No longer are promising applicants discouraged from pursuing a postsecondary degree in France because of their inability to speak French. Instead, admissions officers and advisers help applicants take steps to gain the language skills they need to accomplish their academic goals. But one thing has not changed: Accurate assessment of applicants’ proficiency in French remains essential. A poor command of the language is the leading cause of academic failure, especially in the social sciences and law. In schools of engineering, by contrast, the level of French-language proficiency of incoming students, while still important, takes second place to the depth and breadth of the applicant’s preparation in science and technology.

The TCF and TCF-DAP
- The Test de Connaissance de Français (TCF, test of French proficiency) is the French-language test administered by the French Ministry of National Education. Developed by the Centre International d’Études Pédagogiques (CIEP, international center for pedagogical studies), a certifying body belonging to ALTE, the Association of Language Testers in Europe, the TCF tests proficiency in general French. The TCF includes two series of tests:
  - three required tests (each consisting of a set of questions): oral comprehension (30 questions), language structures (grammar and vocabulary, 20 questions), and written comprehension (30 questions)
  - two optional tests, each independent of the other: oral expression and written expression. Tests are graded at the CIEP office in Paris. Candidates receive a report of results that places them at one of the six levels (A1 to C2) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, see annex 1).
- The TCF for the preliminary application for admission (or TCF-DAP) is a form of the TCF designed specifically for the preliminary application for admission to undergraduate years 1 and 2 in the universities and schools of architecture. It consists of two 90-minute tests: the 3 required components of the TCF plus a special test of written proficiency (a 250-word assessment of a sample of numerical data and a 400-word essay).

The TCF is given in 626 approved centers in 129 countries, including France. In some countries, the required components of the test may be taken on computer. Grades are valid for two years. A student may take the TCF or TCF-DAP any number of times, provided 60 days pass between tests.

Note: Test dates vary from country to country. Some countries administer the TCF-DAP just once a year, whereas others (including Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Vietnam) organize several sessions. Prospective test-takers should contact the test center of their choice to determine sessions dates, fees, and registration procedures.

The TEF
The Test d’Évaluation de Français (TEF, French assessment test), administered by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris (CCIP), measures candidates’ level of proficiency in general French, placing them on a scale indexed to the levels of the CEFR. The TEF consists of two sets of tests:
- the required component is a multiple-choice questionnaire composed of 150 questions (50 questions on written comprehension, 60 on oral comprehension, and 40 on vocabulary and structure)
- there are two optional components, each independent of the other: one on written expression (candidates write about two topics for a possible 450 points); the other oral expression (candidates discuss two topics for a possible 450 points).

For purposes of preliminary admission (enrollment in the first two years of study at a university or school of architecture), the TEF is deemed the equivalent of the TCF-DAP (by ministerial decree of May 3, 2007), provided the student passes the required component of the test and earns a score of at least 315 points on the test of written expression (corresponding to a grade of 14/20, or level B2).

The TEF is administered in about 100 countries through a network of more than 400 approved test centers. Since March 2005, the required component of the TEF has been available in electronic form (e-tef), which makes possible instantaneous reporting of results. Test results are valid for one year. Candidates may take the TEF as often as they wish.
French-language diplomas: DELF and DALF
- The Diplôme d’études en langue française (DELF, diploma of French-language studies) and the Diplôme approfondi de langue française (DALF, advanced diploma in French language) are official diplomas awarded by the French Ministry of National Education to certify French-language proficiency. In contrast to the language tests just discussed, the DELF and DALF have no limit of validity—they are valid for life. The DELF and DALF consist of six separate diplomas, corresponding to the six levels of the CEFR: DELF A1, A2, B1, B2; and DALF C1 and C2. Each of the six diplomas tests proficiency in four areas: oral comprehension and expression, and written comprehension and expression.

- For purposes of preliminary admission (enrollment in the first two years of study at a university or school of architecture), prospective students must have earned the DELF B2 diploma.
- By decree of January 18, 2008, published in the Journal Officiel de la République Française n° 0030 of February 5, 2008, page 2206, holders of the DELF B2 or the DALF (C1 or C2) are exempted from further tests of their proficiency in French connected with their application for admission to a French university.

Note: The DELF and DALF were revised in September 2005. Those who were awarded the DALF before September 1, 2005, retain all rights and privileges connected with the diploma. Units and combinations of units of the old DELF-DALF have been translated into equivalents under the revised system. For details, see http://piaf.ciepf.fr/DELF_DALF/Documents/Table%20de%20correspondances.pdf

OTHER TESTS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
Other certificates and diplomas exist as well—among them those listed below. Some are administered by the Alliance Française, others by the CCIP and France’s universities. Students should make sure that the institutions to which they apply accept the results of the test(s) that they have taken.

- The certificates conferred by the Alliance Française in France and around the world have the advantage of the worldwide name recognition of the Alliance Française and of the recognition in Europe of ALTE, which has resulted in their use in some national school systems and in the labor market. The Diplôme de Hautes Études Françaises (DHEF, diploma of advanced study in French, level C2) is the most widely known. The Bulats test is designed for use with adults in professional settings.

- The CCIP (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris) administers 10 different tests of proficiency in professional French which assess candidates’ proficiency in written and spoken French in specific areas of professional life:
- two certificates in professional French (levels A2 and B1), points of entry into French as it is used in business and the professions
- two diplomas in business French (levels B2 and C1) and an advanced diploma in business French (level C2)
- five tests of professional French (levels B1 and B2): a diploma in medical French; a certificate in legal French; a certificate in French for tourism and hotel management (with an optional module for aspiring tour guides); a certificate in administrative French; and a certificate in scientific and technical French

- Four university diplomas (DU) recognize different levels of proficiency, normalized to the CEFR. These are the Certificat pratique de langue française (CPLF, practical certificate in French language, B1); the Diplôme d’études françaises (DEF, diploma of French studies, B2); the Diplôme avancé d’études françaises (DAEF, advanced diploma of French studies, C1); and the Diplôme supérieur d’études françaises (DSDF, higher diploma of French studies). SELFEE, the French-language testing service of the University of Paris IV, offers all four DU programs, adapted to the needs of students entering programs in literature and humanities at that university.

Note: DUs are specific to the university that confers them; they are not nationally regulated diplomas. Students should check that the institutions they wish to attend recognize the diplomas.

EXEMPTIONS
Individuals in the groups described below are exempt from French proficiency testing for purposes of admission to postsecondary education:
- holders of a French baccalauréat (conferred by the French Ministry of National Education) or recognized equivalent, a European baccalauréat, or the option internationale du baccalauréat (OIB, not to be confused with the international baccalauréat or the Geneva baccalauréate)
- students graduating from bilingual secondary schools figuring on the list compiled jointly by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see annex 2)
- students participating in a program established by intergovernmental agreement or interuniversity agreement, if the latter specifically provides for the exemption
- beneficiaries of scholarships granted by the French government, international organizations, or foreign governments whose scholarships are managed by a recognized French organization (CNOUS or EGEDE)
- children of diplomats stationed in France
- students from the French departments of British universities who are required to spend one or two semesters in France in order to earn their British undergraduate degree
- stateless persons or political refugees holding a card issued by OFPRA, the French office for the protection of refugees and stateless persons (OPFR)
- nationals of state in which French is the official language: Benin, Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d’ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.
- under certain circumstances, students participating in programs taught entirely in English (see http://www.campusfrance.org/fr/b-agence/espacedoc_infos.htm#formes_en).

Notes:
- Nationals of the countries of the Economic European Area (the countries of the European Union, plus Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein) are exempt from making a preliminary application for admission. They may apply directly to the university of their choice, which will use its discretion in deciding whether or not to require the applicant to pass a French proficiency test.
- Nationals of multilingual countries in which French is one of the official languages (Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Haiti, Madagascar, Mauritania (except those in the Arab-speaking system), Rwanda, Seychelles, Switzerland, and Vanuatu) are exempt from the TCF-DAP only if they completed their entire secondary-school education in a French-language institution.
- The sole official language of Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia is Arabic. French has a special status but is not an official language. Students from these countries are therefore not exempt from the TCF-DAP.

USEFUL WEB SITES
- CIEP (Centre international d’études pédagogiques, international center for pedagogical studies): http://www.ciepf.fr
- SELFEE: http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/spip.php?article1790
- ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) http://www.alte.org
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe (CEFR) http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE_FR.asp (also see annex 1)
- 2006 directory of centers of French as a foreign language (published by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs): http://www.diplomatique.gouv.fr/repertoireFLE

Self-administered tests of French proficiency
- “Charlotte’s test,” offered by CNEF: http://www.campus-electronique.tm.fr/TestFle
- Test of the multilingual portal of the “Fit for Europe” project: http://www.fit-for-europe.info

Search for schools, majors, and degree programs on the CampusFrance website.

CampusFrance's online catalog contains information on every program in France—from the licence (bachelor)/level to the doctorate. campusfrance.org/academic-programs and research opportunities in France

Licence et master level: Enter a field of study and academic level, and the search engine will tell you what degrees are offered and where http://www.campusfrance.org/fr/d-catalogue/

Doctorat level: search the directory of doctoral programs http://www.campusfrance.org/ecdodo/index.htm
Foreign language studies do not always lead to a career in teaching. That path, which passes through the gate of the CAPES teacher-qualification exam, continues to attract a large number of students. But language students have other options, as well—among them translation and interpretation, management, communication, and international trade and marketing. To prepare for careers outside teaching, students are advised to consider a double major such as languages and law, languages and international business, or languages and management.

The two most common language tracks in academia lead to two distinct career categories: teaching and business. Today, translation, interpreting, and teaching offer fewer opportunities than they once did. But fortunately language graduates are of interest to many businesses.

Field: Language and literature

Also see the following profiles: French proficiency, communication, management, international relations, humanities, tourism and hotel management.

In the universities

The two most common language tracks in academia lead to two distinct career fields: teaching and business. Those fascinated by languages and working toward a licence in literature and language must make a choice between the concentrations known as LLCE (langues, littératures et civilisations étrangères; foreign languages, literatures, and civilizations) and LEA (langues étrangères appliquées; applied foreign languages). In LEA, students take two languages—as applied to law, economics, or management—all with a view toward a career in the business world. LLCE tilts toward translation, the study of literary masterpieces, and the acquisition of analytical, grammatical, and cultural competencies. In France, a literary baccalauréat and good grades in French and languages are usually required for admission to LLCE programs.

For future teachers: the LLCE concentration

The LLCE option is for students who have already achieved proficiency in a modern language and wish either to teach it or to work in the language as a translator or interpreter. Most LLCE students, many of whom are interested in literature, go on to take the CAPES. LLCE resembles the study of literature, but in a foreign language. The curriculum includes grammar, written and oral expression, vocabulary, comprehension, linguistics, phonetics, literature, and history. Note that students who do not like to read, write, or study texts in their own language are unlikely to like doing so in a foreign language!

Depending on the institution, early specializations are possible in comparative literature, civilization, documentation, literary translation, and several other areas. Students who have earned the licence may move on to a teacher-training institution to prepare for the primary or secondary teaching exam. Note, however, that the number of teaching positions has shrunk for German, Italian, Russian, and Arabic, and in general for languages other than English and Spanish.

A third option, LCR, for langues et cultures régionales, prepares students to teach France’s regional languages.

For future translators and interpreters: the LEA concentration

The career-oriented LEA curriculum enables students to acquire competency in two modern languages, as well as economics. Geared to prepare graduates for the business world, LEA teaches students to master and apply a pair of modern languages, such as English-German, English-Chinese, or English-Arabic. Many different combinations are available, but not all institutions offer the same selection. Instruction is focused on using the language in a professional context, such as administrative correspondence, specialized translation, accounting, economics, computer science, or law. Admission often depends on passing a test of proficiency in the two chosen languages. More and more universities are an optional third language.

From among the specializations available at the licence level students choose one that matches their career goals: business and management, communications, specialized translation, and so on. The curriculum necessarily includes time abroad—in some universities a period of work or study abroad is a precondition for receiving the licence. Translation is a good choice for students who have a literary streak but do not want to teach literature. But would-be translators must not be afraid of long and intense study. Translators—literary, technical, legal, and so on—obviously play a key role in promoting understanding of written communications.
Whether they work for an exporter that needs to make itself understood in its target markets, or for a publishing house, they must command a great deal of objectivity (as well as knowledge and good judgment) if they are to reproduce the original text faithfully in the target language. Translation is no longer a matter of searching one’s brain for just the right word. Today’s translators (particularly technical translators) must also be able to use specialized software and databases (e.g., for machine translation). But the required qualities—rigor, objectivity, and perseverance—have not changed.

French as a foreign language

Many universities have programs that prepare graduates to teach French as a foreign language. The so-called FLE program (for français langue étrangère) is offered in the third year of university licence programs in classical literature, modern literature, LLCE, and language sciences. FLE students continue to follow the usual curriculum for their licence, complemented by instruction in the teaching of French as a foreign language and in general and applied linguistics. They practice by preparing lessons and studying French history and culture. FLE offers jobs that require the would-be instructor to adapt to a wide variety of circumstances, both physical and pedagogical.

Specialized schools

About 10 schools of translation and interpreting—some public, some private—prepare graduates for careers as technical translators, interpreters, and international trade specialists. It goes without saying that advanced language proficiency is required. Programs require either an internship or a semester of study abroad at some point during the curriculum.

RESEARCH THEMES

French research in foreign languages often involves several different fields in the humanities and social sciences—among them literature, history, pedagogy, linguistics, sociology, and psychology. A uniquely French dimension is found in centers of research that focus on the regional languages within France (Basque, Breton, Occitan, and Picard) or on Creole speakers in France’s overseas territories and departments.

USEFUL WEB SITES

- ITI-RI, Strasbourg, an institute of translation, interpretation, and international relations (2 years after the licence). http://u2.u-strasbg.fr/itiiri/
- AIIC, which trains interpreters for work at international conferences, has consultative status with international organizations. http://www.aiic.net/
- ESIT, the École Supérieure d’Interprètes et de Traducteurs, is affiliated with the Université de Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle and offers several degree programs. The interpretation department is open by examination to licence graduates who have spent at least 12 months abroad and have a thorough command of two or three languages. The translation department is open by examination to holders of a 2-year postsecondary degree. Tuition starts at €600. http://www.univ-paris3.fr/esit/
- ISIT, the Institut Supérieur d’Interprétation et de Traduction, 5 years after graduating high school in Paris, prepares for careers in translation, conference interpretation, communication and intercultural management. The Translation Management Communication Program offers opportunities to the business of translation, the location and all major business functions (Marketing, HR, Communication, buying. The Conference Interpretation Program forms in 2 years (level M1 and M2) of high-level interpreters for large international organizations http://www.isit-paris.fr/
- ULIP, the University of London Institute in Paris, awards University of London diplomas for programs taught in Paris in French. One 10-month program prepares students to translate business documents. Graduates may continue on for degrees in translation. http://www.ulip.lon.ac.uk/
- INALCO, the grande école of less commonly taught languages, trains civil servants, translators, interpreters, and international relations specialists in more than 70 languages. At the undergraduate level, the institute awards 2- and 3-year degrees in specific languages and the the cultures in which they are spoken.http://www.inalco.fr/
- ESTRI, a school of translation and international relations in Lyon, prepares students for careers as business translators and interpreters, marketing assistants, export assistants, communications attached, and international relations staff. http://www.estri.fr/
- ESTICE, located in Lille, is a school of foreign languages and international trade that prepares graduates for careers in international exchange as an import-export assistant or commercial, economic, or legal translator. Many graduates go on for a licence in applied foreign languages. Others go straight to work, using experience gained in their required internship. http://www.estice.fr/index2.php
- The IPLV, located at the Université Catholique de l’Ouest in Angers, offers three language programs. One prepares students for a licence in foreign languages, literatures, and civilizations. Another prepares graduates for corporate and organizational staff positions in international affairs. The third trains translators. Students who complete a fifth year may obtain a degree in conference interpreting. http://www.uco.fr/
- ELCOA, École des langues et des Civilisations de l’Orient ancien (school of ancient oriental languages and civilizations). http://www.icp.fr/
To study literature is to come face to face with the richness and infinite possibilities of writing, to expose and learn to operate the levers of literary creation. Because literary forms and genres occur in a particular historic, linguistic, and social context and are in some sense expressions of that context, to study literature is also to explore the wider world of culture, where the reader encounters other artistic disciplines from which literature often mines its raw material. Students must have the sensitivity to appreciate a work on its own merits, but also the tenacity to peer inside the work to see what makes it tick. Students of literature must have the flexibility to switch back and forth from a microscopic focus on the words that make up the text and a much broader vision of the author and his work.

The study of literature is a prelude to professional programs in cultural analysis, publishing, and other fields that require knowledge of cultural life, mastery of the tools of cultural management and communication, or the acquisition of methods to carry out cultural projects—in short, activities that require a keen interest in and appreciation of the contemporary literary and cultural world in its creative, economic, and sociological aspects.

The study of literature requires, and further amplifies, the ability for critical thought. It rewards the student by teaching clear thinking, cogent analysis, and good writing. It allows students to acquire the cultural capital they bring into careers in teaching, publishing, journalism, or civil service.

Field: Languages and literature

Also see the following profiles: Communication and journalism, Languages, Cultural heritage and historic preservation, Humanities and social sciences.

Professional opportunities: teaching, communication, research, journalism, publishing, public service, human resources, archives, cultural management.

Universities

Whether they begin by earning a licence at a university or by completing 2 years of preparatory classes, most students of literature go on to complete at least 5 years of postsecondary education.

Both of the two basic licences in letters (classic and modern) prepare students to take a civil service exam (such as the national teachers’ exam), to tackle a professional program (in journalism, communication, or publishing, for example), or to earn a professional or research master’s degree in communication, publishing, multimedia, human resources, cultural management, or another field.

Of the two licence options, classic letters is the more literary. The curriculum emphasizes French literature from the Middle Ages to the present day. Students spend considerable time on Latin and Ancient Greek. This licence is commonly used as a springboard to CAPES, the secondary-school teaching exam, or the CRPE, the primary-school teaching exam. It may also be used as a stepping stone to a professional or research master in literature, publishing, or library science and document management.

The licence in modern letters is more focused on the French language. The curriculum includes French literature from its origins to the present day, linguistics, style, poetics, one ancient language, courses in essay methods, and grammar.

Preparatory classes

The uniquely French preparatory classes are all very exacting but not necessarily closed to students below the very top rank. A few of the lycées (secondary schools) that offer the classes are extremely selective, but most admit students with solid if not stellar records (averages of 12/20 in the French grading scheme).

In the second year, familiarly known as khâgne, students choose their courses (Latin, Greek, a second modern language, geography) with a view to the entrance exams they plan to take.

The classics track prepares students for the arts and letters exam of the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) Ulm-Sèvres, http://www.ens.fr/, while the letters and humanities track prep them for the exams of the ENS Cachan and ENS Lyon. Students in that track who choose the political science option may also elect to take the entrance exams for France’s institutes of political studies (IEPs). Those who choose the economics option in the letters and humanities track may end up taking the exams for business schools (such as HEC, ESSEC, or ESC) or for ENSAE, the national school of statistics and economic administration.

Graduate study

- EHESS (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, school of advanced study in social sciences), http://www.ehess.fr
- EHESS offers research-oriented degree programs in the humanities and social sciences.
- École Nationale des Chartes, http://www.enc.sorbonne.fr/

The 3-year program (following 2 years of preparatory classes) trains archivists and conservators who will be responsible for preserving the nation's artistic and documentary heritage.

International students, admitted by examination, follow the same curriculum as French students, except that they do not have the status of civil servants in training. Nondegree students and auditors who wish to take only a few courses are also admitted. Auditors do not receive a degree but may request a certificate of attendance.
• CELSA (École des Hautes Études en Sciences de l’Information et de la Communication, school of advanced study in information and communication sciences) http://www.celsa.fr/
CELSA offers 2 degrees: a professional master in information and communication techniques, and a research master in information and communication sciences.
• IEP (institutes of political studies)
All of France’s IEPs (institutes of political studies) offer a track in communication and human resources.
• CNAM (Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, national conservatory of arts and crafts), http://www.cnam.fr/jsp/fiche_pagelibre.jsp?STNAV=&RUBNAV=&CODE=9892593&LANGUE=0&RH=
CNAM offers a 1-year degree program at the second-year master level that prepares graduates to lead documentary consulting projects.

RESEARCH THEMES

The panorama of French research in literature is rich and varied. Research teams from the nation’s universities, grandes écoles, and CNRS work in every field of literary endeavor: French, foreign, and comparative literature; literary history and analysis from antiquity to the present day; literary theory and criticism; and the study of authors and their works in the light of current historical, sociological, and anthropological paradigms.

INTERNATIONAL STANDING

Some French winners of the Nobel prize for literature:
- Anatole France 1921
- André Gide 1947
- Albert Camus 1957
- Jean-Paul Sartre 1964
- J.-M.-G. Le Clézio 2008

Numerous literary prizes are awarded in France. Among the major awards are the Goncourt, Médicis, Femina, Interallié, and Renaudot prizes, as well as the prize of the Académie Française.

Useful Web sites

• Information on literary studies and courses in literature http://www.etudes-litteraires.com/filiere-litteraire
• Fabula, literary research http://www.fabula.org/
• Persée http://www.persee.fr/web/guest/home/
• Europeana (digital library) http://www.europeana.eu/portal/
• Bibliothèque Nationale de France (national library of France) http://www.bnf.fr/

Keywords