

FRANCE

Higher Education

Lycée, Universités and Grandes écoles

France has a particularly unusual system of higher education. There are Universities and Grandes Ecoles.

Lycées

Lycées, are sometimes set up as institutes of higher education which are quite like any other high school in other countries but they sometimes have two extra years of classes that correspond to the first two year of higher education. The most prestigious Lycées are known as “Les Classes Préparatoires” and they are a highly selective alternative to the first two years of higher education. The students in these institutions have over 30 hours of classes a week and lots of homework, and they are generally preparing to enter into Grandes Ecoles. Together, Grandes Ecoles and these Lycées Préparatoires take up the biggest portion of the nation’s education budget.

Grandes Ecoles

Grandes Ecoles are regarded as the peak of educational regard in France, and they are small highly selective schools. The Grandes Ecoles are well funded, have small classes and top teaching staff.

Universities

France has about 82 state universities and 5 catholic universities. The universities are usually known by the name of the state they are in. Universities also include other component, such as Institut Universitaires de Technologie (IUT) or Institut d’Administration des Entreprises (IAE). Universities award three types of degrees which generally correspond to Bachelors Masters and Doctorate degrees.

Academics and Research

Most of the professors at higher education institutions have the status of teacher-researcher (enseignant-chercheur) and they do both teaching and research. There are two grades of tenured enseignants-chercheurs in French universities, Maitre de conference (senior lecturers and lecturers) and professors. To gain appointment at either level, a candidate must go through habilitation which must be initiated at least a year before the candidate hopes to take up the teaching position. To become a lecturer or a senior lecture, a professor from another country, one must go through an even more complex habilitation which requires that one write the equivalent of a second thesis.

Vocational education

Lycée Professionnel

These are vocational high schools and they provide an essentially non-academic syllabus for young people intending to work in manual or clerical jobs. Pupils either work towards a baccalauréat professionnel for which they will need to continue taking classes in the man academic subjects or attain, a certificate d’aptitude professionnel, or a Brevet d’enseignement professionnel.