

Language Assistants in France
2024-25 Programme

ELA in France: The Guide

August 2024

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How to use this guide

[Section 1](#) provides an overview of France and key country information

[Section 2](#) indicates key contacts for your assistantship and their roles

[Section 3](#) provides detail regarding the assistantship role and what this involves

[Section 4](#) and [5](#) helps you to prepare the essentials before you arrive in France

[Section 5](#) to [9](#) covers all core aspects and documents you will need once you arrive in France

[Section 10](#) is for you to consider at the end of your placement.

Each section includes a recap at the end to highlight the key actions. These are not exhaustive but highlight the main takeaways.

You can consult this at any point in the year. Some assistants prefer to read it all in one go or you can focus on the specific section that applies to you. We encourage you to read the sections in full and do additional research on any aspects that are relevant to your assistantship.

Please ensure you have read through this document and carried out research yourself before contacting the language assistants team with any questions.

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

Date checked: 21/08/2024

France Overview

1 Spotlight on France

Did you know that the British Council Language Assistants Programme first began back in 1905 with English masters heading over to France?

You are joining the next generation of this legacy strengthening educational and cultural links between the UK and France through the British Council and our partners France Éducation International.

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

1.1 Emergency Contacts

1.1.1 Emergency services in France

In any emergency: call **112**

Medical assistance (SAMU): call **15**

Fire Brigade (Pompiers): call **18**

Police (gendarmerie): call **17**

General enquiries to the British Embassy:

Tel: +33 1 44 51 31 00

Fax: +33 1 44 51 31 09

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

1.1.2 British embassy and consulate

For up-to-date British Embassy and consulate contact details in France please refer to the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk). Please take note of the address of the British Embassy in France below in case of emergency or loss of your passport. Assistants who do not hold British citizenship should check with their own Consulates/Embassies in France.

British Embassy

- 35, rue du Faubourg St Honore ,75383 Paris - Cedex 08
- Tel: +33 1 44 51 31 00

- Fax: +33 1 44 51 31 09

Office hours are between 9.30am and 6.00pm, Monday-Friday but will close for lunch between 1.00pm and 2.30pm each day.

British Consulates-General are also provided in Paris, Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille.

1.2 Life in France

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

General	News
Complete France Public Holidays Calendar Rough Guide to France France Travel Blog Lonely Planet France	Le Monde Outre-Mer News France Government Website BBC's France Profile

1.2.1 Personal safety and Travel

Your personal safety is of paramount importance while living overseas and we strongly advise that you spend some time looking at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website and check it regularly as there is a lot of useful and up-to-date information provided.

As mentioned in section 3.1 of this document, ensure you regularly check the France travel [advice page](#) and are aware of these key sections:

- [Safety and Security Page](#)
- [Warnings and Insurance](#)
- [Sexual Assault Support](#)
- [FCDO advice for women travelling abroad](#)
- [Lost Passport Recovery](#)

You can find more details on travel in section 4.4

1.2.2 Assistantship

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.

1.3 Local laws and customs

As well as the information on the [GOV.UK site for French Laws and Customs](#), make sure you are aware of the following:

LGBTQ+

[Lonely Planet guide for LGBT travellers](#)

Secularism

Assistants who are allocated a placement must be aware of the laws around secularism in the French education system which they must adhere to. Please refer to the French Education Ministry's website to view the [La charte de laïcité](#), which all assistants should read carefully. Please note that all assistants are expected by the Académies to respect La charte de laïcité. The British Council cannot be held responsible for issues surrounding La charte de laïcité.

Laws

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

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

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

Internet and Phone

- The France code for France is +33. To phone abroad from France the code is 00 followed by the France code.
- If you set up a phone line or internet connection, past assistants have warned to check phone subscription charges with France Telecom first. You may be charged for a full year's subscription even if you end your phone contract earlier than this.
- For this reason assistants often recommend getting a pay as you go mobile rather than one on contract. If you do opt for a contract, be sure to find out how to cancel your contract as this varies by provider.
- To avoid internet contracts you may want to explore other options of internet access such as dongles (clé internet).

Be aware that calls to the UK from a mobile can be expensive. Previous assistants have recommended using Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook messenger as alternatives.

1.4 Outre-Mer destinations

(Guadeloupe, Guyane, La Réunion, Martinique, Nouvelle-

Calédonie, Mayotte)

Emergency Contacts & Telephone Numbers

Emergency contact numbers in the Outre-Mer destinations are the same as mainland France.

If calling from abroad, these are the following area codes:

+590 Guadeloupe

+594 Guyane

+596 Martinique

+262 La Réunion & Mayotte

+687 Nouvelle-Calédonie

To contact the British Consulate/Embassy, for all Outre-Mer destinations, contact the [embassy in Paris](#).

FCDO Travel Advice

Please visit the following webpages for FCDO advice on each destination:

[Guadeloupe](#)

[Guyane](#)

[Martinique](#)

[Mayotte](#)

[La Réunion](#)

[Nouvelle-Calédonie](#)

We recommend that you sign up to FCDO email travel alerts for your destination. On the homepage of each destination's travel advice pages (linked above), please click on 'Get email alerts' to receive email notifications of any important events that take place in your destination.

General Information

Some things to bear in mind about life in the Outre-Mer destinations:

- The lifestyle is usually very relaxed and time is not seen the same way as it is in the UK. You can expect things to run late and take longer than expected.
- Most accommodation cannot be booked online via travel sites and is better booked in person. Please contact your school for more information about accommodation as a lot of schools in the Outre-Mer destinations can support you to find housing.
- Public transport can be unreliable and several former assistants have opted for buying/renting cars. Renting a car long-term may be the most suitable solution for some depending on your location and a plus side is that you will be covered by insurance.

-
- Research the climate of the destination you are going to. Some of these islands can be very humid and warm.
 - Former assistants have recommended investing in a mosquito tent to put around your bed and mosquito repellent sprays/gels.
 - Internet connection can be a lot slower than you are probably used to in the UK.
 - You generally cannot do a lot of things online and will have to go in person.
 - Life can be very expensive in the Outre-Mer destinations as well as flights to and from them.

Section 1 Recap



Language Assistants Programme Overview

2 Key Contacts

2.1 UK British Council Language Assistants team

The Language Assistants programme has a dedicated team to provide support during the application and pre-departure process for each destination. Please note the British Council is not the employer of participants of the Language Assistants programme while abroad.

2.2 Partner Organisation: France Éducation International

France Éducation International (FEI) administers the Language Assistants Programme in France. They liaise with the Académies in France on the British Council's behalf. They will contact you throughout the year regarding your placement and other opportunities. The programme team are active on socials and you can find them on [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

2.3 British Council France

Please note: The British Council in France is not responsible for the administration of the Language Assistants programme in France - this is the role of France Éducation International.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Based in Paris, our France team works closely with French and UK stakeholders around the areas of Arts, Education and English. This cultural relations work is financed by a grant from the UK government.

Our English Programmes team is responsible for promoting the quality and inclusive teaching and learning of English across France at all levels of the education system. You can read more about our work on our [webpage](#).

As British Council language assistants, please do speak about our work and [share this flyer](#) with your schools.

We encourage you to sign up for our [France newsletter](#) to keep up to date with activities that are of interest to you and our [Teacher Development Newsletter](#) which shares teaching resources and professional development opportunities for teachers of English in France.

You can learn more about our work in this [short video](#) from our Head of English Programmes in France.

2.4 Académies

Once the British Council have allocated you to an Académie, the Académie will then allocate you to the schools and are responsible for your contract. Each region differs as to when they organise appointments and send out information. **The Académies are your employers during your assistantship and any changes to your contract should be liaised with them. In addition, your Académie is responsible for your final allocation and providing your 'Arrêté de nomination'.**

2.5 Mentor Teacher

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

If a mentor teacher is not identified at the start of your placement, you should try asking for one and then contact France Éducation International for support as soon as you can.

Application, Allocation and Pre-Departure	Sending Organisation: British Council Esther McKnight , Consultant Rand Abdoun-Machaal , Assistant Consultant languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org Responsible for: application and pre-departure processes
Arrival and Assistantship	Partner Organisation: France Éducation International (FEI) Main Contact: Polina Levkina assistant@france-education-international.fr Responsible for: Programme in France and liaising with educational authorities and schools.
Assistantship in school	Employer: Académie Responsible for: Salary and HR Support: Mentor Teacher Responsible for: In-school support and first contact

Section 2 Recap



Understand role of the British Council, FEI and the Académies

Establish and connect with your mentor teacher

3 The English Language Assistant role

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

As a language assistant you are also an ambassador for the UK and its culture, influencing how those around you view the UK. You should endeavour to set a positive example and avoid any potential damage to the reputation of the programme and adversely affect the experience of future assistants.

Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is a key part of the cultural exchange and an excellent resource you should draw upon during your lessons.

3.1 Posting information

Each school differs as to when they send out information. The British Council is involved in

passing on your application to our partner organisation in France but has no control over choice of town, size of town, school environment or when information is sent out.

Once you receive this information, you should write immediately to your school(s) confirming acceptance of the post. If you do not receive a reply by mid-September, it is a good idea to ring the school(s) to ask about accommodation and give them an idea of your anticipated arrival date. You should also ask them for some information about the school(s) that you will be working in. For example, it may be useful to know the age range of pupils, the average class size, the general level of ability, the social background of pupils, the facilities available and if you should bring any specific materials from home. It is also important to enquire about the dress code for teachers and any other general school information.

3.2 Period of Appointment

The period of appointment for UK assistants in France will be 1st October 2024 – 30 April 2025. Assistants are expected to work 12 hours a week. Those who have been appointed to more than one school will be asked to divide their time between the schools concerned. You can request information regarding how your timetable will be arranged from the head of the host school, which is usually the first one mentioned when you are sent details of your posting however this information will most likely not be available until you arrive in France.

3.3 Holidays and Sick Leave

Assistants are entitled to the usual school holidays; however these can vary according to the Académie zone. The [French Government's Education website](#) has further details regarding the school calendar. You should not be absent on other occasions without prior permission. Attending the induction course does not give assistants the right to take leave at a later date.

An important point to note is that the official date of the beginning of the working period is the date inscribed on the 'procès verbal d'installation' document by the Head of the School. If you are an assistant serving in one of the Départements d'outre-mer, you should check the procedure with the rectorat (Local Education Authority equivalent) as this might be different to that of mainland France.

If you cannot work because of illness, you should inform your school(s) and local education authority (if applicable) immediately by telephone. Any sick leave must be justified by a medical certificate from your French doctor (médecin traitant). It should contain exact dates and cover the entire duration of the absence. This must be sent to the school or to the 'Inspection académique' as soon as it is issued. You must also send your 'arrêt de travail' to the 'sécurité sociale'. **You must also get this from a French doctor as sick notes from doctors in the UK will not be accepted.**

Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to France Éducation International and to the British Council. Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the school(s) who is within his/her right to refuse it. You are reminded that if you are absent from school without prior authorisation, your allowance will be discontinued from the first day of your absence.

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

Further information about the *sécurité sociale* and procedure to follow in case of absence is contained in the France Éducation International's publication [Le Guide de l'assistant de langue](#) under the section 'Votre Installation en France'.

Please note that if you take sick leave before having completed 4 months and 4 days' service you will not be entitled to sickness benefit (*indemnité journalière*) which usually amounts to 50% of your gross allowance and is calculated on a daily basis. As of mid-2012, for all French workers, the first day of sick leave is unpaid.

3.4 School allocation

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

Section 3 Recap



Receive allocation and school details



Accept post offer from school and ask for more details



Save key contact information

Preparation before you go

4 Read before you go

4.1 Costs to prepare

You should prepare for the following costs:

- £90 ICPC
- Administrative costs: visa (if applicable).
- Travel costs
- Accommodation costs
- Insurance costs
- Approximately €1700 - €2500 available for initial costs and to cover your first month's expenses and up to €2500-€3500 if appointed to Outre-Mer, Corsica or the Paris area. This amount may differ depending on your location and how much rent you are required to pay in advance.
 - Take €200 - €350 of this in ready cash.

4.2 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advice

During a crisis, official advice for British nationals will be published on the [travel advice website](#) and regularly updated. For your safety and to stay well-informed, we **strongly recommend** you [subscribe to receive FCDO email updates](#) for France so that you are immediately notified of any important changes to the FCDO's advice.

As international issues and subsequent advice can change often and rapidly, you must take responsibility for your own health and safety by staying informed of any changes to such advice. When responding to an immediate in-country danger or threat to your health and safety, you should always prioritise your own health and safety and make decisions in the best interest for your personal circumstances – do not wait for advice from the British Council.

The FCDO have published a comprehensive guide for [Entry requirements](#) and [Living in France](#). The guide sets out essential information for British nationals residing in France, including advice on health, education, residence requirements and more. We recommend you read this guide thoroughly.

You can also contact the British embassy for advice in the event of an emergency.

4.3 Passports and visas

Those who are not in possession of a passport, or need a new one, should complete the application procedure as soon as possible either through a regional Passport Office or [online](#). You should [check your passport eligibility for Europe](#).

If you have a non-EU passport, you will be applying for a **VLS-TS** (visa de long séjour valant titre de séjour, mention travailleur temporaire). You must ensure your passport is valid **until October 2025**. This process requires your own investment of time and money. The British Council UK team will provide step-by-step guidance on this process when the time comes to

apply.

Assistants are expected to cover the costs of this, which can include sourcing documentation, attending visa appointments and paying service fees to the TLS contact centre.

4.4 Travel to and around France

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

The British Council strongly advises against booking your travel until you have received your visa and are certain that you will be able to travel on your chosen date. In some instances, you may be able to pay the airline a small fee for flexible dates if you wish to book further in advance. The British Council is not responsible for arranging your travel. If you do **not** hold an EU or Irish passport, **you must not travel to France without a visa.**

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

The most widely used travel sites in France are:

Flights	Train and Ferry	In France
Skyscanner British Airways easyJet TUI Opodo Expedia Ryanair Airfrance Air Caraibes (for out-mer)	Eurostar Rail Europe Eurolines Interrail Direct Ferries	SNCF SNCF-connect (for information on cheap train fares)

Other Travel Pointers:

- [Bla Bla Car](#): Car-share - website for sharing arrangements.
- Bus & Metro: [RATP](#)

Former Assistant recommendations:

- Look into buying an [SNCF railcard](#) if you think you will be travelling a lot, or if not just use [the youth railcard](#).
- You will find it cheaper for local travel in Ile-de-France to buy a carnet of 10 tickets for buses and the métro than to buy one ticket at a time. Carnets can now only be bought on a Navigo pass that can be purchased in metro stations.
- Be careful on the RER train which goes to the suburbs of Paris. Don't sit alone in a

carriage especially late at night.

- Flixbus is a great, cheap way to travel, but you absolutely get your money's worth - meaning they won't be top quality buses.
- In Outre-Mer, buy a car if possible, or a bike if you don't have a license.
- [International Student Identity Cards](#) or for non-students [International Youth Travel Card](#) can be used to obtain cheap entry into certain museums, theatres, cinemas and art galleries throughout Europe. We also recommend taking your UK student ID card as that might also get you a discount in certain places.
- Ask your school about the 'Pass Éducation' that you should be eligible for. This is provided to state education staff ('l'éducation nationale'). The 'Pass Éducation' gives you free entry to many museums and tourist sites. You can find more information about the 'Pass Éducation' on their [website](#) including a full list of the locations you can visit for free.
- Check to see if your city has an Erasmus team. They may have weekly trips on the weekend at a good price and may also organise other activities during the week.

4.4.1 Taking a car abroad

You will need to research the laws on driving in France, including adapting your head lights for driving on the right and driving licenses. The [GOV.UK](#) website provides useful information on motoring abroad. It is also worth considering insurance and additional documentation you may require.

4.4.2 Taking pets abroad

You need to consider insurance, pet passports and health certificates. The [government advice page on taking your pet to an EU country](#) details more.

4.5 Insurance

First of all, if you are a university student, please check the insurance that your university provides and always remember to read the small print.

We would advise you to get a GHIC if you do not already have one. These were formerly known as EHIC. Any UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs) are still valid and offer the same cover as GHICs in the EU. Once your EHIC has expired, you'll be able to replace it with a GHIC. The Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) gives you the right to access state-provided healthcare during a temporary stay in the European Union (EU). The GHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance but gives you access to healthcare which becomes medically necessary during your stay, and you cannot reasonably wait until you're back in the UK to get it.

You can find out more online about the free [UK Global Health Insurance Card from the NHS](#).

The NHS website explains which types of medical treatments are covered and not covered by this card.

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

Assistants in France can benefit from health insurance provided by la caisse primaire d'assurance maladie (CPAM) de Paris for which you will make monthly contributions that are automatically taken from your wages through the Social Security System (la sécurité sociale). Please note that you will be enrolled onto the Paris division regardless of your regional allocation and you will have to contact the CPAM de Paris for any queries regarding your health insurance. You can find their contact details in our [French partner's \(FEI\) guide](#).

To register, you must provide the following documents to your school as soon as you arrive in France and open a French bank account: 'Arrêté de nomination', passport with the page showing the visa, birth certificate (which also shows your parents' names and dates of birth), RIB/IBAN provided by your French bank. If you have previously stayed in France on a long stay visa, you should already have a registration number and do not need to reregister.

Your health insurance start date will be given according to your work contract start date. Once the CPAM de Paris have received your completed application and have registered you, your school will receive your provisional certificate (attestation) either by email or post. Your school will be asked to provide a photograph of you so that your health insurance card (Carte Vitale) can be printed and sent to you. This process can take some time therefore, we would advise making your application as soon as possible on arrival in France. Please keep the provisional certificate (attestation) safe and with you at all times until you have received the Carte Vitale. Please take a note of the number on your attestation as it will have to be quoted on any claim for reimbursement that you make before your card is issued. The insurance decrees that 70% of the cost of medical treatment will be reimbursed as well as 15-65% of the cost of prescriptions (NB: some are not reimbursed) and 80% of hospital fees. For more details about the cover, please consult [FEI's guide](#). If it has been some time and you have still not received your Carte Vitale, please call the CPAM de Paris on: + 33 811 36 36 46.

Personal Accident Travel insurance is recommended to cover medical expenses, air ambulance, repatriation, personal accident & civil liability, luggage & valuable items, and cancellation in extreme cases and for treatment not covered by the above.

Personal Accident Travel policies are readily available on price comparison websites, or by using a search engine to search for 'travel insurance'. The UK Foreign & Commonwealth website offers additional advice on taking out [Travel Insurance](#). Former assistants have advised purchasing 'Backpacker' policies as they can usually cover you for a longer period of time.

Remember that normally your health insurance only covers you within your host country during your allocated time there, therefore if you travel outside the country during or after that period, you may need additional insurance. If you do leave France at any point, it is highly advised to take out insurance for the country / countries that you visit.

4.6 Graduates with student loans

If you have a student loan, you will need to let student finance know that you are going to France. Complete an Overseas Income Assessment Form to enable the Student Loans Company to calculate how much you need to repay.

You will be required to provide evidence of income or means of support. They will then send you a repayment schedule showing how much you need to pay each month. Your monthly payments will be based upon the earnings threshold for your destination. The British Council UK team are not able to advise on student loan matters. For all questions relating to student loans, please contact Student Finance directly.

4.7 Benefits and Universal Credit

If you are in receipt of government support in the UK, you must inform the authorities that you are moving to work abroad. Tell your local Jobcentre Plus or the office that pays your benefit if you are going abroad. If it is a temporary move, tell them when you are coming back. You must also tell HMRC if you are leaving the UK.

Section 4 Recap

- Sign up for FCDO email alerts
- Ensure you have a valid passport
- Obtain a visa if required
- Book travel to France once you have the visa
- Sort your EHIC/GHIC prior to leaving
- Get Comprehensive Insurance where necessary
- Inform UK authorities you are leaving (loans, benefits etc.)

5 Health and wellbeing

Before you go

Planning

At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest country-specific health advice from the [National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each France-specific page has information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, and factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad. Guidance is also available from NHS (Scotland) on the [FitForTravel](#) website.

General information on travel vaccinations and a travel health checklist is available on the NHS website. You may then wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you're abroad.

Make sure you have comprehensive travel and medical insurance covering healthcare and medical evacuation and repatriation for the duration of your stay.

Medication

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

If you are on prescription medication, make sure you either bring enough with you or have access to a supply once in France. Certain medicines may not be available in France (including major brands readily available in the UK), and you may be prohibited from bringing some medicines into France. For more information and advice, check with your GP and the Embassy of France before travelling.

5.2 France Healthcare

It is important to find out where your nearest doctor, dentist and hospital are as soon as you arrive. You should ask your school for information about the facilities in your area and advise staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

These sites provide more information on healthcare in France:

- [Choosing a Doctor](#)
- [France Healthcare](#)

All residents in France are asked to choose 'un médecin traitant' as their general practitioner. This doctor must also be consulted for referral for any specialist treatment. For a certain time, you can go to a specialist without having seen your 'médecin traitant' before, but the fee for the specialist will be higher so do enquire about the cost in advance. It is worth looking on the

[website linked above](#) (Choosing a Doctor) for 'médecins conventionnés' and their sector; sector 1 doctors have their fees set whereas sector 2 have more freedom about how much to charge.

It is worth knowing that for minor medical issues pharmacists provide excellent advice free of charge, and in emergencies they are licensed to prescribe medicine as well.

A few things to consider:

- Ensure that the doctor or dentist you choose is 'conventionné(e)'
- A visit (consultation) with a 'médecin traitant' for sector 1 costs €20 - €30 and you must pay this on the spot. The doctor will give you a 'feuille de soins' or 'feuille de maladie', a form which states how much you were charged and is to be forwarded to the sécurité sociale in order to be reimbursed by bank transfer. You may be given a prescription (ordonnance) too.
- When you buy what the doctor has prescribed, the pharmacist will enter the details into the computer. You will normally pay the sum which is not reimbursed by social security only (i.e. 35% of the cost of the prescription).

In order to join some sports clubs, it is sometimes necessary to obtain a certificate to prove that you have a good level of health.

If you require urgent medical attention in France dial **15**.

5.3 Additional Cover

Since the sécurité sociale generally reimburses no more than approx. 70% of medical expenses incurred (0-65% for prescribed drugs, 80% for hospital costs), assistants are strongly advised to take out additional medical insurance. As employees of the 'Ministère de l'Education Nationale' you are entitled to subscribe to the MGEN (Mutuelle Générale de l'Education Nationale).

This cover will only commence 3 months after you join and start paying your subscription. Every school in France has an MGEN representative, usually a teacher, whom you should contact early in the year if interested in joining the scheme. Assistants who register as 'regular' students at a French university can obtain additional medical cover at a reasonable price by joining the LMDE (La Mutuelle Des Etudiants). Both the premium and the cover with the LMDE are slightly less than with the MGEN.

5.4 Mental health

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

It is important to remember that culture shock affects everyone. There is no shame in admitting that you are having a difficult time. France is a very culturally distinct place. If you do feel homesick or frustrated, please talk to your fellow teachers on the programme as they will

understand how you are feeling better than anyone else. Also, be sure to keep up to date with your family and friends back home.

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

Do not hesitate to contact our partners at France Éducation International or your Académie if you are in need of someone to talk to; they can provide specific numbers to call depending on your situation. In addition, the French Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport have a free psychological support service you can reach at 0 805 500 005.

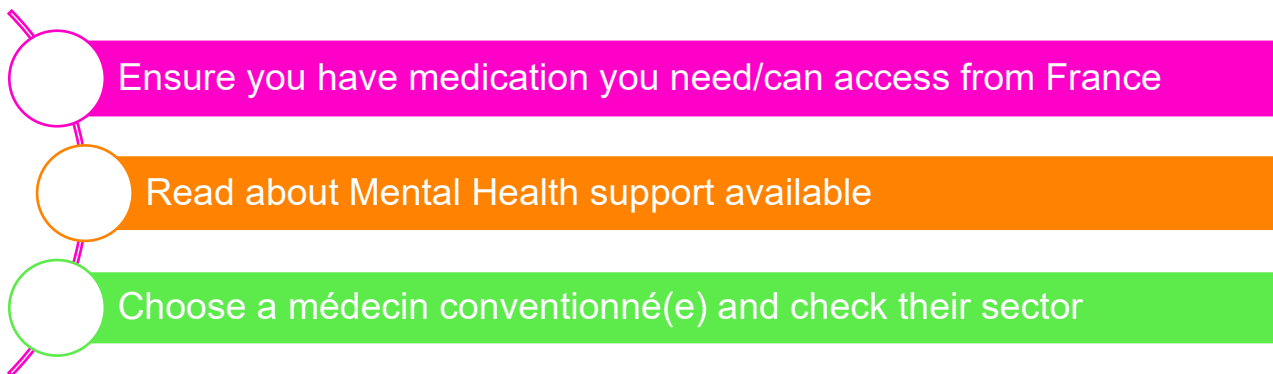
The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office provides information about mental health and travel via the following links:

- [Mental Health and Wellbeing Abroad](#)
- [Mental Health Travelling Abroad Checklist](#)

[The NHS Website](#) lists a couple of helplines that can offer expert advice to people with different mental health needs.

Another useful resource is [Better Help](#), but be aware that they charge \$35 / week for their services, with a possibility to apply for financial aid.

Section 5 Recap



6 Outside of school: Arrival and settling in

6.1 Registering/Validating your Long Stay Visa

Long Stay Visa Holders: Ensure you get your passport stamped by the border authorities upon entering France.

Visas **must be validated within the first three months of arrival** into France and you can do this online. Former assistants have recommended doing this as soon as possible after arriving in

France as it can take time to get the medical appointment. The cost to validate the visa is currently around €200. This process requires you to provide a permanent address in France, so you should only begin the [online visa validation process](#) **after** you have secured housing.

Once the window has opened on your computer, you will click on the icon that says "Je valide mon VLS-TS". Enter your visa number on the following page. Afterwards, click the button that says "Confirmer mon numéro de visa" and follow the instructions that are shown afterwards. Make sure to save the confirmation of your visa's validation provided by the site. Once complete, this online validation will allow you to exit and re-enter the Schengen zone for the duration of your visa's validity.

After you complete the online portion of your visa validation, you should receive a convocation from the OFII (Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration) scheduling you for a brief medical appointment (FREE for assistants) required of all foreigners living in France on long-stay visas. You must complete this routine medical exam.

You will receive a letter in the mail at the address you provide during the online validation process informing you of the time and place of your medical visit. You must go to the appointment scheduled for you by the OFII. After your medical exam, the OFII will provide you with an attestation of completion. You do not need to do anything further with this form, but make sure to keep it for your records as obtaining a copy can be quite difficult.

Several assistants in the past have had some difficulties validating their visa online. We have suggested some quick fixes below that have generally worked in case you encounter any issues yourself when validating your visa:

- Try using a different web browser
- Try using your mobile phone and a 3G/4G/5G network rather than Wifi
- Click on a different area of the visa website before returning to the validation page to try again
- Try again after a couple of days

If the suggestions above do not work for you and you are still experiencing issues, please email us at languageassistants.uk@britishcouncil.org or email France Éducation Internationale (FEI) at assistants@france-education-international.fr

6.2 Accommodation

6.2.1 General Advice

Some websites you may find useful are:

Accommodation Type	Useful Links	
Temporary accommodation:	Hostelling International Hostel World	Airbnb

Permanent accommodation	PAP Le bon coin Habitat Jeunes Appartager	CIDJ A Vendre A Louer Viva Street La Carte des Colocs
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When you go out looking for accommodation, take a dossier of papers with you including as many of the following as possible: your Arrêté de nomination, bulletin de paie, lettre d'un garant, relevé d'identité bancaire (or RIB), pièce d'identité.

Assistants sometimes find reasonably priced accommodation in '[Foyers de Jeunes Travailleurs](#)' which are hostels for young workers.

Your school may be able to offer accommodation or help you in finding accommodation. Please do not hesitate to ask your mentor teacher and/or other teachers about this as it can save you a lot of time.

Who to contact?
family/friends
locals
student/youth/religious organisations
twinned hometowns

Where to look?
Ring local halls of residence
Newspapers (early morning!)
Noticeboards
staffboards, mairie, citizens advice, tourist office,
Online

What to bring?
Residency Documents
Identity document
Bank statement
Lettre de Garantie

Watch out for!
Needing a Guarantor
Agency Fees
Notice period

1. Do not advertise in local papers/public places
2. Take a dossier of key papers with you
3. Only sign if you are happy with the agreement
4. Take photos when you move in

6.2.2 Before Signing an Agreement

- Always ask about additional fees such as agency charges
- Landlords may ask for 1 month's rent as a deposit (une caution)
- Get any agreements in writing, and obtain receipts for any transaction, keeping them secure.
- Confirm your period of notice you must give to move out – in France a minimum of three months' notice is usually the legal requirement. You may also have to give this notice in writing by registered mail.
- Enquire about the possibility of including a 'diplomatic clause' in the rental agreement to allow for a shorter notice period in case of early termination of your placement.
- Take any photos capturing the condition of your room and the flat before moving in to

prevent unfairly losing any of your security deposit.

- Check health and safety issues (temporary and long term) such as fire alarms and exits, gas leaks, electrics, water etc.

When you have found somewhere to live, even if it has been arranged for you, do not sign any agreement you are not comfortable with and make sure that there is a period of notice written in the contract to avoid problems, should you decide to change your accommodation during the year.

6.2.3 French Guarantors & VISALE

Some landlords and agencies in France require a French guarantor in order to rent a property. Typically, a landlord may ask for the guarantor to earn 3 or 4x the price of the rent in order to ensure that it can be paid if things go wrong.

When you arrive in France and are searching for accommodation, it is a good idea to talk about this with your mentor teacher. It may be possible for your mentor teacher to act as a guarantor, but you must make sure that you ask for their permission first before going ahead with this. If your landlord requires proof of income and your salary is not stated on your Arrêté de nomination, you may use the document written by the Ministry of Education which is enclosed in the summer information pack (Attestation de salaire).

Ask for previous assistant's details in order to see where they lived before – they may know someone who would have a spare room. Make sure that you have all of your documents with you when you go to view an apartment – many landlords in France will ask if you have paperwork ready when you go to the viewing. This gives you the best chance of getting the room.

You may be able to have the option of paying the rent in advance in order to avoid needing a guarantor. It is good to ask about this when you attend the viewing or go to the letting agency. However, you must be aware of scams as some landlords and agencies may take advantage. It may also be harder to terminate the lease early if you need to.

For assistants who only have a UK guarantor (such as parents), it is a good idea to speak to the academy or their school to see if they can get things moving. Sometimes when there is more explanation of your circumstances, landlords can be more willing to accept this. They may be able to accept a letter written and signed by your parents. Please see the suggested format enclosed in your summer pack (Lettre de Garantie).

If you cannot find a guarantor or are finding it hard to be accepted with a non-French guarantor, you can apply for the VISALE if you are 30 or under and meet the [eligibility criteria](#). The VISALE is a rental guarantee granted by 'Action Logement'. It guarantees the payment of rent and rental charges to your landlord if you are unable to ensure their payment. The VISALE is a certificate that entitles the bearer to a rental deposit. For more information and to [check your eligibility](#) visit the [VISALE](#) website. To apply for the VISALE, click [here](#).

6.2.4 Assurance d'habitation & Assurance de responsabilité civile

If you rent private accommodation, you must have home insurance which covers risk of fire, theft, water damage as well as a civil liability guarantee. Look for a 'multirisques habitation' contract.

It is generally included with the home insurance, but you should double-check. If it is not included, you can subscribe to it separately or add it to your home insurance. It is mandatory to have civil liability insurance. Here is our partner's [suggested site for more on insurance](#).

6.2.5 CAF (Caisse d'Allocations Familiales)

The CAF is a social welfare system in France that provides aid for housing, childcare, family benefits and disability support.

Language assistants may be eligible to apply for the housing assistance (Aide Personnalisée au Logement also known as APL) if they meet the eligibility criteria.

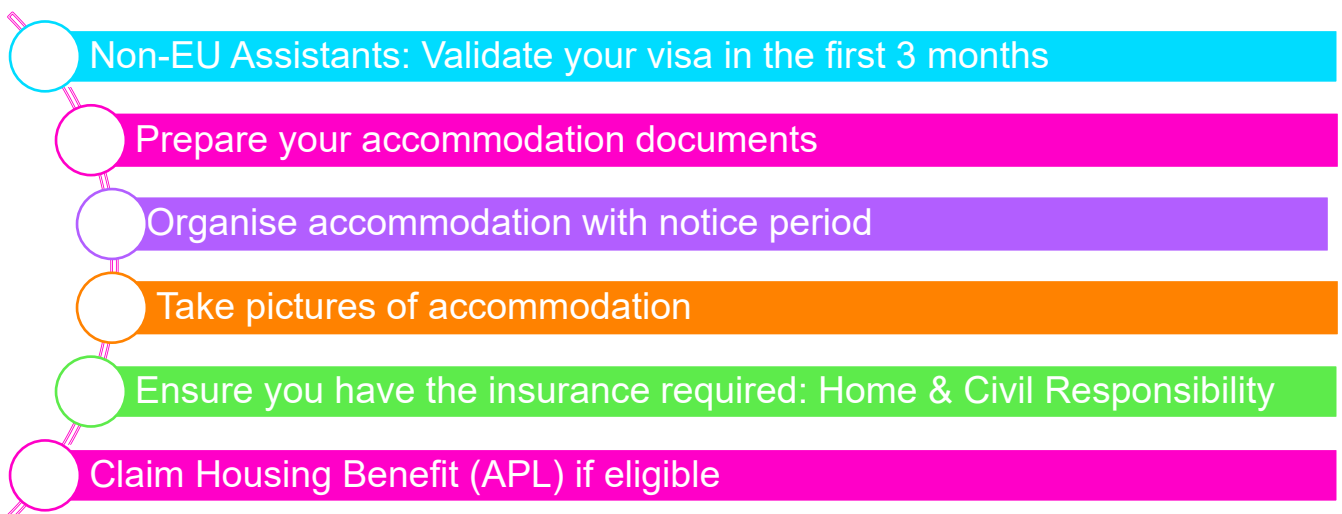
You will normally have to meet the following requirements:

- Have a valid residence permit (so once you have validated your visa)
- Live a minimum of 8 months in your accommodation
- Not be related to your landlord
- Not provided with free accommodation
- Your income does not exceed a certain amount

You can apply for the APL online through the [CAF Website](#). If it is taking a long time, you might find that going in person speeds up the process.

We advise talking to your school/mentor teacher for more information and for support in applying.

Section 6 Recap



7 In school: Arrival, Settling in and Support

7.1 Induction

The Académies will organise a 1 or 2- day 'induction course' or information meeting (un stage) for all foreign language assistants. Please note, the British Council has no involvement whatsoever in the organisation of these meetings. You will receive details about your 'stage' from your Académie, so this is just for your information. The format of the 'stage' varies but it provides you with useful information about your placement directly from the Académie and is a great chance for you to meet other assistants in your region. **Attendance is expected.**

7.2 Observation Period

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

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

This can also be a valuable opportunity to discuss with your mentor teacher about the following:

- How you are finding your experience and settling in
- If you have any additional requirements which may facilitate your placement.

7.2.1 Settling into school life

You can hear tips from former assistants in our [settling in podcast](#).

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

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.

Teachers who are proactive and take the initiative often settle into school life much faster. Being a self-starter is a great way to make a strong first impression. Teachers are often very busy and will certainly appreciate your efforts to help and try to make an impact.

7.4 Social media

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an assistant in France. Keep your profile private so that it can only be seen by people you intend to see it. If you invite other teachers to be 'friends', remember to remain professional in what you post and be careful what you say about your employer.

You should not exchange personal contact details with students, invite them to be 'friends' or accept similar invitations from them. Check with teachers about the school's internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school. It is exceptionally important that you understand issues around child protection, both to protect the students and to protect you from any damaging and potentially serious accusations.

7.5 Support networks

Give yourself some time to adjust –in the beginning, you will have a lot of administrative matters to deal with. Former assistants have recommended that you don't spend all your free time with other programme participants, as you will not be able to integrate into your community and life in France. On the other hand, don't feel that you must cut yourself off from them – your programme peers can provide a very good support network for each other, as you understand each other's experiences.

If you have consented to this, your details (name & email address) will be shared with other language assistants via our Buddy Maps (using Google Maps). You can view which language assistants are in the same destination as you by filtering by country on the Buddy Map. You can contact other assistants in your destination to arrange meet-ups, travel etc.

Start at school

- Showing that you are enthusiastic and keen to get to know staff will go a long way. Start with a simple hello or ask how their weekend went. Remember, though, that you will be working in a school environment therefore staff may not have a lot of free time.
- Try introducing yourself to staff you may not directly work with, for example teachers in other departments, lunch time staff, receptionists, caretakers etc. If there are social occasions or team meetings try to make an effort to attend.
- If you hear about something happening which interests you, ask if you can become involved. Don't wait to be invited as people may assume that you're not interested.

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

- Enrol for an evening class, join a sports club, music group, choir

- Visit your local library and get a library card. They may have free classes/events that you can attend.
- Join or set up a language exchange
- Enquire about joining the local university and attending lectures
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you couldn't join in the UK
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc. You may be interested in finding a volunteer opportunity through the '[Service Civique](#)' website.

Rural Posts

It should be noted that a lot of the posts in France are in rural areas. Past assistants to rural areas have had very positive experiences as they have been able to see “real France”.

Sometimes assistants posted to rural locations find it can be more challenging to adapt to, especially at the start, however it can be a very enriching experience on a personal development level and a real immersion in culture and language. Often assistants in rural postings comment that they receive much more support from their school which can help with setting into life in France.

7.6 Extending your Work Contract & Visa

There may be a possibility for you to extend your work contract with your school for another month or two. You will have to check with your individual host institution(s) if this is possible. Your school may also ask you to stay on for longer if you are available and willing to. This is permitted; however, you will probably need to apply for a visa extension in this case as most visas granted only give you around an extra 2 weeks after your initial contract ends.

Following the advice of a former assistant, we recommend the following:

- Ask your school if it is possible to extend your contract around February time. You will have to send a letter to your Académie to request an extension to your contract.
- As it can take time to receive a response, we recommend booking a visa extension appointment with your local Préfecture [online](#) before you have received confirmation that you can extend your contract. You will need to book an appointment for a 'renouvellement'.
- The reason we ask you to book an appointment before receiving a decision is because you may not find any available appointments for the next two months. If you book an appointment in advance, you will already have an appointment ready to attend before your visa expires if your contract extension is accepted. If it is not accepted or you change your mind, the appointment can be easily cancelled.

The details you will need to book an appointment include: your name, your date of birth and the ID number given to you when you validated your visa online.

7.7 Concerns and Queries: Who to contact?

Conditions in schools in France differ from those in the UK. We have come up with a 'Who to contact' guide to assist you with who to ask if you have a query or concern regarding your placement. Please consult this guide for help on who to contact if you have a query or an issue. The British Council has a zero-tolerance policy approach to discrimination of any kind. If a serious incident occurs and the who to contact sheet is not appropriate, please contact us.

A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in France was the best year of their life. This can raise expectations and often leads to people feeling low, especially during the first few weeks until they settle in.

The assistantship year is a wonderful opportunity to absorb French language and French culture and gain much in life experience and transferable skills. However, it is perfectly understandable that when abroad in a completely different environment there may be times when you feel homesick, have trouble with pupils or colleagues, or with your living situation or so on.

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

In these instances, it can be useful to know that you have access to an anonymous, non-judgemental English-language phone service. "SOS Help" is a telephone listening service for the English-speaking community in France, similar to the Samaritans. It is administratively attached to the French service "SOS Amitiés". The telephone number is: 09 72 39 40 50. Although it is based in Paris, it serves the entire country. All calls are confidential and trained listeners are available every day from 3pm to 11pm, 365 days a year. In addition to compassionate, non-directive listening they provide information on community services and resources available for English-speaking callers.

Section 7 Recap

- Attend Induction
- Carry out an observation period
- Make social media accounts private
- Join in: staff room, societies, clubs
- Follow the 'Who to Contact' guidance sheet
- Reach out if you need support

8 Money Matters

8.1 Bank Account

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

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

Things to consider:

- Assistants are usually entitled to open a 'compte courant' which provides a cheque book and cash card; some banks also offer a 'student account'
- Do not open a savings account as your school will not be able to pay your allowance into this
- Check with former assistants in your region which bank accounts have worked for them as some Académies do not accept certain banks for having your salary paid into
- Check with local banks in advance to find out what kind of documents will be required
- Former assistants have recommended online banks like Revolut and Nickel however, you need to double check that your Académie will accept these

8.2 Tax

Although you should be exempt from paying tax in France, you will still have to declare your income by filling out a form at the end of your assistantship. All employees in France must declare their income. Please attend your local 'Centre des finances' to obtain the form to complete.

FEI's ['Guide de l'assistant'](#) provides more information about this under 'Se renseigner sur les impôts' on page 37.

Enquiries regarding UK income tax should be addressed to a local Inspector of Taxes. Please check [the HMRC website](#) for information about who to contact.

We recommend looking into the Double Taxation Agreement between the UK and France, which normally exempts an ELA from French income tax for a period of up to 2 years. However, it is normally the case that 100% of the remuneration received abroad will be liable for UK tax.

It is important to note that the agreement only covers teaching jobs.

For any tax queries whilst you are in France, please contact the [French government's tax office](#).

8.3 Monthly Salary

The language assistant allowance is usually updated every year in September so the following key info is liable to change.

You can expect to earn approximately €1,010.67 per month gross (before social security deductions). The net monthly pay is approximately €800-815.

Assistants appointed to one of the Outre-Mer destinations are likely to receive an allowance approximately 40% higher than the rate for mainland France: €1351 (€1119 net) for Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyane; and €1482 (€1223 net) for La Réunion.

If you have opened a bank account by 10th October 2024, you will receive 70-80% of your payment at the end of the month. The remaining 20-30% of October's payment will be added to your November payment.

You should therefore ensure that you take around €1700-€2500 and about €2500-€3500 if appointed to Outre-Mer, Corsica or the Paris area.

Consider taking a Credit Card to cover initial costs and be aware that you are often charged for using your British debit card to withdraw money abroad.

8.4 Additional Income

Non-EU assistants who have a visa: This particular visa status in France does not allow language assistants to pursue official secondary employment in France. This restriction is intended to make sure that your job as a teaching assistant is your primary means of living in France at any given time (since you will be in France on a special-status visa for assistants).

For EU Assistants: 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. In general, pupils are easily found through school or private connections, i.e. by word-of-mouth. However, it is essential to check that the other English teachers in your school(s) do not mind, so that you are not perceived to be 'stealing' their private pupils.

The going rate for private one-to-one tuition seems to be €10 - €25 per hour depending on how much preparation for the lesson you plan to do and how much your pupils can afford. Please ensure that any additional work does not conflict with your school timetable. Should you wish to obtain paid work in any other educational institution e.g. teaching work in the public or private sector, you must clear this with the Académie to which you are appointed beforehand.

Each Académie has slightly different rules on what type of extra work you are permitted to take on so it is imperative that you check with them before you accept any other work. If they do not allow it, you must abide by this ruling.

Section 8 Recap

- 
- Open a bank account once in France
 - Budget for your salary
 - Check your income tax situation
 - Check with Académie if wanting additional paid work (EU citizens)

9 Language learning and studies

9.1 For Language Learning

- [BBC- Learn French](#): Offers a wealth of resources for learning French, including short guides and videos.
- [Memrise](#): A sophisticated platform for language learning, with a large online community. App also available.
- [Duolingo](#): A simplistic platform for language learning which is very easy to access. Bite-size lessons allow the user to practice for anywhere from 5 minutes a day. App also available.
- [Lawless French](#): A blog with useful tips for French language learners.

10 End of your placement

10.1 Administrative matters

Bank: Make sure you do not close your France bank account until you have received any final payments you are due. You are advised to keep your account open for a month or so after the contract with your school has ended to ensure that all outstanding payments have been received. Please do check on the conditions for transactions relating to your account. For example, it might be that you can only close your account in the same branch in which you opened it.

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

- Leave a forwarding address with your landlord so that they can forward any mail on to you.
- When you leave your accommodation, remember to cancel any personal contracts,

e.g. internet or utilities.

- Discuss with your landlord what you need to do for them to return your deposit and terminate your rental agreement, as well as arranging the return of your belongings if you have already left.
- If you rent your flat through a property agency, they may want to carry out an inspection before returning your deposit; if possible, you should make sure that you are present during the inspection to avoid any potential disagreements at a later date. Alternatively, you may wish to take photos of your accommodation before leaving to document how it was left.

Reference: If you haven't already done so, please liaise with your host school for a reference.

This will be invaluable when it comes to an official record of your assistantship and for any future applications to be an ELA. This should ideally be on headed paper, stamped and comment on your performance as an assistant.

Please note that as the British Council is not the employer, we are unable to provide references for language assistants, only a certificate certifying participation upon request.

10.2 Indemnity Payment

At the end of your placement in France, you may receive an indemnity payment known as 'paiement d'indemnité' or 'la prime de précarité' which is given to employees at the end of a CDD (Contrat à durée déterminée). It may take a couple of months to come through after you have finished your placement. The amount is usually around 10% of your total net earned income over the course of your contract. For more information, please visit the [France government website](#).

10.3 Staying a consecutive year

It is possible to stay for a consecutive year as a British Council language assistant in France. You will have to **apply through our French partners** France Éducation Internationale (FEI) when the times comes. This is often referred to as 'renouvellement de contrat'. They will provide more information including application opening and closing dates. This usually takes place in the month of February so if you are interested, start thinking about this in January and keep an eye out for information from FEI during the month of February 2025. You are able to apply to stay in the same school or apply to a different region in France although it is not guaranteed that your preferences will be met.

10.4 Ambassador

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

have an opportunity to be involved with this, you must have filled out our end of year survey.

10.5 Getting into Teaching

If you want to take your assistantship to the next level, find out more from the links below of how to get into teaching and inspire future linguists:

- England: [Get into Teaching](#)
- Wales: [Educators Wales](#)
- Scotland: [Teach In Scotland](#)
- Northern Ireland: [Getting into Teaching](#)