

FAQ about international selection

Application

Why choose ENS?

École Normale Supérieure (ENS) is a higher education establishment for pre-doctoral and doctoral studies (graduate school) as well as a top level for research center in France. ENS counts fifteen departments for education and research, spanning the main disciplines in humanities and sciences. It is the 1st French institution in many rankings.

<http://www.ens.fr/actualites/a-la-une/article/l-ens-internationalement-reconnue?lang=en>

ENS Paris is situated in the very heart of Paris, in the “Quartier Latin”, which has been known for centuries for its rich intellectual and cultural activity. It is a wonderful place to live and learn.

<http://www.ens.fr/campus/cadres-de-vie/?lang=en>

What are the eligibility criteria?

- be younger than 25 when you apply (not have reached your 26th birthday),
- apply for the international selection for the first time,
- Not having lived in France for more than 10 months during the year of the application nor the year before.
- Justify you have validated at least one year of undergraduate studies in the year before the application
- Justify you have validated at least two years of undergraduate studies in a foreign university, on September 1st, after the final jury.

As an exception, the Director of ENS could authorize the application of a candidate whose academic background outside France is not standard.

Where and when does the international selection take place?

Applications for international selection can be sent between December and February.

At the end of March, the shortlist is published and each candidate receives the results by email. Candidates on the shortlist are called for written and oral tests, in May for Sciences, in July for Arts and Humanities. The final results are published after the admission jury.

Tests take place in Paris.

What are the documents required for the application?

- passport (for non-European candidates) or ID card (for European candidates)
- high school diploma
- university transcript
- detailed application form, dated and hand signed

- letter of motivation (1 to 3 pages long, text of 12-point text in Times New Roman, 1.5 line spacing)
- your study project and possibly your research (1 to 3 pages long, see explanations below)
- CV
- letters of recommendation from 2 of your university teachers
- If you apply in Arts and Humanities, bibliography (see more details below)
- If you apply in Sciences, 2 Email addresses from recommending teachers (with their phone number if possible)

If incomplete, the application will not be examined.

What is the bibliography you ask in Arts and Humanities?

The bibliography is a list of 10 books, including articles or literary works you have read and which turned out to be important in your intellectual career, three of them have to be in French.



What do I write in my study project?

The application essay should be no more than 3 pages long (i.e. 10000 characters). This is not a cover letter but a research project: it should address a well-defined topic and deal with a core issue, then develop a set of arguments and provide for a few hypotheses. The material the research project relies on (e.g. fieldwork, corpus, database, archives, etc.) has to be precisely described. The research project refers to an existing scientific literature while selecting a small range of relevant and informed references.

This presentation must be written in French for candidates in Arts and Humanities; it can be either in French or in English for candidates in Sciences.

How hard is the selection?

Each year, the international office receives 600 applications, but only 320 to 340 of them are complete with the eligibility criteria respected. Around 70 to 80 candidates are on the shortlist and come to Paris. 20 students are finally selected to become the scholarship holders of the international selection.

Do I have to translate my documents for the application?

In Arts and Humanities, detailed application form, letter of motivation, study project and bibliography must be in French.

In Sciences, detailed application form, letter of motivation and study project can be either in French or in English.

Passport or ID card is not to be translated.

High school diploma and university transcript must be in French or in English.

Do you accept recommendation letters written on another form than the one proposed by ENS?

Yes, your referees can choose their own format. ENS' sample letter is on

<http://www.ens.fr/admission/selection-internationale/article/application-2017>

Am I allowed to apply to DENS (ENS' Diploma)?

If you want to, you have to fill the application in April, on ENS' Website. Admission to DENS doesn't award you with any grant, but you can prepare both a master and the DENS.

<http://www.ens.fr/admission/diplome-de-l-ens/?lang=en>

Some departments open applications to their master. Please visit their Website.

Visas and campus France

For what type of visa do I apply?

For candidates needing a visa to enter France, they have to apply for a visa "concours à entrées multiples 3 mois". This visa allows the holder to come for the tests in July and come back in September if selected without applying for a new visa (or even stay in France between July and September).

Warning: Some countries (see list above) are under Campus France procedure for the visa application and their citizens MUST open a Pastel account on Campus France Website:

www.campusfrance.org >Préparer son séjour >S'inscrire >Pays à procédure CEF, pour les ressortissants des 35 pays suivants Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo Brazzaville, South Korea, Ivory Coast, Egypt, USA, Gabon, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Maurice, Mauritania, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Senegal, Taiwan, Tunisia, Turkey, Vietnam.

Some of those countries have specific programs and procedures for the application on Campus France. For more informations, contact SAE by email at ens-international@ens.fr or by phone at 01 44 32 31 08.

Does Campus France office forward my application to the ENS?

No, campus France doesn't forward any application to the international selection. But you need a pastel account on Campus France to apply for a visa to come for the tests.

Exams in Paris

In Arts and Humanities, what are the tests?

The 3 written tests are:

- study of documents (4h)
- test in your major (4h)

For those 2 written tests, the candidate can choose French or English.

- French language test (4h). Must be written in French

Oral tests are:

- test in your discipline: questions /commentary of a document in the subject chosen (preparation 1h, test 30 minutes). The candidate chooses to speak in French or English.
- interview: presentation of your background and project, both academic and professional (the jury speaks in French only. The candidate speaks either English or French).

Previous years tests on: <http://www.ens.fr/admission/selection-internationale/rapports-et-sujets-78/?lang=en>

In Sciences, what are the tests?

The 2 written tests are:

- exercises in your major (3h)
- exercises in your minor (2h)

Candidates must write either in French or in English.

The 2 oral tests are:

- exercises in your major (preparation 15 minutes, test 1h)
- exercises in your minor (no preparation, test 45 minutes)

Exercises are both in French and in English. The candidate chooses to answer either in French or in English.

Previous years tests on: <http://www.ens.fr/admission/selection-internationale/rapports-et-sujets-78/?lang=en>



For short listed candidates in Arts and Humanities, what happens in the interview?

During the interview, the candidates must introduce themselves for a maximum of 10 minutes to present their background and academic and professional projects.
Then the jury asks them questions for 10 minutes.

Am I allowed to use a dictionary or any document during the tests?

Any personal document is forbidden.

In Humanities, no dictionary is allowed.

In Sciences, the candidate can bring and use a dictionary French/mother tongue/French or English/mother tongue/English.

Am I allowed to use a calculator?

Using a calculator is not allowed.

Who are the jury members?

Jury members are French or foreign teachers, teaching at ENS or in any other university. The jury list is displayed on the ENS' Website at the beginning of the tests.

Cost**If I am on the shortlist and have to go to Paris for the tests, does ENS cover travel expenses?**

ENS will not cover your travel expenses, except in exceptional cases. But you can ask for a partial reimbursement if you are a non-European citizen. ENS offers each student tickets to have breakfast and lunch at the School restaurant.

If I am shortlisted, can I have a room on the campus during the tests?

Yes, candidates coming for the tests can ask for a room. The price for 10 nights is € 250 (and € 30 for each additional night). See a related question in "Other matters".

How much is the grant?

The international selection grant is € 1 000 a month, 36 months. See a related question in "Other matters".

How much are tuition fees?

In public universities in France, tuition fees are paid by the State.

How much is the registration fee?

Registration fees are evaluated each year. They are around € 500 to 600 € for the academic year.

What is the cost of living in France?

In Paris, the living cost is around € 800 per month. The cost for food is € 280 to 300 per month.

Languages**What are the teaching languages?**

In Arts and Humanities, courses are in French. In Sciences, they are either in French or in English, depending on the department.

What is the level required for languages?

No level is officially required. Candidates in Humanities must read and write French easily enough to be able to understand courses and tests (B2 level).

Can I take French lessons at ENS?

Yes, ENS proposes French lessons all year round, at different levels.

An intensive French course is also offered to foreign students at the very beginning of September.

Schooling**What are the courses offered in my major?**

Please see the Web page of each department:

In Arts and Humanities:

<http://www.ens.fr/IMG/file/brochures%20ENS/Brochures%20Lettres%202016-2017.pdf>

In Sciences:

<http://www.ens.fr/IMG/file/admission/Rentree%202016/Livret%20enseignements%20Sciences%202016%202017.pdf>

Can I take a gap year during my studies at ENS?

Students selected through international selection are allowed to ask up to 2 gap years during their studies (either annual or biannual). During the gap year (or semester), the grant is not paid.

Can I choose my tutor?

The department of your major chooses your tutor. You are given his/her name in August or September.

Is it compulsory to enroll in the ENS' Diploma?

Yes, if selected by international selection, you must enroll in the ENS' Diploma. To obtain this diploma, you have to earn 72 ECTS (credits) in addition to the credits you need for your master. You have 3 years to get these credits.

Is it compulsory to enroll in a Master?

Yes, if selected, you must enroll in a Master (sometimes, you enroll first in the last undergraduate year, depending on the level of recruitment), either at ENS or in one of our partner universities.

<http://www.ens.fr/formation/masters/>

Other matters

What is the equipment in the room?

The room is furnished. During the tests, bed linen is provided, as well as a pillow, a blanket and towels. Shared kitchens are open on each floor, with pans, plates, cutlery and glasses.

If admitted, you can ask for a room (the rent is € 320 a month). It is furnished but will not be equipped with household linen as in July.

If I am selected, is it necessary to open a French bank account?

If selected, you are awarded a grant of € 1 000 a month.

ENS is allowed to credit only a French bank account with this sum. That's the reason why you must open a French bank account.