



TIPS FOR FINDING COURSES

FRANCE

Navigating Web Sites

Navigating a French university's web site to find courses will require patience and persistence, two necessary qualities of a successful exchange student. Please give yourself adequate time to navigate the sites in order to find the information you need.

On each university's directory entry on the ISEP web site, there is a section entitled "Hints for researching courses" that provides directions for getting to course listings online. However, links change frequently. If the link doesn't work, you should go to the university's home page and look for the word *formations* (degrees/areas of study) or *licence* or *Bachelors* (Bachelor's Degree). Most sites will have a list of *licences* and if you select one, you can get to that degree program's information. From there, look for *cursus* or *programme*, which is the curriculum or course itinerary for a particular program.

If you will be there for the full academic year, you can choose courses offered in either *semestre* (semester). If you will be there for *premier semestre* (fall semester, Sept./Oct.-Dec./Jan.), only choose courses from odd-numbered semesters (*Semestres 1, 3, 5*). If you are placed for *deuxième semestre* (spring semester, Jan./Feb.-May/June) only choose courses from even-numbered semesters (*Semestres 2, 4, 6*). NOTE: *Semestre 1* is equivalent to the 1st semester, 1st year of courses of an undergraduate degree; *Semestre 2* is equivalent to 2nd semester, 1st year; *Semestre 3* is equivalent to 1st semester, 2nd year; etc.

Course Description Availability

You will notice that not all French universities will have course descriptions online. Instead, it will simply list the courses available in the degree program. When a French student enters a degree program, the courses for the duration of that program are pre-determined. Since there isn't as much picking and choosing as in the U.S., there isn't a need for course descriptions. However, as a result of increased international student mobility, some universities are starting to include course descriptions online. If course descriptions are not available online, it is not likely you'll be able to obtain them in another form.

If you are unable to get course descriptions prior to departure, upon arrival to France you should collect your syllabi from the courses you intend to take. Then fax or scan/e-mail them to your home advisor for approval.

Contact Hours/Credit Equivalency

Students typically are in class 12-18 hours per week and take between 6 and 10 courses. Courses are usually 3 to 5 French (ECTS) credits. Contact hours vary as they depend on the nature of the course (i.e., lecture course versus project-based workshops). Your home university will determine the credit equivalency based on the contact hours.

Additional Tips

At most universities, registration (*inscription*) in France is a more flexible process than in the U.S. You may not have to officially register until 1-2 weeks into the semester. This gives you flexibility to try out several courses and then narrow in on which ones you will eventually register for. For example, if you know you have to fulfill a requirement for an upper-level French literature course, get as many possibilities pre-approved as possible at your home university. Once you get to France, you'll have the flexibility to choose which one you will end up taking by trying out a few. Student recommendations, professor disposition, personal interest, room acoustics are all factors that may affect which courses you end up choosing after trying out a few options.

Remember to save all course syllabi, exams, papers, etc. from your time abroad. This can help you if there is any question about course approval or grade disputes.

Baccalauréat (“le bac”): This is approximately the equivalent of a high school diploma in the U.S.

Cours: Class, course.

Cours magistraux (CM): Lecture courses/sections.

Cursus: The “curriculum” or course itinerary for a particular degree program.

Cycle: French higher education is divided into cycles, each terminating with a degree after successful completion of an exam. The *premier cycle* ends with a *DEUG* degree (after 2 years) and the *deuxième cycle* terminates with a *licence* (after 1 year) or a *maîtrise* (after 2 years). The *troisième cycle* is equivalent to doctoral study in the U.S. This progression may be referred to as *LMD (Licence-Masters-Doctorat)*. ISEP applicants are open to all *cycles*. U.S. undergraduates are best prepared for *premier cycle* and many *deuxième cycle* courses.

DEUG (Diplôme d’Études Universitaires Générales): First two years of undergraduate study (*premier cycle*, see *cycle*); considered foundation of upper-level undergraduate courses (*deuxième cycle*, see *cycle*).

DUT (Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie): A two-year diploma in technology.

ECTS (European Credit Transfer System): A system for transferring university credit units among higher education institutions in Europe. An academic year is roughly 60 ECTS credits. The ratio of ECTS credits to U.S. credits is not 2:1; how ECTS credits transfer depends your university’s transfer credit policies.

Équivalence: A formal correspondence between your academic qualifications and those found in France.

Faculté (“la Fac”): This translates as faculty but actually refers to College or School. Each university is made up of different departments called *UFRs (Unité de Formation et de Recherche)*. Sometimes departments are grouped under *domaine*, subject areas (i.e., Arts and Humanities, Sciences, etc.).

Inscription: Course registration.

Licence (Bachelors): Bachelor’s degree.

Licence (licence générale): A general academic/researched-based bachelor’s degree.

Licence professionnelle: A professional-oriented bachelor’s degree that involves an internship component.

Masters (Maîtrise): Master’s degree.

Mention: Variant of a course or degree. For example, a course may involve a “history” variant (*mention histoire*) or a *licence* in arts and letters may focus on music (*licence arts, lettres, et langues MENTION musique*).

Niveau: Level.

Prérequis: Prerequisites.

Semestre: *Premier semestre* refers to first semester (Sept./Oct.-Dec./Jan.) and *deuxième semestre* refers to second semester (Jan./Feb.-May/June). Make sure to choose courses for the semester you will be on campus.

Travaux dirigés (TD): A course section that involves theoretical and practical components; similar to workshop.

Unité d’enseignement (UE): Term for academic subjects (alternatively discussed as *matières*).