

APPLYING TO FRENCH EDUCATION

France ranks as the third most-frequently chosen country for foreign students. The students came from around the world: 30% came from North Africa, mainly the Maghreb countries, 25% from Europe, 16% from Asia and 7% from North and South America. Foreign students now make up 11.9% of the total student population

English source: <http://www.letudiant.fr/etudes/international/venir-etudier-en-france/coming-to-study-in-france.html>

French source: http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/espaces_dedies.php3?id_rubrique=12793

Please note: If you are a French student planning to enroll in higher education in the US, see our web page in French entitled: *Enseignement aux Etats-Unis*.

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Ammon & Rousseau Translations has been translating grade transcripts and diplomas for American students applying to schools in France and French students applying in the US for over 10 years. We are now providing certified translations of diplomas and grade transcripts from Spanish and all other languages into English.

TRANSLATION REQUIREMENTS: Who is Competent to Translate?

The University application process will accept only as official translations those done by one of the following (in order of preference).

- 1) Professional translation services delivering certified translations.
- 2) Accredited translators of the Consulate or Embassy of the country that issued the document.
- 3) Issuing Institution.
- 4) Faculty member of a U. S. High School or University. In these cases, the translation:
 - a) must be on school letterhead.
 - b) must state that the translator is a faculty member, and of which department.
 - c) by translator providing an attestation or affidavit of his/her knowledge of the foreign language.

TRANSLATING FOR EVALUATORS or TRANSLATION VS EVALUATION

How to Translate and What to Translate?

It is not the translator's job to interpret the document. With the material provided by the translators, evaluators recommend the closest U.S. equivalents and admissions offices make their decisions based on their own guidelines. To facilitate the job of the evaluator or the admissions office, the translator should adhere to the following rules:

- 1) The translations should imitate the layout of the original document.
- 2) The name of the school or university should not be translated unless provided by *The International Handbook of Universities and Other Institutions of Higher Education*.
- 3) The title of the diploma, degree or certificate should not be translated and should be kept in italics. Additional information, such as years of higher education required for the diploma, if included, should be in brackets. Brackets are used to indicate any input of the translator, particularly for professional certificates and licenses.
- 4) All other information must be translated. This includes all stamps, seals and indication of signatures in brackets, i.e. [document is signed].
- 5) The translation must be *verbatim*.
- 6) No interpretation, evaluation made by the translator should be included.
- 7) The translation must be printed on the letterhead of the translator with his/her name and address and an affidavit/certification of the translator stating that the author of the translation is familiar with the source and target language and the translation is complete.
- 8) Some schools want notarized translations, which means that the translator signs his/her certification in front of a Notary Public, who affixes his/her seal and signature. We have an in-house notary so all our translations are notarized.

NO OFFICIAL EQUIVALENCE

There is no official system of equivalence diplomas from one country to another. The American higher education system is much less centralized than most foreign counterparts and so there is more variation among American standards.

Overview of the French System

An initial difference: the *baccalauréat*, which sanctions the end of secondary French education is not directly equivalent to an American high school diploma because it requires some advanced study in certain fields similar to the Advanced Placement program in American high schools, which sometimes gives college credit to students who have scored well on an advanced test in a particular field. French students with a baccalaureate often get some college credits from University evaluators at US education institutions.

Second, the US Bachelor's Degree is really neither a *licence* (three years of study) nor a *maîtrise* (four years of study), and therefore a bad fit for the French **LMD** system (see below). The first round of French university study (DEUG, DUT) roughly corresponds to undergraduate studies for an associate's degree; the second round, which issues the *licence*, then the *maîtrise* in the French system still corresponds to the undergraduate studies in the US system, which culminates with the Bachelor's Degree. The *licence* can be considered comparable to a bachelor's degree when you take into account the fact the *baccalaureat* diploma is closer to a US high school diploma plus one-year higher education. In this perspective, the *licence* represents the equivalent US value of four-year higher education. Is the French Master, a US Master? There doesn't seem to be a standard answer. Since it involves four-year higher education, it is sometimes said to be comparable to the bachelors. In addition, the French, *diplôme d'études approfondies* (DEA), *diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées* (DESS) are post-graduate diplomas and are comparable to graduate studies in the US, here again the Master's Degree. In France there seem to be more diploma options than in the US. The French *doctorat* corresponds to the US doctorate or Ph D.

And so, if no official equivalence still does not exist, comparisons are always possible and there are certain procedures to attest the value of a diploma obtained in the European Union, the USA or other countries. One of them is the issuance of a certificate of comparability (*attestation de comparabilité*).

CERTIFICATE OF COMPARABILITY

A certificate of comparability (*attestation de comparabilité*) determines the level attained in the foreign education system issuing the diploma. They do not entail a comparison with the French educational system but state, as far as possible, the academic prerequisites and academic and professional opportunities to which a qualification in the relevant education system entitles the holder.

ENIC-NARIC is the only body authorized to issue such a certificate. A committee recognizes the education level of the applicant, thereby allowing him/her to continue studies at the level deemed to correspond to the training completed outside France in relation to the courses offered at the institution.

A student's academic record is examined individually; there is no automatic formula for the responses and attestations issued. Only diplomas recognized by the competent government authorities that issued them can be subject to a certificate of comparability.

Issuance costs around 70 EUR when we last checked (except for political refugees and applicants for exile).

In emergency situations, a fast issuance is also offered upon presentation of elements proving the emergency situation and after *avis de recevabilité* (notice of eligibility) of the request by the Centre ENIC-NARIC France; it costs 200 EUR.

Remember, however, that ENIC-NARIC is first and foremost an information center, which gives advice, helps and make suggestions but does not issue documents entitling the holder to any rights. It is the educational institution, to which a prospective student is applying, that ultimately decides whether or not to accept foreign candidates and their previous diplomas.

ENIC-NARIC is affiliated with the *Centre international d'études pédagogiques* (CIEP). The Centre Enic-Naric France can be contacted at enic-naric@ciep.fr.

LMD

This organization of higher education into 5 years of study is common to all European countries. It is called LMD (for Licence, Maîtrise, Doctorat), with Licence in 3 years, followed by Maîtrise (4) and then Doctorat.

The LMD reform is part of the Bologna Process to designate application to the construction of European Higher Education. The French university track is now organized around three diplomas: the *licence* (180 European Credit Transfer System credits), the *master* (240 ECTS credits) and the *doctorat* (at least 300 ECTS credits with a research thesis). Please note that one year of education is usually 60 ECTS credits. This new organization, the LMD, allows for increased mobility for European students between disciplines and professions.

See French site: <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr>

LES GRANDES ECOLES

Alongside the University system, there is a system for the very best: the “*Grandes écoles*”, a tradition unique to France and sometimes compared to “ivy league” schools in the US. The schools are institutions of higher education and research, entirely independent from the university system, though they often have partnership agreements with them. The most renowned and prestigious are business and engineering schools, but there are also schools of journalism, public affairs management, art, cinema and more. The number of students in the *Grandes écoles* represents only around 5% of the total student population.

Students are generally accepted on the basis of a competitive examination scores or application, after two or three years of study in “preparatory courses for the *Grandes écoles*” (CPGE). The curriculum usually covers a three-year period (making the resulting degree a Bac + 5 level), i.e. 2 years of preparatory courses and 3 years at the *Grandes écoles*. However, some *grandes écoles* are open to students immediately after the *Baccalaureat* and then offer a five-year degree program. It is also possible to take part in third-cycle (post-graduate) programs. The *Grandes écoles* (Ecole Polytechnique, Ecole Nationale d'Administration, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Polytechnique, HEC, Ecole des Chartes, Centrale, Arts et Métiers, INSA) are accredited to teach foreign students and have signed a large number of international agreements.

Source: CampusFrance: <http://www.campusfrance.org/en/index.htm>.

Comparison of the French university system and the *Grande écoles* track

University	DEUG1 (now often called License 1)	DEUG2 (now often called License 2)	Licence L3	Maîtrise M1	Master: DEA or DESS	Doctorat
Grandes Ecoles	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	etc.
	Classe prép.1	Classe prép.2	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	Doctorat

ECTS

ECTS (European credits Transfer System) are a numerical value (between 1 and 60) allocated to course units to describe the student's workload required to complete them. They reflect the quantity of work each course unit requires in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of academic study at the institution, that is, lectures, practical work, seminars, tutorials, field-work, private study - in the library or at home - and examinations or other assessment activities. ECTS is thus based on a full student workload and not limited to classroom hours only.

In the ECTS, 60 credits represent the workload of an academic year of study and normally 30 credits for a semester and sometimes 20 credits for a trimester or quarter. It is important to indicate that no special courses are set up for ECTS purposes, but that all ECTS courses are mainstream courses of the participating institutions, as followed by students under normal regulations.

It is up to the participating institutions to subdivide the credits for the different courses. ECTS credits should be allocated to all course units available, compulsory or elective courses. Credits can also be allocated to project and thesis work where the units are an integral part of the degree program. Non-credit courses may only be mentioned in the transcript of records. Credits are awarded only when the course has been completed and all required examinations have been successfully taken.

Source: <http://www.csd.auth.gr/studies/ects.en.php>

ENIC-NARIC NETWORKS

To implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention and, in general, to develop policy and practice for the recognition of qualifications, the Council of Europe and UNESCO have established the ENIC Network (European Network of National Information Centers on academic recognition and mobility). The Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES jointly provide the Secretariat for the ENIC Network. The ENIC Network cooperates closely with the NARIC Network of the European Union.

The Network is made up of the national information centers of the countries which are parties to the European Cultural Convention or the UNESCO Europe Region. An ENIC is a body set up by national authorities.

Source: www.enic-naric.net

FRENCH VERSUS US GRADING SYSTEM

The French grading system is numerical and ranges from 0 to 20. However, a score of 20 signifies perfection, and as "perfection" is commonly held to be humanly unattainable, such grades are unimaginable.

Evaluations are normally given in essay format where the elegance, form and presentation of his/her proofs, reasoning, and written expression is subjectively graded. Multiple-choice tests are rarely used.

The chart below is only for your information. Even evaluators do not transform grades made in one system to a grade in another system. Evaluators assess degrees or diplomas.

FRANCO-AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR THE EXCHANGE OF SCHOLARS (FULBRIGHT) GRADE CONVERSION CHART.			
<i>Collège (6th -9th Grades)</i>		<i>Lycée (10th - 12th Grades)</i>	
French Grade	American Equivalent	French Grade	American Equivalent
16	A+	15	A+
15	A	14	A
14	A-	13	A-
13	B+	12	B+
12	B	11	B
11	B-	10	B-
10	C+	09	C+
09	C	08	C
08	C-	07	C
07	D+	06	D+
06	D	05	D
05	D-	04	D-
04	F	03	F

FRENCH HONORS VS AMERICAN HONORS

EDUCATION LEVEL: SECONDARY SCHOOL		
French	English US	Comments
<i>très bien (TB)</i>	outstanding: high honor roll	In the US there are usually only two levels of honors in elementary and secondary schools. The name given to these honors varies from school to school- High or superior honors have an average of 4.0 (A)
<i>bien (B)</i>	very good: honor roll	The second level honor roll (lower honor roll) is for students who have an average from 3.0 to 3.99 (B)
<i>assez bien (AB)</i>	good: honor roll	The French mention <i>assez bien</i> would usually be incorporated into the lower level honor roll and, for comparison purposes, probably represents an average that would be 3.0 – 3.5
<i>passable</i>	passing/pass	Not a mention per se. Average from 2.0 to 3.0

EDUCATION LEVEL: BAC DIPLOMAS AND UNIVERSITY DIPLOMAS		
French	English US	Comments
		The rule for the French 20-point system is as follows:
<i>très bien (TB)</i>	summa cum laude	≥16
<i>bien (B)</i>	magna cum laude	≥ 14 and < 16
<i>assez bien (AB)</i>	cum laude	≥ 12 and < 14
<i>passable</i>	pass	

DOCTORATE LEVEL (DOCTORATE OR PHD)		
French	English US	Comments
<i>avec la mention très honorable avec félicitations</i>	summa cum laude with congratulations from the jury or highest honors with congratulations from the jury	All PhDs are doctorates. Not all doctorates are PhDs. Several professional schools offer doctorates that are not PhDs. These include Medicine (MD), Veterinary Medicine (DVM), Dental Science (DDS or DMD), Law (JD), Education (EdD or DEd), Divinity (DD) and business (DBA). The PhD is an academic degree rather than a professional degree. It is considered the highest degree possible.

FRENCH LANGUAGES TESTS

The **DEL** (*Diplôme d'études en langue française*) and **DALF** (*Diplôme approfondi de langue française*) are the Ministry of Education's official French-language diplomas. They certify a level of skill in French so that you can enter French higher education. If you hold either of the aforementioned diplomas, you will be exempt from the French-language test required to enter schools and universities. You may take the test for the diplomas in your own country. There exist approved examination centers across 150 countries. For more information about the tests, check *Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques* (CIEP).

Source: <http://www.ciep.fr/en/index.php>

There are two official French-language tests. The **TCF** (*test de connaissance du français*, or French-language knowledge test) and **TEF** (*test d'évaluation du français*, French-language assessment test) are required for registration in first-cycle university programs and are often requested by the *Grandes Ecoles*.

The TCF is the French Ministry of Education's test, or the equivalent of the English TOEFL (test of English as a foreign language). Designed by the *Centre international d'études pédagogiques* (CIEP), it assesses written and verbal comprehension, through a series of 5 tests. Students who make a prior request to this effect take the TCF DAP (*Test de Connaissance du français pour la Demande d'Admission Préalable*), which includes an additional written expression test (www.ciep.fr).

The TEF is the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry's test. In 2004, it was recognized by the French Ministry of Education. Now, students who take the TEF and earn 16/20 on the written exam are exempt from other tests required to sign up for first-cycle university courses. Both tests can be taken in France or in your country. Be careful, however – they are valid for only one or two years.

For more information in French visit http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/services-formulaires_831/espace-etudiants_12793/index.html

HOW TO APPLY TO FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION

1. You Have Graduated from High School and You Want to Start Your Studies in France

To enroll in the first year of a French university, international students must fulfill the conditions required for admission to higher education in the country where he/she obtained their diploma marking the end of secondary education (US High School Diploma). Potential students must demonstrate a level of French adapted to the educational program they wish to follow.

The following information is found at: <http://usa.campusfrance.org/fr/pages-transverses/bloc-actu-rouge/dap-2009-2010-closed-156.html>

If you are interested in pursuing your university degree in France, you need to do a *Demande d'admission préalable (DAP)*. For more information regarding the DAP, please visit: www.education.gouv.fr/cid2476/-dossier-blanc-demande-prealable-a-une-inscription-en-1er-cycle-dans-une-universite-francaise.html

Note: In order to be able to enroll in a DAP, you must have:

- already completed your high school diploma, plus completed two Advance Placement Classes (AP), with a grade of at least 3, including one in French language and the other one in the field in which you want to enroll in a French university, See: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/subjects.html>
- or have successfully completed your first year of college.

DEADLINE - January 31 of the year of intended enrollment. WARNING- The "DAP blanche" procedure is only applicable if you are interested in enrolling in the first or second year of university (*licence* 1 and 2). The DAP does NOT apply to enrollment in a *licence* 3 (third year of university in France) or in a preparatory class. The DAP blanche does NOT apply to students of French lycées. Students from French lycées MUST visit the website <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid2486/-dossier-bleu-1ere-admission-en-premier-cycle-dans-une-universite-francaise-pour-des-candidats-titulaires-ou-futurs-titulaires-du-baccalaureat-francais-passe-a-l-etranger.html> and contact CampusFrance at washington@campusfrance.org to inform them of their decision. Citizens of the European Union and the European Economic Area do not need to apply their first year of university by the DAP procedure. Instead they must contact the university they are interested in directly.

Steps for applying for the "DAP blanche":

- 1) Register on CampusFrance USA at: www.usa.campusfrance.org .
- 2) Fill out "*CampusFrance form*" and "*my procedures*".

Make sure to select the three schools that interest you in France when you fill out "my procedures".

Warning: if the CampusFrance application and "my procedures" are not submitted, your application will not be processed.

3) Send required documents to CampusFrance in Washington DC.

Documents must be sent to:

**CampusFrance- DAP
4101 Reservoir Rd. NW
Washington DC 20007**

Required Documents:

- Birth certificate translated into French;
- Report cards for your last three years in high school (sophomore, junior and senior years);
- A photocopy of your high school diploma (if you have completed your senior year of high school);
- Transcripts from any universities you have attended and photocopies of any diplomas you have obtained (if applicable).
- A money order of \$120 made out to "Maison Francaise- CampusFrance" include campusfrance ID (usxxxxxx) (obtained online at their site)

4) Register for a **TCF-DAP** (Test de Connaissance du français pour la Demande d'Admission Préalable), test date. To find a test center, visit <http://www2.ciep.fr/tcf/Centres/Liste.aspx>

You are **not** required to take the TCF-DAP if:

- You have taken the TCF-DAP in the last two years;
- You have taken the TEF (*Test d'Evaluation du Français*) in the last year and received a 14/20.
- You have a DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française) - level B2, or a DALF (Diplôme approfondi de langue française) C1 or C2;
- You are a citizen of an official francophone country: Benin, Burkina Faso, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Togo. Note: Citizens of countries where French is one of the official languages may be exempt for the TCF-DAP (Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Comoros, Djibouti, Haiti, Madagascar, Mauritania, Rwanda, Seychelles, Switzerland, Chad, Vanuatu). Citizens of these countries must have attended a French high school and passed the BAC.

For more information about the TCF-DAP, visit: <http://usa.campusfrance.org/fr/pages-transverses/bloc-actu-rouge/tcf-dap-155.html>

5) Take the TCF-DAP. Make sure to contact the exam center three weeks before the date of the exam for payment and details.

6) Schedule an interview with CampusFrance (required). The information collected CampusFrance during the interview will be given to the French universities you have applied for. In most circumstances, you can schedule an interview the same day that you take your TCF-DAP. The interview will last about twenty minutes and is an opportunity for you to explain your plans to study in France, your professional goals and motivations. You must schedule your interview with our office before March 30, please contact washington@campusfrance.org for more information.

7) Check your CampusFrance personal page to find out your chosen universities' decisions.

The three universities you selected will contact you directly through your CampusFrance page to let you know if you have been accepted to their school. Decisions will be posted no later than the end of July.

8) Apply for your visa.

If you go to France for studies, you must have a student visa. Once accepted to a French university, schedule a visa appointment at the French Consulate closest to your permanent residence. To locate the French Consulate closest to your house, please go to the link: <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?rubrique=2>

This website will take you to the Consulate in your region's website and will give you a list of required documents that you must bring with you to the Consulate. Do not forget to bring your CampusFrance number when you go to your appointment.

2. You Want to Continue Your Undergraduate or Graduate Studies in France

If you already have a higher education degree and want to continue your studies at a French higher education institution, you can apply for exemption from elements of the course from the institution in which you wish to take a French degree.

To do this, you will need to show the foreign degree(s) that you have along with translations in French and a description of the course(s) taken. The *président de l'université* (chancellor of the university) or the director of the institution concerned will decide at which level you will be admitted, on the recommendation of a *commission pédagogique* (teaching or education committee). This exemption is intended to allow you to gain credits for part or all of your previous university studies. To facilitate your application, you may submit a Certificate of Comparability (see above).

STUDENT VISAS

To ensure that your departure is problem-free, start your paperwork very early, the red tape in France can be time consuming.

Even before you find out whether you have been accepted by a school, make sure that your passport is still valid and that it will remain so until the end of your stay. Not only will it be required for visa issuance, but it will also help you in France, where it is always necessary to have valid papers. European students will need only their ID card.

A visa is required of all non-EU citizens. It costs 99 euros. Visa application should be filed with the Consulate or Embassy of France in your country. The timeframes vary, but plan on at least two weeks.

Visit: <http://www.consulfrance-newyork.org/spip.php?article370>

For an application in English go to:

http://www.consulfrance-newyork.org/IMG/pdf/visa_schengen_EN0001.pdf

Short stay visa for students:

American citizens who intend to study in France for less than 90 days, do not need a visa.

Long stay visa for students:

Applicants who declare being resident in the jurisdiction of the French Consulate in New York (States of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Bermuda), but who study in another State, may apply in New York if they so wish.

You must apply at the French Consulate in DC, if you are living or studying in one of the following states: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia. For other states, see the website of your nearest French Consulate.

Visa applicants, however, will have to produce proof of their residency by giving a photocopy of one of the following documents. (Driver license or Non driver photo ID card, Voter Registration Card, Tax form, Car Registration and Insurance documents of the vehicle, etc.) These documents must bear the applicant's first and last names, and not those of any relative or friend. You may not apply more than 90 days prior to your departure.

For complete information on the procedure, visit <http://www.consulfrance-newyork.org/spip.php?article370>

French students are pleased to welcome the foreign students and sometimes set up associations to help them. "Cerise", a mutual assistance community, information network and source of support, is one such association www.bienvenueenfrance.net.

You can also go to the Animafac site www.animafac.net, an experience-sharing network and resource centre for student initiatives targeting foreign students. Enjoy your stay!

For the recognition of foreign diplomas in French and the United States, Visit the Education Nationale site www.education.gouv.fr/int/refran.htm and the Enic site at www.enic-naric.net

To learn more on the American education system and American private evaluation methods, consult the US Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/>

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FRANCE

Taken from: <http://about-france.com/primary-secondary-schools.htm>

Ecole Maternelle: kindergarten or pre-school.

Ecoles Maternelles take pupils from age 2 to age 6, and prepare them for entry into primary school. The French *école maternelle* is more than just a playschool; the curriculum includes reading and writing, arithmetic and even sometimes a foreign language, as well as artistic and creative activities. There are three classes, "les petits", "les moyens" and "les grands".

Ecole primaire, or Ecole élémentaire: primary school, grade school.

Five classes, ages 6 to 11. The primary school curriculum in France is similar to that in other countries, and includes literacy and arithmetic, with classes in French, arithmetic, but also geography and history, the arts, and more and more frequently a foreign language, usually English. Until 2008, the school week was Monday to Saturday morning, with Wednesday free. From September 2008, there are no more classes on Saturday morning. Pupils have an average of 28 hours of classes per week. The five classes in the *Ecole Primaire* are, in order, are CP, CE1, CE2, CM1, and CM2 (Comparable to grades 1 through 5 in the US). CP is *cours préparatoire*, preparatory class; CE is *cours élémentaire*, elementary class; and CM is *cours moyen*, middle class; the two middle classes are a preparation for the next level, which is middle school.

Collège: middle school.

Four levels, normally for pupils aged 11 - 15. The *collège unique* is the backbone of the French school system. All pupils go to *collège*, usually at age 11, but sometimes at an older age, if they have been made to repeat a year in primary school. The *collège* is designed to provide all pupils with a fundamental secondary education, after which a certain degree of specialization will be introduced. In practice, pupils are frequently oriented during their *collège* years either towards general classes, from which they will be expected to continue their education in a traditional *lycée*, or towards more technical classes, after which they will be expected to take an exam called the *brevet*, and then either stop their secondary education (if they have reached the legal age to leave school), or continue in a *lycée professionnel* or vocational high school. The program in *collège* includes French, math, history, geography, technical education, art/music, physical education, civic education, some science, and at least one foreign language. The four classes, corresponding to grades 6 to 9, are called *sixième*, *cinquième*, *quatrième* and *troisième*.

Lycée: High School.

The traditional French *lycée* covers the last three years of secondary education. There are two main types of traditional *lycée*, the *lycée général* or *lycée classique*, and the *lycée technique*.

In big towns and cities, there will be a mix of both types; in smaller towns, there may not be a *lycée technique*. The main function of the *lycée* is to prepare pupils to take the baccalauréat (or bac) exam. Classes in a traditional *lycée* cover the same range as in *collège*, with the addition of philosophy (for all) in the final year. The three classes (grades 10, 11 and 12) are known as *seconde*, *première* and *terminale*.

In theory, all public *lycées* offer the same quality of education, in the framework of the national education system, and private *lycées* have to provide the same quality; in practice, this is not strictly true, and "league tables" published each year highlight the very high performance levels of a number of *lycées* that are commonly recognized as France's top schools: these include the Lycée Louis-le-Grand or Lycée Henri-IV in Paris, the Lycée Fermat in Toulouse, and a handful of other famous public *lycées*. However, in recent years, more and more of the top positions in the league tables have been taken by private *lycées*, such as the Collège Stanislas in Paris, France's largest private *lycée*.

Pupils in a *lycée technique* may begin to specialize in a fairly narrow technical field, in addition to their general secondary studies. There are technical *lycées* specializing in fields such as microtechnology or aeronautics. Technical lycées that provide training in very specialized fields are usually boarding schools, since they recruit pupils from a large catchment area, and even on occasions from all over France.

Lycée professionnel: Vocational high school.

"*Lycées Pros*", as they are commonly known, provide an essentially non-academic syllabus for young people intending to work in manual, clerical, or service fields. Pupils will either work towards a *baccalauréat professionnel* ("bac pro"), for which they will need to continue taking classes in the main academic subjects - French, math, and frequently a foreign language), a BEP (*Brevet d'enseignement professionnel*), or a CAP (*certificat d'aptitude professionnel*). One common type of *Lycée pro*, found in most cities, is the *lycée du bâtiment* or building trades *lycée*, where pupils specialize in one of the many trades of the building and construction sector. A student can also get a BEP or CAP in hairstyling and other related fields. There are also a good number of agricultural high schools, *lycées agricoles* and even horticultural high schools, *lycées horticolas*, providing the increasingly technical education required by tomorrow's farmers and gardeners.

Lycée de préparation aux grandes écoles: See above: *Grandes écoles* and <http://about-france.com/higher-education-system.htm>

Private and public schools: It is commonly believed, outside France, that virtually all schools in France are state schools, i.e. in the public sector. This is a misconception. Over 80% of school pupils are in state schools, but this leaves a substantial (and growing) minority of almost 20% who attend private schools - far more, for instance, than in the United Kingdom or the USA.

However, the private/public divide is not as clear as it is in other countries. Private schools in France are essentially (about 90%) catholic schools, in which there is religious instruction in the curriculum; they select their own teachers, but must follow the same curriculum as state schools if they wish to remain under contract (*écoles sous contrat*) to the state education system. This is a very important point for almost all private schools, as it means that the state pays the teachers. Consequently, private schools in France only charge symbolic or low fees, and are accessible to pupils from all sectors of society, not just to those whose parents are well-off. There are only a handful of fee-paying boarding schools in France, similar to English "public schools".

The state education system attaches great importance to the principle of secularism (*la laïcité*), and there is no formal teaching of religion in state schools in France. In theory, religion has no place in state schools in France. However, recent events in France have led to a growing demand for schools to teach religious awareness, this being seen by some as necessary for the development of greater understanding between people of different religions, notably with regard to France's Islamic minority. Religious instruction is not banned from state schools in France; it can take place after hours, for pupils who wish - or at least, that is the legal position. School chaplains (*aumôniers*) are officially appointed by the *recteur* (Chief Education Officer) of the *académie* (Local Education Authority).

Baccalauréat: The baccalaureate is an exam that pupils pass or fail. It is impossible to pass in one subject and fail in others. The only mark that counts is the final weighted average, which must be at least 10 out of 20 possible points for a pupil to pass. Pupils who achieve just under 10/20 are often passed by the exam board, whose decision is final. Pupils achieving between 8 and 10 can retake their *baccalauréat* as an oral exam a few weeks later. Those who get under 8/20 must retake their year, and try again.

The general Baccalaureate is organized in different *séries*. In their final year, all pupils specialize in function of the *série* they have chosen, of which currently there are three; the *série L* (literary studies), the *série ES* (economic and social studies), and the *série S* (sciences). Each *série* includes different specialties.

There is much discussion among academics and teachers, and in the media, on the question of the *niveau* (level) of today's baccalaureate. In recent years, the success rate at the *baccalauréat* has been between 75 and 80% (with top *lycées* achieving 100%). Many academics complain that the baccalaureate these days is given away, and that this is a major cause of the high failure rate in the first year of university. Ministers and civil servants claim that this is not the case. This polemic, however, is not confined to France and the arguments over the academic level of those who graduate from high school is one that is frequently highlighted in the media in many countries, even in Switzerland!

EDUCATION SOURCES AND USEFUL EDUCATION LINKS

In English:

- Eurydice - EACEA National summary sheets on education system in Europe and ongoing reforms:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/047_FR_EN.pdf

- Recognition of academic credentials - ENIC-NARIC: www.enic-naric.net

- *LEtudiant* – Studying in France:

<http://www.letudiant.fr/etudes/international/venir-etudier-en-france/coming-to-study-in-france.htm>

- Credential evaluation services:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-visitus-forrecog.html>

- Evaluation of diplomas - WES: <http://www.wes.org/ca/academic/docauth.pdf>

- IAU Database: <http://www.whed-online.com/>

- Association of International Educators: www.NAFSA.org

- Association of International Credential Evaluators: www.AICE.-eval.org

In French

- About French Education: www.education.gouv.fr

- French Consulate of Boston: www.consulfrance-boston.org

- Acronyms of US and French diplomas (mostly French) and certificates:

<http://www.syntec-ingenierie.fr/fr/formationsetstages/annuairedesformations/lexique>

In French and in English

- Fulbright France: www.fulbright-france.org

- France Diplomatie:

http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/espaces_dedies.php3?id_rubrique=12793

http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/espaces_dedies.php3?id_rubrique=12793

- Campus France: <http://www.campusfrance.org/>

- CIEP (centre internationale d'études pédagogiques) :

<http://www.ciep.fr/en/enic-naricfr/poursuite.php>

- Egide: www.egide.asso.fr

- American University of Paris: www.aup.fr

Book

- *The International Handbook of Universities and Other Institutions of Higher Education*
London, Palgrave, Macmillan's global academic publishing, New York, Palgrave, Global Publishing
at St. Martin's Press. 22nd edition, 15 Sep 2010, 5096 pages. ISBN: 9780230223462