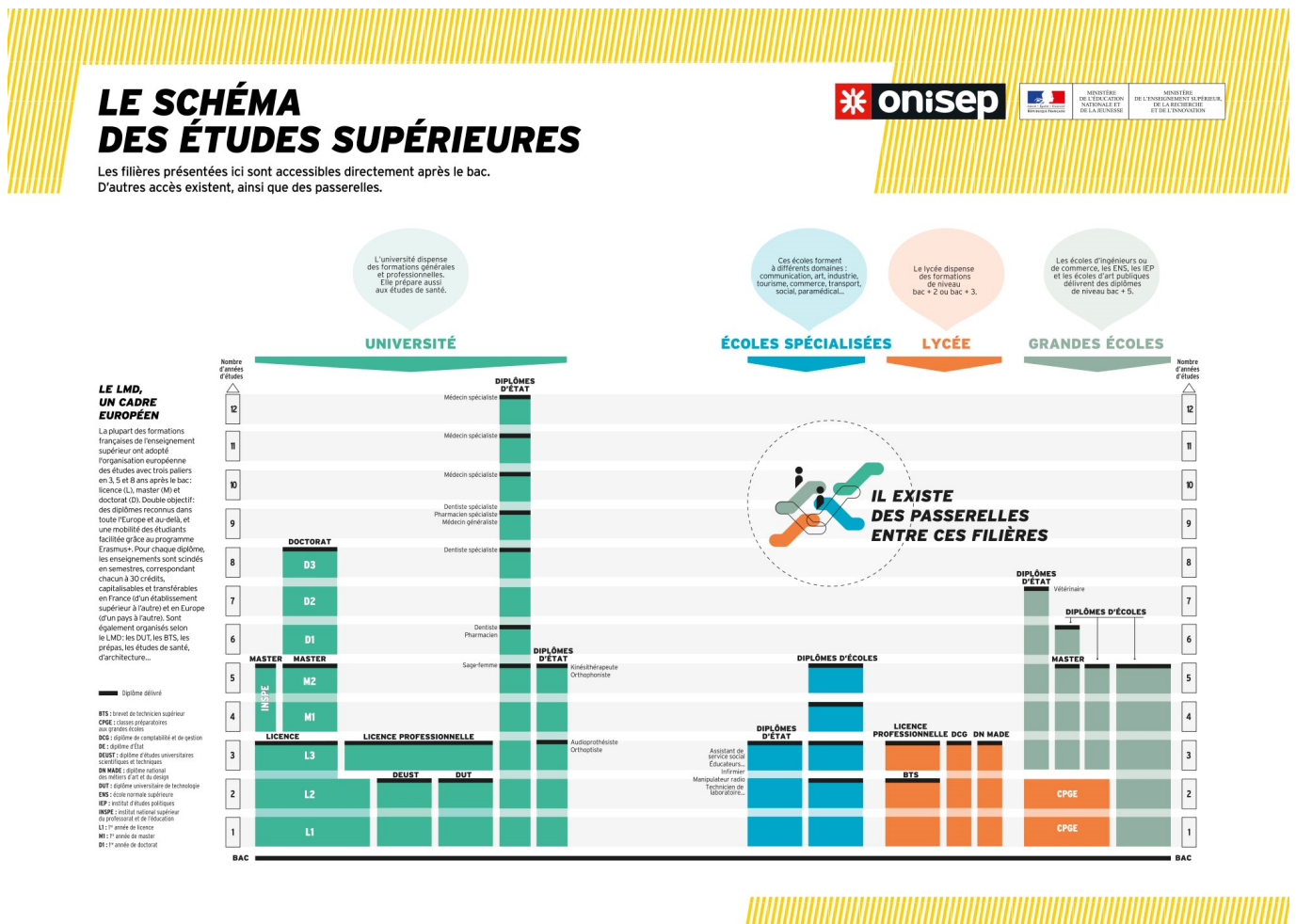




## Chapter 1: Higher Education System

### Section 1.1: Schematic Description of the Higher Education System



<http://www.onisep.fr/Choisir-mes-etudes/Apres-le-bac/Le-schema-des-etudes-apres-le-bac>

### Section 1.2: Description of Higher Education System

Higher education in France is delivered at universities, vocational colleges, engineering schools and some

courses are held in high schools. It tends to align with the structuring of programs in 3 cycles: bachelor, master, PhD.

**Short cycle programs** (DUT: Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie, BTS: Brevet de Technicien Supérieur, and DEUST: Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Scientifiques et Techniques) correspond to 120 ECTS ; courses are therefore practice-oriented and include periods of work placement. DUT are only prepared in university colleges, DEUST in faculties, and BTS by high schools. Graduates can access in third year of a bachelor's program.

The **preparatory classes for the "grandes écoles"** (CPGE, Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles), present in many high schools, allow after two years of studies to attend entrance exams in many post-secondary schools, including engineering schools.

**Academic bachelor programs** ("Licence") prepare students for studies at master's level. These degrees are awarded by universities.

**Professional bachelor programs** (60 ECTS) are accessible after the first 120 ECTS of a bachelor's degree or after a short cycle program (DUT, DEUG, BTS). They prepare students for specific professions.

**The engineering programs** take place in 5 years (300 ECTS) and are accessible either in the third year after 120 ECTS validated (in a bachelor program or during a short cycle program), or directly in first year, from the end of secondary studies.

From 2020, **long-term health studies** (medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, maieutics) are accessible in two ways in the first year (access in the second year is selective in both cases):

- via a **specific "health access" course**, with an option from another discipline. These courses are organized in universities with health faculties. The high school student chooses the specific health course and an option that corresponds to their strengths and their other possible projects (eg. law option, biology option, languages option...). If he/she validates the 1st year, he/she then applies for health studies that interest him/her. If he/she is not admitted, he/she can continue in the 2nd year of the bachelor corresponding to his/her option, and can re-apply for health studies if he/she wishes after at least one additional year;
- via a **bachelor, with an "health access" option**. High school students choose the bachelor that best fits their projects and their strengths from any type of bachelor (eg. letters, law, biology, management-economics, etc.) which offers an "health access" option. Within this license, he/she thus follows additional lessons linked to the "health access" option. If he/she validates his/her 1st year of bachelor he/she can apply for the health studies that interest him/her. If not admitted, he/she can continue in the 2nd year of bachelor, and to re-apply for health studies after at least one additional year. If he/she does not validate the 1st year of bachelor, he/she cannot apply for health studies.
- These long-term health studies confer the **intermediate degrees of bachelor and master**, but which do not allow the exercise of a health profession. Only the professional diploma allows professional exercise. The paramedical and social sector diplomas take place in 3 to 5 years and are gradually reengineered to respect the Bachelor / Master framework.

**Master's programs** are characterized by the integration of teaching and research, a professional experience, and a master's thesis. They cover 120 ECTS. Master degrees are awarded by universities and some university colleges.

**Professional degrees** in different sectors, taught in specialized colleges and supervised by ministries other than the Ministry of Higher Education, now correspond to a bachelor's or master's degree.

**The Doctorate** represents the highest level of specialization in scientific research. It is based on an original research project that typically lasts three years and gives rise to the public presentation of a doctoral thesis. This degree is only issued by universities.

*More info about the French higher education system: <https://www.campusfrance.org/en>*

### Section 1.3: Number of Higher Education Institutions

Public higher education institutions are mainly dependent on the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, but other ministries supervise institutions of higher education: ministries in charge of culture, communication, food, armies ...

- 68 universities and 20 similar higher education institutions (called “Grands établissements”). Most of them are members of 19 university clusters.
- 265 engineering schools
- 50 others university educational institutions
- 450 preparatory classes for the “grandes écoles”
- 2449 preparatory classes for “BTS” in high schools
- 308 graduate schools specialized for business, management or accounting
- 304 artistic or cultural graduate schools
- 410 paramedical schools outside universities
- 192 schools preparing for social functions
- 329 schools of various specialties (legal and administrative schools, schools of journalism and literary schools, veterinary schools, architecture schools...)  
(data 2017).

*More info about the French higher education institutions:  
<https://www.campusfrance.org/en/institutes-higher-education-France>*

### Section 1.4: Number of Students in Higher Education

The number of student registrations in higher education in France is increasing and reaches **2,680,400 in 2017-2018**. University share of total enrolment accounts for 61.3%. Private education brings together

520,200 students in 2017-2018 (19.4% of total inscriptions). Nearly six out of ten students enrolled at university are female students. They are the majority in the Bachelor and Master programs, but remain in the minority in the PhD program (48.2%). Universities host 240,000 foreign students (14.6%).

Number of students (in thousands, academic year 2017-18)	Public	Private	Total
<b>Universities</b>	1642,2	0	1642,2
<b>Engineering schools</b>	97,5	58,5	156,0
<b>Others university educational institutions</b>	38,6	35,8	74,4
<b>Preparatory classes for the “grandes écoles”</b>	72,1	11,9	84,0
<b>Preparatory classes for “BTS” in high schools</b>	183,2	66,5	249,7
<b>Graduate schools specialized for business, management or accounting</b>	1,0	179,6	180,6
<b>Artistic or cultural graduate schools</b>	17,0	45,1	62,1
<b>Paramedical schools outside universities</b>	77,9	25,3	103,2
<b>Schools preparing for social functions</b>	0,9	31,2	32,1
<b>Schools of various specialties</b>	29,5	66,4	95,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2160,2</b>	<b>520,2</b>	<b>2680,4</b>

## Section 1.5: Structure of Academic Year

The academic year usually starts in September. Classes take place in **two semesters** (September-January, February-June). Each semester ends with an examination period. There is a general second chance examination period in August-September.

## Section 1.6: National Qualifications Framework (or Similar)

France has adopted in January 2019 a revised **national qualification framework in line with the European 8-level qualification framework (EQF)**.

The National Register for Professional Certifications (RNCP: Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles) is operated by a multi-stakeholder body, the National Commission for Professional Certifications (CNCP), which includes, among others, the certifying ministries and the social partners.

## Section 1.7: Learning Outcomes in Higher Education

Higher education institutions describe the learning outcomes for each HE program. Reference skills for

bachelors, for the doctorate, as well as for professional degrees, particularly in the health sector have been published. They are being written for the masters. The Higher Education Quality Agency (Higher Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education or Hcéres) evaluates the achievement of quality objectives every five years.

## Section 1.8: Admission Requirements to Higher Education

For bachelor's programs or short programs in 2 years, the **general admission** is the French **“Baccalauréat”** (diploma awarded after completion of secondary studies). If a **foreign diploma** is recognized on the basis of a French **decree**, a European directive or an international convention, the holder will have direct access to diploma programs. Students may also be admitted, after an **individual assessment** of their secondary education diploma, if they provide access to higher education in their home country. Higher education institutions are also allowed to admit persons who cannot meet the general admission requirement. For all students, French or foreigners, admission to a Bachelor's degree course may be subject to additional courses or other support measures, as part of a pedagogical success contract or “learning agreement”.

**Foreign higher education diplomas** give access to master's programs if the admission commissions of HE institutions consider that the foreign diploma of higher education is **corresponding** to the French higher education diploma giving access to the program concerned.

**Access to health studies** and other vocational degrees is subject to **special rules**.

**Doctoral programs** are open to graduates holding a relevant master's degree, after registration authorization issued by the doctoral school. Foreign higher education degrees give access to doctoral programs if the board of the doctoral school considers that the foreign higher education degree is corresponding to a French master's degree.

### Language requirements

In principle, **French** is the language for teaching and learning. However, **courses in English with foreign lecturers and teachers** may exist at the master level. Specific courses can sometimes be provided mainly or completely in English as part of international exchange programs.

Most HE institutions require a **test** of knowledge of French (“Test de connaissance du français”, TCF: <http://www.ciep.fr/tcf-dap>). Each HEI has the freedom to request the level of its choice, but the level 4 of the TCF is often the requested level. This corresponds to level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (<https://www.coe.int/fr/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>).

## Section 1.9: Grading System

**Range of notes:** 0 to 20; Pass mark: 10 and up.

### Description of the scoring system:

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For each course, there is a system of 0-20. **10 is the passing grade.**

Depending on the degree, there are systems of compensation between courses, so that the transition may be possible with the general average (for example, average earned in the year or semester).

Normally, the notation is **absolute**, that is to say related to the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved. In principle, the classification culture is the same everywhere, but in practice, there can sometimes be variability from one professor, faculty or institution and another.

## Section 1.10: Tuition Fee System for International Students

Tuition fees are the **same for French students and students from the European Union**. In public universities, tuition is largely subsidized by the State and registration costs are low: 170 € in “licence” (i.e. bachelor level), 243 € in master's courses, 601€ in engineer course, 380 € in doctorate. In addition, students must pay a fee for student life and campus life (CVEC): 91 € (2019-20 rates).

**For foreigners from outside of the European Union**, from September 2019, tuition fees will be 2770€ in “licence” and 3770€ in master's degree. However, as part of their autonomy, higher education institutions have the possibility of exempting nationals of one or more countries from specific fees for foreign students, depending on their international policy, and also in the case of supervised mobility (agreements between institutions). The ministry may also decide exemptions based on student excellence.

## Section 1.11: Graduation Requirements and/or Qualification Awarding Requirements

**Bachelor** : 180 ects

**Master** : 120 ects (ie : 300 ects in total after the Baccalauréat )

**Engineering degree** : 300 ects

## Section 1.12: Relevant Current and Prospective Reforms in Higher Education

Not applicable.

# Chapter 2: Quality assurance in Higher Education

## Section 2.1: Quality Assurance Body in Higher Education

**The High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (ie : the Hcéres)** is an independent administrative authority. With regard to evaluation criteria, its methods are based on **principles of objectivity, transparency and equal treatment** for all organisations assessed, and, with

regard to the selection of the individuals responsible for evaluations, on world-class scientific expertise, neutrality and balance in the representation of themes and opinions. It may carry out quality assessments directly or check the quality of assessments carried out by other bodies by validating the procedures used. Hcéres enables the organisations and institutions that it evaluates directly to present, at their request, observations throughout the evaluation procedure, and at its conclusion.

### **The Hcéres is responsible for:**

- evaluating higher education institutions and clusters of HEI, research bodies, scientific cooperation foundations and the French National Research Agency, or, where applicable, overseeing the quality of evaluations carried out by other bodies;
- evaluating research units on request from their own umbrella institution, in the absence of validation of evaluation procedures or in the absence of a decision by their own umbrella institution to use another evaluation body or, where applicable, to have validated research unit evaluation procedures carried out by other bodies.

The evaluation, organized by the Hcéres, is **carried out by peers** (researchers and teacher-researchers (ie : “enseignants-chercheurs”) and **by experts from other horizons** (students, professionals from the private or public sector, etc.). The composition of expert committees varies according to the specific nature of the entity being evaluated.

<http://www.hceres.com/Agency/Missions>

**The Commission des titres d’ingénieur (CTI)** is the relevant body in charge of carrying out evaluation procedures that lead to the accreditation of the institutions to award the engineering degree (“titre d’ingénieur diplômé”).

The various missions of the CTI currently include:

- **Periodic evaluation** of all engineering programmes offered by French higher education institutions, that leads to the accreditation of the institutions to award the engineering degree;
- The CTI is responsible for **accreditation decisions for private institutions** and those run by Chambers of Commerce; it issues recommendations to the relevant ministries for public owned higher education institutions;
- **Defining the generic profile** of the engineer at master’s level and drawing up criteria and procedures for awarding the engineering degree.

Official list of schools entitled to award the title of engineer (2018 update):  
<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?dateTexte=&categorieLien=id&cidTexte=JORFTEXT000036590636>



## Section 2.2: Quality Assurance System

	Study programme	Institution	Further explanation
<b>Voluntary</b>	X Private HEIs, except engineer schools	X Private HEIs, except engineer schools	
<b>Compulsory</b>	X Public HEIs and private engineer schools	X Public HEIs and private engineer schools	
<b>Regularity</b>	5 years for public HEIs	5 years for public HEIs	
<b>External</b>	X	X	
<b>Internal</b>	X	X	

## Section 2.3: Link Programme Authorisation with Quality Assurance

- On the basis of the Hcéres advice, the higher education programs (bachelor, master, doctorate) are accredited by the ministry in charge of higher education, and the students receive a legally recognized national HE diploma.
- On the basis of the CTI advice, engineering schools are empowered by the accreditation from their supervisory ministries to award the engineering degree.

List of accredited schools to issue the engineering degree:

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/arrete/2018/1/24/ESRS1733578A/jo/texte/fr>

## Chapter 3: Credit System in Higher Education

### Section 3.1: Description of Credit System

French higher education institutions use **ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System)**. A credit represents 25 to 30 hours of work for a student. The courses are independent modules which, depending on the course, may all be compulsory or to which students can register according to their preferences and their schedule, taking due account of the semester system. In the bachelor's degree, the **new regulation favoring the flexibility and the personalization** of the courses makes that the students can choose a traditional rhythm of 30 credits per semester or to progress more or less quickly according to their capacities and their constraints.



ECTS link: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/introduction\\_en.htm#ectsTop](http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/introduction_en.htm#ectsTop)

## Section 3.2: Credit Transfer System(s)

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

## Section 3.3: Additional Information

Students may be exempted from a teaching unit based on credits acquired elsewhere (in another program or institution, in France or abroad) or according to skills acquired outside a formal learning context (validation of acquired experience). These elements are evaluated by the institutions.

## Section 3.4: Application of Credit System in Higher Education Institutions Obligatory?

Yes for the vast majority of programs, but some programs, in particular professional courses and those of some “grandes écoles”, are not yet available in ECTS.

## Section 3.5: Number of Credits per Academic Year/Semester

A typical semester corresponds to 30 ECTS (except for the second cycle of medical studies: 20 ECTS).

## Section 3.6: Number of Credits per Higher Education Cycle

- Short cycle programs (European level 5): 120 credits.
- Bachelor degree programs (European level 6): 180 credits.
- Master degree programs (European level 7): 120 credits after Bachelor
- Engineer degree (European level 7): 300 credits (no intermediate degree)
- No credits are used for PhD (level 8).

## Section 3.7: Description of Credit Unit

**1 ECTS-credit equals 25-30 hours (of 60 minutes) of student workload.** Workload (based on the ECTS-definition) is an estimation of the time the individual typically needs to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, work placements and individual study required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments.

## Section 3.8: Link between Learning Outcomes and Credits

A student is awarded credits upon achievement of the defined learning outcomes related to the educational unit/course. Learning outcomes (in connection with the ECTS-definition) are statements of

what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. The achievement of learning outcomes has to be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria.

Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational units and to programmes as a whole. They are also used in European and national qualifications frameworks to describe the level of the individual qualification.

*Last updated in 2020*