



The FRENCH BACCALAUREATE or The “BAC”

What is the French Baccalaureate or the Bac?

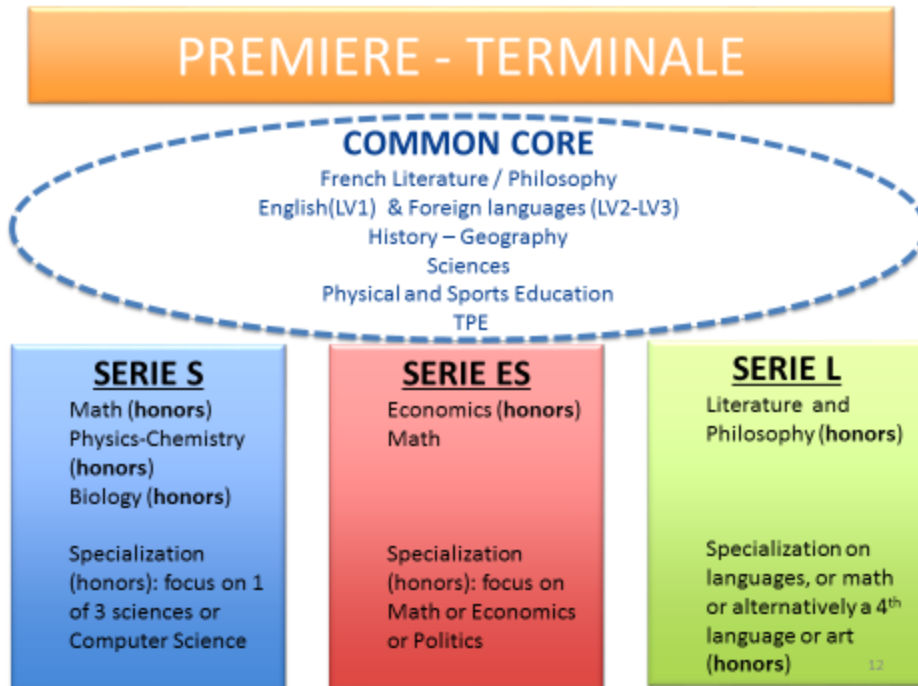
The French Baccalaureate (Bac) is the diploma that marks the completion of a French high school program and follows the curriculum guidelines established by the French Ministry of Education, a demanding pre-university program of study taught entirely in French. Students must choose a specialized program of study (les 3 séries or groups of subjects) within a core curriculum. The diploma is obtained at the end of grade 12, after externally assessed examinations are taken, and is the essential credential for entry into any university worldwide.

What are the 3 séries (groups of subjects)?

As of 11th grade (1ère) students choose one from three séries: L “littéraire” (literary), ES “économique et sociale” (social and economic) and S “scientifique” (scientific). Within the tracks, certain courses are considered to be more challenging than others and are weighted more heavily.

All students study take the common core subjects: French, two other languages, Sciences, History-Geography, Philosophy (T/12th), Physical & Sports Education and, should they wish to do so, one or two elective subjects (see options below). The level of difficulty of some subjects will depend on the série chosen. In 12th grade or Terminale, the students must also select a “speciality or SPE” (see below).

In all subjects, a mastery of both written and spoken French is essential.





“Spécialités or SPE” (subjects selected as a speciality with greater weighting),

In Terminale or 12th grade, the student are required in addition to the core subjects to select a specialty “SPE” that is related in most cases to their série. The speciality adds teaching time in the subject and the value of the subject counts more in the overall baccalauréat score.

Terminale ES	Maths or Economics (honors)
Terminale L	Maths or 4th language (LV3) German, Arabic, Spanish or other...
Terminale S	Maths (honors), Physics-Chemistry (honors), Biology (SVT), or Computer Science*

*Computing Science and Digital (ISN – Informatique et science du numérique)

Options (elective subjects)

As a complement to their program, students can select one or two options: Latin, Theatre, Visual Arts, Cinema, Music, Arabic, 3rd World Language Independent study (CNED).

Travaux Personnel Encadrés -TPE (personal project work)

In their first year of the French Baccalauréat (11th grade or 1ere), students must undertake their TPE in groups of 2 or 3. TPE is defined as a piece of original personal research which aims to allow students to study an interdisciplinary topic linked to the dominant subjects in their chosen série.

Examinations

Baccalauréat exams are taken over a two-year period: students usually take three to four exams at the end of the first year, such as in French and for the presentation of the TPE. Students take their main subjects at the end of their final year.

The French Baccalauréat is based solely on the final grade average – weighted by the coefficients. With a final grade average of 10/20 or more, the Baccalauréat diploma is awarded; with a grade average of more than 10/20, an additional mention (level of distinction) is given: assez bien (12/20), bien (14/20), très bien (16/20). Should a student obtain a score between only 8 and 10, in the week following the announcement of the results, the student may attend vivas (oral examinations) in certain subjects in an effort to improve the grade average to over 10/20. A baccalauréat jury will then review the student’s school record of the past two years along with the results of the oral examinations. If the general grade average is then recalculated to be 10/20 or greater, the student will be awarded the Baccalauréat diploma.

What is the OIB?

OIB stands for the Option International du Baccalauréat. The OIB was developed as a special version of the French Baccalauréat, based on partnerships between the French Ministry of Education and a number of foreign authorities. These partners quality-assure and accredit examinations in Literature and History-Geography in their own language, at university entrance level, which are integrated into the French Baccalauréat.

The American version of the OIB was created and administered by the French Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Advanced Placement Division of the College Board.

Purpose of the OIB

The OIB allow students who are native or bilingual speaker of English to study literature and history in-depth in that language in addition to French. Unlike English as a second-language class, the OIB program must be chosen in its entirety: a student must take both literature and history-geography. This is not an AP (advanced placement), but it is a college-level curriculum for which some universities award credit. At Rochambeau, the OIB curriculum starts in 10th grade (2nde), but students can enter into 11th grade. Acceptance into the OIB program is highly selective.

Special Features of the OIB

- Students learn to handle an unusually heavy workload (2 +hours of English /wk)
- Acquire a cultural mobility – the ability to think from a French cultural viewpoint or an American cultural viewpoint – that gives them different perspectives on their university studies, whatever their subject
- The OIB adds a different approach to thinking and work methodology. This gives students flexibility in problem solving or in adopting a suitable method for a particular task
- History-Geography is taught in both English and French (2 hrs English and 2 hrs French versus 4 hours history-geo for bac).
- Literature is taught in English at the same level as French literature, giving all students an awareness of both American and French literary heritage.

Why choose the French Bac? What are the benefits of such a broad curriculum?

- The core of the three séries and the diversity of the branches leads to wide-ranging knowledge and general culture which is particularly useful to any students who have not yet decided on a future career plan.
- It is a diploma which is comprehensive in content yet work overload is avoided due to the certain subject areas being grouped (History-Geography, for example), less time allocated to subject areas with a smaller coefficient and the fact that certain subjects are taught for one year (for example, French in the first year and Philosophy in the final year).



What choices does the French Bac offer?

- Choice of série to direct one's studies towards the areas of interest, skills and university plans
- Choice of spécialité to give more weight to one subject
- Choice of options to use one's talents in languages, arts or sports
- Opportunity to take the International Option – with English Literature and History-Geography

Which languages and culture are focused upon?

Students will gain an in-depth mastery of the French language and culture. English is mandatory for all students, with native-level classes, and an 3rd language is required in 8th grade. Native-level Spanish classes are offered, as well as German and Arabic.

What particular skills will students develop?

- The French Baccalaureate prepares students extremely well for the rigors of university study through the skills that are developed.
- Students will develop first and foremost, skills of reasoning, analysis and synthesis. They will be required to demonstrate a critical mind, for example, during philosophy class discussions, and need to show initiative and creative skills, especially for the TPE (personal project work).
- The French Baccalaureate develops structured argumentative rigor through written tasks and oral presentation skills which will be assessed by an external examiner.

To what extent is the French Bac recognized by universities?

The French Bac is widely recognized around the world. Some universities may demand a mention (award with a level of distinction).

English-speaking universities, particularly American ones, value the French Bac as it is often considered difficult to obtain. It is recognized as being a comprehensive rigorous program which guarantees in-depth knowledge.