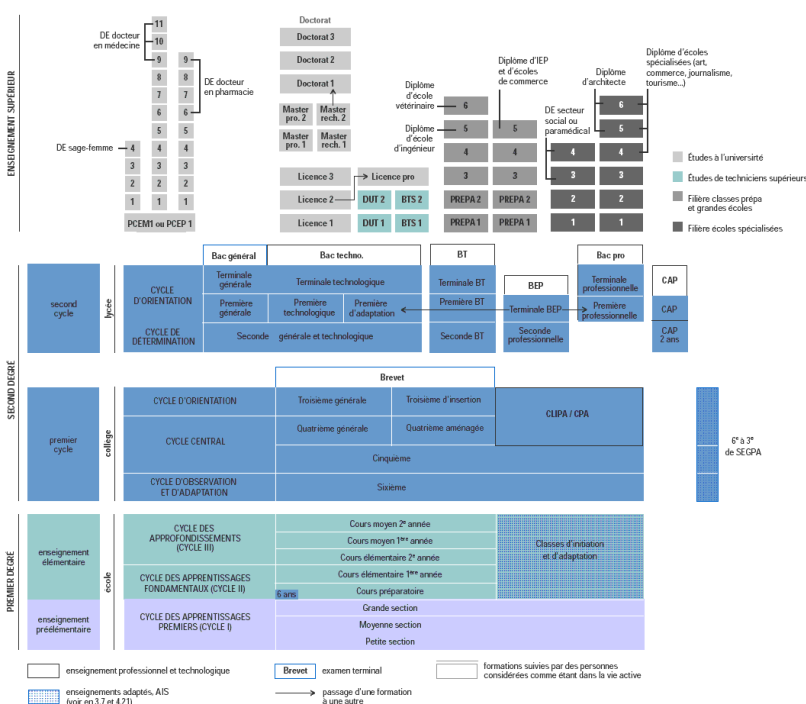


France: Organisation of the Education System and of its Structure

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The French Education System



Compulsory education

Education is compulsory and free from the age of 6 to the age of 16; it includes five years of primary education (at elementary school) plus five years of secondary education: four years at "collège" (lower secondary education) then one year at "lycée" (upper secondary education).

Pupils can then continue their education through to the last year of lycée and go onto higher education. Access to higher education is conditioned by passing a State examination, resulting in a national diploma, the baccalauréat.

Primary education

Primary, or first degree, education comprises:

- [pre-primary education](#) (nursery school), which is optional and free. It is for all children aged 3 to 6 years. 2-year-olds can also be



admitted if places are available. Although optional, nursery school, which receives almost 100% of children from the age of 3, is now part of children's normal schooling;

- **primary education** (elementary school), which is compulsory and free, for 6 to 11 year olds. Children go on automatically to secondary education. There are no admission exams.

Secondary education

Secondary, or second degree, education comprises:

- **lower secondary education** (*collège*), which is compulsory and free, for 11 to 15 year olds. At the end of the last year ("classe de troisième" or 3rd year), a national diploma is issued, the brevet, which assesses knowledge and skills acquired at collège. Pupils are not required to pass the examination successfully to go on to lycée as the first year of lycée ("classe de seconde" or 2nd year) is part of the compulsory education cycle.
- **upper secondary education** (*lycée*), which is free, for 15 to 18 year olds. After collège, pupils can continue their education in a [general and technological lycée](#) or a [professional lycée](#). The general curriculum prepares pupils to take the [general baccalauréat](#) and continue long studies in higher education. The technological curriculum prepares pupils for the [technological baccalauréat](#) and higher technological studies. The professional curriculum offers concrete education, in close liaison with business and professions. Pupils at a professional lycée prepare a [Certificate d'Aptitude Professionnel \(CAP\)](#) in two years or [professional baccalauréat](#) in three years.

Higher education

Since 2002, the higher education cycle has been structured into 3 years of *Licence* ([Bachelor's degree](#)), 2 years of Master ([Master's degree](#)) and 3 years of *Doctorat* ([Doctorate](#)), following the European diploma structure. In France, higher education is dispensed by 4 types of institution: universities, *classes préparatoires* ([classes preparing for admission to the Grandes Ecoles](#)), elites schools or "*Grandes Ecoles*", "*Sections de Techniciens Supérieurs*" (advanced vocational courses).

Adult education

The [adult education system](#) was set up in the early 1970s and involves several players: State, regions, companies and social partners. It is characterised by an original structure leaving room for collective negotiation and comprising admission conditions that vary depending on individuals' status (job seekers, employed persons) and their age (under 26, between 26 and 45, over 45).

