

# DOCTORAL STUDIES IN FRANCE

After earning a European Master or equivalent degree, aspiring scholars and researchers join a doctoral department, where they will undergo 3 years of training in and through research with a research team that will support them in their scholarly or scientific development.

Following a successful defense of their dissertation candidates are awarded the **Doctorate**.

## FRANCE'S DOCTORAL DEPARTMENTS

**Each PhD student joins a research team or unit affiliated to a specific Doctoral Department. Candidates are guided and supervised by a thesis supervisor.**

The Doctoral Departments at each higher education institution represent multiple **research teams** from one or more institutions. Each department is organized around a specific theme.

The departments are responsible not only for **training** doctoral students but also for preparing them for **research careers** by offering them a scholarly setting in which to work and learn. Through instruction, seminars, and internships, students are introduced to a range of career opportunities in various settings, including academia, government, and industry.

**The departments fulfill an essential coordinating role, ensuring the scientific coherence of candidates' research projects.**

- Every Doctoral Department is affiliated with a university or other higher education host institution accredited to deliver Doctoral Degree (called **support or principal institution**) in the field represented by the department. The department, while formally affiliated with a single institution, may coordinate the work of research teams at several "**co-accredited**" or "**associated**" institutions. Co-accredited institutions grant Doctoral Degree independently. Associated institutions may grant Doctoral Degree only in conjunction with the Doctoral Department's host institution.
- Proposals for doctoral projects are drawn up by the department's research teams. The department reviews and approves the teams' proposals and supervises the recruitment of doctoral candidates to carry out the projects. Successful candidates enroll in the educational institution with which the department is affiliated.
- The director of the doctoral project is a key figure. He or she is responsible for developing the project and for recruiting candidates to carry it out. For three years, as the direct supervisor of the successful candidate's laboratory work, the director oversees the progress of the research project, co-signing the dissertation plan. The research director must possess the academic qualification known as the HDR (Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches, or qualification to direct research).
- Doctoral departments may pool their efforts within a COMUE, a community of universities and other postsecondary institutions. In such cases, doctorates earned by candidates working in the member institutions are awarded by the COMUE.
- In order to improve supervision of doctoral candidates and disseminate research opportunities more effectively, the doctoral departments affiliated with a given institution often join together in a "doctoral college," which then becomes the nerve center of the institution's doctoral community.
- Doctoral Departments are accredited by France's Ministry of higher Education and Research.

Each doctoral department is affiliated with a university or other postsecondary institution. The department houses a set of research teams that assume responsibility for training doctoral candidates and preparing them for a future in Research.

## KEY FIGURES

- 270 doctoral departments (2015) and 10 scientific fields
- 14 400 Doctorates (2014)
- **42% of foreign doctoral candidates**

## IN BRIEF

Doctoral program provides training in and through research as well as professional research experience.

- Research activities (laboratory, research center)
- Preparation and defense of a dissertation leading to award of the Doctorate
- Approximately 160 hours of complementary training approved by the doctoral department, a portion of which is mandated by the department, with the rest being selected by the candidate (French language study; business and innovation; courses in the candidate's discipline; teaching and popularizing science; etc.)

## APPLYING FOR ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL STUDIES

**Doctoral Departments are the linchpin of doctoral studies in France. Students begin doctoral studies by applying for admission to a Doctoral Department.**

### How to apply

- Aspiring candidates must hold a degree equivalent to a European Master (5 years of Higher Education)
- Applicants should contact a Doctoral Department to inquire about the procedure for submitting a **research or consulting department's research proposals**.
- The Doctoral Department will refer the candidate to a **thesis supervisor and review with the candidate the options for financing the candidate's doctoral studies**.
- Once the candidate is accepted by the Doctoral Department and thesis supervisor, he or she signs a **thesis contract**.

*The thesis contract represents the agreement of the doctoral candidate, the department, and the research center, team, or laboratory that will host the candidate.*

*The contract helps ensure quality by setting forth the rights and responsibilities of each party.*

## GOOD TO KNOW

- Campus France a unique online access to all the information you need to select a doctoral program or research program in France : A directory of doctoral departments, dissertation opportunities, internships, and postdocs, Presentations on financial aid

[www.campusfrance.org/en>Research in France](http://www.campusfrance.org/en>Research in France)

## FINANCING DOCTORAL STUDIES

**Note:** Candidates may be required to present a clear plan for financing their doctoral study as a condition for admission to a doctoral program.

The financial arrangements must be sufficient to allow the candidate to devote himself or herself full time to research over a period of 3 years. The principal sources of support for doctoral training are financing from doctoral departments; contracts with research bodies (CNES, CNRS, CEA, etc.); research contracts (through European programs or ANR, France's national research agency); CIFRE contracts; the mobility programs of foreign governments; bilateral agreements and scholarships from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs; joint degree programs with foreign institutions; and financing from France's regional governments. The tuition rates charged for Doctorate are set by national State decree : 391 euros (2015).

## THE DOCTORAL CONTRACT

an acknowledgment of the professional nature of doctoral training

The contract system is open to all doctoral degree students. Available for a period of 3 years, the contracts carry medical insurance and other social benefits in addition to a stipend. The minimum gross monthly stipend is 1,685 euros (gross pay). Contracts are awarded and administered by Doctoral Departments. Contract terms are uniform from one institution to another. Doctoral contracts are true employment contracts to the extent that they are enforceable by law and carry all of the benefits attached to such contracts under French law.

## INDUSTRY-SPONSORED EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CONTRACTS (CIFRE)

CIFRE grants enable doctoral candidates to prepare their dissertation within an industrial enterprise, in cooperation with an doctoral department. The enterprise and the student enter into a three-year work contract, under which the enterprise pays the student a monthly stipend of approximately 1,950 euros.

CIFRE contracts offers secure financial conditions under which to prepare a dissertation: 90% of candidates in all disciplines complete their dissertation.

Students wishing to obtain a CIFRE grant must apply, with their Doctoral Department, to the national association for technical research (ANRT, *association nationale de la recherche technique*, <http://www.anrt.asso.fr>).

- 4200 CIFRE doctoral candidates (2015)
- 700 foreign doctoral candidates
- CIFRE contracts provide financing for 10% of the doctorates completed in France.

## VISAS

The circumstances of the doctoral program determine the appropriate visa

- **“Scientific” visa and residency permit (short stay ≤ 3 months; long stay > 3 months).**

This visa is for foreign doctoral candidates who have signed a doctoral contract with a French institution. The applicant must hold a master or the equivalent and must have signed a hosting agreement with a research organization.

- **Long-stay visa conferring the right to reside in France (VLS-TS, Visa long séjour valant titre de séjour) – Multiyear residency permit (carte de séjour pluriannuelle, CSP)**

Designed for unsalaried doctoral candidates, this visa enables candidates to pursue doctoral study in France provided they have adequate means of support. The multiyear residency permit is granted at the end of the first year of study in France. It is valid for 2–4 years, depending on the length of the candidate's academic program.

- **Visa and status of foreign doctoral candidate covered by a CIFRE contract**

Candidates entering into a CIFRE contract apply for a student visa to enter France. Once in France, they request a temporary employment authorization (APT, *autorisation provisoire de travail*), which causes no change in the candidate's visa status.

## USEFUL SITES

- Agence Campus France : Information for studying in France <http://www.campusfrance.org>
- Online access to all the information for a doctoral program or research program in France <http://www.campusfrance.org/en>Research in France> <http://ecoledoctorales.campusfrance.org>
- CampusBourses, grant search engine [campusfrance.org/en>Finance your program](http://www.campusfrance.org/en>Finance your program) <http://www.campusfrance.org/fria/bourse/index.html>
- Agence Nationale de la Recherche : <http://www.agence-nationale-recherche.fr>
- Confederation young researchers (40 associations) : <http://cjc.jeunes-chercheurs.org>
- Arriving in France
  - ABG-L'Intelli'agence: <http://www.intelligence.fr>
  - Fondation Kastler : <http://www.fnak.fr>
  - EURAXESS, mobilité des chercheurs en Europe [http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index_en.cfm)
- CIFRE-ANRT : <http://www.anrt.asso.fr>
- CNRS, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique : <http://www.cnrs.fr>
- DOCPRO, professional integration: <http://www.mydocpro.org/fr>
- Visas information : <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/le-ministere-et-son-reseau/annuaires-et-adresses-du-maedi>
- Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche : <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr>

## USEFUL TERMS

- ANR : Agence Nationale de la Recherche (French National Research Agency)
- EA : Équipe d'Accueil (Host team)
- ED : École Doctorale (Doctoral Department)
- UMI : Unités Mixtes Internationales (international joint unit)
- UMR : Unités Mixtes de Recherche (joint research unit)
- UR : Unité de Recherche (research unit)
- HDR : Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches (certified research director, a postdoctoral program)

