

ECONOMICS

2009

Economic information is at the forefront of the news, whether the subject is the rise and fall of the stock market, a proposed merger between two companies, or a government statement about easing tax burdens. The economy—the set of activities that go into producing, distributing, and consuming wealth—coupled with the knowledge of how to manage those activities, governs our lives. Economics is a truly cross-cutting discipline whose mastery requires knowledge of law, cultures, languages, production systems, geopolitics, diplomacy, history, mathematical models, and communication.

Fields

Administration and public management.
Also see the following subject profiles: Engineering, Management, Administration and public management, Development economics and development assistance, Sustainable development, Law

Sectors of activity

corporate management and strategy, financial management, human resource management, marketing, finance, banking and insurance, accounting, analysis, economic research and forecasting, project analysis, development, education, business and trade, communication, public service, journalism

ORGANIZATION OF STUDIES IN FRANCE

Economics has many branches—among them microeconomics, macroeconomics, econometrics, industrial economics, international economics, labor economics, public sector economics, international economy and finance, economics and management, political economy, and finance. Although the range of possible specializations is vast, the specialization process typically does not begin until the third year of study. For more information on business schools, MBA programs, and banking, please refer to the profiles on management and banking.

Universities

2-year degrees such as the BTS (brévet de technicien supérieur) in accounting and organizational management or the DUT (diplôme universitaire de technologie) in management and public administration are valued because of the technical skills they impart and their flexibility, but demand is greatest for graduates with a higher level of training. France's universities offer upper-level programs in economics in three broad fields: economic and public administration (AES, administration économique et sociale), economic sciences, and management sciences. Attractive career opportunities begin to open up after the licence (3 years of postsecondary study). Conventional licence programs provide basic, general education in economics, while some 60 career-oriented programs (licences professionnelles) allow students to cultivate a professional speciality in their third year. Students serious about a career in economics should aim for a master (5 years of study), choosing either a program oriented toward immediate entry into professional life or one focused on research (and further academic work). Another option is the MSG (maîtrise de sciences de gestion).

Business schools (see the profile on Management)

France's business schools admit students who have already completed 2 years of postsecondary study. Programs leading to a master-level degree require 3 years of further study. Longer and shorter programs are also available. Business programs in the grandes écoles admit students who have completed 2 years of preparatory classes based on their performance on an entrance examination. The use of common examinations now permits students to apply simultaneously to several schools, each of which maintains its own admission standards (and interprets examination results in accordance with those standards). Students emerging from each of the four preparatory tracks (general, economic, technical, and literary) take the examination designed for that track. Some schools that have internal preparatory programs (IESEG, for example) admit students directly from secondary school. Students may also apply for admission on the strength of the academic record they compile while earning a 2- or 3-year degree. The great majority of France's business schools are private. Tuition charges range from €4,500 to €7,000 per year.

Institutes of political science

France's instituts d'études politiques (IEP, institutes of political science) offer general, practically oriented training in economics, in contrast to the more academically oriented programs found in the universities. Like university programs, IEP programs emphasize rigor and general education, preparing graduates for careers in business or public service. Note, however, that the curriculum in IEPs combines training in economics and political science, whereas political science is a separate subject in the universities.

Sciences Po Paris is one of France's most renowned institutions of higher learning. The first (undergraduate) stage of the curriculum requires 3 years of study. In large lectures and small-group sessions, students learn the fundamentals: history, economics, law, sociology. Upon completion of the first stage, students enter one of 12 specialized master's programs, where they spend 2 more years. The curriculum of the IEPs in Aix, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lille, Lyon, Rennes, Strasbourg, and Toulouse is similar in structure to that of Sciences Po Paris, with differences rooted in the history and the regional base of each institution. The IEP in Lille, for example, offers joint degrees with institutions in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom

RESEARCH THEMES

Research is ongoing in every contemporary aspect of economics and management. Important efforts are focused on the seminal work of various French thinkers. Other researchers and their teams grapple with the broad global questions confronting the discipline in finance, labor, energy, natural resources and the environment, and the international economic system. France's research economists have distinguished themselves in every aspect of current economic thought.

INTERNATIONAL STANDING

France has a long and rich tradition in economics. François Quesnay and Jean-Baptiste Say were among the founders of the classical school. Later, Léon Walras was a pioneer of mathematical economics. Maurice Allais, a member of the faculty of the École des Mines de Paris, won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics for his work on market theory and the optimal allocation of resources. Among the most famous French economists are Jean Tirole, scientific director of the Institut d'Économie Industrielle at the Université de Toulouse 1 and a specialist in finance, regulation, and industrial organization; and François Bourguignon, a specialist in economic inequality. Formerly chief economist at the World Bank, Bourguignon is now director of the Paris School of Economics, which has set for itself the goal of becoming one of world's very top centers for the study of economics, sociology, public policy analysis, and demographic analysis. Among the luminaries on its faculty are Thomas Piketty, who is also research director at EHESS (École des hautes études en sciences sociales).

The Financial Times ranks 7 French schools—among them HEC (Hautes Etudes Commerciales), ESC Grenoble, and ESC Rouen—among the top 10 European master's programs in the discipline.

The international reputation of France's institutes of political science is reflected in the rapid growth in applications for admission and in the schools' increasing selectivity. Selectivity does not mean that international students are excluded or even underrepresented, however. At Sciences Po Paris, for example, international students make up 30 percent of enrollments.

Websites

- Association Française de Sciences Economiques (French economic association) <http://www.afse.fr>
- Centre de recherche en gestion de l'École Polytechnique (center for management research of the École Polytechnique), <http://www.crg.polytechnique.fr>
- Centre de recherche européen en finance et gestion, Paris IX (center for European research in finance and management at Université de Paris IX), <http://www.crefige.dauphine.fr>
- Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (center for international research and studies) <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com>
- Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (national center for scientific research), <http://www.cnrs.fr>
- Ecole d'économie de Paris (Paris School of Economics) <http://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu>
- EconomiX : <http://economiX.u-paris10.fr/>
- Fédération nationale pour l'enseignement de la gestion des entreprises (national federation for management education), <http://www.fnege.net>
- Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (foundation for strategic research), <http://www.frstrategie.org>

- Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (institute of international and strategic relations), <http://www.iris-france.org>
- Institut français des relations internationales (French institute of international relations) <http://www.ifri.org>
- Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (national institute of agronomic research) <http://www.inra.fr/>
- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr>
- Toulouse School of Economics : <http://www.tse-fr.eu/>

Web sites of France's IEPs (institutes of political science)

- Aix-en-Provence <http://www.iep-aix.fr>
- Bordeaux <http://www.sciencespobordeaux.fr>
- Grenoble <http://www-sciences-po.upmf-grenoble.fr>
- Lille <http://195.83.2.11>
- Lyon <http://iep.univ-lyon2.fr>
- Paris <http://www.sciences-po.fr>
- Rennes <http://www.sciencespo-rennes.fr/>
- Strasbourg <http://www-iep.u-strasbg.fr>
- Toulouse <http://www.sciencespo-toulouse.fr>

Keywords

administration – agri-food industry – analysis – banking – business – commercialization – communication – competition – computer science – consulting – culture – currency – development assistance – diagnostic – distribution – growth – diplomacy – e-commerce and e-business – econometrics – economic freedoms – economic intelligence – economics of the firm (of the environment, of health, of labor) – economic computation – electronics – engineering – entrepreneurship – enterprise creation – environment – Europe and European economy – evaluation and assessment – executive staffing and recruitment – finance – financial analysis and management – geography – geopolitics – global economy – globalization – government – governance – history – human resources – industry – insurance – international innovation – international – journalism – land-use planning – law – logistics – management and management control – market finance – marketing – migration – negotiation – organization and organizational development – parliament – performance – politics – press – purchasing – reform – regional development – research – services – skills – social analysis – society – sociology – statistics – stock exchanges – strategy – sustainable development – trade