

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS SCHEME INFORMATION NOTES

Introduction

This Scheme allows students in Irish schools to experience a foreign language as a living language in their classroom.

These notes help the schools and the assistants gain the maximum value from the scheme with a beneficial experience for all concerned.

These notes set out the terms under which the Department of Education and Skills expect the assistants in schools and the schools involved to act. These notes will also act as information on the scheme for the participating Cultural Services. Each party should therefore familiarise themselves with these notes and observe all terms and requirements therein.

1. Selection & Assignment of Assistants

Assistants are selected and nominated by the appropriate National Authorities after their level of English has been established and accepted and their details are submitted to the Department.

Assistants are assigned to Schools by the Department based on the recommendation of its Inspectorate having considered the applications received. Representatives of their Cultural Service in Dublin will provide The Assistant with details of the School to which they are assigned.

2. Selection of Hosting School

- Schools apply during January, each year, by completing the application form FLA01.
- Schools and Community Colleges under the auspices of the Education and Training Board (ETB) must have the written permission of the Chief Executive Officer of the ETB to make an application.
- Schools are selected to host an Assistant by the Department based on the recommendation of its Inspectorate.

In its recommendation the Inspectorate will have considered criteria such as:

- Number of hours the language is taught in the School per week.
- Number of students in the School taking the language at both Junior and Senior Cycle.
- The year the School last received an Assistant.
- The development plan of a language in the School.
- The number of students in Exam classes.
- Selected Schools will receive details of the Assistant assigned to them, with details of Department requirements, in May of the year of assignment.

3. Requirements of Hosting School

Schools must co-operate with the Department and specifically agree to:

- (a) Comply with the terms and requirements set out in these notes.
- (b) Ensure that their financial systems are compatible with and comply with the payment dates outlined in paragraph 10.
- (c) **Have a fully operational and VALID email address available to the Department and Assistant at all times.** All information issued by the Department will be by email (with the exception of the notification of the Assistant to be assigned).
- (d) **Email address provided must be monitored during the Summer holidays as the Department or the Assistant may require to be in contact with the school/ETB.**
- (e) Provide the Assistant all relevant information in respect of the School, such as that suggested in paragraph 12, upon receipt from the Department of the Assistant to be assigned **before the start of the summer recess.**
- (f) Release the Assistant for two days in October to attend the compulsory induction course.
- (g) The gender and language ability of any Assistant to be assigned solely being a matter for the Department.
- (h) Ensure that the School Principal/Manager has the support and co-operation of their staff in the operation of the scheme before applying for an Assistant from the Department.
- (i) Nominate a teacher from its staff, preferably one with a command of the Assistant's native language, to help the Assistant in every possible way and to be contactable by the Department, as necessary, regarding matters affecting the Assistant.
- (j) Maintain all relevant records for a period of 2 years which may be requested by the Department for audit purposes at any time, e.g. full attendance, time-tabling and payment records.

4. Period of Assignment

- Assignments for French, Austrian, Spanish, Italian, Wallonian-Bruxelles and Japanese Assistants are from 1st October to 31st May.
- German Assistants will have the option of 6 or 8 month assignments – the start date for both assignments is the 1st October, the 6 month assignment will finish on the 31st March and the 8th month assignment will finish on the 31st May.

5. Garda Vetting (NVB)

NVB Clearance for Assistants is required. Details of the procedure for meeting this requirement are on the National Vetting Bureau website <https://vetting.garda.ie/>. The employer, either the relevant school or ETB, will make application to the NVB for clearance for the Assistant.

For Assistants:

The taking up of a position as a Foreign Language Assistant, in a school in the ROI, requires that your employer (school / ETB) have prior Clearance from the Irish National Vetting Bureau to you taking up the post. You may receive communication from your National Police Agency that such a process is taking place.

6. Leave of Absence and Sick Leave

During their assignment, Assistants may be allowed up to 5 days leave of absence at the discretion of the School Principal/Manager. Any further leave of absence may only be granted with the prior approval of the Department. In cases of illness, up to 4 consecutive days may be allowed without a medical certificate being submitted to the School. Any further sick leave must be covered by an acceptable medical certificate.

7. Health/medical entitlements

Assistants are advised to contact the Irish national health authority, the Health Service Executive at www.hse.ie, to ascertain any entitlements they may have under the Irish medical service.

8. Registration and Work Permits

An Assistant who works only within the terms of this scheme does not have to register with the Irish Revenue Commissioners.

An Assistant who takes up employment outside of the scheme, either within or outside their assigned School, then becomes an employee, and is obliged to register for a Personal Public Services Number (PPSN). To register as an employee in Ireland, an Assistant will need a PPSN which can be obtained from the Department of Social Protection.

A PPSN may also be required by other State Agencies and banking institutions. More information on the Irish Welfare System and the Irish Revenue Commissioners is available from www.welfare.ie and www.revenue.ie respectively.

9. Payment of Allowances and Expenses

Schools/ETBs issue payments of the Living Allowance to the Assistant. Recoupment is claimed from the Department on the dates outlined in paragraph 11.

Living Allowance Payment to FLA's - Bank Accounts

A fixed rate of **€918.00 as a living allowance** is payable each month to the Assistant, irrespective of the location of assignment, provided full attendance is given for the full period of the scheme. ***The Living allowance is exempt from taxation and social welfare deductions.***

Central Bank Information

We can confirm that schools and Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are not entitled to refuse to pay the monthly stipends that you mention to Spanish (or any other non-Irish, euro-area) bank accounts and likewise are not entitled to insist that the students concerned open accounts with an Irish bank for this purpose. The legislation governing these matters is contained in EU Regulation 260/2012 (generally referred to as the 'SEPA Regulation'). Also relevant in this regard is Statutory Instrument No. 132 of 2013, which gave effect to the SEPA Regulation in Ireland.

The full texts of the SEPA Regulation and the related Statutory Instrument are respectively available under the following links:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:094:0022:0037:en:PDF>

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/si/132/made/en/pdf>

The sections of Regulation 260/2012 specifically relevant to your query are Articles 3.1 and 9.1, which read as follows:

Article 3 - Reachability

1. A payee's PSP [i.e., payment services provider - generally a bank] which is reachable for a national credit transfer under a payment scheme shall be reachable, in accordance with the rules of a Union-wide payment scheme, for credit transfers initiated by a payer through a PSP located in any Member State.

Article 9 - Payment accessibility

1. A payer making a credit transfer to a payee holding a payment account located within the Union shall not specify the Member State in which that payment account is to be located, provided that the payment account is reachable in accordance with Article 3.

Payments:

The payment to the Assistant of their living Allowance is made by the School/College or ETB on a monthly basis **on or before the 10th day of each month.**

- The first payment to be made before the Induction Conference in early October. It is compulsory that all Assistants attend the Induction Course in October.
- Assistants assigned to Schools/Community Colleges under the auspices of Education and Training Board, the ETB must comply with these requirements regardless of its own financial systems or payment schedules.
- Appropriate deductions should be made from the allowance of an Assistant who takes up duty after 1 October or who leaves his/her assignment before 31 May.

School Principals/ETBs are required to inform the Department immediately should an Assistant fail to take up their position or leave the School prior to the conclusion of the Scheme.

10. Recoupment by Schools/ Institutions/ ETBs of allowances

Schools/Institutions/ETBs can recoup the living allowance and expenses for attending Induction Course paid to their Assistant(s) on receipt of the fully completed application form for re-imbusement before the dates outlined below:

Claim Period	Closing Date for Claim
October to December-paid December	Receipt of Completed Declaration by 20 th November
January to March-paid March	Receipt of Completed Declaration by 22 nd February
April to May-paid May	Receipt of Completed Declaration by 26 th April

It is the responsibility of the Principal/ETB to inform the Department of any changes as set out in paragraph 9.

Payments by the Department will be by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) direct to the bank account of the School. Payment for Schools/Community Colleges under the auspices of the ETB will be paid directly to the ETB.

11. On meeting with the Assistant for the first time:

It should be borne in mind that the Assistants may be travelling abroad for the first time, and may therefore have some concerns about their role, accommodation, etc. Concerns may be eased if the School gives as much information as possible, as recommended in paragraph 3(e) on the following points:

- (a) The first school day in October, on which the Assistant should report for duty.
- (b) Where and to whom the Assistant should report.
- (c) Type of School including number, age-range and gender of pupils.
- (d) Geographical location of the School and details of public transport.
- (e) Facilities for study/attending courses.
- (f) A copy of the School brochure, if available, or the details of the website of the School.
- (g) The email address of the contact person and of the School.
- (h) How to get from the airport to the School/accommodation and/or if the Assistant will be collected from the Airport / Bus terminal.

12. Accommodation

If the Assistant is to discharge his/her duties efficiently it is important that he/she has reasonable accommodation and it is expected that the School will help the Assistant to find suitable reasonably priced accommodation having regard to his/her financial position.

13. Induction

The Assistants will receive detailed information on their role at the compulsory induction course which will be held by the Department in early October. This induction will last **two** days (commencing at 2.30pm the first day to enable Assistants to reach Dublin on time without the necessity of an overnight stay) and will include both Department Officials and members of the Inspectorate as well as Officials from the Cultural Services.

14. The Status of the Assistants and their normal studies

Assistants are students normally between the third and fourth years of their course. While in this country the Assistants will be pursuing their own studies and they should be encouraged to consult members of the staff who may be of help to them in this regard. Local educational facilities, libraries, and cultural activities should be brought to their attention. **Assistants are not to be regarded as trained teachers.**

The Assistant **must not therefore:**

- (a) be made responsible for discipline or class supervision, or
- (b) be required to undertake formal class teaching, they must not: be assigned on their own, to teach all the language hours of a particular class group; be given the whole class group to teach on their own for the full class period, other than in exceptional circumstances; or be asked to teach formal grammar.

15. The Assistants' Basic Duties

The basic duty of the Assistant is to assist the School's regular staff in promoting a communicative approach to the teaching of the foreign language.

The fluency and authenticity of the native speaker should enable him/her to:

- (a) help students to understand the spoken language
- (b) encourage students to speak the foreign language (suggested activities: pair-work, role-play, games, competitions etc.) and to improve their pronunciation
- (c) encourage and assist students in reading authentic and fictional written texts appropriate to their level
- (d) give students a better understanding of the way of life and customs of the foreign country

Writing may well be helpful to support/develop the above activities.

As experience has shown that the following arrangements contribute to a successful and efficient use of the language Assistant **it is strongly recommended:**

- (a) that the language teacher(s) allow the new Assistant to simply sit in on language classes as an observer for the first ten days or so, in order to become familiar with the language level to be expected from various groups and with the classroom situation in general
- (b) that a regular (weekly or fortnightly) preparation session be held between the Assistant and the Teacher(s) of the foreign language concerned, at which the topics to be covered are negotiated and discussed
- (c) that an appropriate organisation of group/class activities be arranged, e.g. allocating a small group of pupils to the language Assistant for a class period or part thereof (half or one-third of the full class group, rotating the composition of this group so that all class members see the Assistant regularly) and/or a team-teaching situation, where the foreign language Teacher and the Assistant work Together with a class group.
- (d) that the Assistant be provided with: a roll book; a room of their own when working with small groups; a blackboard and chalk and/or an overhead projector; and copies of the text books in use by the classes with which they work.

17. Timetable and Hours of Work

Assistants are required to carry out their duties **for 12 hours per week.**

These hours should be shown on the special timetable form available on the Department website, which should be completed by the Principal in advance of the Assistant starting in the School and retained for a period of 2 years for audit purposes.

The timetable should indicate under "hours per day" the number of hours worked. Under "a.m." and "p.m." what is required is the actual "timetable-slots" worked e.g.

	Hours per Day	a.m.		p.m.	
		From	To	From	To
Wednesday	2	9.25	10.05	13.20	14.00
		10.55	11.35		

To facilitate the Assistants' own studies and travel in this country their timetable should be such as to allow them **one free day each week, preferably Monday or Friday.**

The sharing of the services of an Assistant, between schools, may be arranged, provided:

- *That not more than two Schools in close proximity are involved in the arrangement.*
- *The combined hours worked by the Assistant is not more than 12 hours per week.*
- *The Schools are expected to help with transport arrangements.*
- *The Assistant should not be timetabled for both Schools on the same day(s).*

Travel costs incurred in such travel are non-refundable.

18. *Out-of-School Activities*

Assistants should be encouraged, but not compelled, to participate in the extra-curricular activities of the School. The Assistant should not be made responsible for groups of pupils engaged in out-of-school activities.

19. *The Assistant and the Staff*

The Assistant should be treated as an ordinary staff member (with the exception of the assignment of responsibility for classes) and should be accorded the usual staff-room privileges. This will help the Assistant to feel that their role in the School is an important one and to gain the respect of the pupils.

20. *School Principal Responsibilities*

The School Principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- (a) The scheme is operated in accordance with the terms and requirements set out in these notes and that appropriate records are maintained for 2 years and readily available to the Department for audit purposes.
- (b) All arrangements are finalised with the Assistant, if possible, prior to the closure of the School for the summer recess before the Assistant starts in October.
- (c) Assistant(s) assigned to the School are paid their Living Allowance and Induction Course Grant as set out in paragraph 9. Arrangements should be made to help the Assistant to open a bank account immediately on arrival by issuing them with a letter confirming the name of the School to which they are assigned and the amount of the allowances payable.
- (d) Advice and help is given to the Assistant in the matter of their studies.
- (e) The School staff helps the Assistant to integrate into the School and local community.

21. Enquiries All queries **from Schools** hosting Assistants on matters relating to the Scheme should be referred in the first instance to The Department of Education and Skills:

Email address- teachersna_fla@education.gov.ie
Telephone- 090 648 3826
Postal address- Teacher/SNA Terms and Conditions,
Department of Education and Skills,
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath

All queries **from Assistants** on matters relating to the Scheme should be referred in the first instance to their School Principal and if necessary then to their cultural service as detailed below:

Solene Vilchien

Ambassade de France en Irlande,
Service Culturel,
66, Fitzwilliam Lane,
Dublin 2.

Email: solene.vilchien@diplomatie.gouv.fr
Telephone: 01 277 5055

Anna Weiss (German Adviser),

Goethe-Institute Ireland
62 Fitzwilliam Square
Dublin 2

E-mail: anna.weiss@dublin.goethe.org
or www.goethe.de/dublin
Telephone: 01 680 1114

Ana Alonsa

Language Adviser,
Spanish Embassy,
17A Merlin Park,
Dublin 4.

Email: asesoriadublin.ie@mecd.es
Telephone: 01 2608100

Virginia Venieri

Istituto Italiano di Cultura,
11, Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin 2 DO2 KN81

Email: iicdublino.education@esteri.it
Telephone: 01 662 0509