

# Spanish Language and Culture Assistants Program

## Guidelines for Teaching Institutions in the United States

2019-2020



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## 1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (hereafter the Ministry) and the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C., sponsor a Spanish Language and Culture Assistants program for elementary, middle and high schools and for universities with Spanish Resource Centers sponsored by the Ministry of Education (hereafter universities with SRC) in the United States.

This program gives American **students** the opportunity to learn Spanish language and culture from native speakers. Similarly, the **Spanish assistants** will have the opportunity to learn about American culture, improve their command of English and use their knowledge upon their return to Spain, thus helping to develop cultural understanding between both countries.

The assistants may be college students in their senior year or may already have a B.A. in Education, English/Spanish or Translation and Interpretation.

The assistants' stipend and medical insurance are paid by the Spanish Ministry for the period between **October 1st and May 31st**. Host institutions (schools, school districts or universities with SRCs) should make arrangements to provide the Spanish assistants with **free transportation and free lodging** (such as a room in a furnished apartment or dorm, staying with host families, etc.) or alternatively could provide **financial assistance to help the assistants pay for their own accommodation and transportation**.

If a school or university with SRC would like the assistant to **start their duties before October 1st** (provided that the assistant already has his/her visa), the host institution is responsible for providing the assistant with medical insurance coverage and a stipend until the Ministry's scholarship comes into effect.

The Ministry of Education will assign each candidate to a specific school, school district or Spanish Resource Center and will organize an orientation seminar in Madrid prior to the assistants' arrival in the US.

All arrangements and details concerning assistants should be reported by their mentor to the Spanish Education Advisor in their area prior to their arrival.

## 2. THE ROLE OF THE ASSISTANT

- Assistants will help classroom teachers as native speakers and experts on their home country to encourage students' interest in Spain. Please note that their role is **different from** a regular teaching assistant or classroom aid.
- Assistants **should not be asked to undertake formal classroom teaching, substitute for absent teachers or be responsible for the discipline or supervision of students** since they may lack the appropriate training.

- Before they undertake their own duties, it is advised that assistants **observe classes** conducted by other teachers and learn what will be required of them.
- Assistants should be provided **information on:** teaching methods, students' language proficiency levels, overall characteristics of students and the kind of activities and degree of initiative they are expected to carry out.
- Assistants are to be considered **members of the staff** and allowed staff-room privileges. They should be informed of the resources that they are entitled to use at school – such as computers, photocopiers, email accounts or telephones –, the daily procedures to follow, where to obtain resources or the materials they may need, etc.
- Assistants should be given every opportunity to learn about and participate fully in the **social life** of the school/university and surrounding community. They should be encouraged to take part in clubs and be invited to go on field trips. However, they will not be responsible for the safety or behavior of students on field trips.
- Assistants in a SRC may be responsible for ordering, cataloging and lending materials, organizing conversation clubs, film festivals, training and courses for teachers, etc.
- The Spanish assistant should work between **16 to 20 hours maximum** per week, since that is the time established by their visa and their scholarship.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHING INSTITUTIONS AND ASSISTANTS' MENTORS

- Teaching institutions should **comply with the conditions** expressed in this document and in the application form.
- Assistants assigned to elementary, middle and high schools should have the same **holidays** and scheduled days off as the students. Special arrangements for the winter break or to take other days off can be negotiated with the assistant. The Spanish Education Advisor in the area should be notified of any changes or arrangements in the assistant's schedule. The assistant's working hours may be scheduled so that they have **Mondays or Fridays off**, thus allowing for long weekends for travel or study.

School/university officials should provide the assistant, upon completion of their assignments and if warranted, with a **letter of recommendation stating the specific dates they have worked at the teaching institution.**

- There should be a school/SRC **representative or mentor** to guide the assistants. It is important for the teaching institution to appoint somebody who will have the time and willingness to help the assistant throughout the school year and particularly during the first weeks of their stay.
- The mentor and assistant should both agree on the activities they will be involved in,

including, for example, attending faculty meetings, making presentations in classes and participating in extra-curricular events.

- The schools and mentors should plan the work schedule for the assistant in consultation with the assistants themselves and other people involved in the program. Cooperation and communication among teachers, administrators and the assistant are crucial for the success of the program.
- The mentor should advise and guide the assistant's work, organize orientation and evaluation sessions when necessary, and prepare a final report of the assistant's activities.
- The **mentor or school representative** should also act as liaison between the school/SRC and the Education Advisor of the Spanish Education Office that services their state.

#### 4. ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS

- Teaching institutions must ensure that the **assistants' lodging is adequate**, bearing in mind their age, personal profile and transportation options. There are several possibilities:
- Preferably, institutions should provide assistants with a **monthly stipend** to help them cover accommodation expenses. In this case, help to find a place to stay should be provided.
- **Free accommodation** in a room in a furnished apartment or a dorm. **The address** where the assistants will be staying should be entered when the application is submitted. Assistants living in apartments may arrange to install telephone, cable TV, or Internet at their own expense. Since the assistants do not have credit history or may not have a Social Security Number, they may need help making these arrangements.
- Accommodation with a **host family**. In this case, assistants should have a bedroom of their own and not be expected to do housework: please bear in mind that assistants are not supposed to carry out au pair duties. **The address** where the assistants will be staying and a **contact name** of a member of the host family should be included in the application form.

The Spanish Education Advisor should be informed of the lodging arrangements **prior to the assistants' arrival** and be notified of any changes in advance.

## 5. TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Teaching institutions are also responsible for providing the assistant with transportation to and from work. This can be done in different ways:

- Paying a monthly or annual transportation allowance.
- Facilitating carpooling or rides.
- Providing the use of a car. If this option is chosen, insurance and repair costs should be considered.

All specifications concerning transportation should **be stated** when the application is submitted, and the Spanish Education Advisor should be notified if there are any changes.

It is also advisable that arrangements be made to pick up the assistant at the airport when they first arrive in the country.

## 6. STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE THE ASSISTANT'S ARRIVAL IN THE USA.

The more information the school and community have about the Language and Culture Assistants program, the better prepared they will be for the assistant's arrival. It is **recommended** that the school district officials describe the program in their newsletter or webpage.

Assistants may be traveling to the United States for the first time and, therefore, be concerned about the experience that lies ahead of them. Providing written information prior to their arrival may help ease their worries. **Please send the assistant** as much information as possible. Be sure to include:

- A letter of invitation addressed to the assistant, which they might need to present to the Immigration Authorities at the port of entry.
- Details about the accommodation arrangements made for them. If it is with a family, please let the assistant know that a host family is expecting them and make sure they have previous contact before the assistant's arrival.
- Information on the teaching institution.
- Information on the instructional program where the assistant will work and the tasks the assistant will need to carry out.
- Information on opportunities for studying or attending courses at universities or other teaching institution, if any.
- Information on the community and community services, transportation, banking, etc.
- Information on climate and appropriate clothing, etc.

## 7. SAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ASSISTANT IN A SCHOOL

### A. LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR ASSISTANTS

- Tutoring students with individual needs.
- Small group practice.
- Oral reception/production activities.
- Developing materials for lessons.
- Presentations on Spanish culture: songs, newspapers, plays, etc.
- Presenting story-telling sessions and interpreting cultural aspects.
- Participating in computer-assisted activities.

### B. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR ASSISTANTS

- Coordinating Spanish Language Clubs.
- Participating in school clubs (theatre, chorus, etc.)
- Participating in sporting events, art festivals, etc.

#### **Assistants should not:**

- Be placed in situations where they may not feel comfortable (e.g. assigning them to inappropriate classes or class levels).
- Be responsible for the entire class or whole group on their own.
- Correct all Spanish quizzes and exams or spend hours making photocopies.
- Work more than 20 hours per week.
- Be assigned to teachers who are unfamiliar with the program and are not prepared to work with them.

**The most successful situation occurs when teachers are involved from the beginning, appreciate the contribution of a Spanish Language and Culture Assistant and help plan their assignments.**

## 8. SAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ASSISTANT IN A RESOURCE CENTER

- Ordering, cataloging and lending the resources offered.
- Organizing speaking clubs, film festivals, etc.
- Helping the Education Advisor organize training and courses for teachers.
- Promoting the Education Office programs, etc.

## 9. APPLICATION PROCESS

If interested in participating in this program, please submit the corresponding application form. Be advised that due to the limited number of Spanish language assistants available, a position cannot always be granted to every teaching institution that applies.

The deadline to submit an application for the 2019-20 school year is **April 9th, 2019**. Teaching institutions will be notified on the decision made concerning their application by **May 17th, 2019**.

*Do you have any questions?*

*Please contact the Spanish Education Advisor in your area or send an email to:*

[auxiliaresesp.usa@educacion.gob.es](mailto:auxiliaresesp.usa@educacion.gob.es)