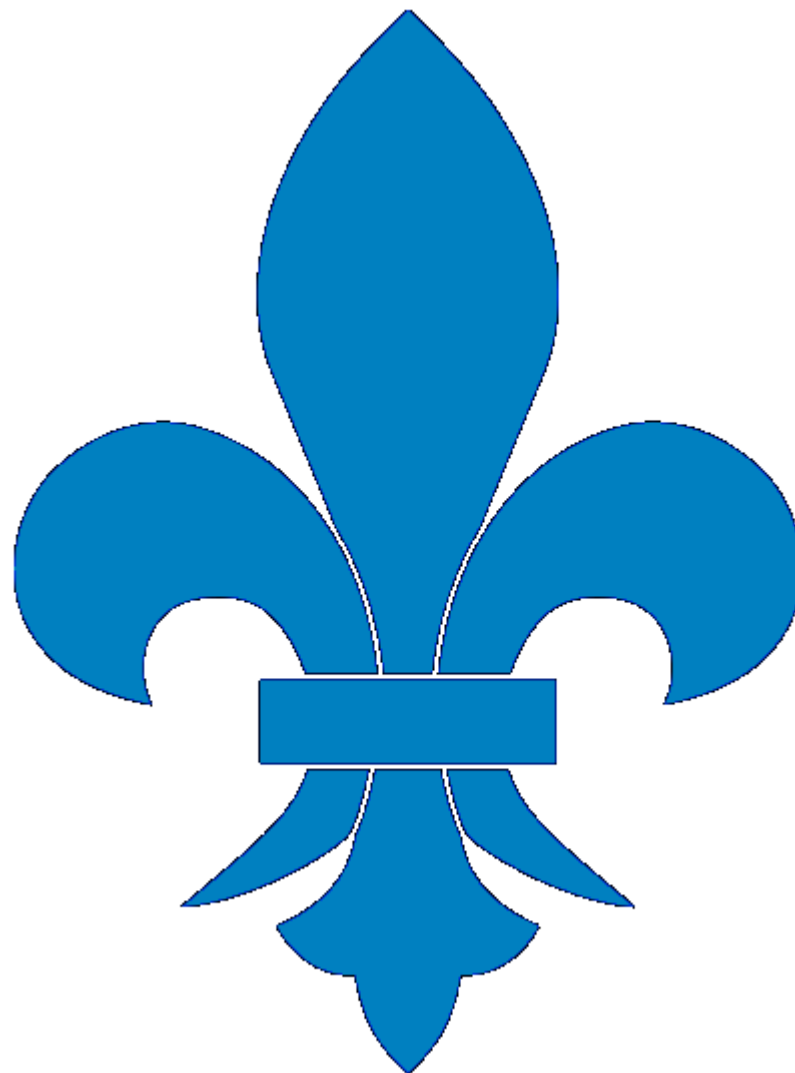




**Country Notes for English Language Assistants
Québec
2017-18**

These notes contain important information and advice on a variety of practical and administrative matters affecting English Language Assistants in Quebec. They should be read carefully, retained for reference and considered alongside any information from Education Internationale or the Canadian Authorities.

If your permanent (UK) home address, personal e-mail or phone number change at any point from now until the end of your assistantship, please inform us **immediately** by e-mail. We may need to contact you during the year with updates, invitations or urgent messages.

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The Basics

1. Co-operating partner

Your contact at Éducation Internationale (EI) throughout the year is Renaud Brissonneau. His contact details are as follows:

Renaud Brissonneau
Éducation Internationale
Équipe des Programmes internationaux
d'assistantes et d'assistants de langue
301 Rue des Peupliers Est, Bureau A
Québec (Québec) G1L 1S6
Tel. +1 418 651-4667 Extension 144
assistants@education-internationale.com

2. Period of appointment

The period of appointment is from 1 September to 31 May for primary and secondary schools (including an induction meeting at the start of September, in Montreal). Assistants are expected to work 18 contact hours per week, and a further 6 hours of preparation time can be incorporated into your timetable as decided by the *commission scolaire* (local education authority) or school. You are entitled to the usual school holidays.

3. The language assistant's role

The role of a language assistant is a very important one, and one that we hope you will enjoy. Please remember that you will be a **member of staff**, with the responsibilities and required professionalism that this entails. Please refer to our [website](#) for more information on your role.

You will also be an **ambassador for the UK and its culture**. The way you behave and represent the UK will shape the view of the UK of those with whom you are in contact. Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is an excellent resource, and you should draw on this in your lessons. We provide a lot of advice to help you incorporate cultural content into your lessons – please see our [Teaching English website](#) for more information.

It is important to be resourceful and use your initiative. If you do not think that you are being used sufficiently, make suggestions of topics that you could discuss with the students, activities you could do with them, materials that you could bring and so on. Remember that teachers are very busy and some will be more responsive to your ideas than others, so don't be put off if your suggestions are not taken up immediately.

Please refer to the first two paragraphs of “Personal & Practical Issues” to learn about other aspects of the assistant's role.

4. Predecessors

Contact details of assistants appointed to Québec last year have been sent in a separate document. It should be noted that schools do not necessarily receive assistants from the same anglophone country each year, and the British Council holds records of assistants from the UK only. Past assistants have emphasised how useful it is to contact former assistants in their area and have described their advice as “invaluable”.

5. Contacting your school

Schools in Quebec close for the summer holidays at the end of June and re-open in the last week of August. Do not worry if you have written to your school and have not yet had a reply. You may still get a phone call. It is essential, however, that you reply to any letter you receive from Quebec, be it from the *Commission scolaire* or direct from the school.

Arrival

6. Passport and work permit

Assistants must be in possession of a standard 10-year passport before leaving the UK and are advised to ensure that it will not need to be renewed until 6 months after the end of the assistantship. Those who don't have a passport, or who need a new one, should complete the application procedure **as soon as possible**, either through a regional Passport Office or online at www.passport.gov.uk/index.asp.

UK assistants appointed in Quebec require a work permit: **it is essential that you have this before you leave the UK**, otherwise entry into Canada may be refused. Instructions were provided on the procedure to follow with Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Assistants are advised to take 2 or 3 scanned copies of the following documents:

- Passport (front cover, photo page, visa page)
- *Contrat de travail* (from *Éducation internationale*)
- Work permit authorisation letter (from the Canadian High Commission)
- Any other important documents

These copies should be stored separately to the originals, in a safe, password-protected place. You should also take note of the number to call if you need to cancel a credit or debit card whilst abroad.

7. Foreign Commonwealth Office Information

Before travelling to Québec you should ensure that you check the [FCO's travel advice pages](#) and ensure that you have subscribed to updates so that you receive any important changes to the FCO's advice. During a crisis, advice for British nationals will be published on the travel advice website and updated regularly, so by subscribing you will ensure that you are aware of any updates. You can register for emails using this [link](#). We also recommend that assistants read the [Checklist for Travellers](#) document provided by the FCO.

8. Travel & Montreal meeting

During the London briefing day you were given a sheet called "Points for UK assistants on arrival in Quebec". It is important that you remind yourself of the contents and keep it for reference amongst your papers.

You are responsible for the cost of your own travel and any travel to and from your place of appointment during the year. The following websites may help you when booking your travel:

www.canadianaffair.com
www.airtransat.com
www.britishairways.com
www.aircanada.com
www.skyscanner.net

At the beginning of September, you will have an induction in Montreal, Québec. You will be guided through all the paperwork concerning social security and other matters. Please bring your passport and work permit to this meeting.

Money Matters

9. Monthly allowance, currency & banks

Assistants posted to primary and secondary schools receive an allowance over the 9 months of \$CAN 15,300 in total. The method of payment depends on the *commission scolaire* or the school in question. As discussed at the London briefing, you are advised to take with you, or have at your disposal, £1,000 - £1,500 to cover your first month's expenses. This amount may differ depending on your location and how much rent you are required to pay in advance. Take \$Can 250-300 of this in ready cash.

You are advised to wait until you get to your town of appointment in Quebec before opening a bank account. This will allow you to research local options, seek recommendations and choose what will be most convenient for the rest of the year. More details and advice will be given to you at the Montreal meeting.

If you wish to supplement your income by giving private tuition in English, you are strongly advised **not** to advertise in local papers or public places. (Please read the relevant sections of the *Personal Safety* leaflet). In general, pupils are easily found through school or private connections, i.e. by word-of-mouth recommendation. However, it is essential to check that you have the permission of the parents of any potential tutees, and also that the other English teachers in your school(s) do not mind, so that you are not perceived to be 'stealing' their private pupils. Furthermore, you must check the terms of your work permit, as they may not allow you to take on extra work.

10. Income Tax

Your salary should not be taxed by the Federal Government nor by the Provincial Government. However, you may have to pay a small amount at the end of the year. You will need to fill out a TD1 form to state that you will earn under the tax threshold whilst working as a language assistant. More information on this will be available at the Montreal induction.

N.B. The financial year in Canada runs from January to December. However, it is normally the case that 100% of the remuneration received abroad will be liable for UK tax.

You are reminded that the UK tax year runs from 6 April to 5 April and that income earned in the UK between April and the start of your assistantship may be taken into account when your own or your parents' tax liability is being assessed. Enquiries regarding UK income tax should be addressed to a local Inspector of Taxes, **not** to the British Council. This is because we are not trained in tax, and cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax. It is also for data protection reasons.

11. Insurance (see also separate sheet from the briefing called 'Insurance – The Options – 2017-18')

The Québec National Insurance Plan (RAMQ or *Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec*) covers assistants for most medical expenses. However, due to government legislation, all non-residents applying for a RAMQ card will not be covered for the first 90 days (i.e. from the date on which you apply for your health card). Full details and application forms will be provided at the Montreal meeting. You are strongly advised to take out a comprehensive policy for **at least** the first 90 days before the issue of your RAMQ card (*Carte Soleil*). The card is free as a condition of the programme, and **only provides cover for Quebec**. In the rest of Canada, treatment will be covered only up to the cost of the same treatment in Quebec. If you travel to the United States, you will not be covered by your '*Carte Soleil*'. Beware: outside Quebec medical expenses, even for minor complaints, can be very high.

Assistants should note that the policy provided by the Quebecois authorities does not cover prescriptions (these can be very expensive), routine dental and ophthalmic treatment, or ambulance transportation. You may therefore wish to consider private insurance against these eventualities.

It is strongly recommended that, at the very least, you take out a comprehensive insurance policy in the UK to cover you for the first three months after leaving home. The British Council is unable to advise on private insurance packages, you are recommended to consult an insurance broker for professional advice and to check whether you are covered by your parents' insurance policy. Undergraduate assistants may find that a "study abroad" policy purchased online may be an option.

Administrative Matters

12. Absence from school

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

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

If you wish to withdraw from the programme, you must give sufficient prior notice in writing of your intended departure to the school, the EI and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full. If you are an undergraduate you must also inform your university/college in the UK. Withdrawing is also strongly discouraged, as it means that pupils are left without a language assistant, which can affect academic results and our relationship with our partners in Quebec.

13. Solving problems

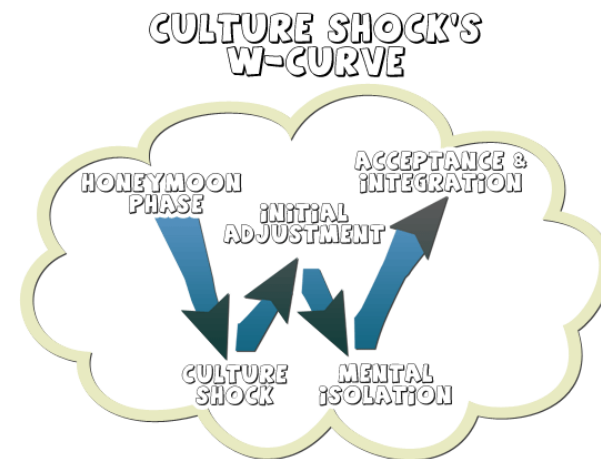
Country Notes for English Language Assistants Quebec

Information correct @ 15.08.2016 Please inform us during the year of any changes that you come across.

School conditions in Quebec differ from those in this country. Any difficulties should be discussed with your mentor teacher (*responsable*) and/or the teacher of the class concerned in the first instance. If the problem cannot be solved this way, then talk to the head teacher or get in touch with your *responsable* at the local education authority (*Commission scolaire*).

Satisfactory solutions can usually be found through such discussions. If the problem remains unresolved, you may contact Éducation Internationale (see section Co-operating partner for contact details). The British Council in the UK will be happy to advise, but **problems are dealt with most quickly and effectively locally.**

Do tell people if you have problems or if you need information as otherwise they may assume everything is ok. The authorities will not appreciate it if you suffer in silence and complain six months later. A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in Québec was the best year of their life. This can raise expectations and often leads to people feeling low especially during the first few weeks until they settle in. Please see the below diagram for an illustration of how your year may be structured (this is just a rough guideline).



Settling In

14. Accommodation

The *Commissions scolaires* and/or the schools will help assistants find somewhere suitable to live: either in a studio, with a family or sharing a flat. Obviously, the remoter the area, the more limited the choice of accommodation, but it is worth taking your time to find something suitable. Do not feel pressured into taking the first thing you see. Further details and advice will be given to you at the Montreal meeting.

When renting accommodation, you should not be asked for a deposit as this is illegal in Québec. Renters' rights are protected by the *Régie du logement* (www.rdl.gouv.qc.ca). When you leave your accommodation, remember to cancel any personal contracts e.g. internet or utilities.

When looking for accommodation **please follow the advice given in our Personal Safety Leaflet**. When you have found somewhere to live, even if it has been arranged for you, do not sign any agreement you are not comfortable with. Make sure that there is a period of notice written in the contract to avoid problems if you decide to change your accommodation during the year.

15. Creating social networks

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

The best way to start is with colleagues at school. Make sure you are positive, enthusiastic and willing to learn. Socialise as much as you can with colleagues and accept all invitations to events, dinner etc. Tell

people what your interests are and ask them to let you know what's going on in the local area. Alongside this, do keep in mind that teachers can be very busy, especially during exam periods.

Apart from your work in the classroom you may be able to attend other classes in subjects which interest you. You will find that you become much more integrated into school life and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the school, such as sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Go to school 'open days' or parent evenings as these are also a good way of meeting people. If you hear of something happening that interests you, ask if you can become involved. Don't wait to be invited as people may assume that you're not interested.

It is also a good idea to get in touch with other people in the area before you leave. One useful way to do this is to get in contact with a previous assistant in your region and ask them to give you any e-mail addresses or numbers of contacts they made. Another excellent way to meet new people is to set up language exchanges with local people who want to practise their English. You could also enrol at a local language school, offer English lessons to colleagues/locals, join a club and join assistant groups on social networks such as Facebook. There are often Facebook groups for people who are new to the city/town, which organise different events to help people make new friends - just search for 'new in "city name"'. Previous assistants have also suggested joining a local Couchsurfing group as they often organise social activities.

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an ELA. Keep your profile private so that it can only be seen by people you intend to see it. You should not invite other teachers to be 'friends' unless they add you. Remember to remain professional in what you say on your wall and be careful what you say about your employer.

You must not exchange personal contact details with students, invite them to be 'friends' or accept similar invitations from them.

This is regarded as inappropriate behaviour. You should check with teachers about the school's internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school.

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

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

- Live with native speakers
- Enrol for an evening class; join a sports club, music group, choir etc.
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you couldn't join in the UK
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc

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

As a golden rule, **try to say yes to every social opportunity presented to you** that does not compromise your personal safety. You can accept invitations to places and activities even if they do not sound interesting as you might meet other people there who do share your interests.

16. Travelling around

For travel within Quebec past assistants have recommended coach travel with Orléans Express, who offer a discount for students, and domestic flights with Westjet (www.westjet.com).

Useful travel websites:	
www.lonelyplanet.com	www.pc.gc.ca/eng/index.aspx
www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree	www.viarail.ca/en
www.roughguides.com	www.aircanada.com/en/home.html
www.routard.com	www.expedia.ca
www.budgettravel.com	www.orbitz.com
www.worldtravelguide.net	www.travelocity.ca

Please note that in Canada you have to be at least 21 years old to hire a car in your name; some car-hire companies even have a minimum age of 25. An assistant who is less than 21 can sometimes be nominated co-driver on a car-hire contract (since the minimum legal age to drive is 18) but this, too, varies from one company to another.

For detailed information on road conditions throughout Canada, please see the Transport Canada web site at <http://www.tc.gc.ca> or the Canadian Automobile Association site at <http://www.caa.ca>, both of which provide tips for travelling safely on Canadian roads. Canadians drive on the right-hand side of the road.

Many assistants in the past have used the 'organised lift' company, called Amigo Express (www.amigoexpress.com).

There is also a *Route Verte* cycle network for those who are keen cyclists: www.routeverte.com.

N.B. A tip of 15% is expected in most restaurants and waiters in bars expect a small tip for each drink they bring you, even at the bar. Taxi drivers also expect a tip of about 15%. It is not necessary to tip at take-away counters and in fast food restaurants.

17. Personal Safety

It is very important to stick to the same health and safety rules as you would at home and always heed advice given by local people. Please refer to the Personal Safety Leaflet which provides an emergency

telephone number as well as essential guidelines on how to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

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

18. ISIC cards

International Student Identity Cards cost around £12 and are available online and from student travel agents such as STA and BUNAC. They can be used to obtain cheap entry into certain museums, theatres, cinemas and art galleries. They may also entitle you to certain travel concessions. Please see www.isiccard.com for further information. Please note that in order to obtain an ISIC card you need to be a full time student. For non-students under 26 there is the International Youth Travel Card, which can be bought in the same way – see <http://www.istc.org> for details of discounts available.

19. Phoning home & mobiles

Be sure to shop around for the best deal on your telephone contract. There are many service providers in Quebec and these can vary from region to region. Many of these companies often offer long-distance calling packages, so it is best to ask what local offers there are when you first sort out your phone. In Quebec City and Montreal you can buy a number of different phonecards – the most popular are Global and Vox – and you can make cheap calls to the UK with these. Previous assistants have also found Sprint Canada to be worthwhile.

With regards to mobile phones, you will only be able to use your UK mobile phone in Canada if it is a tri-band phone. Previous assistants have recommended the following pay as you go Canadian phone providers: Solo Mobile (available through Espace Bell stores) Fido, Telus

and Koodo. More information on this will be given at the Montreal meeting and can be requested from one of your predecessors as they will know what network coverage is like in your region.

20. Prepare for the winter

Assistants should remember that **the long winter season in Quebec is very cold** by European standards (although it is a dry cold), and you are strongly advised to think carefully about the kind of clothes you take with you. Some items (boots, coats) are best purchased in Quebec as these will be designed to withstand local conditions; others (ski wear) can often be borrowed from friends and colleagues. On the other hand, schools, office and apartment blocks, shopping malls etc are usually very warm and well insulated and you will also require light clothing.

21. Useful websites and recommended reading

You can read a case study written by a former Quebec ELA on our website:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/language-assistants/become/canada/case-study>

Former assistants recommended the following guidebooks: Rough Guide to Canada, Guide Routard de Québec, Lonely Planet Canada

Some useful websites:
www.Quebecoriginal.com
www.radio-canada.ca
www.voir.ca
www.thirdyearabroad.com

Teaching Tips and Resources

22. Observation period

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

Try to note the following:

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

23. British Council Teaching Resources

The British Council produces and co-produces a range of resources specifically for Language Assistants. Making use of these will help you to deliver interesting and useful classroom activities and will support you in solving problems in the classroom.

The British Council is also closely involved with the teaching of English abroad. Local branches develop useful resources and organise a range of cultural activities, which may be of interest to you and your school. For information on forthcoming events, go to <http://www.britishcouncil.ca>.

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

<https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/>

There, you can also find resources for classroom activities and projects, such as 'Culture in a Box' or 'Shakespeare Lives'.

24. Language Assistants Manual

'Language Assistant' by Clare Lavery is a resource book designed for language assistants and provides information on all aspects of the role. This can be downloaded here:

www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/whole_manual.pdf.

Please read this carefully as it is extremely useful in preparing you for your assistantship.

25. TeachingEnglish and LearnEnglish

TeachingEnglish is an online resource centre produced jointly by the British Council and the BBC, which you can access here:

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>.

On the site you can find:

- Teaching tips
- Seasonal lesson plans based around UK topics
- Primary tips
- Classroom games

The British Council Learn English website is an excellent free online resource for students of English with lots of games, stories, listening activities and grammar exercises:

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/>

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

26. Teaching materials

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

Past assistants have found that the following materials worked well:

- Photos of family and friends and your home town
- Postcards
- Examples of UK coins and notes
- Train tickets and timetables
- Stamps
- Christmas cards and crackers
- Magazines and local newspapers
- Tourist brochures
- UK food (marmite, jelly, chocolate, custard, mince pies, gravy granules, etc) – make sure these are allowed through customs before packing!
- Tapes of friends' accents and conversations

The more materials you can find the better (although bear in mind luggage allowance when you're packing! You will be able to find a lot of resources online). Think about what worked well for you as a language student and about which items you find interesting when you are in a

foreign country. You can also ask your host school(s) whether there is anything specific they would like you to bring and to find out about topics you are likely to be asked to cover during your assistantship.

27. Social Media Links

You are welcome to join our private Facebook group to facilitate communication with other assistants in Quebec. We will also be updating social media with further opportunities and items of interest throughout the year – follow @Languageasst on twitter or Study Work Create on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). We also encourage you to keep in touch with us throughout the year with details of your activities – you can email languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org, or tag us on social media and we'll be sure to give you a like!

28. Miscellaneous

- Co-operating partners abroad have requested that the attention of British visitors be drawn to the severe penalties imposed for drug offences, drinking in public places and for taking part in unlawful political demonstrations which may result in heavy fines and prison sentences. You are therefore strongly advised not to become involved in these activities.
- Married students should note that the allowance is intended to provide for one person only. However, if an assistant's spouse remains in the UK and is unemployed, he/she may be barred from income support or be required to refund whatever was received as such since the start of the assistantship. Enquiries should be made well in advance in order to prevent financial difficulties from arising during a married assistant's period of appointment.
- Please note the British Council is **not** the employer of UK assistants abroad and should not be given as a referee in future job applications. In general the Head of the school would be the most appropriate referee.

Useful contacts

- Please take note of the address of the British Honorary Consulate in Quebec City in case of emergency:

British Honorary Consulate
Suite 700
1150 Claire Fontaine
Québec City
Québec G1R 5G4
☎ (1) (418) 521 3000

The principal UK Diplomatic post in Canada is [The British High Commission in Ottawa](#).

In case of loss of your passport refer to:
<https://www.gov.uk/report-a-lost-or-stolen-passport>

- Emergency Services in Quebec: ☎ 911

Enjoy your year and Bonne Chance!

“Get involved. It is only through participation that you will derive the enormous benefits that this year will give you. Many of my fondest memories are from extra-curricular clubs, sports and other activities I became involved in.”

“Don't be shy. Try everything, talk to a lot of people, get involved and keep busy. Be serious about your risks. It doesn't matter if you make mistakes. You are new to the country and culture and you need to learn the language. Do things with your classes and try to have done in language assistance at your school/university. Make the most of it, it's your chance!”

“Work hard and you will not only feel proud but also appreciated by those you work with!”

“Bite the bullet and ring your number as soon as you have their number.”

