

Good Practice Guide

Fulbright *ETA* – *English teaching assistants*



Adapted from the good practice guide
Comenius Assistantships Good practice guide for host schools and assistants
Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009

Good practice guide for ETA

Table of Contents:

1. Introduction

1. Contact your host institution
2. Make a list of the information you need
3. Get your mentor's contact details
4. Make sure the dates of the Assistantship are clear
5. Agree on an outline timetable
6. Make sure the timetable is for up to 16 hours
7. Collect resource materials to take with you
8. Understand the host education system
9. Start learning Portuguese
10. Apply for the visa early
11. Make travel arrangements well in advance

2. Integration into the institution

1. Respect cultural and educational differences
2. Introduce yourself to all staff
3. Understand that professors are sometimes very busy
4. Use the induction period to think carefully about the Assistantship
5. Offer to help professors during the induction period
6. Offer to help with extra-curricular activities — sport, clubs etc.
7. Meet your mentor at the end of the induction period
8. If you have problems, speak to your mentor first

3. Integration into the local community

1. Be aware of cultural and religious differences
2. Try to use the Portuguese wherever possible
3. Profit from language classes or exchanges
4. Consider joining a local club or evening class
5. Do not miss the orientation meeting

Good practice guide for ETA

6. Ask the Fulbright Commission for a list of other Fulbrighters in the host institution or the region
7. Complete all necessary formalities (banking, health insurance, etc.)
8. Consider contacting the local media

4. In and beyond the classroom

1. Teaching your mother tongue needs determination and planning
2. Aim for informality but ensure respect
3. Plan and evaluate all lessons thoroughly, with the professor if possible
4. Speak clearly, but usually at normal speed
5. Grade your language
6. Discuss with professors how you should correct students' mistakes
7. Gain as much experience as possible with different types of class
8. Suggest activities and materials
9. Try not to be limited to the traditional classroom
10. Every week, evaluate with the mentor what you have achieved
11. Keep a file on your Assistantship
12. Ask your host institution for a certificate

5. Conclusion

ANNEX I — Accommodation

ANNEX II — Resources ETAs can bring

ANNEX III — Some ideas for activities

Good practice guide for ETA

1. Good practice for ETA's

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Program is a component of the U.S. Fulbright Student Program that places young Americans in schools and universities where they are assigned various duties that help strengthen the students' English language abilities and knowledge of the United States and at the same time improve the ETAs' language skills and knowledge of the host country. ETAs provide an American and native-speaker presence in the classroom; they serve as language informants and assist the permanent teaching staff not only with English language instruction but with other coursework that is taught in English. They can also provide informal educational advising services by providing information about study in the United States; serve as resource persons and attendants in language labs; and give talks about the United States in English classes or to civic or school organizations.

ETAs may also pursue individual study/research plans in addition to their teaching responsibilities.

By taking part in a Fulbright ETA program you can gain a wealth of experience that is valuable for your future career and beyond.

You will need to invest some time and thought in your assistantship to make sure that it gives you the experience you are looking for. This guide aims to help you do just that.

1.1. Contact your host institution

Preparation, by both the host institution and the ETA, is vital to ensuring that the Assistantship goes smoothly from the start. Make contact by telephone and/or e-mail as well as by letter if necessary. In most cases, the institution will contact you first, but if this does not happen within a couple of weeks, you should take the initiative. Provide the institution with as much information as possible about yourself and your interests. Send them a picture and a mini-CV so that the mentor can introduce you to the whole institution community even before you arrive.

1.2. Make a list of the information you need

Perhaps the first step for a prospective ETA is to make a comprehensive list of things you need to know before leaving. This list can be drawn up even before your first contact with the host institution and updated as new questions occur to you. Obviously, you will want to be as fully informed as possible about the institution itself, but there are also likely to be many other general questions about the host community. In many cases, the institution will send you much of the information you require, but if it does not do this spontaneously, do not hesitate to ask. You can also seek information from the host country or region's official representations in your country (embassy, consulate, tourist office, etc.). Use the internet to search for any specific information on the host country you might need.

1.3. Get your mentor's contact details

Once you are in contact with the institution, make sure that you have the name and contact details of the person who will be supervising your Assistantship. If the mentor agrees, you should obtain a private telephone number so that you can reach him or her outside institution hours, or during the summer holidays which often immediately precede the beginning of Assistantships.

1.4. Make sure the dates of the Assistantship are clear

A number of things need to be discussed before you leave. Basic practicalities such as the date of arrival and departure, as well as the dates of starting and finishing the Assistantship itself, must be clear. Where possible, institutions will arrange for someone to meet the ETA at the airport or railway/bus station.

1.5. Agree on an outline timetable

Both parties should also agree on the outline of the ETA's timetable. This may be merely an indication of approximately how many hours will be spent doing which type of activities with which students, rather than a detailed weekly plan. In any case, flexibility is essential if the Assistantship is to be used creatively. It should be clear that what is drawn up at this stage is only provisional and may be modified later.

The ETA must be fully consulted on his or her timetable, and you should not be afraid to put forward your point of view. It is very important at an early stage to let the institution know if you have particular preferences or skills which may be useful, for example in sport, music, drama or art. Remember, however, that you may not be able to have exactly the timetable you would like and that the education system in Portugal is different from your own.

Good practice guide for ETA

1.6. Make sure the timetable is for up to 16 hours

Nevertheless, there are two things that you can and should insist on. The first is that the timetable should provide for up to 16 hours every week, unless you are willing to do more. This includes time with students, whether within or outside normal lesson hours, and any time spent on other work on behalf of the institution, such as assisting with other projects or working with the local community. Preparation of lessons is not included. Many ETAs enjoy their work so much that they are prepared to take on additional duties. However, you should not agree to do any extra hours at this stage, until you have been in the institution for a while and have a better idea of what is involved.

1.7. Collect resource materials to take with you

You should also discuss with the host institution what teaching materials you should bring with you. These may differ according to the subject you will be teaching or the students involved. A list of things which have proved useful in the past is contained in Annex II. If you are asked to spend any significant sums of money on materials, you should confirm before buying anything that the institution is willing to reimburse you. Keep all receipts.

1.8. Understand the host education system

In order to prepare properly for the Assistantship, it will be useful for you to do some reading in advance about the education system in Portugal. Ask the host institution to send you any relevant documents. It may be worthwhile to visit your local educational bookshop, where comparative studies may be available. Information on the Portuguese education system can also be found through the 'Eurydice' European database, which has a comprehensive Internet site at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Portugal:Overview>

1.9. Start learning Portuguese

Reports from ETAs often stress the enormous benefit of beginning to improve your language skills before your departure. If you do not speak Portuguese fluently, you should spend some time studying the basics, if possible by attending a class or if not by using self-teaching materials, often in the form of interactive CD-ROMs as well as on paper. Your host institution has also committed to provide you with language and culture training.

1.10. Apply for the visa early

Coming from a non-EU /EE A country, Visas are required for Fulbright ETAs. In some cases, medical certificates may also be required. As soon as you have been notified of your placement, you should contact the Portuguese embassy or consulate in the U.S. for information and application forms. Applications may take two months or longer to process. If you have particular difficulties, contact the Fulbright Commission. Please note that, although you are unlikely to face problems if you act in good time, the granting of visas is at the discretion of national immigration authorities.

1.11. Make travel arrangements well in advance

You should book your ticket as soon as possible, as the cheaper tickets often sell out quickly. It is in your own interest to ensure that you get the cheapest possible tickets.

Before booking any tickets, speak with the Fulbright Commission to ensure that the route you have chosen is convenient and economical. For example, a direct flight to a regional airport may at first appear more expensive than flying to a capital city, but in some cases train fares to the final destination may not be time effective.

2. Integration into the institution

Institutions tend to be very complex with a way of life of their own, and it often takes some time to get used to a new work environment even when it is in one's own country and within a system with which one has grown up. It is all the more challenging when the educational culture is also different.

It is therefore not unusual for Fulbright ETAs to feel a little disorientated at first, especially if they arrive at a time when the institution term is already in progress. You will need time to adapt to the host institution and vice-versa. Do not be despondent if things do not go smoothly at first. However, integration is usually a very quick process and it is very rare for ETAs to experience lasting problems in feeling comfortable in the host institution. Be prepared for serious work and do not expect others to tell you all the time what to do and when. Independence and self-reliance

Good practice guide for ETA

are very important. Be also prepared to be flexible, come with a sense of humour and never be afraid to ask for help.

2.1. Respect cultural and educational differences

Possibly the most important thing to bear in mind at all times, and especially during the early stages of the Assistantship, is that practice in the host institution may be very different from that in institutions in your own country. Observe and be sensitive to these differences without making value judgments. Remember that institutions can be managed and students can learn in many different ways. The examples of potential differences given below are some of the most common, but there are many others.

Relationships between members of staff and between staff and students may be more or less formal than you have been used to. Pedagogical principles may also be very different and may at first appear rather shocking if you have been trained in another country, especially given that most ETAs' training is very recent. For example, in some educational systems, classroom work tends to involve groups of students working together. In others, the professor usually addresses the whole class throughout the lesson. This type of difference can be particularly evident in language lessons, where another aspect, which differs between countries, is the emphasis that is put on oral as opposed to written work. Within oral work, the emphasis on effective communication compared to that given to speaking 'correctly' may vary. In some systems there will be frequent use of translation exercises. In others these will never be done.

Some educational systems use a great deal of testing and sometimes rank students in order of success. In others, this is uncommon. The level of freedom professors have to determine the content of their lessons also varies. Sometimes the syllabus is very detailed; in other cases only broad outlines are given. Attitudes to discipline differ. Sometimes a certain level of talk in classrooms is accepted, while elsewhere silence is required.

2.2. Introduce yourself to all staff

Normally your mentor or head of the department will introduce you to most of the institution's staff soon after your arrival. But if this does not happen, do what you can yourself to ensure that you are known to everybody, both professors and other staff. You should do this even if you are not a fluent speaker of Portuguese, but bear in mind that some of your new colleagues may find it difficult to communicate with you. Do not expect them to do all the work in getting to know you.

2.3. Understand that professors are sometimes very busy

You will probably have many questions to ask and will be eager to speak with professors about the kind of work you will be doing with their classes. Do not be discouraged if they do not have the time to talk to you immediately. Choose a moment when they are relaxing rather than one in the middle of a hectic institution day. It may also be worth making a list of what you need to know and asking your mentor if he or she could organise, and attend, a short meeting with each of the professors you will initially be working with.

2.4. Use the induction period to think carefully about the Assistantship

In most cases, before you are asked to begin your regular timetable, the institution will organise an induction period of at least a couple of weeks, during which you will get to know the life of the institution by observing lessons and other activities. But this does not mean sitting passively at the back of the class. Your mentor may suggest some points to consider. But even if not, you should use this time to assess the differences between the host institution and your institution in the U.S. Taking notes may help you to concentrate and make it easier to report back to your mentor later.

Make sure you observe a wide variety of lessons. Think about how to motivate students of different levels. The key question to ask yourself at this stage — and indeed throughout the Assistantship — is what contribution you can make to students' learning and to the life of the institution and local community. Remember that what you have to offer is of great value and that you are there not to do what professors do already but to add a new dimension.

2.5. Offer to help professors during the induction period

The induction period will normally be organised to some extent for you, but you should always ensure that you speak personally to all professors whose lessons you wish to observe, in order to ask their permission and to ask if there is any way you can make yourself useful in the lesson, for example by sitting with and helping a particular group of students.

Good practice guide for ETA

2.6. Offer to help with extra-curricular activities — sport, clubs etc.

Some institutions may have a calendar of extra activities organized at the institution and your extra help is likely to be much appreciated, for example with institution sport or with producing institution drama or musical events. Such assistance will gain you goodwill and will also enable you to have a better insight into the culture of the host country, both educationally and more generally.

2.7. Meet your mentor at the end of the induction period

It is essential to set aside time at the end of the induction period for a meeting with your mentor. Before this meeting, you should prepare a list of questions you wish to ask and points you want to make. If as a result of the induction period you have any new ideas on classes or activities with which you would like to be involved, now is a good time to say so. If you are having any difficulties with accommodation or other personal matters, seek advice. Do not be afraid to speak frankly, but tactfully, about any problems you have noticed or about differences between what you have seen and institutions in your own country. ETAs should always be aware of their own relative inexperience and accept that professors in the host institutions are likely to have many years of accumulated knowledge and practical experience of what works and what does not for their students. You can learn a great deal from these professors. But they can also learn from you, and if you are tactful, most professors will be willing to allow you to experiment with your own ideas. A regular time should be agreed with the mentor for future meetings, which should be at least weekly. It may also be useful at this stage to discuss the form in which you will keep a record of the Assistantship.

2.8. If you have problems, speak to your mentor first

This happens very rarely, but if at any stage in the Assistantship you are unhappy about something or feel that you are not being treated correctly by the host institution, first speak tactfully and in confidence to your mentor. If this does not lead to a solution, contact the Fulbright Commission in Portugal and explain the problem.

3. Integration into the local community

Although you will spend much of your time at the host institution or doing things connected with the institution, the Assistantship is also an opportunity to experience more widely the culture of another country. During a relatively short stay, it can sometimes be difficult to integrate fully into the life of the community around you, especially in large international cities. If you spend much of your free time with other foreigners, there is no reason to feel that is any kind of failure. However, there is a number of ways in which you can increase your chances of meeting local people and of making progress in the local language.

3.1. Be aware of cultural and religious differences

It is very likely that ETAs feel a little culturally disorientated for a while and are unsure what behaviour is expected of them in Portugal, especially when they have not visited before. But if you are open and treat differences with your own culture as an opportunity to learn rather than as a threat, you should soon begin to feel more at ease. Remember that it is more normal in some cultures than in others for people to begin conversations in public places such as cafés or shops and that in some places it is unusual to be invited to people's homes unless you are a close friend. What may appear as either coldness or over-friendliness to you may be quite normal in the host culture. Remember that, while animated discussion on serious issues such as politics and religion can in some circumstances be interesting and informative for all concerned, you should not risk offending your hosts by bringing up such matters at an inappropriate time or place. Different cultures have different customs in this respect. And you should always avoid being over-critical — remember that your own country and culture is no better (or worse) than the host one.

3.2. Try to use the Portuguese wherever possible

Even if you are not fluent in Portuguese, practice as much as you can. For example, try to begin conversations in shops, etc. in Portuguese. You may find that many people you meet try to help you by using English. But where possible, explain politely that you prefer to speak the local language at least part of the time. Do not be discouraged if at first you have difficulty in understanding or if the language is spoken differently from how you are used to. It is

Good practice guide for ETA

also very useful to watch television in Portuguese, especially news programmes where the pictures or your knowledge of current events give you a good grasp of the general context. Films, whether at the cinema or on the television, which have a soundtrack in a language you know well but subtitles in Portuguese, can also be very useful.

3.3. Profit from language classes or exchanges

The best way to make progress is usually through a combination of immersion in the language and more structured learning. Again, your host institution has committed to provide you with language and culture training, so make sure to profit from their offer.

Another option is an exchange, whereby you teach your partner your language for a few hours a week, and he or she teaches you Portuguese. Obviously, professors at the host institution are ideal partners for this, but may not have the time. An alternative exchange partner may be an older student, but you should take care in this situation not to create jealousy among other students who may see your spending time with one individual as favouritism. If you cannot find a partner through the host institution, you could try putting an advertisement on a university or other local notice board.

If you already have a reasonably good command of Portuguese, the exchange can take the form of simple conversation. But if you are a beginner, you will need to ask your partner to provide more structured practice, perhaps using a textbook.

3.4. Consider joining a local club or evening class

.In many towns and cities, and even some smaller communities, there are opportunities to join informal evening classes and clubs in art, photography, local history, creative writing, cooking, wine tasting and many other subjects. This can also bring you together with local people with interests similar to yours. Evening classes tend to lead to considerable social contact. Professors at your institution will probably be the best source for information on evening classes.

3.5. Do not miss the orientation meeting

Fulbright ETA's and other Fulbright U.S. Students are invited to an orientation meeting by the Fulbright Commission soon after their arrival and right before the start of their grant period. Attending this meeting is mandatory,

3.6. Ask the Fulbright Commission for a list of other Fulbrighters in the host institution or the region

The Fulbright Commission will put you in contact with other ETA's and U.S. Fulbrighters in Portugal. In the past, some groups of ETAs have set up networks (for example through mailing lists) to share teaching materials, and even worked together to create Internet sites.

The Fulbright Commission will also be able to put you in contact with alumni of the Fulbright Program at your host institution or in the region where you are placed. Portuguese Fulbrighters are usually eager to contact current grantees and will offer an excellent network of local contacts.

3.7. Complete all necessary formalities (banking, health insurance, etc.)

There will be some formalities to complete on or soon after arrival. The Fulbright Commission will help you in this matter by giving you information and advice on the procedures needed.

3.8. Consider contacting the local media

It may be worth contacting the local newspaper (or asking the institution to do so), particularly if it is a small publication, although even larger regional newspapers often have specific sections dedicated to particular towns. The local press is often short of news, and would be delighted to interview you. Local radio stations may also be interested. Several previous ETAs have found this a very good way of making the community in general aware of their arrival. The resulting article can also be very useful in terms of attracting the attention of local people and enterprises with whom you may later wish to collaborate in organising activities for your students. If an interview is arranged, take some time beforehand to prepare the message you want to communicate. The Fulbright Commission can help you find media contacts and provide you with a media kit about the Fulbright Program.

Good practice guide for ETA

4. In and beyond the classroom

This section does not provide advice on particular activities — a list of suggestions, which have proved useful, is at Annex III — but gives some general hints on classroom techniques. In applying these ideas, it is important also to consider cultural and educational differences and not to enter into conflict with the policy of the host institution. Some of the following advice is relevant to all situations and all types of lesson or activity. Some deals specifically with language teaching, which is still the most common activity during a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship.

4.1. Teaching your mother tongue needs determination and planning

When teaching English, your mother tongue, remember that speaking a language perfectly does not make you a perfect professor! You may well need to work hard at it and if it is difficult to find teaching materials, see if you can adapt ideas from other materials. Textbooks for native English speakers can often be used and you will receive some materials for the classroom from the Fulbright Commission.

4.2. Aim for informality but ensure respect

Fulbright ETAs usually have a different relationship with students than that of a professor. Students should normally feel that they can approach the ETA informally, but also that he or she is a full member of staff and should be respected as such. Your initial contact with students will be very important in determining the nature of your longer-term relationship with them. It is better to begin relatively formally and then relax than to do everything possible to 'be friends' straight away. Bear in mind, when you are working with students within a lesson led by a professor, that you may later need to handle the same students on your own and so be able to demonstrate a certain authority.

In many cases, as the Assistantship goes on, with older students in particular there will be a clear difference between your relationship with them in the classroom and outside it. The latter may be a relationship of equals, but in the classroom it should be clear that, although the atmosphere is informal, you are in charge. You should also take care that if you socialise with certain older students, you are not perceived to favour them in class.

4.3. Plan and evaluate all lessons thoroughly, with the professor if possible

Ideally, all lessons in which you are to take part will be carefully planned in collaboration with the professor, with a written lesson plan setting out who will do what. In reality, this will not always be possible. But you should always try to speak to the professor before the lesson and to have a clear idea what the aim of the lesson is and what your role will be. Afterwards, again ideally with the professor, you should evaluate how successful you were in achieving your own aims within the lesson and discuss what might be done differently next time.

4.4. Speak clearly, but usually at normal speed

When you are teaching your mother tongue or another language you know very well, you should always speak as clearly as possible but ensure that students (except perhaps absolute beginners) get plenty of exposure to speech at normal or near normal speed and to your normal vocabulary. After all, one reason you are there is to provide a realistic experience of dealing with a native or fluent speaker. Even if students have difficulty at first, they will usually gradually become accustomed to the ETA's voice and speech patterns.

4.5. Grade your language

However, it is necessary to 'grade' the language used depending on the situation. If you are giving instructions or explaining a detailed point to students, they will need to understand more or less every word. You should therefore speak more slowly and avoid using complicated constructions or vocabulary. At first, this may require some advance planning, but it quickly becomes second nature. In other situations where students only need to understand the gist of what you are saying, it is appropriate to speak more naturally. Indeed this can often be a useful comprehension exercise.

Good practice guide for ETA

4.6. Discuss with professors how you should correct students' mistakes

One sensitive issue where there may be significant differences between host institutions is their policy on correcting students' mistakes. Many professors will tend towards the 'modern' view that too much correction, in particular of oral language, can discourage students from communicating, and thus be counter-productive. In particular, students should only be helped while they are speaking if it is clear they are searching for a word. Otherwise, correction should be done once they have finished. If a conversation takes place between several students, the professor should listen and make notes, and then afterwards correct only the three or four most frequent or most serious errors. Students will not in any case remember any more and any further correction will be wasted.

Other professors will have a more traditional view and argue that students should get used to speaking correctly as early as possible, or errors will become habitual and impossible to correct later.

Matters such as this should always be discussed with professors and the ETA — while free to put his or her own point of view diplomatically and in private — should respect their wishes and the policy of the institution.

4.7. Gain as much experience as possible with different types of class

If the Assistantship is to be of the maximum benefit to your professional and academic development, you will need to gain as wide a variety of experience as you can. If, a few weeks into the Assistantship, you do not feel this is happening or you think of new ways in which you can be useful to the institution, speak to your mentor. Try to get experience with different subjects, different activities, with small groups or with whole classes, etc. It is often worthwhile, too, to continue observing other professors' classes throughout the Assistantship, and not only during the induction period — your view of the way they do things may develop as you become more experienced in teaching in the institution.

4.8. Suggest activities and materials

As has already been mentioned, professors often have very little time for longer term planning. One way in which ETAs can be enormously helpful is by suggesting activities that can be done in the classroom and offering to help professors by preparing resource materials. This can also be a very good way of playing a positive role in non-language lessons and ensuring that professors are aware of the extra potential you have to offer. In addition to the resources you may have brought with you (see Annex II), you will obtain a prepared teaching pack from the Fulbright Commission. Do not forget that the Internet is a very rich source of teaching resources. However, it is important to select and use them carefully and target them to your pedagogical aims.

4.9. Try not to be limited to the traditional classroom

Obviously, much of your work will take place in traditional classrooms. But there are other opportunities. Open formats such as language clubs are possible, where students come voluntarily at lunchtime and after institution for activities such as reading, playing games or watching videos. The Fulbright ETA acts as a resource, helping where necessary. You may also be able to use the institution premises to provide classes — in languages or other subjects you know well. ETA's can help create and develop links between the host community and their own local area, sometimes in collaboration with businesses or local authorities. The internet is often very helpful for this.

Discuss these matters with your mentor. The institution may well have had experience in the past, which you can draw on.

4.10. Every week, evaluate with the mentor what you have achieved

You should have weekly, timetabled meetings with your mentor. These discussions need not be long, but they should enable you to bring the mentor up to date on what you have done during the previous week, what you have achieved and where you feel more work on your part may be necessary. You should also discuss your timetable for the following week and suggest any changes. Agree with your mentor two or three points on which to concentrate during the following week's work. You should not hesitate to speak frankly with the mentor about any problems you may be experiencing either inside or outside the institution.

Good practice guide for ETA

4.11. Keep a file on your Assistantship

You should keep a simple record of your Assistantship, with copies of all your weekly timetables and lesson plans where you have them, as well as any observations on learner behaviour, cultural and educational differences between the host country and your own etc. This will be of personal value to you as a record of your progress and will also help you to fill in the mandatory mid-term and final reports on your Assistantship. It might also be worth keeping a virtual diary (weblog) of your Assistantship to share your experience with your colleagues, your friends and family. You should also keep at least two copies of any resource materials you prepare, one set to remain with the institution after your departure, the other for you to take home. It may prove very useful in the future, whether to show to potential employers as proof of your talents or to be used in the classroom in your subsequent career. You should also stay in touch with the host institution. The links you make may be very enriching personally, and may also help you start international projects in your subsequent career and keep your knowledge of the language of the host country alive.

4.12. Ask your host institution for a certificate

In the interest of your future professional career, it is worth asking the host institution for a certificate specifying the dates and the duration of the Assistantship, your main tasks as an ETA and your performance.

5. CONCLUSION

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistants Program is enriching for both the host institution and the ETA. The great success of the program relies on the efforts of all concerned and ETAs and host institutions who invest hard work and imagination almost invariably find the experience of taking part in the Fulbright ETA program immensely rewarding. The Fulbright Commission hopes that this guide will allow ETA's and host institutions to benefit from the accumulated wisdom and experience of those who have gone before them. However, the Commission does not want to stifle the creativity of participants, which has been and will continue to be ETA's greatest strength. Future ETA's will certainly present new opportunities which are not covered here. Participating institutions and ETAs will continue to be imaginative and innovative and are certain to come up with many new ideas which will make Assistantships even more successful in the future.

Good practice guide for ETA

ANNEX I - Accommodation

Host institutions offer cost-share to the ETA program that may consist in directly providing accommodation or assist ETA's in finding housing that may or may not be paid for by the institution. The amount of the grant awarded to each ETA depends on whether housing (and meals) is cost-shared by the host institution or not. Many ETAs find that accommodation is their greatest concern before departure and this Annex is designed to help you with some general advice. In some cases, accommodation is arranged before departure, while in others ETAs find accommodation after arrival. Whatever the accommodation arrangement, if you are asked to sign any documents seek advice from your mentor, especially if you are not fluent in the language of the host country. Particularly in large cities, it is advisable to take someone with you when you go to view accommodation, for security as well as for language reasons.

Scholar and Student residences

An advantageous form of accommodation sometimes offered to ETAs in larger towns and cities is scholar and student residences. If such an offer is made, it is usually much better value than anything you are likely to find on the private rental market, while at the same time offering you the same independence you would have living in a flat. Such residences are also often near city centres, where it can be difficult or impossible to find other accommodation. Again, however, you need to be absolutely sure of the terms before you accept a university room. Will you have a room on your own? Will meals be provided? If not, will you have access to university restaurants? If you move out, will you be liable for the fees for your whole scheduled stay?

Sharing flats and houses

Many ETA's live in flats and houses shared with other people, usually of around the same age. Normally, each person has a bedroom and everybody shares the kitchen, bathroom and sometimes a living room. In cities with large university population such as Lisbon, Porto or Coimbra, this is common amongst the native population, both students and young employed people. Sharing is cheaper; it usually gives access to more space and can be a good way of making friends. But the experience of living in shared accommodation often requires tolerance and a spirit of compromise on all sides and adapting can be difficult for those used to living either alone or in the family home. Just as for any other type of accommodation, ensure that you have understood the terms before accepting, in particular the size of the room you will have, whether electricity and gas bills are included in the rent, and if not, how much they are likely to be. You will want to find out the length of the daily journey to the host institution, and the cost, as well as to be satisfied that the house or flat is in a secure area. Finally, you should also ensure that you can leave without unreasonable financial loss if you are not happy. Usually ETA's find this type of accommodation by themselves by replying to advertisements in local newspapers or on notice boards in student cafeterias. It is a good idea to ensure that you have met the people with whom you will be sharing before definite acceptance! Obviously, if you do share accommodation, it can be particularly beneficial to your language skills and cultural experience to share with native speakers of the language of the host country. But that can sometimes be difficult to arrange, especially in cities where flat sharing is less common and there are not many local people looking for or offering this kind of accommodation. In some cases, if you are going to work in a large town, the institution or the Fulbright Commission may be in a position to put you in touch with U.S. and other international students who may be in the same city. You may be able to agree with them to look for accommodation together.

Living alone

Of course, in some cases, ETA's who wish to are able to find small flats in which to live alone, particularly in smaller towns where costs are lower. Just as for any other type of accommodation, it is wise before accepting to think carefully and to ensure that you have full information on the commitment you are taking on. One fundamental matter is whether the flat will be rented furnished or unfurnished. Be aware that in some places furnished flats can be very difficult to find. In most cases, you should not normally pay an agency any money to find you a flat — this is sometimes illegal and agents are permitted to receive commission only from the landlord. Before signing any contract carefully work out your budget, bearing in mind that you will probably want to keep some money for socialising and travelling within Portugal. Make sure that the contract covers only the period you will need the flat. Seek advice from your mentor to make sure any arrangements to pay a deposit comply with the law. The deposit is paid directly to the landlord and he or she returns it when you leave. When you move in, ask the landlord to draw up an inventory for you both to sign, to avoid disputes over missing items or damage.

Good practice guide for ETA

Annex II - Resources ETAs can bring

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but merely to give some ideas. ETAs and host institutions should discuss together before the Assistantship what the ETA might be able to bring.

- Photos of family and home area
- Maps of home town or city
- Tourist brochures for the ETA's home area
- Postcards
- Posters
- Calendars
- Cuttings from local and national newspapers
- Magazines and comics aimed at the age groups to be taught — those including questionnaires are particularly useful
- Taped pop and traditional songs — preferably with the lyrics typed out
- Board games
- Transport timetables and route maps
- Videos of films, television news, weather forecasts and advertisements
- Taped radio news, weather forecasts and advertisements
- Pages from mail order catalogues
- Restaurant menus
- Typical recipes
- The timetable from a institution in the ETA's country
- Letters from students in a institution in the ETA's country
- Local/regional objects/costumes

Annex III - Some ideas for activities

Again this annex is not intended to be exhaustive. Each suggestion is meant to be a starting point for further thought rather than to serve as a lesson plan. These are informal though effective activities, which are easier for a professor to manage if an ETA is involved as a language resource and to share supervision of students divided into groups. These activities are also suitable for extra class language groups. Exercises commonly found in text-books are not included since you will receive a teaching pack from the Fulbright Commission upon your arrival.

Part one — in the language classroom

Mystery board

This is mainly for ETAs introducing a new language into the institution. To create interest in your language, try pinning up on a prominent notice board in the institution a new item from your country (pictures, short vocabulary lists, recipes, travel tickets, newspaper articles) every day for couple of weeks. Say nothing to students, then once enough curiosity has been aroused, announce the start of lessons in the language: 'if you want to know more, come to Room x at time x'. Maintain the notice board even after the lessons have started.

Interviews

Professor interviews the ETA about an aspect of his or her life. Students fill in a multiple-choice worksheet. (NB this requires careful preparation.) The interview can also be taped or videoed to practice particular language points or for further use in later classes. Students can also interview the ETA. For more advanced classes the ETA can remain silent unless the students' questions are correctly formulated.

Role plays

The professor and ETA can together conduct either structured dialogues or more informal role plays, before students are asked to try. Role plays can often be based on authentic material supplied by ETAs, such as street maps (asking directions), transport timetables or tourist brochures (asking for information). ETAs can also do role plays with students, for example telephone conversations in which students have to obtain information.

Good practice guide for ETA

Drama

It may also be possible, either in class or as an extra-curricula activity, to produce full plays or extracts of plays in the target language, whether these are based on established works or created by the students themselves. This can be a very effective boost to language learning.

Memory test

The class professor or ETA shows a picture for ten seconds, after which students try to recall as much as possible. The ETA asks questions to help the students.

Drawing words

The class is divided into small groups of three to five students. The students cannot talk to each other during the whole activity. A representative of each group comes to the professor who writes down a word on a piece of paper so that it is visible only to the representatives of the group. Once they have seen the word, the representatives go back to their groups and try to explain the word through pictures. All talk is prohibited! Once the group guesses the word, they write it down and show it to the professor. The group who guesses the first gets a point. The professor decides on the number of the rounds. For each round, there is a different representative of the group. The group with the highest number of points is the winner.

Supermarket alphabet

Start by saying 'I went to the supermarket today and I bought some apples'. First learner must repeat and then add something beginning with 'b', next learner must repeat what the first one has said and add something with 'c', and so on until the end of the alphabet. This can be played in smaller groups as a competitive game — when a learner cannot remember correctly all the items bought, he or she is out, until only one person is left. If several people are still in by the time you reach 'z' begin again at 'a', so that the next person has to remember 27 items, and so on.

Vocabulary bank

A selection of new vocabulary (not too much at once) which has come up in lessons, with a translation or picture and perhaps some examples of use, is first displayed for a week on card around the room, then stored in a revision box students can consult.

Songs

There are many ways songs can be used as listening comprehension. Writing out the lyrics with words blanked out for students to fill in is a useful example. This is even more effective if students are asked to guess the missing words from the context of the rest of the lyrics, before they actually hear the song.

Quiz

At the end of your Assistantship, hold a quiz about the U.S. and English, either in each individual class, or if it can be arranged with all students you have taught. Provide small prizes for the winners.

Quiet correction

Students are divided into groups and given an activity to perform, for example putting a series of comic strip pictures in the correct order, although any group oral activity is suitable. All discussion must be in the target language. The ETA circulates between groups asking questions and quietly correcting language mistakes.

Group presentations

The class is split into groups of three or four and given/asked to choose a subject for a presentation of ten minutes or so in English. Ideally, the subjects should involve some research in the library/on the Internet. They can be connected to what is currently being taught in other parts of the curriculum. Each group gives its presentation to the rest of the class, using overhead projectors, photographs, etc. Presentations can be recorded on video.

Newspaper article reconstruction

The ETA finds a short article from a newspaper in English. The article will preferably be a general interest item narrating an unusual event or a crime story. Students are divided into small groups. The ETA writes on the board ten important words from the article, in the order they occur. Using those as a clue, students are given ten minutes to

Good practice guide for ETA

work out what the article is about and to try to reconstruct it, speaking and writing only in English, while the ETA circulates helping and correcting. A member of each group is then asked to report to the class. The ETA writes five more words from the article inserting them into the correct place in the order, and the groups are asked if they have changed their minds or want to add anything. Then the class is given the whole article to compare with their guesses.

Other newspaper activities

- Matching headlines to articles;
- Giving students an article without a headline and getting them to suggest one;
- Transposing headlines into normal language (works well in English where headlines do not follow normal grammatical rules);
- Giving students an article with the paragraphs in the wrong order and getting them to rearrange it correctly;
- Comparing a newspaper in English with one from Portugal (especially effective if each paper has articles about the same international news items);
- A news board with a regularly updated selection of articles (news, features, cartoons etc) from newspapers and magazines in English.

Radio news

The ETA listens to a radio news program in English and makes a list of the items covered, changing the order. Students, working in groups, play the role of news editors and have to decide a suitable order while the professor and ETA circulate helping them. They then listen to the program to see if they agreed with the real editor, and after listening a couple more times rewrite the script for the program. The professor and language ETA both circulate as they are doing this, and then each group in turn leaves the room with the ETA and the tape recorder to record their script, taking the time to make detailed corrections, while the professor does other work with the rest of the class. Finally, the class listens to all the scripts. (This activity may take more than one lesson.)

What's my job?

One learner is given a piece of paper with a profession written on it. Others ask closed (yes/no) questions e.g. 'do you work indoors?' to find out what the job is. The learner who guesses correctly is then given another piece of paper with the name of a job on it, and answers questions in turn. This sort of activity can be done with the class divided into smaller groups if the ETA and the professor both monitor and help.

Job interview role plays

Many variations on this theme are possible. All need to be prepared well with vocabulary, etc. and can be preceded by filling in application forms. For example, students can be asked to apply for jobs of their interest. This can include a discussion on employment or be linked with a career lesson.

Who am I?

Each learner is given a sticker with a famous personality's name on it, and puts it on their forehead so that everyone else but themselves can see it. They then have to find out who they are by asking closed ('yes/no') question (e.g. Am I a man? Am I dead? Am I a film star?).

Charades

Write some words on different pieces of paper, give one to each learner and divide them into two or more groups. One person in the first group has to mime the word and his colleagues have to guess the word. If they can't, the next group gets a chance to guess it. Each group has a number of turns until all the words have been done, and they get one point for each correct guess. This can also be done with higher level groups by using description instead of mime.

Poems/stories

Ask students to list five words each they particularly associate with their town or institution. Put the resulting list on the board. Then ask them to write a poem/a story, alone or in groups. They are not obliged to use the words on the board but most will do so.

Good practice guide for ETA

Poetry reconstruction

Read a poem, preferably one with rhymes, to the class, then divide them into groups and give them the poem cut up into small sections. They have to put it together again in the right order. Alternatively, leave out the last word in every other line and get them to try to remember what it was — the fact that it will rhyme with the line before will help them.

Grammar/vocabulary/spelling betting

After the class has done a piece of work, either oral or written, the class professor or ETA picks out common mistakes they have made. On a piece of paper with three columns, he or she then puts a correct version of each target word/construction in one column (chosen at random) and two wrong versions in the other two. Students are put in groups of three or four. The ETA asks them what they think is the correct answer from the first set of three possibilities. Groups discuss for one minute, using only the target language. Each must then say what it thinks the correct answer is. The same procedure is followed for all the other sets of three.

Do it yourself vocabulary

Give each learner a complex text in English at above their normal level. Ask them to read it and ask general questions on the gist. Do not give any vocabulary explanation, but give out a translation in Portuguese with certain words highlighted. Students must find the translation of those words in English, using the first text as their source.

Yes/no game

A learner volunteers to answer questions from the rest of the class. He or she must not use the equivalent in the target language of the words 'yes' or 'no'. Once he or she does use one of these words, the person who asked the question takes over as the respondent. This game can also be played in groups.

Liar

Students ask each other or the professor and/or ETA a short series of questions (3–6) about their life, interests etc. The respondent must answer all of them truthfully except one. Group must then discuss and guess which answer was untrue.

Home made trivia quiz

The class is divided into groups, each of which must prepare ten questions under a particular subject area. This can include sport, pop music, films or institution subject areas like chemistry, geography, history.

Blank screen

The ETA plays a short video passage — 30 seconds or so — several times with the screen blanked out. He or she then asks questions to encourage the class to guess, in detail, what the picture on the screen would have shown during the passage e.g. what type of people, how they are dressed, their body language, the room or landscape. Students then see the video and compare with their guesses.

Tell me what happened

Students sit in pairs with one facing the screen and one facing away. A short passage — a couple of minutes — of video is played and the students who have not seen it, but have heard the soundtrack, have one minute to ask their partners 'yes/no' questions to find out as much as possible about what happened.

'Dubbing'

Students are shown a short video dialogue — 30 seconds — in Portuguese and then are divided into small groups who, without translating word for word, write and perform it in English. The ETA circulates making suggestions and correcting.

Part two — Beyond the language classroom

Some of the activities described below take place in lessons on subjects other than languages. Many involve going outside the confines of the institution, either physically or via virtual links.

Good practice guide for ETA

Language club

The ETA can set up a club which students (and possibly professors) attend voluntarily at lunchtime or after institution. The ETA can give lessons in English. Self-teaching materials, books, videos and games can be provided and members encouraged to ask the ETA for help in using them.

TV/video club

If the institution is lucky enough to have cable/satellite television or access to a good range of videos in foreign languages, the ETA can set up a film/television club for students to watch (suitable) programs from the U.S.

Information gap

Students in a lesson on any subject are given a task for which they require certain information, which the ETA has. The end product may be in Portuguese or in English, but the ETA answers questions only if asked in the target language. (Using this type of technique effectively requires close collaboration with the subject professor.)

Hear in one language tell in another

Following a history or geography lesson with some connection to the U.S., given in the students' own language, students are asked to choose an element of the topic covered on which either they give a talk for one minute or write a one-page essay in the target language. The ETA helps and corrects mistakes. Alternatively, the ETA gives the lesson in English (and if possible hands out some written material) and students do the exercise. These exercises, and many possible variations upon them, allow language and other lessons to be combined and simulate the situation in which people need to receive information in one language and disseminate it in another, especially at work. This is in practice a much more commonly needed skill than word for word translation.

Signposts

The ETA adds colourful signs in English (perhaps also with the pronunciation) to those used throughout the institution's Department, in corridors and outside special rooms, e.g. the word for "staff room", "laboratories", "head of institution", "music room", etc. The ETA can then also offer a guided tour through the institution building (once he/she is familiar with the premises).

Snack-bar

In institutions, you often find a small snack-bar, kiosk, sometimes even a dining hall. In cooperation with the person who runs it, the ETA could prepare a list of items sold in English which can be posted next to the one in the local language. Or, alternatively, the ETA can prepare small flags with the names of the objects which can be pinned to the relevant articles.

Historical comparisons

After the class has had a history lesson on a particular period in Portugal, the ETA gives the next lesson describing the same period in the U.S. Students can be given a simple worksheet to fill in, perhaps with multiple choice questions.

Institution/class newspaper

The institution, class or student's union produces a newspaper in one or more foreign languages, on events in the institution, local area or nationally. It may be possible to obtain assistance from the local newspaper to produce this professionally. The results can be distributed to students and more widely in the local area, perhaps with vocabulary lists or even full translations of the articles to help readers. They can also be put on the Internet. Crosswords and language games can also be included.

Video diary

If the institution has a video camera and the ETA has contacts with a institution in the U.S., a small group of students can make a video diary of a day in the life of their institution and swap it with one made by the other institution.

Tourist video

Students can make a video 'advertisement', with the ETA's help, for their local area. If possible this can be sent to students at an institution in the U.S., who can then ask questions by e-mail or video-conference.

Good practice guide for ETA

Internet searches

The ETA can research web sites in English and draw up an exercise where students have to fill in a questionnaire for which the answers can be found from those sites. Students are given the site addresses and the questionnaire, which they complete with the ETA helping as necessary. This can be done in small groups.

E-mail collaborative projects

E-mail links can be set up with a class in an institution in the U.S., perhaps one that he or she attended as a student. Small groups of students can set time each week to exchange messages with their counterparts. This initiative may be very enriching for the ETA's teaching skills and may foster an international dimension in the host institution.

Opinion poll

Students can make up questionnaires in Portuguese on a particular theme, e.g. views on the U.S., travel, how do you get to work, what is your favourite food/pastime. They then go out into the community collecting answers. The questionnaire is then translated into English and sent by e-mail to an institution in the U.S., where students use the same questionnaire in their own community. The results in the two countries are then compared.

Book week

Arrange with a local bookstore a week of books in English or about the U.S., with the ETA present at certain times to speak with customers. An informal reception with food from the U.S. can be organised in parallel and local personalities invited.

United States week

The Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon can supply printed material, videos, etc. on American themes. This is often also available from local information points and can be used as a basis for an exhibition for students and the local community. The exhibition can also include students' own work (essays, projects, videos, newspapers, etc.) produced with the ETA's help. The exhibition can also be linked with talks on different subjects, from the U.S. culture to studying in the U.S., by staff of the Fulbright Commission and the U.S. embassy.

A series of activities can be organised over a week or longer, all connected to the U.S. Traditional food can be offered in the institution canteen. The ETA can help students to organise activities on cultural themes from the U.S., such as cooking, wine, music, dance, theatre and film. This type of activity can be especially effective in the Spring when the Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Embassy usually are available for outreach projects. It can also be taken at an American Corner, if there is one in the ETA institution, or outside the institution, with activities or a display in a local public library, cultural centre or other community building.

Story book

Students write stories in English — there is no need to worry too much about spelling and grammar — which are then 'published' in a book. If the institution, or the ETA, has contacts with institutions in other countries, the book can be sent to them or swapped for one they have themselves produced. Students can then exchange comments, by letter or e-mail, about the stories.

Art/poetry/short story competition

Students are invited to enter a competition, judged by the ETA and inspired by the U.S. The best work wins a prize. This idea can be extended to the local community, with advertisements placed in public buildings, supermarkets, etc.

Business project

A project can be set up to demonstrate to students the real importance of languages in business. This is particularly fruitful if done in cooperation with a local business, which has frequent contact with English speaking countries. If the institution curriculum includes business studies or economics, these can also be included in the activity. Activities might include practising writing business letters in English, e-mail contact with businesses in the U.S., making a video in English about the local business, comparing business practice in the two countries, etc.