

## The Spanish Language Assistants programme

Through the Language Assistants programme, Spanish students of the last year of higher education, graduates and primary school teachers are placed in a primary or secondary school in the United Kingdom for a school year, in order to support the teaching of Spanish. Each Language Assistant may be assigned to a maximum of three different host schools.

Applicants are required to have completed or be in the last year of an English Studies degree, or a translation and interpreting degree, with English as a first language; to have completed or be in the last year of a primary school teaching degree, with English as a first language; or to have completed or be in the last year of a Spanish or Romance languages degree, if they have also taken English in their programme of study.

The main objective of the language Assistants' work is to enhance the quality of the teaching of Spanish in their schools, awakening among their students the interest and motivation to learn about the Spanish language, serving as a model for its use in communicative situations, and providing a fresh and direct vision of present-day life and culture in their native country. On the other hand, the language Assistants, who are in the process of learning the English language and culture, will have the opportunity to live through a personal and professional experience which will allow them to deepen their knowledge of the society and education system of the UK.

The Language Assistants become part of the foreign language department of their school and work for twelve hours a week directly with the students. Their work consists mainly of supporting the teaching of Spanish through the practice of oral skills and communicative and cultural activities with their students. The Language Assistants frequently collaborate in extracurricular activities organized by the school, such as the Spanish Club.

The beginning of the programme takes place on the first school day of October and finishes on the last school day of May. The host schools, or the corresponding local authorities, pay a monthly salary from the 1st of October until the 31st of May, for board and keep, and provide health insurance to the participants. The amount of the salary is determined yearly and varies according to geographical area. Travel expenses to from Spain are covered by the participants themselves.

The selection of the participant Language Assistants is carried out in Spain, through an annual public call by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the British Council. The last public call may be accessed on <http://www.mecd.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/catalogo-servicios/profesores/convocatorias/espanoles/externo/auxiliares-conversacion.html>

The list of the selected candidates is published annually by the *BOE* (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*). Once the list is published, the selected candidates receive information about their assigned schools and towns from the British council, as well as about the matters they need to attend to upon their arrival in the UK (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/language-assistants>). For its part, the Spanish Embassy Education Office in the United Kingdom (*Consejería de Educación*) organises, in collaboration with the British Council, one induction course and other training courses throughout the school year. The education office sends information on these annual activities to all the participants. This information is disseminated by email and through the Education office's web page.