K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in France

A guide for international students & families — how French higher education works, the Campus France procedure, the VLS-TS student visa, low public tuition, and generous work rights.

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT K12 ACADEMICS

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

ELITE, AFFORDABLE — AND STRUCTURED

France is the world's third-largest host of international students, combining **elite universities with remarkably low public tuition and generous work rights**. The path is well-defined: for many countries it runs through the **Campus France "Études en France" procedure** and the **VLS-TS student visa**. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. French rules, tuition, and the funds requirement change (recent 2026 changes to non-EU fee waivers and the proof-of-funds amount). The figures here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with Campus France, France-Visas, and your institution**.

1

STEP 01 OF 10

Understand Why Students Choose France

WHAT TO KNOW

France offers **prestigious universities and grandes écoles, low public tuition, generous 964-hour-a-year work rights, and housing aid** — plus life in one of the world's great cultural settings, with easy travel across Europe.

BY THE NUMBERS

Elite institutions	Low public tuition	Work rights
universities & grandes écoles	+ housing aid	up to 964 hrs/year

HOW TO HELP

Weigh France's **prestige, affordability, and work rights** against the language and the structured Campus France process — for many, it's elite study on a budget.

GOOD TO KNOW

France pairs **elite credentials with low public tuition** — rare among top destinations.

2

STEP 02 OF 10

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

French higher education includes **public universities** (broad, affordable) and the selective **grandes écoles** (elite business, engineering, and political-science schools with their own admissions). Degrees follow the European bachelor's—master's—doctorate (Licence—Master—Doctorat) structure.

BY THE NUMBERS

Universities	Grandes écoles	LMD
broad & affordable	selective & elite	Licence–Master–Doctorat

HOW TO HELP

Decide between an **affordable public university** and a selective **grande école** (which may have separate admissions), based on your field and goals.

GOOD TO KNOW

Grandes écoles (e.g., Sciences Po, top engineering/business schools) often apply **outside** the standard procedure — check each one.

3

STEP 03 OF 10

Use the Campus France Procedure

WHAT TO KNOW

For around **70 countries**, you must apply through the **Campus France "Études en France" (EEF)** platform *before* the visa — it ties admissions and the visa together. Create an account, upload documents, and follow your country's specific steps.

BY THE NUMBERS

Études en France	Before the visa	Country-specific
mandatory for ~70 countries	ties them together	check your local rules

HOW TO HELP

If your country uses **Études en France**, start there early — it is the required gateway to both admission and the visa, with its own timeline.

WATCH OUT

Not all institutions use the procedure (some grandes écoles apply separately) — confirm the route for your specific school.

4

STEP 04 OF 10

Get the VLS-TS Student Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

For programs over 6 months, non-EU students get a **VLS-TS** — a long-stay visa that **acts as your residence permit** once validated. Apply via **France-Visas**, then **validate online (ANEF/OFII) within 3 months of arrival**.

BY THE NUMBERS

VLS-TS	Via France-Visas	Validate
long-stay = residence permit	the official portal	within 3 months of arrival

HOW TO HELP

Apply for the **VLS-TS** through France-Visas after your Campus France steps, and **validate it online within three months** of arriving — a required, easily-missed step.

WATCH OUT

Forgetting to **validate the VLS-TS** within 3 months can invalidate your stay — do it promptly on arrival.

5

STEP 05 OF 10

Apply to Institutions

WHAT TO KNOW

Applications (via Études en France or directly) typically open in **autumn** and close in **winter/spring** for an autumn start. There are limits on the number of applications (e.g., a few for bachelor's, more for other programs).

BY THE NUMBERS

Autumn open	Application limits	Autumn start
winter/spring close	a few for bachelor's	the main intake

HOW TO HELP

Note the **application windows and limits**, prepare your documents, and apply through the correct route (Campus France or direct) for each institution.

GOOD TO KNOW

Deadlines for a September start often fall **months earlier** — start the Campus France process in autumn the year before.

6

STEP 06 OF 10

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

French-taught programs require **French proficiency** (e.g., **DELF/DALF or TCF**); a growing number of **English-taught** programs (especially at master's level and grandes écoles) require **English** (IELTS/TOEFL). Some French helps everyday life either way.

BY THE NUMBERS

French-taught	English-taught	Some French
DELF/DALF/TCF	IELTS/TOEFL	helps daily life

HOW TO HELP

Take the **right test for your program's language**, and build some French regardless — it eases daily life, work, and integration.

GOOD TO KNOW

English-taught options are growing, especially at master's level — but everyday life still runs in French.

7

STEP 07 OF 10

Plan for Costs & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

Public tuition is **low** but changing: EU rates are tiny (~€178 Licence, ~€254 Master), while **non-EU students pay differentiated rates** (recently ~€2,895 Licence, ~€3,941 Master), and a **2026 decree narrowed fee waivers**. Scholarships (Eiffel, Charpak) exist.

BY THE NUMBERS

EU rates	Non-EU	Scholarships
~€178–254	~€2,895–3,941	Eiffel, Charpak

HOW TO HELP

Budget the **differentiated non-EU tuition** (now less often waived) plus living costs, and pursue scholarships like **Eiffel Excellence and Charpak**.

WATCH OUT

A **2026 decree** sharply reduced non-EU fee waivers — most non-EU students now pay the higher differentiated rates. Confirm your fee.

8

STEP 08 OF 10

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

You must prove **sufficient funds** — recently about **€615/month**, rising to **€877.50/month (~€8,775 for 10 months) from August 2026**. You'll also need health insurance and proof of accommodation for the first months.

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds	Rising 2026	+ insurance
€615/mo (recent)	to €877.50/mo	& accommodation

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds** at the current threshold, plus **health insurance and accommodation evidence** — and check the amount, which rises in 2026.

WATCH OUT

The proof-of-funds figure **rises in August 2026** — confirm the current amount before you apply.

9

STEP 09 OF 10

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, **validate your visa, register for French health insurance (free for students), and apply for CAF housing aid**. Use the **CROUS** network for student housing. Prepare for a French academic culture and daily life in French.

BY THE NUMBERS

Validate visa	CAF housing aid	CROUS
+ health insurance	cuts rent	student housing

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin: **validate the VLS-TS, enroll in French health insurance, and apply to CAF for housing aid** (which meaningfully reduces rent), and use CROUS for housing.

GOOD TO KNOW

CAF housing aid (APL) can cut rent by €100–250/month — apply after you arrive; it's a real saving.

10 STEP 10 OF 10

Thrive & Work

WHAT TO KNOW

The VLS-TS lets you **work up to 964 hours per year (~20 hours/week)** and travel the Schengen area. After graduating, a temporary residence permit (APS) can let you **stay to seek work** — a route to launching a career in France.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work	Schengen travel	APS
up to 964 hrs/year	included	post-study job search

HOW TO HELP

Take advantage of France's **generous work rights and Schengen travel** during study, and consider the **APS** post-study permit to seek work after graduating.

GOOD TO KNOW

France's **964-hour work allowance** is among the most generous — a real support for students on a budget.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in France: The Essentials

A snapshot — 2026 brought fee and funds changes, so confirm everything with Campus France, France-Visas, and your institution.

The system

Public universities (broad, affordable) and selective grandes écoles (elite, own admissions); Licence–Master–Doctorat structure.

The procedure & visa

For ~70 countries, apply via Campus France / Études en France before the visa; non-EU students over 6 months get a VLS-TS long-stay visa (validate online within 3 months of arrival).

Language

French-taught programs need DELF/DALF/TCF; growing English-taught programs need IELTS/TOEFL; some French helps daily life.

Money

Low public tuition, but non-EU students now pay differentiated rates (recently ~€2,895 Licence / €3,941 Master) after a 2026 waiver cut; prove funds (~€615/mo, rising to €877.50 in Aug 2026); scholarships (Eiffel, Charpak).

Work & after

Work up to 964 hours/year; CAF housing aid and CROUS housing help with costs; an APS permit can allow post-study job search.

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