About 90 state universities have been established in France since the beginning of the 19th century. The education they provide is largely funded by the state (in 2001, state spending amounted to EUR 6,590 per student). Many foreign students come to study in French universities: 180,418 enrolled for the 2002-2003 academic year, accounting for 12.7% of university students.

Universities usually offer a wide range of courses covering many different disciplines. Each university is made up of various departments, known as unités de formation et de recherche, or UFRs. Each UFR covers a particular discipline, in literature, science, languages, law, economics, etc.

Key Figures

• In 2002, there were 3322 research teams employing 42200 faculty members (known as “teacher-researchers”) and 15000 researchers.

• Theses research teams or laboratories are part of 85 universities and 70 other establishments (Grandes Ecoles - schools of engineers), including 1300 mixed laboratories between universities and research organizations (CNRS, INSERM, INRA, INRIA and others. The multiplication of the mixed units with the organizations reinforces the position of the university research.

Higher education

Universities are authorized to deliver thesis and organize their Doctoral Schools around 2 principles:

• Quality of research: young doctors prepare their thesis within nationally recognized laboratories
• The follow-up of the doctors throughout their work of thesis, with the multiplication of interactions with new disciplines, information technologies and communication, European languages and cultures.

All the training of the doctors is organized in Doctoral Schools (315 are recognized for approximately 11000 defenses per year). The role of research allocations (approximately 4000 per year) is fundamental to help young researchers to conclude their thesis (the annual expenditure for the allocates is 213 million euros).