

Dear all

This document is meant to help clarify information concerning the school system in France. It is a quite unique system, that can be very confusing and obscure from the outside.

Here are a few points that we think should be pointed out :

- For the 4 years of Middle School and 3 years of High School, each grade has its own program of study. Classes are not chosen independently.
- In order to be admitted to the next year, students must have an average of all their grades above the requirement of 10/20. It is common for a student to have one or several subjects' grade below 10/20, the important goal is to keep this average above 50%. It is commonly accepted that some students, who are stronger into a certain specific areas of study will have lower grades in some subjects.
- French grading system is not meant to reach perfect grade. 20/20 is almost impossible to get, and if a grade above 18/20 is achieved, it would both mean that the student is exceptional in the subject and that this student's teacher is one of the very few willing to give an exceptional grade.
- Grading requirements changes from one teacher to another. Some teachers are satisfied with having a class average around 08/20. So again, the importance is placed on the average between subjects.
- Grading requirements can change from one school to another, especially for students frequenting private schools which can be much more severe and demanding. In some extreme cases, even an average above 10/20 can be hard to achieve.
- After completing the first year of high school, students are helped to decide on an emphasis of study or "major". These include a science, economics or literature emphasis. Once decided, grades from your major are weighted more heavily that your other classes.
- At the end of each of the last 2 years of High School, students take a part of the Final High School Examination (Baccalauréat). Based on the grades obtained from the first session of this test, it is the student that chooses whether or not to continue into the last year or to repeat the year just finished. Therefore, for 11th and 12th Grade, individual subject grades are considered less important.
- **Repeating a grade is very common in France.** According to OECD studies, 38% of French students finish high school one year late. With the French 'year system', all subject areas are included as a 'package'. This means those who have not averaged fifty percent or better will repeat the year with more or less the same schedule. Consequently, the idea of failing a particular subject does not make sense in France. If student has a "failing grade" for a subject, it is of no incidence if other subjects balance the average. You can only 'fail' or 'pass' a year of study. This is also why "year of graduation" on the 7A-B forms in the application doesn't make sense for many of our candidates.

According to AFS France and our understanding of the system in France compared to foreign countries, this is the best way to “explain the of grading system” on Doc 7A of the AFS standard application. Some teachers might have a slightly different interpretation, but for AFS France, knowing international standards, we agree on the following :

Outstanding	16 +
Very Good	14-16
Good	11-14
Average	09-11
Poor	06-09
Failing	- 06

About the AFS Year :

- In France, the AFS year abroad is not recognized in the system. Therefore, all students ‘lose’ academically the school year here in France. As opposed to some country, they have the possibility to participate to an AFS program before graduating. However, many parents won’t let their child leave before they finish High School, mainly because of the importance of the High School Final Exam (Baccalauréat) that takes place over two years, and that is a key for entrance to university.

‘Graduated’ Students :

- Some student complete 2 years in 1 when they are young (usually primary school) and therefore finish secondary school early. Although younger, they are graduated and therefore hit by that AFS restriction even if in their birth date fits one country’s limit. In this paradoxical situation, being too good at school keeps them from being accepted in certain countries. This situation concerns about 2% of our YP students. If possible, it would be great if partners could consider those few candidates outside of the ‘graduated restrictions’.