



FRANCE

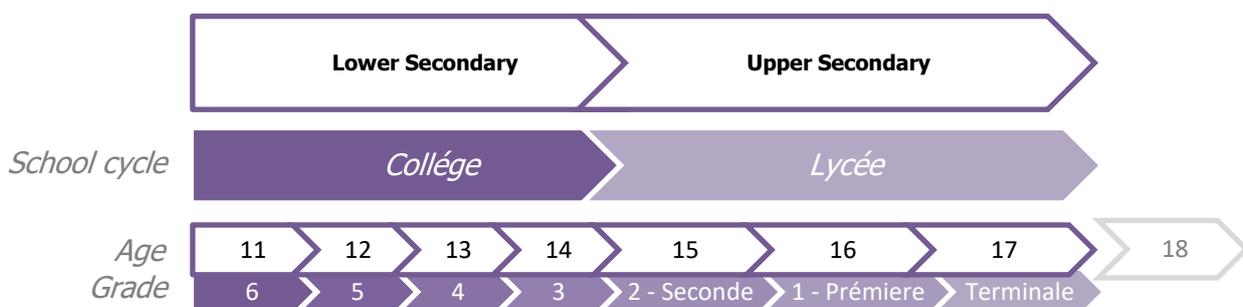
INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

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The information below gives an overview of procedures¹ for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



¹ Based on data gathered in February 2021.

Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. After *collège* pupils continue their schooling in a *lycée* which provides a three-year school cycle, compulsory until the age of 16 (*seconde*). General and technological *lycées* offer general upper secondary education.

Graduation and Certification

The certificate awarded at the end of upper secondary schooling is the *baccalauréat*. It is based on successful examination results (including both written and oral components) and teacher-graded assessments, which are administered throughout the two final grades of *lycée*.

The *baccalauréat* provides access to higher education studies.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM FRANCE

Age and grade

Pupils usually enrol in a long-term individual exchange programme during the *première* or *terminale* (i.e. 16-18 years old). However, these are also the grades when pupils need to sit exams in preparation for the *baccalauréat* (*Bac de Français* and continuous evaluations). Given that there are no exams in 1st year (*seconde*), this would be an ideal time to go abroad. However, pupils are regarded too young to travel at this stage and they usually only take part in trimester exchange programmes.

Registration in the sending school

If you are planning to study abroad, you are required to notify the head of your school. They then inform the *Inspecteurs d'académie-directeurs académiques des services de l'éducation nationale* – IA-Dasen – so-called Academies, the territorial branch of the Ministry of Education² – and request that a place be kept open for you in the next academic year. However, it is not always possible to keep a place for you if you follow specific programmes with few places available, therefore upon return you might need to enrol in a regular track.

For study periods organised by the school, the IA-Dasen -through the *Délégué de Région Académique aux Relations Européennes Internationales et à la Coopération* DAREICs³- participates in overseeing and funding the programme.

² The regional branches of the Ministry of Education, *Les régions académiques, académies et services départementaux de l'Éducation nationale*, <https://www.education.gouv.fr/les-regions-academiques-academies-et-services-departementaux-de-l-education-nationale-6557>

³ the unit of IA-Dasen dedicated to international relations, which supports schools in developing school-to-school partnerships and communicate to schools on how take part in EU and bilateral programmes.

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Funding for the sending school

The Regional authority funds schools based on the number of pupils over the course of several years. Therefore, the school budget remains the same irrespective of the number of pupils that goes abroad.

RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad of any duration within school-to-school partnerships and within programmes offered by private organisations lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

Recognition of learning periods abroad is possible only in the framework of a school-to-school partnership. For pupils participating in exchange programmes which take place outside of this kind of partnerships, there is no possibility for recognition of the learning period abroad. However, all pupils who spend a school period abroad can receive a 'certificate of international experience' (*Attestation d'expérience internationale*) issued by the school or by the pupil exchange organisation, even if there is no partnership agreement between the sending and host schools. This certificate is often added to the school report issued by the home school, and pupils may also include it with their university applications.

School-to-school partnerships

Recognition of study periods abroad is regulated by a circular issued in 2016⁴ and is managed by the school. The regulation requires that the sending and the host school develop a special partnership agreement including a learning agreement for the pupil during the stay abroad, which allows pupils to enrol in the next school year if:

- 1) they have respected the school agreement;
- 2) they provide a transcript of records and an overall evaluation from the school abroad.

A list of mobility programmes available within this framework is available on the website of the Ministry of Education⁵.

Please note that French-German individual pupil mobility programmes⁶ fall under the category of school-to-school partnerships. In the case of trimester and semester exchange programmes, the two schools sign a specific learning agreement. In the case of a full school year, any pupil registered in a French school and spending a year in a German school in grade 10 or 11 may have their year

⁴ Circular n° 2016-091, 15 June 2016, Internationalisation of upper secondary schools, pupil mobility within European and in the world, *Ouverture européenne et internationale des établissements du second degré, Mobilité des élèves de collège et de lycée en Europe et dans le monde*, <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/16/Hebdo24/MENE1615925C.htm>

⁵https://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/24/97/5/ensel925_Annexe_7_Tableau_duree_indicative_programmes_d_echanges_et_de_mobilite_593975.pdf

<https://eduscol.education.fr/2249/les-programmes-de-mobilite>

⁶ Brigitte Sauzay programme (trimester exchange), Voltaire programme (semester exchange), full 1st year of upper secondary school in Germany.

validated in France, if it is also validated by the German school⁷: there is a specific partnership agreement⁸ between the two schools to be signed for this purpose and this is a well-established practice.

Pupil mobility programmes organised by private organisations

Periods of between 2 and 3 months

For short-term mobilities, there are possibilities for reintegration in the school year, depending on the school rules and class council decisions. There is usually no problem for re-integration in the *seconde*, while adaptations are needed in the two last grades since the *baccalauréat* exams take place in January, April and June in *première*, and February, March, April, May and June in *terminale*.

Periods of between 3 months and a full school year

For pupils participating in exchange programmes which take place outside of a special partnership agreement between the sending and host school or governmental programme, there is no recognition of the learning period abroad. It is also not possible to have a partial validation of the competences acquired⁹. There are exceptional cases of school principals who allow pupils to enrol to the next grade upon return from the exchange, however this is the case only for very well performing pupils.¹⁰

Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year

There is the possibility to take an exam in the sending school upon return, in order to be admitted to the next grade. The content of the exam is agreed by the school and the IA-Dasen according to the circular of 2016. However, much depends on the willingness of the school principal to organise this exam, as they must administer the exam and validate the results. Many families and pupils are unaware of this possibility¹¹, which has been available since 1981.

There are alternative training systems that may enable you to complete a year abroad jointly with the year in a foreign school (such as the National Centre for Distance Education – *Centre National d'Education à Distance*, which is a certified body recognised by the national education system). You may follow the programme and take relevant tests during study abroad, but this is very difficult as they need to focus both on following the home country curriculum and integrating in the host country: this is usually not recommended as it interferes with the integration in the host country.

⁷ Recognition of the 1st year of upper secondary school (*seconde*) spent in Germany
<https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2006/44/MENC0602799N.htm>

⁸ School-to-school agreement on the recognition of the 1st year of upper secondary school (*seconde*) in Germany,
http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/echangesMobilite/10/2/validation_annee_seconde_allemagne_653102.pdf

⁹ E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

¹⁰ In the experience of AFS Vivre sans Frontière, this happens every year to 5-10 pupils who have been on a full school abroad with their non-profit organisation.

¹¹ 4 out of 1 200 pupils who have been on exchange with AFS France in the period 2015-2017 used this opportunity.

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INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN FRANCE

Registration in the host school

If you wish to enrol in secondary education schools in France, you must contact the *Directions des services départementaux de l'éducation nationale* (DSDEN)¹², the departmental services of IA-Dasen. Usually, the host family or the hosting exchange organisation contacts the school principal to ask for enrolment in the school. Depending on IA-Dasen, either the decision is made by the school principal, or s/he has to ask DSDEN. Your placement is usually in a class with peers of the same age where you can study subjects you are already familiar with, depending on availability of places.

Enrolment of pupils hosted within school-to-school partnerships and governmental programmes is dealt with directly through the *Délégué de Région Académique aux Relations Européennes Internationales et à la Coopération* (DAREIC)¹³.

Funding for the host school

Regions fund schools based on pluriannual statistics related to the school population, therefore, the school budget remains the same irrespective of the number of hosted pupils.

Certification for hosted pupils

You will receive transcripts of grade at the end of each trimester, like regular pupils.

Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

You will receive transcripts of grade at the end of each trimester, like regular pupils. Pupils hosted in the final grade (*terminale*) used to be able to obtain the French *baccalauréat*, although it is a rare practice¹⁴. With the introduction of the new *baccalauréat* in 2020/21, it will be more difficult, or even impossible as the course work for the *baccalauréat* will extend over 2 school years.

TESTIMONIAL

Jeanne from France: a full school year in Finland

"I brought back not only wonderful memories, but also a sense of autonomy and responsibility."

Discovering a new language and culture is what motivated me to go on exchange. I already had some contacts with my host family before leaving, I attended some preparatory weekends, where I was told what to expect once in Finland. Moreover, I started learning Finnish, so I would not arrive totally unprepared.

¹² Each IA-Dasen covers several *départments* (sub regional authorities) and therefore administration by IA-Dasen in the *départments* is supported by the Directions des services départementaux de l'éducation nationale (DSDEN).

¹³ See footnote 3

¹⁴ The experience of the non-profit pupil exchange organisation AFS Vivre Sans Frontière is that every school year, 5 to 10 of their hosted pupils who obtain the *baccalauréat*, and with good grades.

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I was expecting a lot of snow and cold weather and I wasn't disappointed, but the lack of sunlight during winter was challenging at first. I soon found out that the best cure was staying out as much as possible.

As every Finnish family, my host family had a sauna at home. On my first day we went together and I was shocked to see them entering completely naked. In Finland it is normal but for me it was not!

No recognition needed

I left for Finland after graduating from upper secondary school so, when I came back, I started my first year at university and I didn't have to go through any recognition process.

From the exchange I brought back not only wonderful memories, but also a sense of autonomy and responsibility. I'd suggest exchange students to be the first to make contacts. It is also very important to have an open mind, and not to be afraid of trying new things.

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