from. Please note that this is likely to happen between mid-July and mid-August 2019.

For your visa you will need:

- A valid passport for the duration of your stay in Mexico and photocopy of the pages where the personal details and holder's photograph are found.
- A completed visa application form (PDF sent by email).
- One UK-size passport photograph (it must be in colour, with the face clearly visible without glasses, white background and be taken within the last month).
- A copy of the acceptance letter from the SEP signed by each applicant. (This document will be sent directly to the Mexican Consulate for you, but very soon you all should have a scanned copy of the document that you can print and sign just in case).

Please state on your visa application form that you are sponsored by the Secretaria de Educación Pública to cooperate as a Language Assistant at the institution.

After obtaining your visa in the UK, when you arrive in Mexico and have a permanent address you will need to register as a 'cooperante

residente temporal' locally in Mexico. You need to do this within 30 days after arrival or you may have to pay a fine. Some assistants in the past have not been allowed to leave Mexico if they forgot to register. The British Council and SEP will give you more information on how to register and the cost during the briefing when you arrive in Mexico.

Please bear in mind that visa procedures may vary from year to year. The British Council tries to obtain the latest information on your visa requirements but we are unable to accept any liability if the information provided here differs from what the Consulate requires from you.

4.2 INSURANCE

Assistants in Mexico are required to provide proof of their insurance policy to SEP and must therefore take out comprehensive insurance to cover you during your time in Mexico. It is important to cover medical and other expenses, personal accident and personal liability, luggage and personal possessions and cancellation charges. We recommended you research the various options available and consult other/former assistants before purchasing a suitable policy. However, any insurance you purchase should include cover for emergency treatment and repatriation.

The British Council will not be responsible for you while you are in Mexico, although we will offer support when necessary.

If you do fall ill make sure you keep copies of all medical bills, receipts or other documents. You will then need these to make a claim.

The British Council is unable to advise on private insurance packages, so you are recommended to consult an insurance broker for professional advice and to check whether you are covered by your parents' insurance policy. Undergraduate assistants 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. We recommended you research the various options available and consult other/former assistants before purchasing a

suitable policy. However, any insurance you purchase should include cover for emergency treatment and repatriation.

Please send British Council Mexico details of your health insurance immediately to Cristina.Rodriguez@britishcouncil.org

4.3 DOCUMENTS TO TAKE

We recommend that you scan important documents before leaving the UK and email these to yourself so that you have access to them while you are away. Documents you may need access to include; birth certificate (although you should not need the original) and scanned copies of the photo page of your passport, visa and driving licence (take this with you). You should carry a photocopy of the photo page of your passport rather than the original and always have this on you as a means of ID. We also recommend learning your passport number as you may need it to fill in multiple forms. It is also worth having a couple of passport sized photos to take with you as you may need these for various ID cards or in the event of losing your passport.

5.0 MONEY MATTERS

5.1 MONEY MATTERS

The monthly allowance for 2019-20 will be \$8,000 (Mexican pesos) and this will provide a reasonable basic standard of living for one person. However, please note that assistants working in Mexico City, La Paz, Villahermosa, Cardenas, Queretaro and Cozumel may find they will need to supplement this monthly allowance with additional hours at your university to maintain a comfortable standard of living. You are strongly advised to be sensitive when talking about your payment with other teachers.

Allowance payments are made by SEP who will confirm your estimated payment dates during the year. Please be aware that assistants in the past have experienced regular payment delays. Whilst we understand it can be frustrating, please try to be patient in the face of such delays and budget carefully. We strongly

recommend having savings to use in such circumstances.

Please note that SEP is responsible for payment of language assistants. In the event of payment delays, British Council Mexico will support you and be in constant communication with SEP on your behalf. However, the British Council is not able to provide any financial support.

5.2 ADDITIONAL INCOME

Unfortunately, the visa you receive does not permit you to work, other than at your allocated institution, in Mexico. Therefore, you should take into consideration that acquiring any type of formal job in Mexico will affect your migration status and you could be dismissed from the programme.

5.3 BANKS

During your induction you will open a bank account with help of SEP in order to obtain your debit card. Your allowance will be deposited into this bank account every month.

Many ELAs use a cash card that often doesn't charge for using your card abroad and isn't linked to your British bank account. You may wish to consider this as an option to using your British account until you have a Mexican bank account.

5.4 LOST OR STOLEN CREDIT CARDS

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

5.5 GRADUATES WITH STUDENT LOANS

If you will be overseas for more than 3 months, you will need to let student finance know. 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.

Whilst in Mexico the money you receive is considered a monthly allowance or grant, rather than a salary. This means you are officially taking part in a grant funded mobility programme rather than formal employment. Previous assistants who declared their Language Assistant role as formal employment rather than a grant funded mobility programme faced challenges with the student loans company, who requested copies of employment contracts.

You will be required to provide evidence of income or means of support. They will then send you a repayment schedule showing how much you need to pay each month. Your monthly payments will be based upon the earnings threshold for your destination country. More information can be found online [here](#). Please note that the British Council cannot advise further on student loans matters.

6.0 HEALTH & WELLBEING

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

For information in insurance please see section 4.2 of this document.

6.1 VACCINATIONS

The British Council is unable to pay for your vaccines but we recommend strongly that you consult your GP and get information on the vaccinations needed for Mexico before you travel. [Fit for travel](#), NHS website will be a useful starting point.

6.2 MEDICATION

Make sure that if you need medication you bring a large enough supply. Label it clearly before boarding a plane. If you have to carry syringes or needles, please remember to get a letter from your GP explaining their medical necessity. We also recommend checking your airline's website to see whether any other documentation is

needed. Country specific information and advice can be found on the National Travel Health Network and Centre [website](#).

6.3 MENTAL HEALTH

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

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

The Foreign Commonwealth Office provides information about mental health and travel via the following links. The advice contains guidance on travelling abroad and mental health, and information about how the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is able to 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 English law and practice and that of other countries.

[Mental Health: Travelling Abroad](#)

[Mental Health: Travelling Abroad Checklist](#)

7.0 ARRIVAL

7.1 INDUCTION

Assistants should arrive in Mexico between 24 and 25 August; British Council Mexico will welcome you at the airport. There will be an induction course between the 26-30 August by British Council Mexico and the SEP. British Council Mexico will inform you about finalised dates very soon. Please inform British Council Mexico of your flight information when you book your flight so that transportation and accommodation can be arranged. If you do not arrive on these dates, then you will be expected to make your own transport arrangements. You

will not have to make reservations for travelling to your final destination until you arrive in Mexico as your host institution will help you to sort this out upon arrival.

Accommodation will be reserved for you at a hostel for the duration of the induction and you will need to cover the cost. Further information about hostel details will follow soon. Your booking confirmation will be done when you send your flight information.

7.2 ACCOMMODATION

Temporary accommodation may be arranged for the first 1-2 weeks in your town/city, but if not, we strongly recommend staying in a hostel/Airbnb/hotel for the first few weeks of your assistantship. This will give you time to get to know the area and to work out where it is best for you to live, based on where your institution is, and where you plan to carry out activities and hobbies.

When it comes to organising permanent accommodation, you will likely have to do this yourself, but your tutor should be able to tell you what to expect and give advice and help. You may also wish to check with your predecessor if applicable.

The first thing to do when looking for permanent accommodation is to ask your tutor 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. 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. Having temporary accommodation in a hotel/hostel etc lined up can make this easier.

Do not take out a contract on your accommodation until you know the location of your institution and have viewed the property.

Please note that the British Council is not in a position to provide or to help find accommodation.

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

- advertise on the school/staff notice board and ask around the staff; do NOT advertise in local papers or public places
- 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
- contact 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 their fees are often lower
- search for a room or flat on the internet

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 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. Once 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. When you leave your accommodation, remember to cancel any personal contracts e.g. internet or utilities.

8.0 SETTLING IN

In Latin America there is often a culture of anti-formality which might give the impression of a lack of organisation and forward planning. Things tend to happen at the very last minute and many assistants from the UK find it hard to adjust to what they consider to be a disorganised society.

Usually what is lacking in forward planning is made up for in making newcomers feel welcome. However, you will need to prepare yourself for certain frustrations particularly at bureaucratic level, even prior to departure, especially when it comes to finding out specific details regarding your post and visa applications.

Showing an interest in Mexican culture, especially nature and music will certainly endear you to the locals. We recommend you read up as much as possible before you go as this will help you make conversation and talk knowledgeably to people you meet in the first few weeks.

8.1 CULTURE SHOCK

Even if you have travelled to non-European destinations before, you might feel slightly overwhelmed in the beginning by your experience. Some areas can be very poor and you might struggle to accept this. Latin America is also known for its alleged chaos. Be open to changes of plans (social and at work), lessons cancelled at the last minute etc. A different climate and location as well as feeling jet lagged after the long flight and struggling with speaking Spanish all day long might lead to temporary disorientation, self-consciousness and exhaustion. This usually leads to feeling homesick but please be assured that this is a very common and normal feeling which usually disappears after a few weeks or even days. Don't be afraid to admit that you are homesick and to reach out for help!

There are some ways which might help you to overcome this initial culture shock. Try not to be too hard on yourself; yes, you have come to Mexico to live and work there but that does not mean that you have to be like one of the locals within a week. Give yourself time to get over the jet lag and to explore your area. Do not stay in contact only with UK assistants during your assistantship as this might lead to your feeling alienated for the whole time of your appointment. However, it is important that you contact them and your family and friends back home in the beginning to tell them about your experiences. Other assistants can be a great support as they are going through the same process. Once you have met local people and have tackled bureaucracy you will realise that life in Mexico gets much easier and you will have an enjoyable

time. Religion and family play an important role in everyday life so although you may at first feel like an outsider, once you have proved your interest in local people and their culture, you will be welcomed into these tight-knit groups.

The way you behave and represent the UK will shape the view of the UK of those Mexicans with who you are in contact. There are a number of frustrations that Language Assistants to Latin America frequently feel; attitudes towards timekeeping in Latin America can be somewhat lax, particularly in social settings (although you will be expected to be punctual to your classes) Machismo and general gender issues might be something with which female assistants, in particular, struggle to manage and unwanted attention in the street should be expected by female assistants. Discourage this by dressing appropriately and trying to blend in. Bureaucracy can also be very tiresome. Do not get angry as this usually does not lead to any results – especially when dealing with people in authority. Ultimately, remember that you are an ambassador for the UK – do not criticise what you cannot change and above all, keep your sense of humour!

Politeness and respect are seen as important everywhere in Latin America. People generally shake hands when they meet each other and start a conversation with a formal greeting. In Mexico the formal addresses usted/ustedes are used almost exclusively and you should address older people as señor/señora.

8.2 PRACTICALITIES

The electrical current in Mexico is 110 Volts, and they have different styles of plugs (a plug with two parallel flat blades and a plug with two parallel flat blades above a large circular grounding pin) so make sure that you get proper adapters. The 110V current means that electrical appliances that do not have dual voltage (110V~220V) will not work. You can check this on the appliance itself.

Mexicans use the metric system for weights and measurements. Distances are measured in km.

The time difference between Mexico and the UK varies. Mexico is between 6 and 8 hours behind

GMT, depending on where you are in the country, and observes daylight saving.

Important Numbers:

Country code 0052

Fire 911

Police 911

Medical emergency 911

8.3 SECURITY

Consider this advice and remember to avoid insecure situations and stay alert.

Being aware of potential dangers and taking precautions not to stand out will make a considerable difference to your personal security. You should be aware that looking like you are not in a familiar environment or have something worth stealing may mark you out as a victim of crime.

You should try to be inconspicuous and look as if you know where you are. Leave expensive watches and flashy jewellery at home. You should avoid carrying large quantities of cash and valuable objects (cameras, etc), but if you must carry them then keep them concealed. Do not carry your passport with you, but you should carry photocopies of the main pages (including number, identification and visa, if any) at all times as a means of identification if stopped by the police.

The drugs war is a serious issue in Mexico, with armed cartels possibly matching the Mexican army in size. It would be impossible to overstate how serious the consequences of getting involved in drugs could be. Drug-taking and drug related crime is a serious offence in Latin America. If convicted, you could be fined or even receive a prison sentence. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office will not be able to get you out of prison or detention, and you will not receive special treatment because you are British. The FCO also cannot prevent the local authorities from deporting you upon release. Furthermore, you will be dismissed with immediate effect from the Language Assistants

programme, without a university report and without a reference.

In many Mexican regions, drinking alcoholic drinks outside, such as in the street, a park etc. is not allowed, and if caught you may face imprisonment.

The Foreign Office regularly updates their travel advice and this can be checked on the link provided here. You must look at this website before planning any trips and follow the [FCO's advice](#).

You should always ask for and balance this with local advice. You must check this website frequently to get the most up-to-date advice.

Please take note of the address of the Embassy below in case of emergency or loss of your passport.

The British Embassy
Río Lerma 71
Col Cuauhtémoc
06500 México DF
Tel: (0052) 55 1670 3200 (if you are calling from within Mexico City do not add the (55) area code. You just need to dial 1670)
Email: ukinmexico.info@fco.gov.uk

8.4 CREATING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Even if you have been to Mexico 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'll have a lot of administrative matters to deal with.

The best way to start is with colleagues at your host institution. Make sure you always seem positive, enthusiastic and willing to learn. Socialise as much as you can with colleagues and accept all invitations to events, dinner 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 university life and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the university, such as sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. 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.

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 get in contact with a previous assistant in your region and ask them to give you any e-mail addresses or numbers of contacts they made.

Here are some other ways to meet people in Mexico:

- Enrol for an evening class/join a sports club/music group/choir etc
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival etc
- Join a Facebook group. 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"'

Former assistants have recommended not spending all of your time with other assistants, as you won't be able to integrate into your community and life in Mexico. 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 host institution if they have contact details.

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.

- 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.

9.0 WORKING IN MEXICO

9.1 ABSENCE FROM WORK

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

Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the institution(s), who is within his/her right to refuse it and once confirmed to British Council Mexico. You are reminded that if you are absent

from institution without prior authorisation your allowance will be discontinued from the first day of your absence. You should get any authorisation for additional leave in writing.

In the unlikely and unfortunate event that it becomes necessary to resign from your post, you must give sufficient prior notice in writing of your intended departure to the institution and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full, following the process stated by SEP. If you are an undergraduate you must also inform your university/college in the UK.

9.3 DRESS CODE

Check with your mentor teacher what the dress code is at your institution and observe the local dress code, particularly in the classroom. We would generally advise the dress code in Latin America is more informal and jeans are likely to be acceptable attire. However, check this with your mentor and follow their lead.

9.4 LINE OF REFERRAL

Conditions in universities in Mexico differ from those in this country. Any difficulties should be discussed with the teacher of the class concerned in the first instance. If the problem cannot be solved then talk to your mentor teacher, and then British Council Mexico initially. Satisfactory solutions can usually be found through such consultations. The British Council in the UK will be happy to offer advice, but should only be contacted when all other attempts to solve the issue have been made. Problems are dealt with most quickly and effectively locally and British Council will instruct you to take the steps mentioned above. **Please see the provided line of referral document for information on who to contact.**

To avoid problems at your institution, 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 pressure 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 ok. The staff will not appreciate it if you suffer in silence and complain six months later. A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship was the best year of their life. This can raise expectations and often leads to people feeling low especially during the first few weeks until they settle in.



10.0 TEACHING RESOURCES

10.1 BRITISH COUNCIL 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.

- [TeachingEnglish.org](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk) is an online resource centre produced jointly by the British Council and the BBC:
- The British Council Learn English website is an excellent free online resource for students of English with lots of games, stories, listening activities and grammar exercises:

This may be a useful tool for you to use for your teaching but also to pass on to your students for them to access from home.

Some other websites which may be useful are listed below:

- <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>
- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org>
- <https://go.edmodo.com/teachers>
- <https://www.teach-this.com>
- <https://en.islcollective.com>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJsSEDFnMFvW9JWU6XUn0Q>
- <https://premierskillsenglish.britishcouncil.org/>

10.2 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, postcards, examples of UK coins and notes, train tickets and timetables, stamps, posters and tea towels to decorate walls, 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, recordings 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 institution 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.

10.3 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. This can be downloaded here: Please read this carefully as it is extremely useful in preparing you for your assistantship.

11.0 TRAVELLING AROUND MEXICO

Ask your teaching centre to provide you with a credencial de Estudiante/Profesor, with which you will be able to claim discounts on flights/bus travel and entrance fees.

Please remember that we only pass on information. It is up to you to carefully research and compare each company before booking travel, and take into consideration the safety tips the British Embassy will give you, and notify British Council Mexico about your travel plans.

All large cities in Mexico have passenger airports. The country's largest airline is Aeroméxico. Interjet and Volaris are becoming more popular but are more expensive. It is up to you to carefully research and compare each airline before booking your flights but remember that flights are usually much more expensive than the bus.

Most cities and towns have a central bus terminal and intercity buses are frequent and go nearly everywhere. Bus fares vary depending on company and season so please make sure to check thoroughly before buying tickets. More expensive and comfortable companies include ADO, Primera Plus and ETN and they each have websites.

If you intend to rent a car in Mexico please keep in mind that you must have valid driver's licence (your home license is OK). It might be worth

checking locally which renting agencies are recommended. If you wish to rent a car you must be at least 21 years old (sometimes 25) and must have a valid driver's licence plus a credit card and a passport. Please make also sure that you are adequately insured.

For all travel advice in Mexico please see the [FCO advice](#).

There is a lot of very useful information including road travel safety and advice. Ensure that you read this thoroughly and that you check it regularly.

If you intend to travel around Mexico or other Latin American countries, remember to take photocopies of important documents (e.g. plane ticket, passport, etc) and keep them separate from the original. Again, scans of all documents sent to yourself via email are recommended.

Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey are cities with an underground system (metro) but taking the bus is a much better way of getting to know the area to which you have been appointed. Past assistants have found [Ticketbus](#) and [ado](#) useful for finding out bus and coach times and booking tickets. City buses stop only at specific bus stops (paradas) that may or may not be marked. Please check this with your tutor.

It is recommended that you keep all of your valuables in a backpack or bag under your constant supervision. We strongly advise you not to leave your valuables in the luggage that you will put in the baggage compartment. You must inform your mentor about your travel plans, even for short trips.

¡Buen viaje! We hope you enjoy your assistantship in Mexico.