

# The Grandes Écoles

Unique to France, the first *Grandes Écoles* were established in the early 19th century to operate in parallel with the universities. Their distinction then, as now, lay in offering professional education at a very high level.

The *Grandes Écoles* remain very selective. Together they enroll about 100,000 students.

## All *Grandes Écoles* offer five-year diplomas recognized by the government to be equivalent to the European master

They may also offer intermediate degrees and specialized diplomas, among them the bachelor (in three or four years), the master of science (in four or five years), the master of business administration, and the recently introduced specialized *mastère* (six years).

The traditional path into the *Grandes Écoles* was by examination following two years of preparatory classes. Students then earned their degree in three more years of increasingly specialized study.

**To accommodate international students, many *Grandes Écoles* now offer admission on the strength of the applicant's academic record.** The degree may be earned in two to five years, depending on the amount of credit the applicant receives for his or her prior academic work. Some *Grandes Écoles* also admit students directly from secondary school.

## Engineering

**200 schools of engineering, public and private,** run the gamut of engineering sciences. But they also have some common characteristics, emblematic of the solid quality of the *diplôme d'ingénieur*, a venerable French degree that is fully equivalent to the European master. The *diplôme d'ingénieur* is a national diploma that entitles its holder to apply to a doctoral program. Depending on the school in which it is offered, the degree may indicate general expertise in engineering or more specialized study—in agronomy, chemistry, biology, or information science, for example. Public schools of engineering charge tuition of approximately €500 per year.

The *Financial Times* ranked 5 French schools among the top 10 master in management programs (2009). The *Economist* included 3 French MBA programs among its top 100 (2008).



## Business and management

France's *Grandes Écoles* of business and management, about 200, are recognized by the national government and may enjoy other distinctions as well, such as membership in the management section of the *Conférence des Grandes Écoles*.

Operating at a variety of levels, France's many schools of business and management offer programs geared to economic requirements and new management practices. Internships and international exchanges play a large role in many programs. The great majority of schools have come together to offer common entrance exams. About 190 schools admit students directly from secondary school.

Most of France's business schools are private; many are affiliated with local chambers of commerce and industry.

**The annual tuition varies widely but is generally between €4,500 and €7,000.**

## Note

Many of France's business schools have attained international recognition by meeting the standards of various accrediting bodies, among them CGE, EQUIS, AACSB, and AMBA. Some forms of recognition apply to the school itself, others to the degree conferred. All signify international recognition.

Engineering and management dominate the offerings of the *Grandes Écoles*, but one also finds programs in public administration (the specialty of the prestigious *Ecole Nationale d'Administration*), military sciences, higher education and research (the purview of the nation's four *Écoles Normales Supérieures*), agronomy, and veterinary sciences.

## The Écoles

### Normales Supérieures

France's four *Écoles Normales Supérieures*—located in central Paris, Cachan (a Paris suburb), and Lyon—prepare students for careers in university teaching and research in both the arts and sciences.

International students are admitted on the basis of their academic record (they must hold a bachelor-level degree) and their performance on an entrance examination. European students may sit for a special ENS-Europe admission examination.



# Schools of architecture

Postsecondary programs in architecture in France now follow the harmonized European system of degrees based on the bachelor (*licence* in France), master, and doctorate.

- The first cycle of postsecondary study lasts three years and is capped by the *diplôme d'études en architecture*, equivalent to a *licence*.
- The second cycle lasts two years and leads to the *diplôme d'état d'architecte*, equivalent to a master's degree.
- The **HMONP** (*habilitation à la maîtrise d'oeuvre en nom propre*) is the sole professional credential that entitles an architect to apply for a building permit. It requires a sixth year of study and an internship.
- The third cycle includes a variety of specialized master's degrees, as well as doctoral programs in architecture in a number of university-affiliated research laboratories.

[www.archi.fr/RECHERCHE](http://www.archi.fr/RECHERCHE)



The nation's 20 schools of architecture, all overseen by the French Ministry of Culture, confer national diplomas.

[www.archi.fr/ECOLE](http://www.archi.fr/ECOLE)

Two other schools deliver degrees that are considered equivalent:

- The public Institut National des Sciences Appliquées (INSA) in Strasbourg (formerly known as ENSAIS).  
[www.insa-strasbourg.fr](http://www.insa-strasbourg.fr)
- The private École Spéciale d'Architecture (ESA).  
[www.esa-paris.fr](http://www.esa-paris.fr)



# Schools of art

The *écoles supérieures d'art* and the *écoles supérieures d'arts appliqués* are top-notch public institutions that confer government-regulated national diplomas (DNAP and DNSEP) in recognition of 3 or 5 years of study.

Following a core curriculum covering the artistic disciplines, they allow students to specialize in art, design, or visual communication.

Private schools of art, and those affiliated with chambers of commerce and industry (the latter are known as *écoles consulaires*)

confer certificates or professional titles. Those that have earned accreditation are listed in the Répertoire National de Certification Professionnelle (national registry of professional certification, [www.cncp.gouv.fr](http://www.cncp.gouv.fr)) and classified according to the level of employment for which they prepare their students.

All such institutions admit students selectively by exam or interview.



[www.campusart.org](http://www.campusart.org)

- > find your course
- > Subject information sheets
- > Arts

[www.culture.gouv.fr/](http://www.culture.gouv.fr/)

- > infos pratiques
- > formation

## Other institutions: lycées, specialized schools and institutes

More than 7,000 technical units (known as *STS*, for *sections de techniciens spécialisés*) are embedded in France's upper secondary schools, or *lycées*. These units offer 2-year postsecondary programs leading to a BTS credential in 145 technical, vocational, artistic, and academic subjects. A smaller number of *lycées* offer 2-year scientific and literary courses that prepare students to enter one of France's *Grandes Écoles*. Those programs go by the acronym CPGE. They are even more selective than STS programs.

Educational institutions known as *écoles spécialisées* extend the French system of higher education into specific areas such as tourism, paramedical studies, social work, gastronomy, fashion design, and communication.

These institutions offer government-accredited degrees as well as other credentials specific to the institution that confers them. Programs demand from two to five years of study. Admission is by examination or on the basis of the applicant's academic record.

CampusArt

[www.campusart.org](http://www.campusart.org)

Apply online to the 60 member institutions of the CampusArt network of French schools of art

The CampusArt network offers applicants a choice of some 200 different art programs at the *licence* and master levels. By completing a single online form, students who have completed 3 years of art education may apply for admission to the entire network of schools and track the progress of their application through to the offer of admission.