Information booklet for Language Assistants and host institutions

Modern Language Assistants
2019–20

www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/employ-language-assistant
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Introduction

This booklet is intended to help Language Assistants and host schools prepare for the assistantship, and to provide a source of reference and information for both Language Assistants and their employers during the year.

Most of the information applies to Language Assistants from every country. Where the information is specific to any one country, this is clearly indicated. For simplicity we use the word ‘school’ for all kinds of institutions to which Language Assistants may be appointed.

The main school in which Language Assistants work, which is most likely the school making the first contact with them, is referred to as the host school.

1.01

Terms and conditions of the job – frequently asked questions

How long is the contract for Language Assistants?

Apart from Language Assistants from China, the period of appointment usually runs from 1 September (posts in Scotland and Northern Ireland) or 1 October (posts in England and Wales) until 31 May. Language Assistants from China usually work from mid-September until 30 June. Language Assistants’ contracts may be extended for an additional period of up to four weeks. This may be before or after the standard period of appointment. This must be agreed in writing between the Language Assistant and the employer in advance. Schools / local authorities should notify the British Council if they have agreed a longer period of appointment with their assistant(s).

Is a Language Assistant the same as a Classroom Assistant?

No, these are two entirely different roles. Language Assistants are in the UK as part of an international exchange programme. The purpose of their role is to assist with foreign language lessons. They have a temporary contract for eight to ten months and are not paid for the summer holidays.

What is the status of a Language Assistant?

Language Assistants do not have the status of a student, except in the matter of council tax (see Section 1.13). In all other respects, the status of a Language Assistant is that of a paid employee of the host school or local authority.

Who is a Language Assistant’s employer?

Language Assistants are employed by either the host school or the local authority. Language Assistants are not employed or paid by the British Council. Employers have the same right of dismissal over their Language Assistant as over other members of staff. If a breach of the rules or gross misconduct occurs, it is up to the school or local authority to assess the severity of this and then deal with it in accordance with their own procedures. Should any problems arise with the Language Assistant, employers must ensure the British Council is informed immediately. The British Council is responsible for informing the appropriate overseas partner organisation whenever disciplinary action is to be taken against a Language Assistant, and it is therefore essential that the correct procedure is followed. Although the British Council and/or relevant cultural organisations in the UK provide inductions for Language Assistants upon arrival in the UK, local authorities and/or schools are also asked to provide professional and administrative inductions to their Language Assistants and to monitor their progress on a regular basis.

Do Language Assistants get an official contract?

Language Assistants should receive and sign a Statement of Employment, which constitutes their employment contract, from either their host school or local authority. It is a legal requirement (Employment Rights Act 1996) that this information is given to an employee in writing within two months of their start date. The best practice is for this to be signed as soon as the Language Assistant arrives at school, and for two copies to be printed, each of them signed by both parties.
How many hours do Language Assistants work per week?

Language Assistants work a minimum of 12 contact hours each week. If a Language Assistant is asked to work additional contact hours, and they agree, they should be paid for the extra hours at a fixed rate as outlined on our website, up to a maximum of 18 hours per week in total. Any additional hours worked should be agreed in writing by both parties. Lesson preparation time is in addition to the 12 contact hours.

In the case of Language Assistants from non-EU countries, under the Home Office’s immigration rules, permission for additional hours must also be sought from the British Council.

Although it cannot be guaranteed, the Language Assistant’s timetable should be blocked to allow reasonable free time and, where possible, one full day free per week.

How many schools can a language assistant work in?

Language Assistants may be required to work in more than one school – they are often shared between two or three neighbouring institutions. If a Language Assistant works in more than one school, one of them acts as the ‘host school’ and will be responsible for co-ordinating a timetable and providing administrative support.

Unless the Language Assistant is employed by a local authority, the host school is also responsible for paying the assistant’s salary, which is then reimbursed by the other sharing schools if applicable. A named member of staff should be designated as the Language Assistant’s mentor, and will normally be based in the host school.

Language Assistants should only be working in a maximum of three schools. However, some secondary schools may also send their Language Assistant to work at a local primary school for a couple of hours a week. Schools / local authorities wishing to do this should make it clear when requesting an assistant from the British Council, and seek permission in advance of offering the assistant a post. Employers are asked to avoid timetabling assistants to work at more than one school on the same day where possible. However, if this cannot be avoided then the employer should cover the assistants’ travel expenses between the two schools.

The British Council Language Assistants team needs to be notified of all sharing arrangements.

Sharing arrangements in Scotland:

In some local authorities in Scotland, it is possible that Language Assistants could be allocated to more than three schools in order to support the Scottish Government’s 1+2 languages initiative.

This means that, although assistants will be allocated to a host secondary school and two primary schools as normal, the primary schools could change every six weeks. In these cases, assistants should remain at the host secondary school for the entire period of appointment and spend at least 50% of their timetabled hours there.

Please note that these types of flexible arrangements are only possible in special circumstances with advance agreement in writing from the British Council. In all cases, assistants should still only be working in three schools at any one time, and the rules outlined above regarding reimbursement of travel costs should still apply.

How much is a Language Assistant’s allowance?

The current rates for 2019-20 will be on our website in early to mid-June 2019. Any changes from the 2018-19 rates are minimal and in line with inflation.

Please note that the monthly allowance is based on a Language Assistant working the standard 12 hours per week, and is a monthly rate which is not broken down per hour. The only part of a Language Assistant’s allowance which should be calculated hourly is for any hours they are contracted to work which are in addition to the standard 12 hours per week.

Do Language Assistants get holidays?

Language Assistants will have the same fully paid holidays as the other teaching staff in their school and are expected to be present during term time. Please note that if an assistant is contracted to work for more than the standard 12 hours per week, they should continue to be paid for these during holiday periods, so that their pay remains the same each month.

Can Language Assistants extend their contracts for a second year?

The British Council and our overseas partner agencies abroad only allow Language Assistants from France to remain for a second year in the same school, as for all other countries there is a long waiting list of candidates every year wanting to gain experience in the UK and we must give priority to these first-time applicants. It is not possible, however, for French assistants in Scotland to remain a consecutive year.
Getting prepared

1.02

Familiarisation with the UK education systems

The United Kingdom is comprised of four countries: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, each with their own education system. We recommend that Language Assistants familiarise themselves with the system of the country to which they are allocated.

For up-to-date information visit the following websites:

- Understanding the National Curriculum (England and Wales)
- Curriculum for Excellence (Scotland)
- The Northern Ireland Curriculum

Below is a brief comparison of the different stages currently in use in primary and secondary schools in the UK:

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<th>Description/stages</th>
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<td>Key Stage 3 (KS3)</td>
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<td>16–18</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Primary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Level</td>
<td>8/9 – 11/12</td>
<td>Primary 5–7 (P5–P7)</td>
<td>Primary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third and Fourth Level</td>
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<td>Secondary 1–3 (S1–S3)</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
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<td>Senior Phase</td>
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<td>Secondary 4–6/college or other</td>
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<th>National Curriculum, Northern Ireland</th>
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<tr>
<td>Key Stage 1 (KS1)</td>
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<td>Key Stage 2 (KS2)</td>
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<td>Post-16</td>
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1.03
Thinking ahead about the role of a Language Assistant

Language Assistants are native speakers who bring the language and culture of their country to the classroom. They should therefore use every opportunity to help make language learning relevant and fun for their pupils. Keep in mind that some of the pupils with whom Language Assistants will be working may never have visited, or even met someone from a country where the language they are learning is spoken, so the more ‘real’ a Language Assistant can make their language learning experience, the better. Although the daily work of a Language Assistant will depend on the class teacher(s) and the age of the pupils, assistants can expect their tasks to include: working together with a teacher in the classroom, working with small groups of pupils, helping to prepare pupils for oral examinations, contributing to cross-curricular work in collaboration with other subject areas, or helping with clubs.

Language Assistants are employed as assistants and not as teachers. They should not be asked to take sole responsibility for a whole class, deal with discipline issues independently or be solely responsible for marking pupils’ work or exam papers.

The British Council encourages Language Assistants to undertake several projects in the target language over the course of the year, such as culture evenings, pen pal exchanges or even school plays, which can be highly beneficial for the school and create a lasting impact.

Compiling resource materials for lessons

One way of making language learning real for pupils is by bringing authentic materials from a country where the target language is spoken into the classroom. Language Assistants should take the opportunity to collect a variety of resources before leaving their home country. There are a lot of authentic materials that will come in useful for lessons, such as:

- photographs – the Language Assistant’s house, street, town or village, region, family, pets
- maps (for example of the Language Assistant’s home town and/or of countries where the Language Assistant’s language is an official language)
- tourist information – hotels, campsites, monuments, price lists, opening and closing times, museum tickets, tourist brochures and postcards
- music – popular and traditional
- easy-to-understand textbooks related to social themes or illustrating grammar points (for example, conditional tense)
- audio-visual aids – weather information, quiz shows, word games, soap operas (especially those known in the UK), adverts, cartoons
- television/cinema listings and reviews
- local newspapers, teen magazines, weather forecasts, minor news items, problem pages
- games
- a school timetable/a school report
- transport timetables and tickets
- real menus from restaurants, price lists from bars
- empty packets – toothpaste, soup, chocolates, etc.

The more materials Language Assistants can find the better. Language Assistants should think about what worked well for themselves personally as a language student and about which items they find interesting when in a foreign country (keeping in mind that the language level of their pupils may not be the same as the level of English of students in their country). Language Assistants may wish to contact their school(s) before leaving their home country in order to find out if there is anything specific they should bring and to find out about topics they are likely to cover during their assistanship.

The British Council also provides online pedagogic support for Language Assistants. Language Assistants and teachers are able to download teaching materials from the British Council website.

In addition, there are some guides produced by various cultural organisations, which also give information about aspects of life and education in the UK and are available in a variety of languages:

Mallette pédagogique pour les assistants (Institut Français)

Guía para auxiliares de conversación de español en el Reino Unido (Ministerio de Educación)
What will the role involve?

Most Language Assistants will be working in secondary schools, however some will be working in primary schools, and a small number in sixth form colleges, universities or colleges of further education. Their role will almost certainly involve both assisting language teachers with classes and teaching small groups (of up to approximately 12 students) independently.

The role of a Language Assistant is to improve students’ confidence in communicating in the target language, and to bring classes to life by discussing contemporary aspects of culture from their home country, such as current affairs, education, sport, fashion, films, television, lifestyle and celebrations. Language Assistants can help to make language learning fun by planning activities and projects, and by having discussions with pupils in the target language. At the same time, Language Assistants will improve their own language skills, learn how to become more effective communicators and experience living and working in the UK.

What will the job be like?

Although the role of a Language Assistant is fairly standard, every Language Assistant will have a different experience depending on the type of school they work in, the teachers they work with, the students’ backgrounds, and the local area. Language Assistants who are enthusiastic, keen and have lots of different ideas for activities and lessons are likely to benefit the most from their experience. However, a strong teacher support network is also crucial.

What is the UK like as a place to live?

The UK is a very diverse country. Most big cities have a multicultural population and a lot of people do not have English as a first language. Cities are usually lively with a lot to do but are often expensive to live in and can be impersonal at times. Smaller towns are usually cheaper to live in and often easier to make friends in. The UK is quite densely populated, so even in a small town, it is usually possible to reach a larger place quite easily, (except in more rural areas such as Cumbria and Northern Scotland).

Who do Language Assistants work with?

Schools must assign a mentor teacher to their Language Assistant. The mentor will probably be a teacher in the languages department and will usually work closely with the assistant; however, assistants are also likely to work with other teachers in the department on a regular basis. Teachers in the UK tend to be very busy and don’t always have a lot of time to chat between lessons, but if Language Assistants make the effort, it is usually easy to make friends in school.

What are the conditions like in schools in the UK?

Conditions vary from school to school and place to place. For example, if Language Assistants work in two schools, they may find one easier to work in than the other, for a number of reasons. Many schools in inner-city areas may have more students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds whose first language is not English. Some schools have more discipline issues than others, so it is impossible to generalise. It will depend on the teachers and students in each and every school. As previously mentioned, Language Assistants are not responsible for overall discipline in classes. However, they should expect respect from their students, whilst maintaining a friendly and approachable attitude.
What will the students’ level of ability be like?
Again, it is impossible to generalise, but the situation regarding language learning in the UK is not the same as that of learning English in other countries. Language Assistants should therefore not assume that the language level of their pupils is the same as the level of English of students in their own country. English is, in a sense, a world language and it would be more appropriate to compare the teaching of the second foreign language (after English) in the language home country to the teaching of foreign languages in the UK. Some schools employ their Language Assistants to help the most able students prepare for university entry-level examinations; others employ them to help prepare for oral examinations of the relevant school-leaving qualifications. The role of the assistant is to make language learning more interactive and fun, whatever level(s) they end up teaching, and to build students’ confidence in communicating in the target language.

What is the climate like?
Unpredictable! The UK is often associated with rain, but this is because the weather can change very quickly. The climate is fairly similar from place to place within the UK, but northern areas tend to be a few degrees colder than southern areas. Current temperatures can be checked on the BBC weather website.

Is the allowance enough to live on?
The UK is fairly expensive compared to most other European countries, but the allowance is quite generous for the number of hours worked (usually 12-18 per week). There are additional allowances for London, but living in London is still very expensive. Rent varies depending on the size of the town/city and the standard of the accommodation. Language Assistants from the EEA may be able to supplement their income by giving private lessons or by doing a part-time job, as long as these do not affect their working hours in school. However, this may affect the amount of tax they pay.

Language Assistants from outside the EEA (who are in the UK on a visa sponsored by the British Council) can only take on additional work if they are working in jobs related to teaching (e.g. working with children or translating). The additional work they take on cannot exceed 20 hours, and the Language Assistant must provide the British Council with all the details of any additional work in writing.

Language Assistants should make sure that they have access to enough money to live on (approximately £1,500–£2,000) until they receive their first payment, which should be at the end of the first month, but could be later.

What is the situation regarding accommodation?
Language Assistants should understand that finding accommodation is ultimately their own responsibility. However, schools are encouraged to advise Language Assistants concerning accommodation queries; advice regarding the most suitable areas to live, transport links, approximate rental prices etc. is greatly appreciated. The Language Assistant’s settling-in period will be a lot smoother if schools and local authorities are able to assist them in finding accommodation at a reasonable cost, even if only on a temporary basis, before their arrival.

The type of accommodation will vary. If living in a house with a family or renting someone’s room while they are away for a few months, assistants will probably not have to provide their own bedding and cutlery, pots and pans etc. However, if renting a room in a shared house with other assistants, students or workers, they will probably have to provide their own. It is best to check this before moving in.

The British Council strongly advises Language Assistants not to sign rental agreements or pay any money for permanent accommodation before arrival in the UK.

Will Language Assistants have the opportunity to travel?
Yes. Language Assistants will have half-term holidays as well as two weeks’ holiday at Christmas and Easter. The VisitBritain website can provide useful advice on what to see and do whilst in the UK. Schools are encouraged to compress working hours into a four-day timetable, so that assistants can benefit from a long weekend which provides them with a chance to travel and discover the UK.
Preparing for the Language Assistant’s arrival

1.04 Sharing arrangements

Where a Language Assistant is shared between two or three institutions, it is essential that a single host school be identified. The host school should:

- be the principal point of contact for personnel matters
- co-ordinate requests for the language assistant’s presence
- draw up the Language Assistant’s timetable and assist with travel arrangements
- unless the local authority is acting as the Language Assistant’s employer, the host school should arrange full payment for the Language Assistant and request reimbursement from partner schools – this is very important in order to avoid tax implications for the assistant.

When drawing up sharing arrangements and timetables, host schools / local authorities are asked to ensure that travel between schools does not become unreasonable for the assistant. Where local public transport is limited, it may be possible for school teachers to consider offering lifts to or from school. Where Language Assistants should not normally be required to travel to more than one school on the same day. However, if this cannot be avoided, the schools involved (or the local authority where applicable) should reimburse the Language Assistant’s additional travel expenses.

1.05 First contact between host school/local authority and Language Assistant

When will schools/local authorities receive information about their assistant(s)?

The application forms (‘dossiers’) of allocated assistant(s) will be sent to schools / local authorities via email, usually in early June. The British Council will send an email to schools/local authorities who have applied for an assistant nearer the time with a specific timeline for receiving the dossiers.

If a school/local authority has requested more than one assistant, they will receive their dossiers in separate emails - often from separate members of British Council staff - at slightly staggered intervals. Dossiers will be sent to the email address(es) provided on the original application to host a Language Assistant, so if these change, the British Council should be informed as soon as possible by contacting languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org.

Schools/local authorities should continue to check the email address(es) provided in their applications over the summer months, as their assistant(s) and the British Council may need to get in touch with important information about the assistantship. Failure to respond to communications over the summer may, in some cases, result in a delay in assistant(s) arriving in the UK.

How should schools/local authorities go about contacting their assistant(s)?

Upon receiving their assistants’ dossier(s), schools/local authorities should make contact with them as soon as possible to offer them a post. Email contact is usually the quickest way of contacting assistant(s), however we’d also recommend a follow-up phone call to provide more information about the school / local authority and to reassure the assistant(s) prior to their arrival.

How should assistants contact their employer?

Language Assistants should receive an email in June or early July from their employer, which will be the local authority or host school (not the British Council). To secure the job, Language Assistants should reply immediately to this email with the following information:

- a brief introduction of themselves, their interests and any previous teaching experience
- the address, telephone number and email address where they can be contacted
- their full name(s) as stated on their passport before arrival
- the dates of any examinations during the academic year for which they may be obliged to return home.
Language Assistants should ask the following questions:

- When should I arrive in the UK? Language Assistants will probably be expected to be in school on Monday 02 September (Scotland/Northern Ireland) or Tuesday 01 October 2019 (England/Wales), unless they have agreed another starting date with the school. Language Assistants will need to arrive earlier than these dates (at least a week in advance is recommended) in order to settle in, and in most cases, secure accommodation.

- Can schools help me find accommodation, or give me advice? As outlined earlier in this booklet, Language Assistants should understand that finding accommodation is ultimately their own responsibility. However, schools are encouraged to advise Language Assistants about accommodation options in the local area, and in some cases it may be possible for schools to arrange temporary accommodation, for example in a hostel, in order to give assistants time to find something more permanent. If the school has indicated that it is able to provide accommodation, Language Assistants should ask for the address and telephone number. See also the notes on finding accommodation in Section 1.10.

- What are the address, telephone number, email and website of the school?

- What are the contact details of my mentor teacher throughout the summer?

- Will I be working in one school or more than one?

- How many hours will I work?

- What will my allowance be?

- What type of school(s) will I be working in?

- How big is the school? How many pupils?

- How many teachers? How many teachers of my language are there?

- What is the social environment of the school?

- How old are the pupils? What is the age-range and language level of the pupils I will be working with?

- Does the school have a link with a school in my country?

- Would the school like me to bring any authentic materials such as photographs, maps, postcards, posters, tourist brochures, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, information on festivals in my country etc. that I could put up in the classroom or use in lessons?

- What is the name, address, telephone number and email address of the previous Language Assistant, i.e. my predecessor?

- How do I get to the school or my accommodation from the airport/station/port of arrival?

- What type of clothing will I be expected to wear in school?

Withdrawal procedures

If a Language Assistant is unable to take up the post offered to them, or has to withdraw from the programme after beginning their post, they should inform their host school/local authority immediately in writing. The assistant should also inform the British Council of their withdrawal, as well as the organisation who runs the Language Assistants programme in their home country.

If a school/local authority receives news that their allocated assistant has withdrawn, they should inform the British Council by emailing languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org, confirming in the same email whether they would like a replacement assistant. Please note that, by requesting a replacement, the school/local authority is committing to employing the assistant subsequently sent to them.

The timescale for the British Council providing schools/local authorities with a replacement assistant is approximately two weeks. This is because overseas partners must contact individual assistants from their reserve pools and confirm their availability to come to the UK before the British Council can send dossiers to schools/local authorities.

Please note that the later in the year an assistant withdraws, the less likely it is that the British Council will be able to provide a replacement. In most cases, providing a replacement assistant from November onwards is not possible.
**Pre-arrival webinars**

Over the summer, Language Assistants will be invited to take part in a pre-arrival webinar. These sessions are not compulsory, however will be useful particularly for assistants who may not have visited or lived in the United Kingdom before. The session will cover essential and useful information to support the assistant’s initial move to the United Kingdom.

**Child Protection Training**

The United Kingdom has some of the strictest child protection laws in the world. Language Assistants working in schools should be aware of child protection rules. Over the summer, Language Assistants will be invited to complete an online awareness course which will give them information about child protection issues. Assistants should endeavour to complete this training before starting their placement in the United Kingdom.

**Induction days for Language Assistants**

All British Council Language Assistants in the UK (except Chinese Language Assistants – see below) will be invited to an induction day either before, or shortly after, beginning their posts. We recommend that assistants arrive in the UK at least a week before beginning their posts to give them time to settle in, and to start organising essentials such as accommodation, bank accounts and national insurance numbers in advance of starting work.

It is important that assistants attend an induction day, as they will receive useful information regarding administrative procedures (including support on how to open a bank account and get a national insurance number), as well as useful information and guidance on their role as an assistant. The inductions are also a fantastic opportunity for assistants to meet other Language Assistants working in their area.

Inductions are organised differently across the four UK countries, and assistants will usually be invited to one induction day only, the location of which depends on the location of their school. The only exceptions to this are the Chinese Language Assistants, for whom special induction arrangements are made. Specific dates and locations of the inductions will be provided nearer the time, however general information about induction arrangements in each can be found below:

**Northern Ireland**

There is one induction day in Northern Ireland, for assistants of all languages, which usually takes place in late August or early September. The induction is run by the British Council, so assistants will receive an invitation directly from us.

**Scotland**

There is one induction day in Scotland, for assistants of all languages, which usually takes place in late August. The induction is run by the British Council, so assistants will receive an invitation directly from us.

**England and Wales**

Inductions in England and Wales are organised according to language. In some cases, the induction days are organised by the relevant cultural organisation in the UK (e.g. Goethe Institute, Spanish Embassy) and not by the British Council, although the British Council will support and have a presence at each of the days. There is no Italian specific induction day but Italian-speaking Assistants will be invited to an online induction instead.

- **French-speaking Language Assistants (from Belgium, Canada, France or Switzerland)**
  The induction days for French-speaking Language Assistants are organised by the British Council, and assistants will receive an invitation directly from them. The inductions usually take place in the first two weeks of October, in a range of locations across England and Wales. Assistants cannot choose which date or location to attend. British Council staff will provide assistants from Canada with visa and administrative guidance during the induction day.

- **German-speaking Language Assistants (from Austria, Germany or Switzerland)**
  The induction days for German-speaking Language Assistants are organised by the Goethe Institut, and assistants will receive an invitation directly from them. There are usually two induction days in London and two in Manchester – which take place in late September or in early/mid-October. The Goethe Institut will invite assistants to express preferences as to which date/location of induction they would like to attend, although space is limited so these preferences cannot be guaranteed.

- **Spanish-speaking Language Assistants (from Spain or Latin America)**
  The induction days for Spanish-speaking Language Assistants are organised by the Spanish Consejería de Educación (the education office in the Spanish Embassy), and assistants will receive an email directly from them. There are usually two induction days – one in London and one in Manchester – which take place in early October. Please note that space is strictly limited and assistants cannot choose which day to attend. British Council staff will provide assistants from Latin America with visa and administrative guidance during the induction day.

**Chinese Language Assistants – whole UK**

Information regarding induction and training events for Chinese Language Assistants will be provided in the summer. There will be a separate induction in September for Chinese Language Assistants based in Scotland. Details regarding induction events for all other Chinese Language Assistants will be communicated directly to assistants and schools.
1.06 Legal matters: police clearance

(A) Police clearance – from abroad

Most Language Assistants will have included a police certificate in their original application, sent to the school/local authority by the British Council. If a police certificate has not been included, Language Assistants must apply for one from their country of origin and give it to their local authority or school on their first day or earlier if requested. Please note that Language Assistants’ police certificates should be dated within six months of presenting it to the school/local authority.

The police certificate is a very important document: schools and local authorities must request this from their Language Assistant(s) as soon as possible.

(B) Police clearance – from the UK authorities

It is an offence for an organisation to knowingly offer work in a childcare position to anyone who is on the children’s barred list. Therefore, a criminal record check must be carried out by the Language Assistants’ employer (host school or local authority) as soon as possible after their arrival. The type of criminal record check which will be carried out will vary depending on which UK country the Language Assistants have been allocated to – please see the sections below for further information.

For this reason it is important for Language Assistants to comply with any requests from their employer and to provide the necessary information for this criminal record check. This applies to all Language Assistants, regardless of whether or not they have a history of previous residence in this country. This is in addition to the police certificate from their own country.

Host schools/local authorities should:

a. verify a Language Assistant’s identity on arrival (see below for acceptable documents)

b. give the Language Assistant the appropriate form to apply for an Enhanced DBS with children’s barred list (England and Wales), a criminal history disclosure through Access NI (Northern Ireland) or for membership of the PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) Scheme (Scotland)

c. ensure that the Language Assistant’s form is fully completed and is accurate

d. submit the form to the appropriate authority (Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales, Access NI in Northern Ireland, or Disclosure Scotland), together with the fee, if applicable.
Language Assistants will require the following documentation

EU nationals (including Switzerland):
- valid passport and EU national ID card
- bank/building society statement which has been issued in the last three months (UK or EEA) if no EU ID card
- bank/building society account opening confirmation letter with UK address.

Non-EU nationals:
- valid passport
- visa
- bank/building society account opening confirmation letter with UK address.

Important information regarding UK criminal records checks

Cost
Schools/local authorities should cover the cost of the criminal record check for their Language Assistant(s).

Please note
Criminal records checks in the UK can take some time to process, and they may not arrive in time for the assistant’s start date at school. If this is the case, the Language Assistant is able to work under supervision until the check comes through. If this is not possible, the assistant could be used to prepare materials/resources or support teachers in other ways but they must be paid for the duration of their contract, regardless of whether the check is in place.

England and Wales (DBS check)

Only original documents are valid for the identity verification check: photocopies are not acceptable unless certified by a notary public. A foreign driving licence is not acceptable. All documents must be in the Language Assistant’s current name. At least one document must confirm the Language Assistant’s UK address at the time of application for the DBS check, and at least one document must confirm the Language Assistant’s date of birth. In Section C of the DBS application, Language Assistants must also provide (but not prove) all addresses where they have lived in the last five years, ensuring that there are no gaps in the dates between addresses. An application that has gaps in the dates between addresses will be rejected. Documents such as bank and credit card statements cannot be used unless they show the Language Assistant’s UK address at the time of application for the DBS check. Very few Language Assistants will be in a position at the start of their placement to offer these for their identity check. However, upon opening a bank account in the UK, the Language Assistant will receive a confirmation letter which will contain their UK address; therefore this letter can be used instead.

The Language Assistant’s ‘current’ UK address cannot be the address of the school unless they live at the school. However, the document required to show the address could be a letter from the head teacher (at the host school), on headed paper, confirming the Language Assistant’s address on the basis of a letter from the landlord. Please remember the employer of a Language Assistant is the host school and not the British Council.

Northern Ireland (AccessNI)

Only original documents are valid for the identity verification check: photocopies are not acceptable unless certified by a notary public. A foreign driving licence is not acceptable.

All Group 1 documents must be in the Language Assistant’s current name. At least one document must confirm the Language Assistant’s UK address at the time of application for the AccessNI check, and at least one document must confirm the Language Assistant’s date of birth. In section E of the application form, Language Assistants must also provide (but not prove) all addresses at which they have lived over the past five years, ensuring that they leave no gaps in the dates between addresses. An application with gaps in the dates between addresses will be rejected.
Documents such as bank and credit card statements cannot be used unless they show the Language Assistant’s UK address at the time of application for the AccessNI check (very few Language Assistants will be in a position at the start of their placement to offer these for their identity check, as they will not yet have had sufficient time to open a bank account).

A Language Assistant’s ‘current’ UK address (Section D of the form) cannot be the address of the school unless they live at the school. However, the document required to show the address may be a letter from the head teacher/principal (host school), on headed paper, confirming the address on the basis of a letter from the landlord.

Question B11 can be left blank. It is not mandatory information since Language Assistants may not have a permanent National Insurance number at the start of the academic year.

Section H (Responsible Body Information) should state the host/lead school, NOT the British Council.

Scotland (PVG Scheme)
The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (PVG scheme) came into force on 28 February 2011 and replaced enhanced disclosures for those working with vulnerable groups. Like its predecessor, it is designed to ensure that people who have a known history of harmful and abusive behaviour are not put in positions of trust with vulnerable people. It is managed by Disclosure Scotland. This applies to all Language Assistants, regardless of whether or not they have a history of previous residence in this country. This is in addition to the police clearance from their home country.

The procedure for this must be undertaken by the employer: a local authority or independent school.

It is assumed that these are already registered bodies with Disclosure Scotland. The employer should:

1. verify the Language Assistant’s identity on arrival (see below for acceptable documents)
2. give the Language Assistant the form to apply for membership of the PVG scheme
3. ensure that both the Language Assistant and the employer have completed the relevant parts fully and accurately
4. submit the form to Disclosure Scotland together with the fee (paid by the employer).

Where an individual applies to join the PVG Scheme at the request of a registered body, they will verify that identity documentation has been shown to them and countersign the form. Disclosure Scotland will still carry out some identity checks of its own and if necessary might request copies of supporting documents from applicants.

Documentation that has been cleared with Disclosure Scotland as acceptable includes any of the following, of which THREE are required:

- passport
- national ID card (EU or non-EU) – please note that while ID cards are acceptable, employers should be aware of potential forgeries and value the ID card based upon the country of origin
- birth certificate
- driving licence (including foreign driving licence)
- school-leaving exam certificate or university exam certificate
- letter from landlord or hostel confirming address
- marriage certificate
- work permit/visa (less than 12 months old)
- UK National Insurance card
- UK utility or Council Tax bills
- (for Chinese Language Assistants only) letter from Chinese head teacher confirming the Language Assistant’s identity and position within their school.

It is strongly recommended that employers ask for all documents to be originals, or copies certified by a notary public. Please inform Language Assistants whether documents in the original language will be acceptable, bearing in mind that it can be very expensive to have these translated. At least one document must confirm the Language Assistant’s date of birth, and one must include a photograph. Employers should also be satisfied of proof of current address at the time of application in the UK. It is at the employer’s discretion what proof is required for this.

Please note these documents need only be shown to the employer, and should not be submitted to Disclosure Scotland unless requested by them. For further information, see the Disclosure Scotland website.
1.07

Legal matters: immigration

Language Assistants from countries within the EU/EEA and Switzerland

These Language Assistants will be allowed to enter the UK on presentation of a valid passport or national identity card.

We will give further information when details are finalised regarding Britain’s exit from the EU. In the meantime, please consult the GOV.UK website.

Language Assistants from countries outside the EU/EEA

Language Assistants from outside the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA) will need a visa to enter the UK. **Non-EU Language Assistants and their host schools/local authorities must read this section carefully as it contains important guidance which both parties must follow to comply with strict visa rules set by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).**

Who are non-EU Language Assistants?

When we say non-EU Language Assistants, we are referring to Language Assistants from the following countries:

- Argentina
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Ecuador
- Mexico
- Language Assistants from any other country travelling to the UK on a non-EU passport

Please note

Some Language Assistants coming to the UK from a non-EU country may have dual nationality with an EU member state. Language Assistants in this position should check with the organisation that co-ordinates the Language Assistants Programme in their home country as to which passport they should use to travel to the UK. Those travelling on their EU passports will not require a visa to enter the UK, and should inform their host school/local authority of this as soon as possible

How to obtain a visa

All non-EU Language Assistants will need to apply for a Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) Government Authorised Exchange Visa, issued under the UK Visas and Immigration's (UKVI) Visas and Nationality Service. The British Council in the UK will act as the sponsor for this visa, and will provide Language Assistants with the necessary paperwork and guidance in order to apply for this visa during the summer before posts commence. **Host schools/local authorities are not required to sponsor the Language Assistants themselves.** They are, however, required to provide the Language Assistants with an offer letter, which the assistants will need to apply for the visa (see below for more information).

Visa processing times

Visa processing times vary from country to country; it can take up to two months for Language Assistants to receive their visa, and delays are common at certain times of year. If assistants are experiencing delays in receiving their visas and think they may arrive in the UK later than expected, they should inform the British Council and their host school as soon as possible.

Online visa guidelines

The British Council will send all non-EU Language Assistants guidelines on how to apply for their visa online during the summer before they begin their posts. This document contains important information about the visa process and Language Assistants should not attempt to begin their application before receiving these guidelines.
Documents required to apply for a visa

- **Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)**
  As the visa sponsor, the British Council will assign each non-EU Language Assistant a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS), which is a unique reference number that they will need to apply for their visa. The CoS will appear on a certificate called a T5 Confirmation of Maintenance Form, which the British Council will send to Language Assistants by email during the summer before they begin their assistantship.

  Please note that the CoS can only be sent once we have received an offer letter from the host school/local authority and an acceptance letter from the Language Assistant (see below). Any delays or errors in receiving the offer letter may result in delays in assistants obtaining their visas. Therefore the co-operation of host schools/local authorities in sending this information as soon as possible is greatly appreciated.

- **Offer letter from host school/local authority**
  As outlined above, we can only send Language Assistants their CoS (which they need to apply for their visa) once we have received a written offer letter from their host school/local authority in the UK. This can be sent via email. A standard offer letter template will be sent with your allocated assistant’s dossier. Please note that the offer letter must include the following information:
  - the Language Assistant’s **full name**
  - the full name and address of the host school (including postcode)*
  - the full name and address of any additional schools in which the Language Assistant will be working
  - the start and end dates of the language assistant’s post
  - **exact** hours worked per week
  - **exact** monthly allowance (including for any hours worked over the standard 12 per week).

*If you are a local authority hosting a non-EU Language Assistant, **please note that you must not state the local authority headquarters as the host school address**: exact details of schools must be given for visa purposes.

- **Acceptance letter from Language Assistant**
  As well as an offer letter from the host school/local authority, we also require a letter/email from the Language Assistant confirming that they accept the conditions of the post offered. Again, full information will be provided upon the Language Assistant being allocated to a host school/local authority.

**Immigration Healthcare Surcharge (IHS)**

**What is the IHS?**

Language Assistants applying for a visa to come to the UK are subject to an additional charge called the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). This is a **one-off payment of approximately £400** which must be made by all visa applicants, including Language Assistants.

The IHS is not a visa fee; the payment will be collected by the Home Office and it will go directly into the National Health Service (NHS), giving Language Assistants access to the NHS on the same terms and as a permanent UK resident during their time in the UK. Each assistant will be responsible for covering the cost of his or her own IHS.

**When should assistants pay the IHS?**

**Assistants must make the payment of £400 when applying for a visa or when booking a biometric appointment.** Anyone who does not pay the surcharge at this time will not be granted a visa, and applicants who pay the incorrect amount will experience significant delays in their visa application. It is therefore extremely important that Language Assistants read the **IHS guidelines** and the online visa guidelines (which we send out the summer prior to beginning their posts) very carefully before making their visa application.

**More information about the IHS:**

For full information about the IHS, please see the GOV.UK website: [https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/how-much-pay](https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/how-much-pay)

We strongly recommend that Language Assistants keep checking the above website regularly as information regarding the IHS can be subject to change.
Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)

What is the BRP?
Language Assistants coming to the UK from outside of the EU are required to obtain a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) upon arrival in the UK. The BRP will serve as proof of the Language Assistant’s right to work in the UK.

Before Language Assistants arrive in the UK, they will be issued with a short-term visa (called a vignette) that will be included as a page in their passport. The vignette will be valid for 30 days, and will only allow Language Assistants to travel to the UK.

Therefore, upon arrival in the UK, Language Assistants must collect their BRP, which includes their biometric information and the dates of their right to work in the UK.

How to apply for the BRP

Language Assistants do not have to apply for the BRP separately: they will be asked to provide all the necessary personal data (including photos, fingerprints and expected date of arrival in the UK) as part of the visa application process.

After applying for their visa, Language Assistants will be issued with the following documents:
- a Biometric Identity Document (BID) decision letter which sets out the leave granted and explains how Language Assistants should collect the BRP
- a short-term visa (vignette)

Where to collect the BRP

Language Assistants must collect their BRP from a post office branch within ten days of when they said they would arrive in the UK, even if they actually arrive later. Full information about the BRP and where to collect it can be found on their website: www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits/overview

For comprehensive information on applying for Biometric Residence Permits from outside the UK, please consult the UK Visas and Immigration website.

Please note

If an assistant receives a visa valid for the entirety of their assistantship (instead of the 30 day vignette) then they may not need to collect a BRP. However, we strongly encourage them to contact UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) directly to check this, as every case is different. Details on how to contact UKVI from outside the UK can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk

For full information about BRPs, please see the GOV.UK website: https://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits/need-brp

Visa start and end dates

It is the Language Assistant’s responsibility to ensure that their visa (or BRP) is valid for the full duration of their assistantship, and to report any errors they think may have been made with their visa as soon as possible. Most Tier 5 visas end around two weeks after the Language Assistant’s contract at school; if the visa is significantly longer than this, the Language Assistant must contact the British Council immediately and we will advise you how to rectify the error.

Under Tier 5 visa rules, Language Assistants are allowed 28 days’ additional stay in the UK outside of their official Language Assistant appointment dates (only 14 of these days can be taken before the assistantship begins). Please note that the distribution of these days may vary, therefore Language Assistants should discuss this possibility during their biometric appointment in their home country.

Assistants should remember that the dates stated on their visa (or BRP) already include these additional 28 days. Language Assistants must leave the UK on or before the date their visa expires. Therefore, we strongly advise that Language Assistants do not book their flights until they have received their visa.
**Insurance**

Although paying the IHS will entitle Language Assistants to NHS treatment whilst in the UK, we strongly recommend that they still consider taking out insurance which covers other medical-related costs that may not be covered by the NHS. An insurance policy may cover, for example:

- costs of returning home if a relative is ill
- costs of a relative visiting the UK if the Language Assistant falls ill
- cost of returning to their home country for treatment
- or, in the worst possible situation, returning a body home for burial.

Please note that there can be a long wait for certain NHS treatments, sometimes many months. An insurance policy which gives Language Assistants access to private medical care could give them much quicker access to the treatment they need. Language Assistants who already have medical insurance in their home country should check whether they can extend it to cover their stay in the UK, as well as looking at options available from UK insurers. Please note that the British Council is unable to recommend particular insurance policies or companies; it is the Language Assistant’s responsibility to investigate this themselves.

**Police registration**

Language Assistants from some countries must register with the police in their local area within seven days of arrival in the UK, and re-register (within seven days) if they change their address during the year. If a Language Assistant is required to register, it will say ‘police registration within seven days’ on the visa page of their passport, so we advise Language Assistants and host schools/local authorities to check this page carefully.

**Normally, all Language Assistants from Argentina, China and Colombia must register with the police.** However, there are some exceptions and this can change year on year so it is important that Language Assistants check their visas and the [UK Visas and Immigration](https://www.gov.uk/uk-visas-and-immigration) website to see if they are required to register or not.

**We would advise all Language Assistants who are required to register with the police to contact their local police station immediately upon arrival in the UK to check the process for registering in their particular area.**

Please see the [UK Visas and Immigration](https://www.gov.uk/uk-visas-and-immigration) website for about how to register with the police. Language Assistants must read this information carefully to avoid breaking any immigration rules. Language Assistants should also pay particular attention to where they should register (this differs across the UK) and which documents they should bring with them when they register.

**Travelling outside of the UK during the assistantship**

As the visa sponsor for non-EU Language Assistants, the British Council is required to keep a record of the dates that non-EU Language Assistants will be travelling outside of the UK during their assistantship. Language Assistants from outside the EU who are planning on travelling abroad should inform the British Council in advance, using an online form which the British Council will send shortly after Language Assistants arrive in the UK. **It is the Language Assistant’s responsibility to ensure they have the correct visa for the countries they are visiting before they travel:** the British Council is unable to advise on this, so Language Assistants should investigate this themselves before they travel.
**Induction days in the UK**

There will be a number of Language Assistant induction days taking place across the UK in September and October, which are usually language-specific (except in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where central inductions are held for all languages). Language Assistants will be invited to one induction day, depending on where they are working in the UK. Please note that Language Assistants cannot choose which induction to attend.

Induction days for some languages will be organised by the relevant cultural organisations in the UK and not the British Council, so please do not contact us in advance to request information about inductions as it may not yet be available. Language Assistants will receive an invitation to an induction day as soon as possible after their arrival in the UK.

**Documents to bring to induction days**

As visa sponsor, the British Council is required to keep certified copies of the passports and visas of non-EU Language Assistants. This means that we must a) have sight of the Language Assistant’s original passport, visa and BRP and b) collect photocopies of specific pages of the passport, visa and BRP, and sign them to confirm that we have seen the original copy.

In order for us to do this quickly and easily, we ask that non-EU Language Assistants bring the following documents with them to their induction day:

- their original passport, with visa page included
- photocopies of the following:
  - the front cover of the passport
  - the photo page of the passport
  - the visa page of the passport
  - the Biometric Residence Permit (if separate from the visa).

**It is extremely important that Language Assistants bring these documents with them to their induction.** If Language Assistants or host schools/local authorities have any doubts about which documents to bring then they should contact us on languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org and we will be happy to advise.

If a Language Assistant does not attend the induction days or does not bring the correct documents with them, then a member of staff from the host school or local authority must certify the Language Assistant’s documents instead and send them to the British Council. Language Assistants in this situation should inform the British Council and their host school/local authority as soon as possible, and we will send instructions regarding how to certify the documents correctly.

**Proof of return**

As the visa sponsor for non-EU assistants, the British Council must collect evidence that Language Assistants have left the UK on or before their visa expiry date. Therefore, Language Assistants are required to send the British Council a copy of their boarding pass from their flight home and/or the stamp in their passport that proves they have returned home safely. We will send full instructions about where to send proof of return towards the end of the Language Assistantship period.

We know that some Language Assistants plan to travel in Europe or elsewhere before returning to their home countries. Language Assistants in this situation should still send us the boarding pass or stamp from their flight out of the UK (even if they are not going directly to their home country), to show that they have left the UK within their visa dates.

**National Insurance number appointments**

Please note that Language Assistants from outside the EU may not have to attend an appointment in order to obtain a National Insurance (NI) number, and instead may simply be asked to complete and send away some forms. Please see page 26 for full instructions on how to apply for an NI number.
1.08 Bringing a car to the UK

Normally, EU vehicles circulating temporarily within or between EU countries are limited to visits of six months in a 12-month period. It is required that Language Assistants’ vehicles are fully registered and taxed in their home country if they wish to use it in the UK on a temporary basis. If the vehicle remains in the UK for more than six months in a 12-month period, one is required by law to register it (UK number plates, UK insurance, fees to pay), and failure to register can lead to a substantial fine. The procedure on arrival for bringing your car into the UK depends on whether your home country is in the EU or not. Further information is available online.

Language Assistants who wish to bring a car to the UK with them should familiarise themselves with The Highway Code as soon as possible. This can be bought in most bookshops and there is also an online version.

1.09 Travel matters and personal insurance

For travel to/from the UK and for the Language Assistant’s time in the UK

We strongly recommend Language Assistants take out personal travel insurance to provide cover for both themselves and their possessions, in particular personal items of value for their journey to and from the UK, and for their stay in the UK. This should also include cover for emergency medical repatriation and personal liability (civil responsibility).

Language Assistants should be included in the employer’s insurance policy for public and professional liability. In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, mentor teachers should check on the whereabouts of their Language Assistant(s) to ascertain that they are safe and well while in the UK.

For all Language Assistants from outside of the EU – please visit the HM Revenue and Customs website and look at: ‘Move from outside the EU’ for further information and guidance.

For holidays outside the UK during the Language Assistantship period

If Language Assistants take holidays in other countries during the time of their residence in the UK, they are advised to take out additional travel insurance for these periods. For Non-EU and EEA holiday guidance, please see Section 1.07.

Transport

Language Assistants arriving to the UK by plane, especially if arriving during a school day, must be aware that it may not be possible for someone to meet them at the airport. If this is the case, they should ask their school for directions and local train stations and do some research online prior to arrival.

Language Assistants need to bring sufficient money with them to the UK or have access to funds to pay for rent (and likely a deposit) and other initial expenses before they receive their first month’s salary. Assistants should expect to initially need around £1,500–£2,000.

1.10 Accommodation

Although a Language Assistant’s school may be able to help with finding accommodation, Language Assistants are in fact responsible for finding accommodation themselves. We therefore recommend that Language Assistants plan their arrival in the UK so that they have time to find suitable accommodation. It may be easier to move into temporary accommodation in the short term. Organisations such as HOST may allow assistants to stay with UK residents for the initial days or a weekend upon arrival. Language Assistants can also try the following:

• if possible, ask the school’s previous language assistant if they can offer any advice
• ask around at school and advertise on the staff notice board
• check university or other student notice boards
• look online on websites such as www.gumtree.com or www.spareroom.co.uk or uk.easyroommate.com
**Note:** When moving into long-term accommodation we recommend that Language Assistants take photographs of the room and the flat. This is to help retrieve any deposit they may have paid, which is usually dependent on the accommodation being in the same condition as when the tenant first arrived.

Language Assistants should not:
- advertise telephone numbers in public places
- sign any contract with an agency without finding out if there are any fees to pay
- sign any contracts or pay any money until they have seen the property in person.

**Note:** Host schools and local authorities will not pay for transport costs between accommodation and schools, so Language Assistants must make sure they do not arrange accommodation too far away as travel could be expensive. If Language Assistants are working in more than one school, they shouldn't normally be asked to travel between two or more schools on the same day. However, if this is not possible, the host school or local authority should reimburse the assistant for any additional travel costs incurred travelling between the schools.

**Note:** If Language Assistants share accommodation with people other than Language Assistants or students, they may have to pay Council Tax. See [Section 1.13](#).

### 1.11 Medical care and Statutory Sick Pay

**All Language Assistants**

All Language Assistants should register with a local NHS health centre as soon as they arrive in the UK. Staff at the school may be able to recommend where to go.

**Note:** the NHS does not cover emergency repatriation in the case of severe illness, accident or death.

**Language Assistants from countries within the EU/EEA**

Language Assistants from countries within the EU or EEA are entitled to treatment under the NHS on the same basis as UK nationals. However, like other UK citizens and depending on which part of the UK they are posted to, they may have to pay for the following:
- prescriptions (each item on a prescription costs £8.80 in England, but is free in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland)
- dental treatment (note: it can be extremely difficult to register with a dentist that will provide NHS treatment, which is less costly than private dentistry services, so we strongly advise Language Assistants to have a dental check-up and any follow-up treatment in their home country prior to travelling to the UK)
- eye care or treatment, purchasing contact lenses or glasses, except in Scotland where eye tests are free.

Language Assistants will need to prove their identity and work status, so taking their passport or ID card, offer of appointment letter and any other useful documents is a good idea.

Schools are asked to inform their Language Assistants about local medical services and to recommend that they register with a doctor as soon as possible. Language Assistants from countries within the EU/EEA are entitled to everyday medical care on the same basis as UK residents. However, it is at the discretion of individual GPs whether they accept Language Assistants from countries outside the EU/EEA. Language Assistants from Canada, China and Latin America, or those travelling on non-EU passports, may therefore be advised to take out private insurance. Language Assistants must check that their own insurance covers this.

All Language Assistants receive free emergency treatment. All Language Assistants are liable for prescription charges.

Every Language Assistant is entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from the very start, and to the full range of benefits once they have worked continuously for the same employer for 12 weeks. Language Assistants should be made aware that SSP is significantly below their monthly allowance.

**European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)**

If EU Language Assistants have an EHIC from their own country, they should bring it with them. The amount deducted from their salary each month for National Insurance will also entitle them to an EHIC issued in the UK. (The application form for this is available from any UK post office or online). A UK-issued EHIC will entitle Language Assistants to free emergency treatment (not to full healthcare) when they return to their home country or visit another EU state while they are in official employment in the UK.

**Assistants from outside the EU/EEA**

For Language Assistants outside the EU and EEA, please see [Section 1.07](#).
Money matters

1.12 Payment, Income Tax and National Insurance

Language Assistants will receive a gross monthly payment directly from their host school – please refer to the link below for further details.

As soon as the Language Assistant has opened a bank account, they must give their account details to the person in their school or local authority who is in charge of staff pay. This may be a colleague working in human resources (HR) or the school bursar. Language Assistants will usually be paid once a month and will receive a payslip that shows their gross allowance (before deductions) and net allowance (after deductions).

Unless the local authority is acting as the employer, if an assistant is working in more than one school, the host school should arrange full payment for the Language Assistant and request reimbursement from any partner schools. This avoids tax complications for the assistant.

Assistants should continue to be paid during all school holidays during the period of appointment (including for any additional hours they work over the standard 12 per week), meaning that they receive the same salary each month until the end of their contract.

Payment and period of appointment

The rates of pay for 2019-20, including all London weightings, are posted on our website.

The official period of appointment for Chinese Language Assistants in the UK is mid-September to end of June.

For all other Language Assistants, the period of appointment is as follows:

- England and Wales: 1 October to 29 May (eight months).
- Northern Ireland: 1 September to 29 May (nine months).
- Scotland: 1 September to 29 May (nine months).

The salary paid to Language Assistants is adequate to support one person only.

Language Assistants should remember to keep their payslips for reference in case they have any queries about pay or the deductions made. Language Assistants may also need them in the future to prove to their home authorities – for pension purposes – that they spent a year working in the UK.

Income Tax

Following the raising of the tax-free personal allowance across the UK and due to the fact that the Language Assistantship contract is split across two financial years, most Language Assistants should now be exempt from paying Income Tax on their standard salary, as they will earn below the threshold in each financial year (£12,500 per annum). It is still essential, however, that Language Assistants are issued with the correct tax code from the tax office and they must complete the Starter Checklist as soon as possible after arrival in the UK. The Language Assistant’s local authority or school should have the forms. The form gives the UK tax authorities information about who the Language Assistants are and whether they should pay tax or not. The Language Assistant’s local authority or school should send the completed Starter Checklist to the local tax office.

Language Assistants from countries which have a double taxation agreement (with Teachers’ Article) with the UK – see list in Appendix I – should complete the covering letter for HM Revenue and Customs (provided by the British Council and available to download from our website). Language Assistants should attach this to the New Starter Checklist and return it to the local authority or school. The Language Assistant should keep a photocopy of the completed form and accompanying letter in case of a future query regarding a possible tax refund. For more information please read Appendix I carefully.

Only the employer’s tax office can deal with problems and refunds; no other tax office can access the information.

Note: The British Council is unfortunately unable to help with individual enquiries. This is because we are not trained in tax, do not know about each individual’s background and current financial situation, and for data-protection reasons we are not allowed to contact the tax office on behalf of a Language Assistant; the tax office will only speak to the individual involved so Language Assistants have to call them directly – no one else can do this for them.
National Insurance (NI)

National Insurance Payments

National Insurance has nothing to do with Income Tax. It is the UK equivalent of social security in other countries. It entitles Language Assistants, for example, to treatment under the NHS. Every employee in the UK has to pay National Insurance and this applies to Language Assistants too, even if they have insurance from their home country. If Language Assistants have any problems understanding their NI payments, they should speak to their local authority or school as their employer. Before they leave home, Language Assistants should remember to check any queries about entitlement to medical insurance, healthcare or unemployment benefit in their own country following their Language Assistantship in the UK with their own authorities.

National Insurance number (NI number)

If the Language Assistant already has an NI number from previous work in the UK, they can use it again as it is valid for life. If not, they need to apply for their NI number as soon as possible on starting work. The card provides the Language Assistant with a unique number, which all employers must have in order to offer the assistant work, and which ensures that the Language Assistant does not pay too much tax on their wages. Currently, an amount of around £50 is deducted from a Language Assistant’s monthly allowance. This amount is slightly higher for Language Assistants based in London. All Language Assistants have the right to a NI number.

Language Assistants need to apply for their NI number as soon as possible on starting their job. Employers are no longer recommended to give Language Assistants temporary NI Numbers as these cannot be used on the HM Revenue and Customs online tax return system.

• Applying for a National Insurance number

Language Assistants should check with their local authority co-ordinator to see if a group booking has been arranged for them in their area in order to obtain a NI number. If not, they will need to contact JobCentre Plus on +44 (0)345 600 0643 to arrange an appointment. If Language Assistants are from a non-EU country and are applying for their NI number individually, they should mention their nationality and that they have a Tier 5 visa when phoning for an interview, as it should be possible to apply by post instead of attending the interview. Language Assistants should expect to travel for an interview, but if they are very far from interview locations they may be entitled to a ‘rural appointment’, where a job centre representative comes to them. Language Assistants should emphasise to the JobCentre Plus staff when booking an appointment that they would prefer a rural interview if they are located in a more remote area.

When making an appointment, Language Assistants should check what supporting documentation they will be required to take to the interview. Waiting times for interviews vary across the country, but the average time is around ten working days from phoning. Language Assistants should then receive their permanent National Insurance number four to six weeks after the interview. They are allowed to work in the UK for up to 12 weeks without a NI number, so this should not be a problem. More information on National Insurance is available on the HM Revenue and Customs website.

1.13

Council tax

Council tax is a property tax based on both the value of the property (house or flat) and the number of adults living there. Language Assistants are exempt from paying council tax as they are regarded as a student for council tax purposes when enrolled on the British Council programme. We will send every Language Assistant a British Council Certificate of Registration in their first month of employment so that they can prove their status as a Language Assistant as well as their exemption from paying council tax. Language Assistants may need to show this certificate to their landlord or send it to their local council tax office if they receive a letter from them demanding council tax payment.

No one in the Language Assistant’s property should be required to pay council tax, provided everyone living there is a student or British Council Language Assistant.

Please note: if the Language Assistant lives with anyone who is employed, the household will be liable to pay council tax and a council tax bill will be sent to the property.

Language Assistants with a certificate of registration are not legally required to pay any of this bill, but may wish to help their flatmate(s) by contributing something towards the cost. If there is only one working person in the property, apart from the Language Assistant, they can apply for a discount, which means that they are only required to pay 75 per cent of the full normal bill.

If Language Assistants have any queries about council tax when they are in the UK, they should ask their school or local authority, depending on who their employer is, for the address of the local council tax office, where they can go for further advice. They may also wish to consult the Citizens Advice website and select the appropriate UK country in which they are living.

Note: if Language Assistants rent property before their assistantsship contract starts or after it finishes, they will be liable to pay council tax for any days outside the exact dates of their contract.

Note: Council tax is not applicable to Language Assistants based in Northern Ireland.
In summary:

Council tax

Council Tax is a tax Language Assistants pay on their accommodation and has nothing to do with the money they earn as a Language Assistant. All Language Assistants on the official British Council programme do not have to pay council tax. The certificate of registration proves that Language Assistants are exempt from paying council tax only; it does not exempt them from any other tax.

National insurance

National insurance is a tax which everyone who works in the UK must pay, including Language Assistants. This will be deducted automatically from their salary each month and will be around £50 per month.

Income tax

Income tax is a tax that everyone who works in the UK pays on the money they earn through employment. Language Assistants should not have to pay this tax because they will not normally earn enough to have to pay income tax during the time they are working in the UK. However, please note that there is no specific exemption form for income tax. Your employer should be able to provide you with a New Starter Checklist (previously called the P46 form). Language Assistants should fill this in and give it back to their employer and they will send it to the tax office, who will then calculate how much tax the assistant should pay (as mentioned before, this should be none).

In addition, you should ensure that you have filled in the Double Taxation Agreement form (if applicable) and attached this to your New Starter Checklist before you return it to your employer. There is a link to the Double Taxation Agreement form on page 41.
1.14
Pensions

Language Assistants are eligible for membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and will automatically be enrolled into the scheme through the payroll section of their employer. However, they have the right to opt out of the scheme or not to join it at all.

If Language Assistants join the scheme, they will have money deducted from their salary each month as contributions towards their pension.

The employer must give the Language Assistant a guide to the LGPS. If the Language Assistant does not wish to join the scheme, they must complete an opting-out form prior to their first month’s payroll run. If they join, they can opt out of membership and receive a refund of contributions provided they opt out within two years. A guide to the LGPS, together with the relevant membership forms should be sent to the Language Assistant with their offer of appointment letter or given to them with their statement of employment (contract).

Note: some Local Authorities process refunds via the payroll for those who opt out within the first month, whereas others process all refunds (including those for people who opt out with less than one month’s membership) via the pension fund.

1.15
Banking

The Language Assistant’s allowance will be paid directly into a UK bank account, so they must open one as soon as possible after their arrival and give the account details to the appropriate person in their Local Authority or school (for example, the finance officer or bursar). Opening a bank account can be a difficult process for Language Assistants, as they are regarded as short-term clients. Please note that a decision on what is acceptable is often at the discretion of the individual branch. If a member of staff can accompany the Language Assistant when they first visit the bank, this may be helpful. When opening an account, the Language Assistant should bring the following documentation with them:

- passport or national identity card
- a letter of introduction from the local authority or host school. The letter of introduction should be on headed paper and if possible addressed to the specific bank and branch concerned. It should confirm:
  - the name, address and telephone number of a contact person who is responsible for the Language Assistant (for example the person writing the letter; most likely the mentor teacher)
  - Language Assistant’s name, address in their home country, address in the UK (even if a temporary address, such as a hostel), their position as a Language Assistant, details of place of work and conditions of employment.

The British Council has been told that the above documents will normally be enough to open bank accounts with major UK-based banks.

As banks’ requirements vary, it is not possible to be absolutely definite about what documents they will accept. The documents that can be accepted may therefore differ from bank to bank. The best approach is to take with you as much information as you have available. Remember that banks will normally only accept original documents, not copies.

If the Language Assistant has any other documentation, such as their lease (if they have already moved into accommodation), birth certificate, photographic driving licence, a letter or recent statement from their bank at home, or even their British Council certificate of registration, they should take this with them. Any recommendations for a local bank where it is known that former Language Assistants or members of staff have banked successfully would be of great help.
The role and responsibilities of Language Assistants and host schools

1.16

General school life – frequently asked questions

What is a mentor teacher?

Schools must appoint a mentor teacher for each Language Assistant – this does not need to be a principal teacher or head of department; it could be another teacher who is not overcommitted elsewhere. Whoever the mentor teacher is, they should have a short meeting with the Language Assistant every week or two to ensure they are able to support them both personally and professionally, within reason.

Language Assistants should be contacted by their mentor teacher before their arrival to arrange to meet on their first day at school or even beforehand. Mentor teachers will almost certainly be a member of the Modern Languages Department in the school. He or she will be the Language Assistant’s initial contact for any queries or problems they may have. The Language Assistant and mentor should meet to discuss what Language Assistants can and cannot do, and to work out their role in the school. This should help avoid misunderstandings and encourage co-operation with staff.

How can Language Assistants meet people at school?

A Language Assistant’s mentor teacher should introduce the Language Assistant to key staff in school: the head teacher, deputy head, school secretary, bursar/finance officer, principal teacher of modern languages or faculty head, and other teachers. Language Assistants are just as much a member of staff as any other employee at the school and should be treated accordingly.

How can Language Assistants find their way around school?

Language Assistants can ask for a plan of the school buildings or to be shown around the school – even those areas where they might not normally teach. Language Assistants should note the code of conduct for each classroom to see how pupils are expected to behave.

How can Language Assistants link their work with colleagues’ work?

Language Assistants and school colleagues should discuss how the Language Assistant’s lessons fit into the curriculum in operation. Language Assistants can ask for copies of the course books as these could help to develop linked topics. Preparation and communication between Language Assistants and key colleagues is vital.

School holiday dates

Language Assistants should be informed of the school’s calendar and be aware of all holidays and training days.

How can Language Assistants borrow equipment for their classes?

Language Assistants should ask their mentor about the procedure for using a CD player, television, DVD, overhead projector, computer or interactive whiteboard for their lessons. This equipment will give the Language Assistant’s classes more variety. In advance of classes, it may also be useful for the mentor teacher to show the Language Assistant where to make photocopies.

What are the rules regarding discipline or aggressive behaviour in class?

Mentor teachers should explain to Language Assistants what the school policy is on disruptive or aggressive behaviour. This will ensure that any action the Language Assistant takes is understood by the pupils and supported by the school. If one child is very disruptive in the Language Assistant’s class, the usual teacher for that class should be able to advise and support the Language Assistant appropriately. Please remember that Language Assistants are members of the school staff and deserve the same status and respect as other teachers.
What are the rules regarding sick leave?
The assistant’s mentor teacher should explain what the school procedure is regarding absence in the case of illness and when a doctor’s certificate would be required. Language Assistants must telephone their school to inform them as soon as possible if they are sick. If Language Assistants fall ill within the first 12 weeks of starting work, they will only be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (please see the GOV.uk website for full details). The amount is unlikely to cover the living costs of a Language Assistant. It is therefore expected that a Language Assistant will return home if they are ill for an extended period. Assistants should check any arrangements for sick pay with their school before returning home.

If a Language Assistant has to return home for any reason during the year, they must ask permission from the school or local authority.

What about examinations Language Assistants may have to take at their home university?
If Language Assistants have to return to their home country at some point during the year to take examinations, they must inform their mentor teacher prior to their arrival in the UK. On arrival, they must show their mentor teacher the official request from their university. French Language Assistants may be able to take exams at the French Institute in London or Edinburgh and should enquire about this possibility before arranging to return home. Schools are asked to be sympathetic to reasonable requests by Language Assistants for time off to take examinations but Language Assistants should ensure that they are absent for as little time as possible, and they should offer to make up any hours they might miss during their absence. If they make up the hours (work the same number of hours missed) once they return, they should be paid the same as in a normal month where they are there all the time.

Teachers are always so busy, how can Language Assistants interact with them?
We encourage assistants to stay in the staffroom occasionally when they have free periods between lessons as they may meet teachers of all subjects. Perhaps having lunch with staff members will also provide the opportunity for social chat. If Language Assistants have particular interests or would like to get involved in local activities, colleagues are encouraged to invite them to such events and try to find the time to talk to them as a new life in the UK may prove daunting and rather lonely at first. Often there are organised school trips to theatres and other towns in which Language Assistants could easily be included. Insurance for such trips must be looked into as assistants may not be fully covered by the school’s insurance policy.

Should Language Assistants be given fixed timetables?
All Language Assistants must have a timetable for their classes. Most timetables are weekly but some may be for 10-day (i.e. two-week) periods. The Language Assistant’s timetable has to fit in with the rest of the school timetable, so although schools may try to arrange for the Language Assistant to have one free day during the working week, this cannot be guaranteed. Assistants must receive a fixed timetable by their third week in school.

1.17

Induction meetings/observing classes
Some local authorities arrange induction meetings for Language Assistants appointed to schools in their area. Language Assistants will also be invited to meetings organised by their embassy or cultural institute alongside the British Council. Assistants are strongly advised to attend as they will be given lots of useful information and will meet other Language Assistants working in the area. If schools can allow the Language Assistant to take a day off work for such induction meetings, it would be most beneficial for all parties involved.
Observing classes

Before Language Assistants begin to work closely with pupils they should be given the opportunity to observe the class teacher. Observation will allow Language Assistants to experience classroom management techniques as well as to get to know the names, faces and personalities of their pupils.

We ask Language Assistants to note the following:
• how the teacher starts and ends the lesson
• how much the target language is used
• what the teacher’s attitude is to pupil errors and error correction
• how the teacher controls behaviour, lateness and lack of effort
• how the teacher speaks to pupils
• how the teacher involves all pupils in the class activity.

1.18

The role of a Language Assistant

Depending on teachers and the age/level of the pupils, Language Assistants may be asked to:
• work with the teacher in the classroom
• work on their own with small groups of pupils
• help prepare pupils for oral examinations
• make recordings in their own language that the school can use as an example of native speaker speech
• introduce and contribute to group discussions and role plays in their own language
• work on specific topics with small groups of older students
• contribute to cross-curricular work in collaboration with other subject areas
• help set up links with schools in their home country
• contribute to an international project.

Language teachers may wish to talk to Language Assistants in their own language for practice. Language Assistants should communicate in the target language during class time. Teachers should meet with the school’s Language Assistant(s) on a regular basis in order to plan work. Feedback will be helpful to both the assistant, staff members and eventually to pupils.

Experienced teachers can sometimes forget that Language Assistants need time to prepare a lesson and cannot do a good job if asked to cover a specific topic only a few minutes before going into the classroom. Please make sure regular communication and sufficient support is offered so that Language Assistants and teachers can develop a good working rapport throughout the academic year.

Language Assistants are not employed as teachers. They should not be asked to:
• take sole responsibility for whole classes
• supervise or discipline pupils regularly
• take responsibility for marking pupils’ work or exam papers
• give classes in a language other than their own or cover a different subject to the teacher’s classes.

In class, a good first impression will help and Language Assistants should try to establish themselves from the start as well-organised, professional and motivated members of the school.

1.19

The role of the host school: how to make the best use of your Language Assistant

In order for Language Assistants to feel welcome and settle in quickly, we would recommend that you:
• make your offer letter as comprehensive as possible: provide travel information, a what-to-bring list, local area and climate information and school prospectus
• remain in contact with the assistant over the summer period
• meet the Language Assistant on or around day of arrival
• introduce the assistant to relevant members of staff, the Modern Foreign Languages team and other colleagues (especially the younger ones or those with similar interests)

• ensure the Language Assistant’s tax code and National Insurance are set up on arrival

• pass on helpful information from previous Language Assistants

• give Language Assistants the same information you would give a student or probationer (e.g. school site plan and introduction to the relevant school system which is likely to be very different for them); this will include exam system and curriculum guidelines – you may want to use handbooks, websites, personal introductions and meetings

• remember Language Assistants often come from very different school cultures, some of which can be much more formal or informal than that of the UK. It may take time for them to understand the relationship between staff and pupils in the UK

• help with finding permanent accommodation if required

• help with signing up with a doctor and getting an NHS number

• support with understanding their role, status and discipline – Language Assistants are colleagues and should be treated as such

• ensure they understand issues surrounding child protection and have access to a copy of the school’s child protection policy

• make arrangements for lesson observation (preferably during the initial weeks of the assistantship)

• allow them to spend as much time in a learning environment as possible, especially in the first term, so that they understand how children learn a language and how to use authentic materials/resources in a classroom context; the Language Assistant may not know much about the practicalities of language teaching and may need some guidance – when/if the Language Assistant teaches groups independently, ensure an appropriate room is available

• provide Language Assistants with a display board if possible

• make sure the Language Assistant has a fixed timetable by the third week – rolling timetables can give flexibility

• involve the Language Assistant in their department – staff meetings, parent evenings, etc.

• find out about their interests and how these can be put to good use in school (e.g. sport, music, drama, art)

• encourage involvement in interdisciplinary and out-of-school activities – music, drama, sport, trips, etc.

• appoint a mentor for regular support

• provide opportunity for contact with other Language Assistants in neighbouring schools (it would be helpful if you could give them the appropriate contact details)

• talk to the Language Assistant about English as a Foreign Language courses they may be interested in

• try to arrange for the Language Assistant to be invited by other members of staff to join outings. This can be particularly helpful in the first few weekends or during the October break.

Language Assistants need to know:

• what is expected of them in good time before each lesson

• about the pastoral system and discipline procedures the school might use – please ensure the Language Assistant is provided with a copy of the school’s grievance and disciplinary policy

• about the structure of the school year and exam periods (GCSE, National 4 and 5, A-level etc.)

• about teaching groupings/sets, etc.

• where to access services (for example, photocopies) and who to speak to about financial problems (for example, pay, tax, etc.)

• where to find departmental resources – teachers’ books, supplementary books, flashcards, scissors, card, glue, OHTs, VCRs, DVDs, tape recorders, computer schemes of work, smart board or other classroom equipment

• about useful sources of support: for example, www.britishcouncil.org/language-assistants
With regard to teaching, Language Assistants need to understand fundamental concepts such as:

- using authentic resources
- how to set up pair work
- information-gap exercises
- receptive versus productive language
- how to stay in the target language
- promoting discussion in the senior years (for example with Advanced Higher or A-Level students)
- fun ways of practising role plays and other creative activities
- the importance of games (including grammar games) and competitions
- the importance of pictures and sources – magazines, calendars, photos
- how to approach a new topic with higher classes without frightening them
- how to tackle a sophisticated text in which there is a lot of new vocabulary
- planning to go from familiar to unfamiliar and from easy to harder, and the need for planning (give a template format if possible).

The best way for Language Assistants to understand the above is for them to be in the classroom with the teacher and to see these concepts in practice. Team teaching, at least initially, is very valuable as it exposes the assistant to the methodology of the school/teacher and establishes their status as a member of the teaching staff. It also ensures regular, pre-planned and structured teaching, as well as authentic use of language.

1.20

Child protection

Information for Language Assistants:

Language Assistants should make themselves aware of important issues regarding child protection under the relevant country’s legislation (see ‘further reading’ below). Assistants should also ask their mentor teacher for a copy of the relevant school policies.

Language Assistants must be sensitive to cultural differences at all times and be aware that some types of behaviour may be seen as unusual, or inappropriate in a school context. Comments or gestures that are intended to be funny may cause offence and, exceptionally, may even be seen as threatening violence or constituting sexual harassment. They must take care that they do not behave in a way that could be misinterpreted by pupils or staff. Any complaint will be taken very seriously; if any accusations were to be made against a Language Assistant, it could end in dismissal or even a court hearing.

Moreover, if Language Assistants wish to select discussion topics with political, religious or sexual aspects, they must ask the mentor teacher for advice before introducing the material in the classroom.

Information for schools:

The mentor teacher or another relevant member of staff is strongly advised to inform Language Assistants of their responsibilities with regards to child protection under the relevant country’s legislation (see ‘further reading’ below). Assistants should also be provided with a copy of the relevant school policies. It is the local authority’s/school’s responsibility to explain what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate interactions with pupils. Any child protection concerns regarding a Language Assistant should be raised with the British Council immediately.

Host schools must be sensitive to cultural differences at all times and be aware that some types of behaviour may be seen as unusual, or inappropriate in a school context. Moreover, some students may be of a similar age to the Language Assistant but please remember that Assistants are to be treated as a respected member of school staff.
**Further reading can be found here:**

**England and Wales**
Language Assistants must be aware of the issues regarding child protection under The Children Act 1989 and should consult the [Department for Education (DFE) website](https://www.gov.uk/).  

**Northern Ireland**
Language Assistants must be aware of the issues regarding child protection under the [Department of Education Northern Ireland](https://www.educationni.gov.uk/). It is known as the Children (NI) Order 1995.

**Scotland**
Language Assistants must be aware of the issues regarding child protection under The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 and should consult the information on the [Scottish Government website](https://www.gov.scot/) on this subject.

**Use of internet and social media**

**Information for Language Assistants:**
Language Assistants should familiarise themselves with their school’s policy on the use of computers and be aware of any restrictions on access to certain internet sites or on the content of emails sent from school computers. Assistants should be aware that accessing pornographic and other unsuitable sites could result in disciplinary action.

Language Assistants are encouraged and expected to use the internet for professional purposes, and they can usually do so at school. However, they should check with their mentor when they can and cannot use the internet.

If Language Assistants would like to set up a project using the internet, they should ensure that they follow the school’s acceptable usage policy and that teachers are kept informed.

Assistants should be very careful about how they use social networking sites (such as Facebook) while they are a Language Assistant on the programme. They should keep their profile private so that it can only be viewed by people they intend to view it and should consider changing their profile name so they are more difficult to find. Assistants must always remain professional in what they say on their profiles.

Language Assistants should never swap personal contact details with pupils or invite them to be ‘friends’, or accept similar invitations from them, as this is likely to be regarded as inappropriate behaviour and could lead to disciplinary action.

**Information for schools:**
We would ask host schools to allow Language Assistants to use the internet as a resource to access up-to-date material for the classroom, for helping with school projects and similar. It is also helpful if assistants can access information on the UK that will help them to make the most of their stay.

Schools are asked to ensure that Language Assistants are aware of, and fully understand, the school’s policy on the use of computers. In particular, assistants should be made aware of any restrictions on access to certain internet sites or on the content of emails sent from school computers.

Advice from teachers regarding the use of the internet and social networking sites would be very useful, especially if Language Assistants want to get pupils involved in online work.
1.21

Professional associations and online resources

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

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<tr>
<th>Association for Language Learning (ALL)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once Language Assistants have arrived in the UK they may be invited by an ALL member in their area to a meeting with local Modern Foreign Language teachers and other Language Assistants. They should go along to meet people and to find out how the association can be of benefit to them as well as their school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Association for Language Learning          | +44 (0)116 229 7600 |
| University of Leicester                    | info@all-languages.org.uk |
| University Road Leicester                  | www.all-languages.org.uk |
| LE1 7RH                                   |                        |

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<tr>
<th>Network for Languages (England only)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Network for Languages operates on a regional basis, working through established links with schools, colleges and businesses. Network for Languages offers a wide range of high-quality and relevant professional development courses and events, covering a variety of pedagogical, language and cultural topics and themes.</td>
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Contact details for each regional hub can be found online at: [http://networkforlanguages.org.uk/](http://networkforlanguages.org.uk/)
## Northern Ireland

**NICILT, the Northern Ireland Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research**

NICILT is a partnership between CILT, the National Centre for Languages, and Queen’s University Belfast with funding from the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DE). NICILT aims to serve all sectors and stages of education in Northern Ireland and support the implementation of national objectives in language learning and teaching. This includes, where appropriate, support for early language learning, for the post-16 sector and for adult education.

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<tr>
<th>NICILT</th>
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<tr>
<td>School of Education</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nicilt@qub.ac.uk">nicilt@qub.ac.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 College Green</td>
<td><a href="https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/nicilt">https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/nicilt</a></td>
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<td>Belfast BT7 1LN</td>
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### Teaching in Northern Ireland

If Language Assistants are interested in training to become a teacher in Northern Ireland they can consult the following [website](https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/nicilt).

## Scotland

**SCILT, Scotland’s National Centre for Languages**

SCILT provides information on and promotes the learning and use of languages in Scotland. It also offers professional development and conducts research in support of language teachers and professionals.

SCILT works in partnership with the British Council in Scotland to support the professional development of Language Assistants, and encourages them to implement a project during their stay. You can sign up for their weekly news bulletin for information on languages and language learning in Scotland. SCILT also has responsibility for the Confucius Institute for Scotland’s Schools (CISS).

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<tr>
<th>SCILT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LH-232 Lord Hope Building</td>
<td><a href="mailto:scilt@strath.ac.uk">scilt@strath.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Strathclyde</td>
<td><a href="http://www.scilt.org.uk">www.scilt.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141 St James Road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow G4 0LT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teaching in Scotland

If Language Assistants are interested in training to become a teacher in Scotland, they can consult the following [website](https://www.scilt.org.uk).

## Scottish Association for Language Teaching (SALT)

SALT is the professional association for people working in or studying modern language teaching in Scotland. Once Language Assistants have arrived in the UK they may be invited by a SALT member in their area to a meeting with local teachers of Modern Foreign Languages and other Language Assistants. They should go along to meet people and to find out how the association can be of benefit to them as well as their school. They hold a popular annual conference in early November. For more information please consult the following [website](https://www.salt.org.uk).
Curriculum for Excellence
Curriculum for Excellence is a Scottish government initiative to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge and skills they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning, and work, both now and in the future. By identifying and developing four main themes – to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor – Curriculum for Excellence aims to improve the quality of learning and teaching and increase the attainment and achievement of all children and young people in Scotland, including those who need additional support in their learning. For more information, see the Education Scotland website.

Scotland China Education Network (SCEN)
SCEN is a group of individuals, national agencies, schools and associations keen to promote the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in Scottish schools. For more information, please visit their website.

Education Scotland
The national body supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education by:
• leading and supporting the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence
• increasing the capacity for self-evaluation and self-improvement among education providers and practitioners
• promoting high-quality professional learning and leadership
• identifying and stimulating innovation, sharing successful approaches widely with others
• providing independent external evaluations of the quality of educational provision at individual provider, local authority and partners, and national levels
• supporting the development and implementation of policy at national level. For more information visit the following website.
Life outside of work

1.22

Settling in

Even if Language Assistants have been to the UK before, it is possible that they will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. Assistants should tell people if they are having any problems or if they need information, and mentor teachers and other colleagues in school should make sure they are approachable and willing to help wherever possible. Language Assistants should try to accept invitations to places and activities as much as possible as they might meet new friends and gain new interests. Useful information on life in the UK can be found here.

1.23

Extra-curricular activities

The people Language Assistants meet in school initially will be members of the Modern Foreign Languages department. By getting involved in school activities, they will have the opportunity to meet other members of staff. Apart from their work in the classroom, Language Assistants may be able to attend other classes in subjects that are of interest to them. Assistants will become much more integrated into school life and gain considerably more from their stay if they become involved in activities organised by the school, for example, sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Language Assistants should try to go to school ‘open days’, fairs or parent evenings, as these are also a good way of meeting people.

Private study

Language Assistants should have lots of time during the year for private study, as well as for preparing and giving lessons at school. They could investigate the possibility of doing a part-time course at their local college of further education. This is also a good way to meet people and speak more English. If Language Assistants are interested in taking any of the Cambridge English exams, visit their website for further information.

However, Language Assistants must remember that their school work, timetable and role as a British Council Language Assistant must take priority. Assistants must not arrange any classes for personal study until they have a fixed timetable at their school(s).

1.24

Some (more) useful tips for Language Assistants

- Smoking is banned in all public places in all parts of the UK. This usually includes the area immediately outside school buildings.
- It is illegal to carry a CS gas canister (i.e. pepper spray or similar) in the UK, even for personal protection. CS gas is a riot-control agent used by police and is classified legally as an offensive weapon. The maximum penalty on indictment is four years’ imprisonment or a fine, or both.
- Child protection laws in the UK are very strict and may also apply to situations outside of the classroom, for example on school buses or at private parties.
- Although Language Assistants can be polite and friendly if they see students outside of school, they should remember to remain professional at all times and not put themselves in any situations that could be misconstrued.
- Inviting your students to join blogs or online discussions is likely to lead to an offence against child protection regulations. Consult your colleagues before doing so.
1.25

**Travel**

Coach (long-distance bus) travel is cheaper than rail but Language Assistants can get cheaper rail tickets by booking in advance.

Rail travel is usually more expensive at peak times from Monday to Friday, but some assistants may be entitled to buy a railcard. These cost £30 and save a third off train travel. Please visit the railcard [website](#) to get more information on the different railcards available or to buy a card online.

Language Assistants from a non-EU country who are considering travel to other European countries at Christmas or Easter should apply for a Schengen Visa, which allows travel to 15 European countries on a single visa. They should also inform the British Council of any dates when they will be leaving the UK during their stay. There is more information available on the Schengen Visa [here](#).

1.26

**Saving money**

Language Assistants who are students in their home country should look into getting an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) before coming to the UK. With this card you are eligible for discounts in shops, restaurants and tourist attractions among other things. Additionally, Language Assistants should ask at their school if there are ‘cheap days’ for activities in their area; for example, cinemas are often cheaper mid-week. A number of shops and supermarket chains offer loyalty cards which may prove useful.
Appendix 1: Tax matters

Information about income tax

The HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) office should calculate the correct amount for Language Assistants to pay each month allowing for the fact that they start work halfway through the tax year. However, sometimes income tax may be deducted so assistants should contact them to claim this back.

Please contact HMRC here if more information is necessary. The British Council cannot provide guidance beyond what is included in this booklet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Language Assistants who work in the London area</th>
<th>They may have to pay a small amount of income tax because the London supplement can sometimes take their salary over the maximum threshold for not paying income tax. However, assistants only pay tax on the amount they earn above the threshold. This ‘no tax’ threshold runs over a financial year (April – March). The academic year runs over two financial years.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. All Language Assistants</td>
<td>Language Assistants may be subject to tax (emergency tax) in the first month or two as it takes time for their New Starter Checklist (previously known as the P46 form) to be processed. They should receive a refund with their next salary (usually in December).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Language Assistants who obtain a second job whilst working in the UK.</td>
<td>They may have to pay a small amount of income tax because their second job can sometimes take their salary over the maximum threshold for not paying income tax. However, assistants only pay tax on the amount they earn above the threshold. This ‘no tax’ threshold runs over a financial year (April – March). The academic year runs over two financial years. Assistants with second jobs should contact HMRC to ask for their non-taxable allowance to be split between the two jobs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Assistants may not have to pay any income tax in the UK on their allowance because there is a Double Taxation Agreement, with an article for teachers, between their country and the UK (in the UK Language Assistants are considered as teachers for payment purposes). Please note that Language Assistants may still be eligible to pay tax in their home country.

A list of agreements can be found on the HM Revenue and Customs website. Find the relevant country in the list and then the article relating to teachers. This agreement lasts for two years only, or for three years with China.

If Language Assistants do any teaching work in the UK after this time, they will start paying tax and will also have to pay the tax back for their first two years. In addition, if they have worked in the UK before, or if they have been living outside their home country for a long time, they may have to pay income tax anyway.
What you have to do regarding Income Tax

| On arrival | All Language Assistants must fill out a New Starters Checklist and ask their employer to fill out their section on the same form. This is the form employers need when recruiting a new employee who has not worked in the UK recently. The New Starter Checklist, when completed, must be sent to the employer’s tax office (schools or local authorities as appropriate). |
| January | If the Language Assistant’s country has a Double Taxation Agreement (with Teachers’ Article) with the UK – a covering letter and a printout of the relevant Teaching Article must be attached to the completed tax form. Otherwise, the Language Assistant may be taxed |
| April/May | For Language Assistants who pay income tax in the new tax year (from April onwards) – since they will normally work for only two months of the new tax year, they should be able to claim back the tax. Language Assistants need to fill out the income tax form P85 just before they leave the UK. As they will no doubt leave the UK before they receive the money, Language Assistants must keep their bank account open and when the tax refund arrives in their account, they should make arrangements to transfer it to their bank account in their home country. |

Income tax is specific to each person, so each Language Assistant must find out what applies to their personal situation. If Language Assistants are doing any additional non-teaching work outside of their role as a Language Assistant, they would normally have to pay tax on this. If Language Assistants have a question about their own income tax situation, they should contact HMRC: details are available online.

Possible questions Language Assistants have relating to Income Tax:

1. I think I have paid too much tax – what should I do? It takes time for forms to be processed, so you may be paying emergency tax (which is a high rate). Don’t worry: you should get the money back with your next salary. HMRC will only deal with you personally regarding queries.

2. There is a Double Taxation Agreement with my home country but I’m still paying tax. What should I do? Please check that the Double Taxation Agreement with your country includes teaching work as some agreements do not. In this case you will have to pay income tax.

3. My school can’t help me with my income tax problems. What should I do? Income tax is very complicated and your situation is different from that of normal teaching staff as you are not from the UK and are working at the school for only a few months. It is better to contact HMRC to check your situation.

4. I haven’t been paying income tax on my salary but I have worked in a bar/restaurant and paid tax on that salary. Can I get it back? Possibly. It depends on how much you earned. Before you go home, fill out form P85, send it to your Revenue and Customs office and they will investigate.

5. I’m going back home soon and I’m worried I won’t get my tax back before I go. Make sure you fill out form P85 before you leave. Revenue and Customs will not send you the money in your local currency, so you will either have to cash a cheque at home or keep your UK bank account open so that the money can be paid into it after you leave. You can then transfer the funds into your bank account at home.

6. I’ve tried everything, but I’m certain I’m paying too much tax. There is a procedure for making a complaint to the Revenue and Customs office. Information on this can be found on the website.

Please do not call the British Council with regard to income tax enquiries, as we cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax.
Appendix 2: Salaries 2019-20

Salaries for Language Assistants are set by the education authority in the relevant UK region. The most up to date salary details are available from our website here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Gross monthly salary</th>
<th>Standard fixed hourly rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England</strong></td>
<td>£914.05</td>
<td>£13.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner London</strong></td>
<td>£1,150.39</td>
<td>£17.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outer London</strong></td>
<td>£1,085.75</td>
<td>£16.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>London Fringe</strong></td>
<td>£974.65</td>
<td>£14.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Ireland</strong></td>
<td>£914.05</td>
<td>£13.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scotland</strong></td>
<td>£914.05</td>
<td>£13.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wales</strong></td>
<td>£914.05</td>
<td>£13.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mandarin Chinese</strong></td>
<td>Minimum annual cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Assistants</strong></td>
<td>£4,090 (including IHS* surcharge)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Funding for the programme means that UK schools only pay assistants the National Living Wage (£8.21 in 2019) for a minimum of 12 hours a week worked, reducing costs dramatically.

* Chinese language assistants coming to the UK on a visa are subject to a one-off £400 Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). This charge should be reimbursed directly to the assistant by the UK host school or schools involved in the sharing arrangements.

As of May 2019, these figures are for guidance. You may find minor variations depending on location.
Appendix 3: Embassies/consulates in the UK

All embassy websites are available [here](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>65 Brook Street, London W1K 4AH</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7318 1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>18 Belgrave Mews West, London SW1X 8HVU</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7344 3250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>17 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EE</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7470 3700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London SW1Y 5BJ</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7004 6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>37–41 Old Queen Street, London SW1H 9JA</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7222 2361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>49–51 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7299 4049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>3 Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LN</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7589 5037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Flat 3b, 3 Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LS</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7584 1367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>58 Knightsbridge Road, London SW1X 7JT</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7073 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>23 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PZ</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7824 1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>14 Three Kings Yard, Davies Street, London W1K 1EH</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7312 2200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>16 St George Street, London W1S 1FD</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7499 8586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>39 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8SB</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7235 5555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>16–18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ</td>
<td>+44 (0)20 7616 6000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4: Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Applicable in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AifL</td>
<td>Assessment is for Learning</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>The Association for Language Learning</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Advanced Subsidiary Level</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Advanced Level</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRP</td>
<td>Biometric Residence Permit</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Chartered Teacher</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfE</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHT</td>
<td>Deputy Head Teacher</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Disclosure and Barring Service</td>
<td>England and Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTA</td>
<td>Double Taxation Agreement</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DiS</td>
<td>Determined to Succeed</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVLA</td>
<td>Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Economic Area</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHIC</td>
<td>European Health Insurance Card</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Education Authority</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE</td>
<td>General Certificate of Secondary Education</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>General Practitioner (doctor)</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTC</td>
<td>General Teaching Council (for England and Wales)</td>
<td>England, Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTCS</td>
<td>General Teaching Council for Scotland</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HT</td>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIC</td>
<td>International Student Identity Card</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IWB</td>
<td>Interactive White Board</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Applicable in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>Key Stage</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGPS</td>
<td>Local Government Pension Scheme</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Modern Language Assistant</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML/MFL</td>
<td>Modern Languages/Modern Foreign Languages</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLPS</td>
<td>Modern Languages in the Primary School</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEELB</td>
<td>North Eastern Education and Library Board</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>National Insurance</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICILT</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Centre for Language Teaching</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIRU</td>
<td>National Import Reliefs Unit</td>
<td>England, Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQT</td>
<td>Newly qualified teacher</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFSTED</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHT</td>
<td>Overhead transparency</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1–P7</td>
<td>Primary 1 – Primary 7 (pupils aged 5–11)</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate in Education</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGDE</td>
<td>Professional Graduate Diploma in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Principal teacher</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVG</td>
<td>Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QTS</td>
<td>Qualified teacher status</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>S1–S6</td>
<td>Secondary 1 – Secondary 6 (pupils aged 12–18)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALT</td>
<td>Scottish Association for Language Teaching</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCEN</td>
<td>Scotland–China Education Network</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCILT</td>
<td>Scotland’s National Centre for Languages</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQA</td>
<td>Scottish Qualifications Authority</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
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<td>SSP</td>
<td>Statutory Sick Pay</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDA</td>
<td>Training and Development Agency for Schools</td>
<td>England, Wales, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this booklet. However, the British Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors that may exist or any subsequent changes post-print.

Contact us

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Email: languageassistants.UK@britishcouncil.org

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Manchester M1 6BB

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British Council
The Boat (7th Floor)
49 Queens Square
Belfast BT1 3FG

Scotland

British Council
Waverley Gate (4th Floor)
2–4 Waterloo Place
Edinburgh EH1 3EG

Wales

British Council
1 Kingsway
Cardiff CF10 3AQ