# PROFESSIONAL FRENCH FAQ

DFP DIPLÔME DE FRANÇAIS PROFESSIONNEL

LE FRANÇAIS DES AFFAIRES

CCI PARIS ILE-DE-FRANCE EDUCATION

# INTRODUCTION

In an innovative and competitive global economic environment, mastering French represents a strategic opportunity for companies and professionals. As an official language in more than 29 countries and a key asset in fields such as diplomacy, international trade, and technology, French opens doors to dynamic markets, particularly in Europe, Africa, and Canada.

Over the past fifteen years, French departments in U.S. universities have been facing a "humanities crisis," marked by a significant decline in interest and funding for disciplines in the humanities such as literature, philosophy, history, and languages. This crisis is reflected in decreasing enrollments, as many students increasingly opt for fields perceived as more directly tied to employment opportunities, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

To counter these negative effects, many French professors have been innovating by developing French courses related to the professional world, combining communication skills for the workplace with knowledge of the Francophone economic landscape. This phenomenon is no longer a temporary trend within language departments but has become a lasting development across institutions, helping attract and retain a growing number of students each year.

The Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI Paris Ile-de-France), a pioneer in certification, assessment, and training in French, actively supports universities—particularly language departments within American institutions—by contributing to the promotion and teaching of French for professional purposes. It relies on a solid network of nearly 40 exam centers in the United States. This network has expanded over the years alongside extensive training efforts: since 2013, more than 400 professors from North American universities have been trained, either in person or remotely, to integrate professional French into their teaching practices. These initiatives are also part of a broader momentum to develop French for professional purposes through participation in forums and the organization of roundtables. Through these commitments, CCI Paris Île-de-France actively supports instructors and enables professional French to thrive across North America.

These various initiatives contribute to the growth of professional French courses, which have multiplied in many French departments in recent years, responding to the increasing demand for training aligned with the needs of both academia and the professional world. For the 2019–2020 academic year, a study conducted by Hélène Bouche at the Embassy of France in the United States and Deborah S. Reisinger at Duke University revealed that 58.7% of U.S. colleges and universities offered at least one course in French for professional purposes.

This momentum, however, raises several questions:

Is professional French truly accessible to everyone? Are there enough tools to get started? How can one successfully convince their French department? And is it necessary to have expertise beforehand?

We asked seven French professors to share their experience teaching professional French from different perspectives and through highly personal viewpoints. You will find anecdotes, real-life experiences, as well as knowledge acquired over the years.

We hope this FAQ will support your reflection on professional French, answer your questions, and—better yet—offer solutions for integrating professional French into your educational and professional strategies, to the great benefit of your students.

**Embassy of France in the United States**

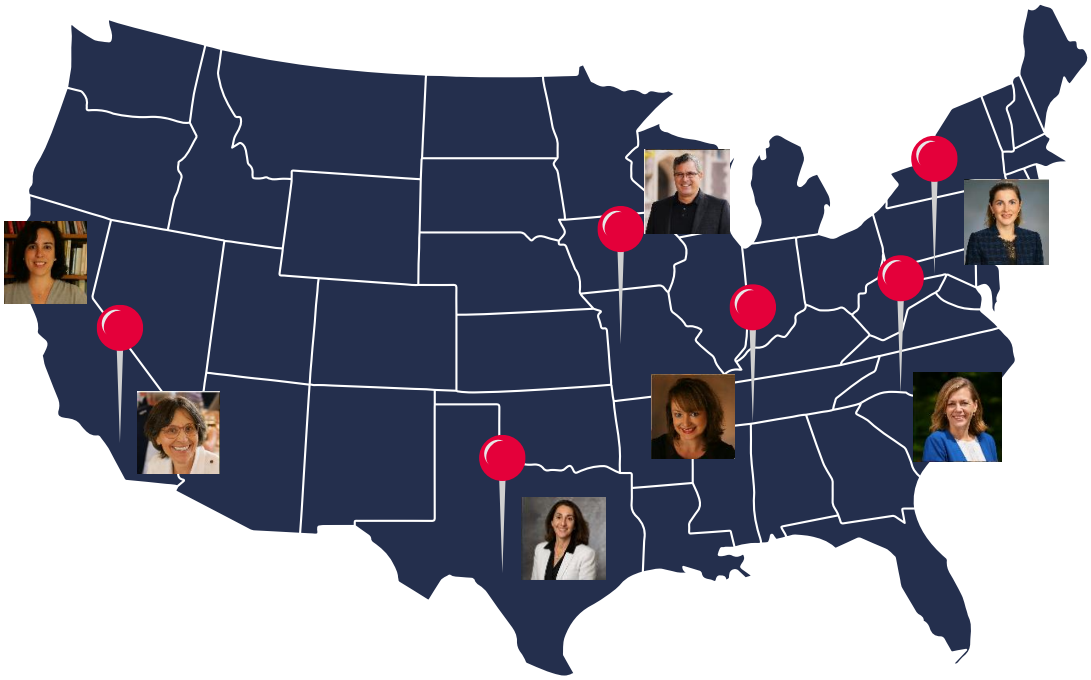
Education Research - French Culture (villa-albertine.org)

To highlight the added value that French brings to the professional world, the Educational and Linguistic Cooperation Office of the Embassy of France in the United States, in collaboration with the Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is working to develop one of the key tools enabling French departments in U.S. universities to attract a new population of students: professional French.

Funding dedicated to teacher training and to projects that support the creation of professional French courses aims to equip students with the tools they need to apply their language skills in a professional environment.

Our efforts also focus on building connections between universities, students, and potential employers through career forums and internship programs, thereby expanding students' professional opportunities as a natural extension of their academic studies.

# OUR TEACHERS: AMBASSADORS OF PROFESSIONAL FRENCH





Ms. Buckley Paola, Teaching Professor, Department of World Languages, Southern Methodist University (SMU), *Dallas, Texas (TX)*



Ms. Degât Sophie, Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Francophone, Italian, Germanic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, French-Europe Faculty, The Lauder Institute, *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (PA)*



Ms. Denié-Higney Laurence, Senior Lecturer, Le Cercle Francophone, advisor ; Le Centre d'Excellence, director ; European Languages and Transcultural Studies Department, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), *Los Angeles, California (CA)*



Ms. Dieu-Porter Nathalie, Principal Senior Lecturer in the Department of French and Italian Studies, Vanderbilt University, *Nashville, Tennessee (TN)*



Mr. Cuillé Lionel, Associate Professor of Modern Literature, Washington University in St. Louis (WashU), *St.Louis, Missouri (MO)*

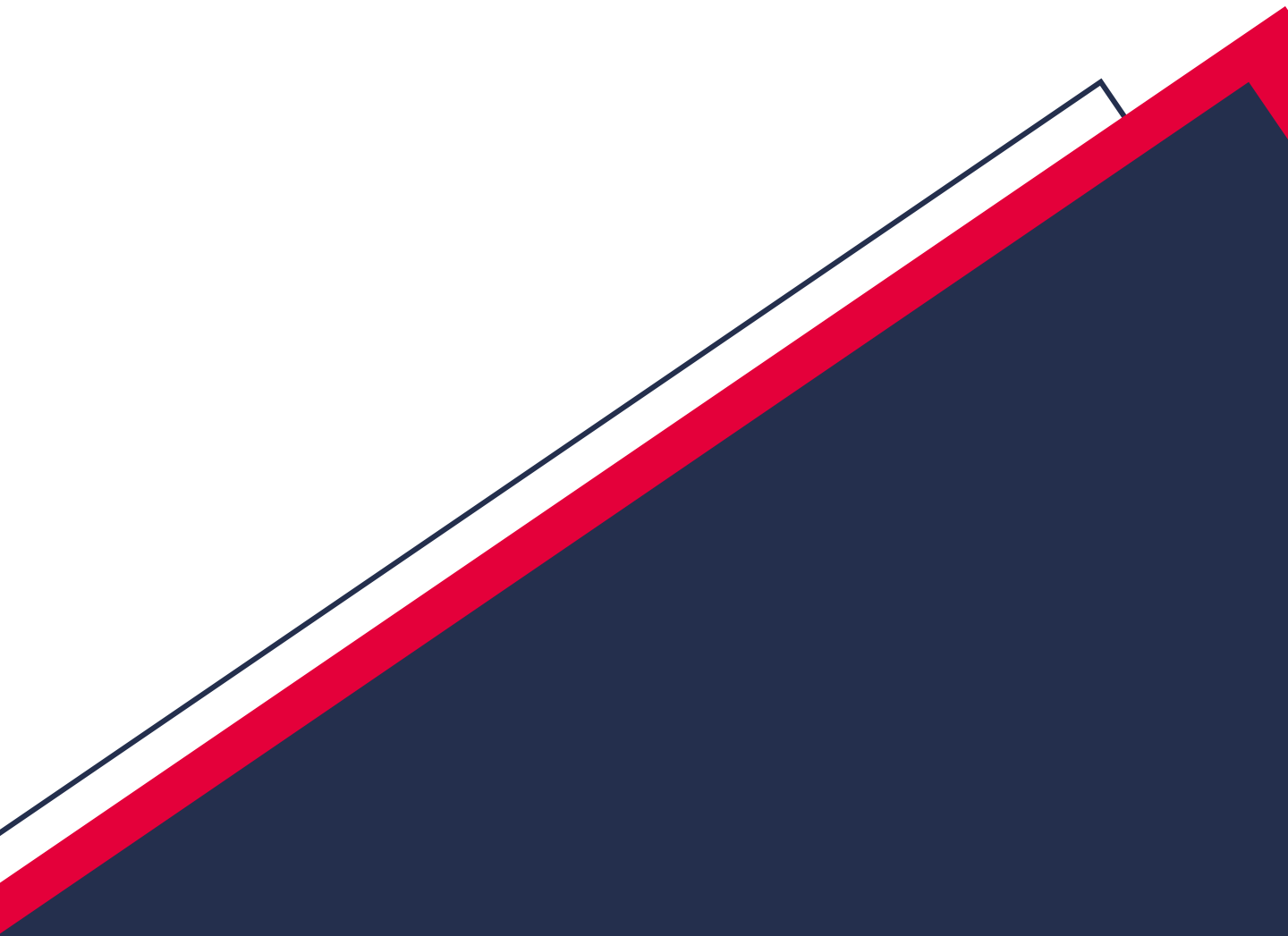


Ms. Reisinger Deb, Professor of the Practice in French in the Department of Romance Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Education,Duke University, *Durham, North Carolina (NC)*



Ms. Soroosh Mina, Assistant Professor (Teaching) of French at the University of Southern California, *Los Angeles, California (CA)*

# 1 Professional French Courses





# Let’s separate fact from fiction

## Is French for Health Professional a passing trend?

## ✕ NO

**We integrated the pathway into our interdisciplinary teaching, and we believe it contributed to a 20% increase in our enrollments in 2024**

The first objection that could be raised against FPS is that it has no place in a traditional French department where we have historically taught literature. As an agrégé de lettres, specialist of French literature, I myself would never have imagined teaching FPS. My colleagues and I hold doctorates in French and Comparative literature, and we might have been reluctant to teach courses with strictly professional objectives. However, my colleagues were receptive to creating an FPS pathway not only to serve our PreMed students and to internationalize their first major, but also to encourage incoming students to pursue a double major or minor in French. To pursue our pathway, students must not only take the FPS course Medical French but also enroll in upper-level French courses on themes associated with medical humanities. We are fortunate to have two colleagues who are researchers in this field: Professor Julie Singer, a specialist of medieval literature and disability studies; and Dr. Kat Haklin, who studies the representation of phobias in 19th-century French literature. I myself am offering a course entitled "Well-Being," in which we study the philosophy of happiness through literature, from Montaigne to Francis Ponge.

Colleagues might have feared that the FPS pathway would draw students away from traditional literature courses. On the contrary, we integrated the pathway into our interdisciplinary teaching, and we believe it contributed to a 20% increase in our enrollments in 2024, without decreasing the number of students in our other courses. It's essential to reassure colleagues, explaining that FPS does not replace our literature courses but instead attracts STEM students to the humanities.

To combat the notion that FPS is just a fad, it is crucial to create a narrative comprehensible to our students. In an American context where it is no longer possible to recruit students based on the prestige of French literature or the Francophone space, it is now important to explain the added value of French as a complement to a primary major. Since many of our students are PreMeds, the FPS pathway appears to be a logical complement to their primary major. FPS internationalizes their primary major (biology, chemistry, etc.) by allowing them to understand an alternative universal healthcare system that serves as a point of comparison during their medical studies and checks the "intercultural competence" box on their CV, a valued skill in the professional world.

For FPS to have a lasting impact, the teaching team must not only be involved but also make the program known on campus. Our French department is fortunate to host the French Connexions cultural center that I founded and direct, which is recognized as a center of excellence by the cultural services of the French Embassy in the United States. Thanks to the Embassy's support, our center received a grant from cultural services enabling us to invite Francophone doctors and public health experts to our campus (MEFRAN conference cycle). This year, with colleagues from the centers of excellence at Johns Hopkins University, the University of Virginia, and Florida, we also obtained a significant grant through which representatives of Doctors Without Borders (MSF) will speak about humanitarian medicine on our respective campuses. Such initiatives highlight the importance of FPS for our students interested in humanitarian medicine, in Francophone West Africa, for example.

Clearly, to promote WashU's FPS pathway, we must take advantage of the university's media channels and the network of the French consulate's cultural services in Chicago or the embassy.

The first benefit for any French program in the United States is the impact on recruitment. According to a recent MLA report, French enrollments decreased by 23.1% between Fall 2016 and Fall 2021. Thanks to the FPS pathway, we reversed this trend by attracting a new group of students who understood the added value of French for their degree: last year, our French enrollments increased by 20% and our number of double-majors and minors is increasing.

The second benefit is that our FPS pathway better prepares our students for their observational internship at the CHU Pasteur in Nice. Familiar with professional health vocabulary, having listened to numerous Francophone health professionals invited to our courses, and practiced many role-playing scenarios integrating patient and practitioner roles, our students are better equipped to understand real-life interactions within the various medical teams at CHU Pasteur where they will be placed.

***Mr. Cuillé Lionel, Associate Professor of Modern Literature, Washington University in St. Louis (WashU), St.Louis, Missouri (MO)***



# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Aren't professional French classes boring for teachers and students?

**✕ NO**

**For the past 15 years, this course has been consistently in high demand. It is always full, frequently with a waitlist!**

When I asked to take over the "French for Business" course from a colleague who had retired, the program director at the time told me that we didn't need to offer it. She explained that it hadn't been very well enrolled, that it was challenging to teach if you didn't have a business background, and that it wouldn't necessarily attract many students. I thought otherwise. While I didn't have a degree in Economics or Business, I surely knew more than my students; I also knew where I could learn more. I enrolled in a week-long course in Paris offered by the then-named CCIP (Chambre de Commerce et d'industrie de Paris-Ile de France). It was like an economics bootcamp taught by Jean-Luc Penfornis, author of Affaires.com, and it gave me a framework and the confidence to develop a course. We decided to pilot the course and see how it went.

The results? For the past 15 years, this course has been consistently in high demand. It is always full, frequently with a waitlist. Students appreciate using their French in "practical ways", which is inherently motivating – interacting with professionals, learning about how different cultures approach problems, and developing research-based projects and deliverables. We tackle big issues, from sustainability to diplomacy. It's a course in which students often finally grasp the importance of mastering another language.

As for myself, I have found professional French courses to be the ideal challenge: exciting to develop, interesting to design, and a joy to teach. As my expertise grew, I even began researching in this area, eventually co-authoring a textbook on advanced professional French (Affaires globales) with my colleagues Mary-Beth Raycraft and Nathalie Dieu-Porter.

In sum, French for the Profession is a field that is well-established, with plenty of resources available, yet still young enough that we can invent and create meaningful new content.

***Ms. Reisinger Deb, Professor of the Practice in French in the Department of Romance Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Education, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (NC)***



# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Do professional French courses compete with literature courses?

## ✕ NO

**If your French program attracts and retains more students, you can offer more courses and a wider variety of courses, including literature courses.**

French for the professions courses as well as internships and other experiential learning experiences enhance your language programs and help increase retention.

If your French program attracts and retains more students, you can offer more courses and a wider variety of courses, including literature courses.

Case study: Spanish and French at Southern Methodist University (SMU)

- At SMU there are roughly 800+ students enrolled in Spanish classes vs. roughly 300+ in French classes
- Spanish offers a traditional literature-based curriculum and only one Spanish for Business course (generally taught abroad)

For the 2023-2024 academic year, Spanish counted 32 majors and 140 minors, whereas French counted 28 majors and 38 minors. These numbers suggest that students enrolled in Spanish courses do not continue to a major because there are not enough courses that meet their interests.

Each semester the French Area offers one Lit course, one Language for Specific Purposes course, one culture course, and an experiential learning experience (internships). For example, in the fall 2024 semester, we offer Contemporary French Cinema, Introduction to French Culture and Literature, French for Business, and Internships. In the spring 2025 semester, students can choose among the following upper-level courses: Stylistics (translation), Contemporary French Lit, Perspectives on French Identity, Internships. We will also pilot an intermediate-level (fourth semester) course in French for the Professions; we hope this will increase retention from third to fourth semester and pave the way for more French minors and majors.

***Ms. Buckley Paola, Teaching Professor, Department of World Languages, Southern Methodist University (SMU), Dallas, Texas (TX)***



# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Do I need to be an expert to teach professional French?

**✕ NO**

**My French Business course is first and foremost an advanced French language course !**

Sometimes teachers believe they are not qualified to teach a French Business course, since they do not know the business world. My French Business course is first and foremost an advanced French language course. I teach using the communicative method, the five Cs and the ACTFL performance descriptors. My course theme is efficient communication in a business setting. I do not teach business to my students.

***Ms. Denié-Higney Laurence, Senior Lecturer, Le Cercle Francophone, advisor ; Le Centre d'Excellence, director ; European Languages and Transcultural Studies Department, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Los Angeles, California (CA)***

**You can design and develop a Business / Professional French course (online or in person) without prior training. To do so, rely on the following key points:**

-the required proficiency level students will need to take the class (intermediate or advanced?)
-student learning outcomes (being able to negotiate a deal, write professional emails, pitch a new product, participate in meetings, make a sale, etc.)
-the materials you will use (a textbook? role-plays scenarios? websites / online resources ?)
-sectors you might cover depending on your students' needs (finance, sales, law, hospitality, technology, etc.)
-collaboration tools students could use (Google Docs, Padlet, etc.)
-guest speakers from the business world (this can greatly enrich the course)
-student assessment tools (oral presentations, writing assignments, role-play evaluations)
-opportunities for certification (in language and in business) for your students to participate in at the conclusion of the course
-course evaluation questions (mid-course, end of course)

***Ms. Soroosh Mina, Assistant Professor (Teaching) of French at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California (CA)***

## The Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry, supports instructors with practical and adaptable teaching resources.

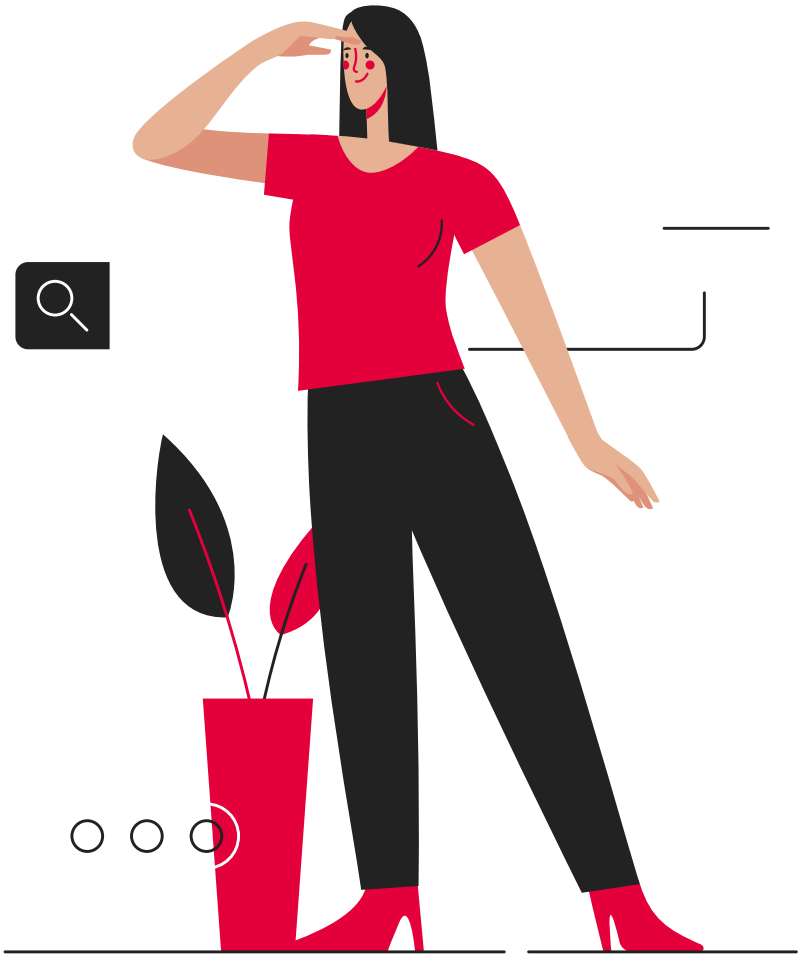
The Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry is committed to supporting instructors in implementing their professional French courses.

This is why we provide them with a wide range of free pedagogical resources designed to meet the diverse needs of learners and teaching contexts.

These resources are:

- Practical: they offer ready-to-use activities, role-play scenarios, thematic worksheets, and authentic materials.
- Adaptable: they can be adjusted to different proficiency levels (from B1 to C1) and to a variety of professional fields (business, healthcare, tourism, international relations, etc.).
- Aligned with certifications: they help students effectively prepare for the Diplômes de Français Professionnel (DFP) by reinforcing the expected linguistic and intercultural competencies (see Part II).

More information about our resources: Ressources pédagogiques FOS - Le français des affaires





# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Isn't it lonely to teach professional French courses?

**✕ NO**

**Today, in many departments, the number of teachers offering these courses is increasing!**

A decade ago, there was often one person in a department designated to teach French for the Professions courses. Today, in many departments, faculty now vie to teach these courses, which are often enrolled by students with genuine interest in learning the language for current or future careers. When multiple sections or courses are not possible, a successful course can sometimes be rotated amongst faculty, ensuring more teachers become familiar with the content, and more apt to include professional French modules in their courses at all levels. When even this is challenging, other faculty can become involved in unique aspects of the course. I have invited colleagues to be guest speakers, to judge student projects, to conduct mock interviews, and to serve as examinators for the CCIP exam. All of these interventions ensure the course is understood within the department as a rigorous and engaging course.

French for the Professions faculty will often find like-minded colleagues in Spanish and in Mandarin Chinese; both languages have robust LSP communities. If you have colleagues teaching Business German or Business Spanish, for instance, consider hosting a translanguaging event where students come together to share cultural nuances around business practices, from c.v. writing to marketing campaigns.

In addition, there are national associations and conferences that focus exclusively on World Languages for Specific Purposes (WLSP). With a growing number of colleges and universities offering these courses, you won't be alone. Plus, the community is small enough to be accessible and open, and in my experience, it has been incredibly friendly and welcoming.

***Ms. Reisinger Deb, Professor of the Practice in French in the Department of Romance Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Education, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (NC)***

# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Can I teach my French for the Professions Course online ?

**YES**

**I taught a successful synchronous French for the Professions class on Zoom in July 2020 during the pandemic lockdown.**

Eight students took the class. At the start of the class, students' proficiency levels ranged from Intermediate-Mid to Advanced-Low in French. On a preliminary survey, most students elected to work on product development. Throughout the course, students worked in teams of two to design a product then market it. Class time was split between working together as a class (learning new vocabulary, looking at authentic materials such as ads, articles, and sample product videos, having class discussions) and teamwork (when students collaborated and worked on their own product design strategies). I circulated among the groups in the Zoom breakout rooms and answered any questions.

In terms of product design, students at first worked on identifying a need in one of their communities then developing a product to aid with that need. They conducted mini-market surveys in French among their classmates, designed product ideas, developed a detailed product concept, then pitched that product in French to the class. They then refined their products based on feedback given by the class and by me, designed a brand logo and slogan, and created a video ad in French to appeal to the target market that they had identified. Finally, students orally presented their final videos before screening, then answered questions as well as received feedback after showing it.

Student evaluations at the end of the course were mostly positive. Students expressed their desire to have been able to do the course in person. Two students prepared for the Chambre de Commerce certificate exams and successfully passed, placing at the B2 level.

***Ms. Soroosh Mina, Assistant Professor (Teaching) of French at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California (CA)***



# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Aren't "French for the Professions" Courses basically retooled "Business French" courses?

**✕ NO**

**Many faculty are expanding their offerings to offer more specialized courses.**

While many departments and programs offer traditional "Business French" courses, many faculty are expanding their offerings to offer more specialized courses. These include "French for ___" courses; topics include Fashion, Tourism, Food Studies, International Relations, Health Professions, Sustainability, and so on. This expansion is logical, as usually more successful, as such courses draw on local specificity, including geographic location, student population, faculty research areas, and campus culture. A city known for its tourism such as New Orleans would be wise to work with its local universities to support the development of a course or even a certificate in French for Tourism and Food Studies.

To expand their courses, French faculty should get to know their university colleagues as well as their universities more broadly. Are there French-speaking colleagues in other departments, particularly in Economics, Public policy, Environmental Studies, or the Health Professions? Invite them for coffee and introduce them to your class; in my experience, these people understand the importance of language and culture and will become your biggest champions. What are the most popular majors, and how can you draw on student interest to create connections? Many of our students are pre-health, so developing a course in French for the Health Professions is a logical choice.
Where are faculty research labs and what connections might exist with global Francophone populations? I learned that a number of our students were spending their summers conducting research in West Africa.

Finally, faculty must get to know their surrounding area: are there French speakers in their community who can meet your students? Is there an alliance française in the area? Are there Francophone or French-owned businesses nearby? Such local connections will anchor courses, excite students, connect faculty with colleagues, and strengthen campus-community ties more broadly.

***Ms. Reisinger Deb, Professor of the Practice in French in the Department of Romance Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Education, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (NC)***



# Let’s separate fact from fiction

## Is a course in French for the Professions merely about acquiring field-specific vocabulary?

**✕ NO**

**French for the Professions courses go far beyond teaching field-specific vocabulary.**

French for the Professions courses provide students with an in-depth understanding of professional norms, cultural contexts, and practical skills required in French-speaking professional environments. The curriculum includes case studies, simulations, and role-playing exercises that expose students to real-life scenarios in industries such as healthcare, business, and law.
For example, students in the French for Health course don't just learn medical terms—they engage with ethical issues, patient interactions, and the subtleties of healthcare communication in French.

The course also proposes activities to establish a firm connection between the UN sustainable goals, healthcare issues and solutions through the lens of the whole francophone world.

Similarly, the French for Business course integrates negotiations, email etiquette, and business presentations, ensuring students are well-prepared to work in francophone professional settings.

Concrete Elements in the Course:
These courses involve much more than vocabulary; they include cultural analysis, business etiquette, legal frameworks, and practical applications of language in professional contexts. Students leave with a toolkit that allows them to navigate professional environments, think critically, and engage confidently with francophone professionals.
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***Ms. Dieu-Porter Nathalie, Principal Senior Lecturer in the Department of French and Italian Studies, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (TN)***

**In most courses, the emphasis is placed on the application of knowledge.**

While Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) courses do offer students the opportunity to learn and to integrate specialized, discourse-specific vocabulary and phrases into their lexical repertoire, the emphasis in most courses is on the application of this knowledge. In other words, most teachers will use a pedagogical approach using active, situated learning via role plays and case studies to help students use the language they are learning. In my experience, students are most engaged when they focus on the content and have opportunities to use it.

For example, when students listen to an economic podcast or watch a news show, they should note new phrases or vocabulary words that are used. They can then compare these to what their peers have noted, and together they work to develop a lexical repertoire that they can expand, based on needs. We then ask them to practice, reproduce, and incorporate these words and phrases into staged discussions or debates. This results in a more authentic use of language that is more lasting. This approach is useful for all professional French contexts across multiple modalities, from running a meeting and presenting information to negotiating an outcome to composing an email.

***Ms. Reisinger Deb, Professor of the Practice in French in the Department of Romance Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Education, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (NC)***



# Let’s separate fact from fiction

## Do French for Business courses only focus on teaching specialized language?

**✕ NO**

**Learning professional communication in French necessarily includes a linguistic component but is not limited to it.**

As I explain to my students on the first day of each semester, what I mean by French for Business is:
"The set of knowledge, skills, cultural awareness, communication abilities, learning strategies, and behaviors that are part of the professional communication competence required for operating adequately and effectively in French in Francophone business and economic environments and for functioning in an international context." (Binon and Verlinde, 2007:27)
"This competence involves studying and mastering the variety of discourses and documents in professional situations related to French for Business, combined with a reflection on intercultural issues." (Rakotobe-Darricades, 1992:93)

As these definitions show, learning professional communication in French necessarily includes a linguistic component but is not limited to it. Developing intercultural competence is central.
In this section, I will first illustrate how the course content aligns with these definitions by providing future instructors with concrete examples of activities and projects implemented in class. Finally, I will conclude with a piece of advice on course categorization to attract the largest number of students possible.

The second course (French for Business II) begins by introducing the theoretical framework of interculturality, exploring different models of intercultural analysis. Students use various theoretical frameworks (Hall, Hofstede, Meyer) to analyze and compare two geographical cultures of their choice, identifying the concrete implications for business. After covering these foundations, we examine how they factor into marketing and advertising by analyzing how a single brand, such as McDonald’s, tailors its advertising campaigns to the French and American markets and leverages cultural references specific to both.

Moreover, conducting business in or with a country requires an understanding of its cultural, historical, social, and political context—knowledge that is essential to understanding future clients or negotiation partners. That is why, during the second semester, we conduct a weekly press review in class where students present a news story of their choice. The only condition is that it must have been published in a Francophone media source that week. This activity not only keeps students connected to current events in the French-speaking world but also enables them to conduct an ongoing study of their market, as the final project for this course is to create their own business in a Francophone country.

The second unit of the course is customizable according to students' professional profiles and interests. Students vote at the beginning of the term for their preferred topics from a list of market sectors (luxury industry, tourism, transportation) and issues (ESG, impact, gender parity).

Finally, this course is structured around two global simulation projects that help students develop practical and transferable skills. The first is a stock portfolio project where students select French stocks and track their performance weekly throughout the semester, making strategic decisions to maximize returns. The second is a business creation project: as a final assignment, students develop a detailed business plan that they then pitch to a panel of potential investors.

These projects provide authentic immersion into professional contexts and allow students to put the skills they have acquired into practice, including strategy, communication, and intercultural collaboration. By developing these abilities in a simulated yet realistic environment, students prepare themselves to tackle the challenges of a globalized world in which linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence are essential assets for success.

Finally, students at American colleges and universities are often required to take at least one course from various predefined categories designed to develop cross-disciplinary skills and a strong general education. At Penn, these categories vary by school. Students in the College of Arts and Sciences, for example, must take courses that fulfill seven sectors of knowledge and five foundational approaches.

For instance, my two French for Business courses fulfill cross-cultural analysis for College students and cross-cultural perspective for Wharton students. Not only does this reinforce the fundamental goal of the course, but it also attracts students, as for some, it allows them to fulfill two requirements at once.

My advice to instructors looking to create a French for Professions course is to research the required categories at their institution thoroughly. It is also important to complete the necessary administrative steps, such as submitting a course proposal or collaborating with academic committees, to ensure that their course appears in one of these categories in the catalog. This way, your course can offer students the satisfaction of "double counting," like a good move in Scrabble!

***Ms. Degât Sophie, Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Francophone, Italian, Germanic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, French-Europe Faculty, The Lauder Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (PA)***



# Let’s separate fact from fiction

## Can you teach professional French in beginner and intermediate classes ?

**YES**

**French business courses can be offered at every level .**

French business courses can be offered at every level (beginner, intermediate and advanced). It can be an entire course dedicated to French business or one module on the business world. For example, I taught a module on French work culture at a beginner-intermediate level.

For example, I taught a module on French work culture at a beginner intermediate level. In this unit, students develop their vocabulary necessary for the workplace and review the object pronouns. Students learn how to write a resumé and read a job offer. They role play a job interview and write a professional thank-you note. They gain an understanding of the job interview format and typical questions when completing a grammar exercise on object pronouns: a person is taking a job interview and answers questions using the proper object pronouns. This exercise is used as a model when students do their role play: one student is a recruiter, and the other one is looking for a job (then they switch roles). In another unit on immigration, I asked my students to help refugees looking for a job in France to write their resumé. I give them refugee's profiles that they use to write the résumé following the format learned in class. This activity allows students to reinforce their knowledge and apply them in a different context.

The French business course attracts students from the science departments such as engineering, biology, etc… with a very good level of French. These students would not have considered taking a more traditional French course. Once they are in my French business course, I encourage them to do either a major or minor in French and Francophone studies.

***Ms. Denié-Higney Laurence, Senior Lecturer, Le Cercle Francophone, advisor ; Le Centre d’Excellence, director ; European Languages and Transcultural Studies Department, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Los Angeles, California (CA)***



# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Are French for Business courses only intended for business or economics students?

**✕ NO**

**French for Business courses bring together students from all Penn schools.**

Contrary to what some may think, French for Business courses are not restricted to students specializing in business or economics. On the contrary, they attract an extremely diverse range of profiles, demonstrating their relevance to students from various disciplines and interests.

First, it is crucial to clarify in the course description and communication with prospective students that these courses do not require a prior background in business. The only prerequisites are a sufficient linguistic level, determined by the course level, and curiosity about professional dynamics in a Francophone context. In our department, the level required for French for Business I corresponds to the completion of five semesters of French (i.e., the elementary-intermediate sequence and, ideally, an advanced course such as grammar), which is equivalent to levels ranging from B1.1 to B2.2. The second level is open to students who have taken the first course as well as to native speakers or those who have completed several advanced courses, corresponding to B2-C1.

This accessibility allows us to bring together students from all Penn schools. French for Business I typically includes roughly equal thirds of students from Wharton (including those in the Huntsman dual-degree program), students from the College of Arts and Sciences, and engineering students. A smaller additional group consists of MBA students from Wharton who obtain special permission to take this course.

Within these groups, the diversity is equally remarkable. My classes regularly include international students (this semester alone: China, Canada, Spain, Burundi, Luxembourg) or binational students, students who have already completed internships in Francophone environments such as Senegal, Switzerland, or France, or those wishing to do so. Some come as exchange students from European universities and take advantage of these courses to enrich their cultural and academic immersion. Others, such as a mother returning to her studies after raising her children, bring unique perspectives that enhance classroom discussions.

Finally, the presence of Francophone students (often raised in the U.S. with one or two Francophone parents) is notable, particularly in the second semester, as they seek to refine their understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances in a professional context (quite different from everyday spoken French).

The transversality of the first course (French for Business I), partly inspired by Objectif Express, is reflected in its structure. It is organized into units corresponding to different professional tasks that are transversal and applicable beyond the strict confines of business, as they involve everyday professional skills regardless of sector or type of organization. These tasks include, for example, writing emails, organizing meetings, and managing schedules. A portion of the course is also dedicated to recruitment: students work on a real internship offer adapted to their profiles and skills and prepare their application package (resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile) to apply. Some, after receiving my corrections, actually apply! In this course, students work in groups on two professional scenarios (which include many tasks useful for the DFP preparation) as part of a larger and authentic project, such as welcoming new colleagues or launching a product in the French market.

Each semester, at least a quarter of the class, regardless of their profile, chooses to take the DFP, and our center boasts a 100% success rate.

This rich diversity of profiles contributes to a stimulating and dynamic learning environment where each student brings a unique perspective. These courses are therefore not a niche reserved for a specialized elite, but an inclusive space open to all who wish to develop their linguistic and intercultural skills in a professional context.

***Ms. Degât Sophie, Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Francophone, Italian, Germanic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, French-Europe Faculty, The Lauder Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (PA)***



# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Does professional French provide students with an advantage in the job market ?

## FACT

**French provides job seekers with hard skills that employers seek.**

Students who develop language proficiency gain hard skills that represent a competitive advantage in the job market:
-French is the third most requested language on the American labor market (according to French Higher Education)
-France is ranked number three on the list of largest foreign sources of employment in the U.S., employing over 700,000 people in the states https://www.novacredit.com/resources/french-companies-in-the-us
-Canada is the 2nd largest trading partner of the United States. (United States Census)
-According to Indeed.com, French is one of the eight most useful languages for your career https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/languages-for-jobs

Professional French helps students build the in-demand interpersonal skills needed to succeed in today's global economy

Increasingly, employers view soft skills as essential elements in new hires: "84% of employees and managers believe new employees must possess soft skills and demonstrate them in the hiring process. This figure was the highest in companies with over 500 employees, with 90% saying that soft skills were the most important"
https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2024/04/04/soft-skills-in-the-workplace/

Professional French goes beyond language proficiency: it enables students to develop essential interpersonal skills for a globalized work environment.
According to the 2023 World Economic Forum and Forbes, some of the top soft skills that employers want are :

- Creative thinking, an ability to “think outside the box”: student who speak another language can understand multiple perspectives, especially students of French who are exposed to the multiple cultures of the Francophone world
- Resilience, flexibility, and agility: these are skills students develop when they study and intern abroad
- Communication: proficiency in French enhances communication skills
- Emotional intelligence: bilingual students develop an increased sense of self-awareness and can empathize with others on a deeper level
- Critical thinking: when you learn a second language you develop your problem-solving skills and question your assumptions about others
- Conflict management: students of French learn about the great diversity of Francophone culture and are therefore more likely to foster an environment of collaboration where respect for different ideas and perspectives can diffuse disagreements and expedite resolutions.

https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/soft-skills-examples/

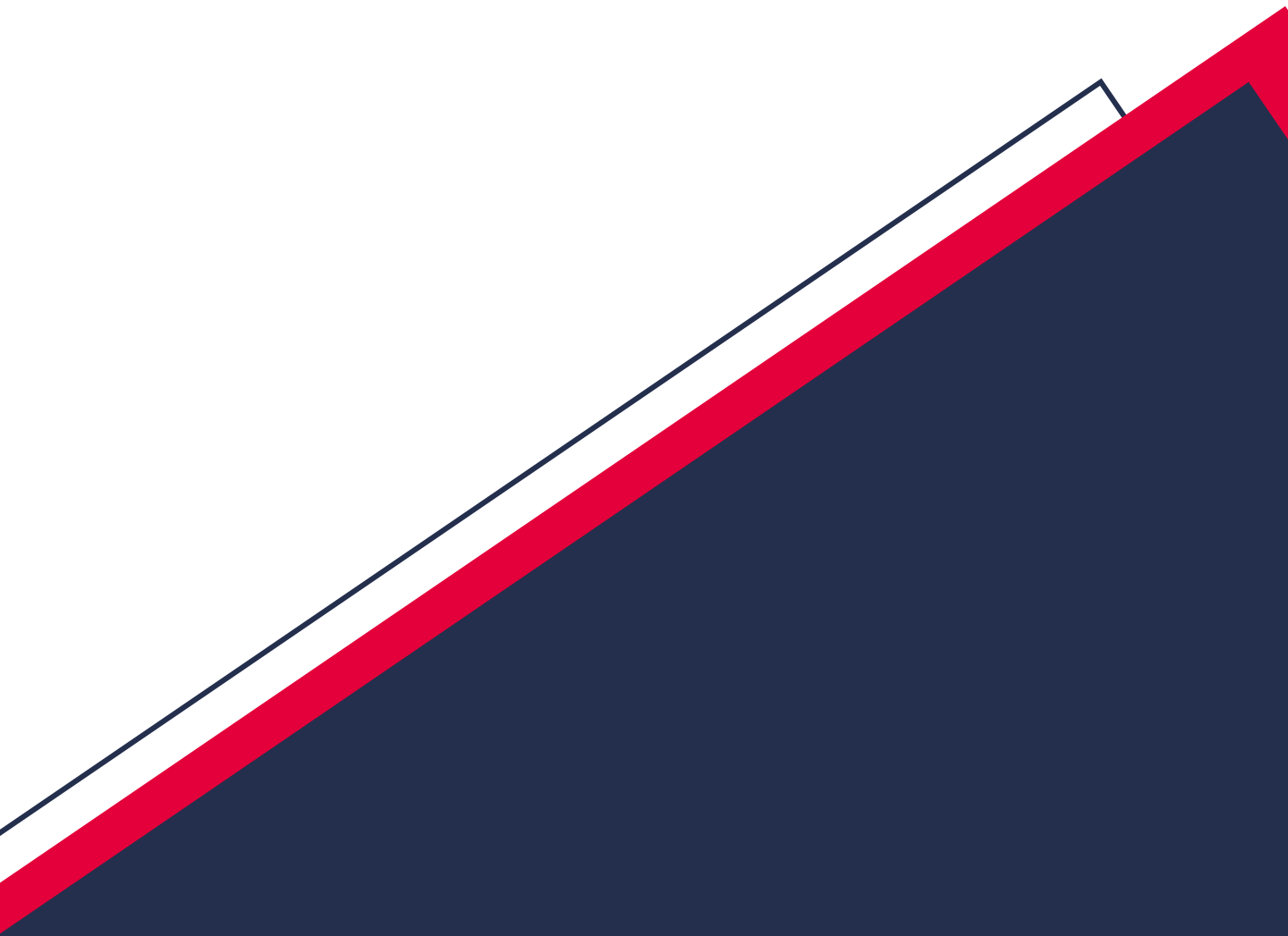
These competencies, strengthened through the study of French, expose students to rich cultural diversity and encourage them to adopt new perspectives.

Students can validate their skills in a professional linguistic domain through the Professional French Diplomas offered by the Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry. By certifying language abilities in specific professional contexts (business, international relations, healthcare), these diplomas also attest to students’ capacity to mobilize their soft skills in real-world situations.

These diplomas allow students to stand out from other candidates in the job market by demonstrating not only their mastery of French, but also their ability to operate effectively in multicultural and demanding environments.”

***Ms. Buckley Paola, Teaching Professor, Department of World Languages, Southern Methodist University (SMU), Dallas, Texas (TX)***

# 2 CERTIFYING PROFESSIONAL FRENCH INSTRUCTION





# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Can students improve their global diplomacy skills through a Diploma in French for International Relations?

## ✓ YES

**Professional French provides job seekers with concrete, in-demand skills that employers are looking for.**

Students pursuing the Diploma in French for International Relations (DFP) are not only improving their language skills, but also gaining a significant asset recognized internationally. This certification validates their competence in navigating complex diplomatic scenarios in French, which is a crucial skill in today's globalized world. It sets them apart in competitive job markets, offering a clear advantage for positions in international organizations, diplomacy, and global NGOs.

From the university's perspective, offering this certification enhances Vanderbilt University's reputation as an institution that prepares students for global professional opportunities. Furthermore, the certification aligns with the growing demand for multilingual professionals in international relations, boosting both the university's prestige and the students' employability.

An internationally recognized certification, such as this one, provides students with a competitive edge in securing internships and jobs that require not just language proficiency but also cultural fluency in diplomatic contexts. It allows them to demonstrate their expertise in real-world negotiations and legal matters, crucial for a career in international relations.

***Ms. Dieu-Porter Nathalie, Principal Senior Lecturer in the Department of French and Italian Studies, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (TN)***



# Let's separate fact from fiction

## Does an international certification offer little added value ?

**✕ NO**

**It enables students to demonstrate their expertise in negotiations and legal matters in real-world situations.**

An internationally recognized certification, such as French for International Relations Diploma (DFP), provides students with a competitive edge in securing internships and jobs that require not just language proficiency but also cultural fluency in diplomatic contexts. It allows them to demonstrate their expertise in real-world negotiations and legal matters, crucial for a career in international relations.

***Ms. Dieu-Porter Nathalie, Principal Senior Lecturer in the Department of French and Italian Studies, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (TN)***

# Let's separate fact from fiction

**Is there no professional French certification that allows students to demonstrate their language proficiency to employers?**

## ✕ NO

**The Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry, provides instructors with the Professional French Diplomas.**

Created in 1958 by the Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the request of businesses, the Professional French Diplomas assess written and oral communication skills in French across major professional sectors: business, tourism–hospitality–food service, international relations, and healthcare.

By focusing on performance-based evaluation and professional tasks to be completed in French, these Diplomas offer a coherent assessment system that is fully aligned with the needs of today's economic landscape.

Valid for life, they are an excellent indicator of professional-level French proficiency and represent a valuable asset for anyone wishing to highlight their French language skills within the francophone and international professional spheres, particularly when entering the job market.

**Different fields and levels offered:**

DFP DIPLÔME DE FRANÇAIS PROFESSIONNEL

| | BUSINESS | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS | HEALTHCARE | TOURISM HOSPITAL FOOD SERVICES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | DFP Affaires C1 | DFP Relations internationales C1 | DFP Santé C1 | |
| B2 | DFP Affaires B2 | DFP Relations internationales B2 | DFP Santé B2 | DFP Tourisme Hôtellerie Restauration B2 |
| B1 | DFP Affaires B1 | DFP Relations internationales B1 | DFP Santé B1 | DFP Tourisme Hôtellerie Restauration B1 |
| A2 | DFP Affaires A2 | | | DFP Tourisme Hôtellerie Restauration A2 |
| A1 | DFP Affaires A1 | | | |

# Recognitions

ACADEMIC

CEMS
THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Duke UNIVERSITY

Università Bocconi MILANO

HEC PARIS

GU

ECOLE HOTELIERE LAUSANNE
Since 1893
A MEMBER OF EHL GROUP

diplomatische akademie wien

INTERNATIONAL

ALTE
Full Member

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE la francophonie

CCI FRANCE INTERNATIONAL

NATIONAL

MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE
Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité

Bundesministerium
Europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations SEM

VIDAUS REIKALŲ MINISTERIJA

MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ, MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY

OKTATÁSI HIVATAL

**Professional French Diplomas are recognized by numerous ministries around the world and validate language-training pathways in language centers, high schools, vocational schools, and universities. Access to the Professional French Diplomas is simple and fast and is granted through membership in the global network of testing centers of the Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry.**

# Simplicity – Reliability – Proximity

### More than 500 centers worldwide

A network of partner centers accredited for the TEF and/ or DFP, present in over 120 countries

### Simple computer-based testing

A wide range of tools available to make the t process easier

### Fast and secure results

Results available in a secure digital vault within 2 weeks

### Extensive open-access resources

Information and guidlance available for instructors and candidates



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry, extends its deepest gratitude to all the professors who generously contributed to the development of this Professional French FAQ.
Their expertise, dedication, and commitment were essential to the success of this project.
We sincerely thank them for sharing their knowledge and for collaborating with such rigor and enthusiasm.
This work reflects their passion for teaching and their desire to share their experience with the widest possible audience.



## Ms. Paola Buckley

**Teaching professor, Department of World Languages, Southern Methodist University (SMU), Dallas, Texas (TX)**

Paola has been teaching professional French courses for over ten years. To enable students to apply and showcase their skills, she developed an internship program in Dallas and in Aix-en-Provence.

She has also integrated the B2 and C1 Business French Diplomas (DFP) into her business French course.

To encourage students to continue their studies in French, each semester, the French department Paola belongs to offers a variety of courses: a literature course, an applied language course, a culture course, and an experiential learning opportunity (internship). This diversity allows students to choose courses that match their interests while still offering more traditional options.

**What's next ?**
Paola has launched an intermediate-level (fourth-semester) professional French course to try to increase retention between the third and fourth semesters and to encourage more French minors and majors. She is also planning to relaunch the French for Fashion course and to develop a course in French for International Business.



## Ms. Sophie Degat

**Lecturer in Foreign Languages, Francophone, Italian, Germanic Studies, University of Pennsylvania**

**French-Europe Faculty, The Lauder Institute, , Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (PA)**

Sophie has been teaching at the University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy League university located in Philadelphia in the northeastern United States, since 2012. UPenn has nearly 10,000 undergraduate students. The French department has been a close partner of the Paris Chamber of Commerce for 20 years with the opening of our official testing center for the Diplôme de Français Professionnel (DFP) in 2005. The department offers a major, a minor, and a certificate in Francophone Studies and provides French courses in various fields (literature, history, cinema, phonetics, translation, etc.) at all levels.

As the coordinator of the French for Business curriculum since 2017, Sophie is delighted to apply her multidisciplinary background (a law degree from the University of Cergy-Pontoise, a Master of Science in Management from ESSEC Business School, a Master of Arts in English Translation from Paris X University, and a Master of Education in intercultural communication from Penn's Graduate School of Education) to this program. They currently offer French for Business I in the fall and French for Business II in the spring. The first course is open to all students who have completed the equivalent of five semesters of French and prepares them for the DFP B2 at the end of the term. The second course is open to students who completed the first course as well as heritage/native speakers and offers DFP C1. These courses attract many students and are often full, enrolling around thirty students per year.

**What's next ? :**

Starting in 2026, we plan to offer a Medical French course with the option to take the Business French Diploma in health professions. In the future, we aim to continue developing the French for Business curriculum, focusing on three possible avenues: creating a new intermediate-level course (B1), establishing a summer internship program in France through institutional partnerships, and adding a week-long immersion to explore the ecosystem of companies and startups in Paris. à Paris.



## Ms. Laurence Denié-Higney

**Senior Lecturer**

**Le Cercle Francophone, advisor**

**Le Centre d'Excellence, director**

**European Languages and Transcultural Studies Department, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Los Angeles, California (CA)**

Laurence teaches at a large public university that offers both a major and a minor in French and Francophone Studies. The Business French course is offered during the spring term in the third year of French. Students are generally at a B1 level. Laurence typically has between 20 and 25 students enrolled in this course.

**What's next ? :**
In the future, Laurence will be teaching two Business French courses. The first course will allow students to continue developing their professional French skills while working with local businesses through what is known as a 'community engagement' course. Students will support local French-speaking entrepreneurs and organizations in developing their businesses in the region. This course will also enable students to strengthen their linguistic and intercultural competencies.The second course will give students the opportunity to complete a 4-hour-per-week internship with French-speaking businesses or institutions in the area.Finally, in preparation for the FIFA World Cup (2026) and the Olympic Games (2028), Laurence plans to develop a new course at the intersection of sports, international relations, and hospitality. This course will be designed during the 2024–2025 academic year so that it can be taught in 2025–2026.



## Ms. Nathalie Dieu Porter

**Principal Senior Lecturer in the Department of French and Italian Studies, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (TN)**

Nathalie is the co-author of the professional French textbook Affaires mondiales, published by Georgetown University Press.

Each semester, she teaches a Professional French course to about 15–20 students at the 3000 level at Vanderbilt University, with students generally achieving a B2 level, and sometimes C1:

- French for Healthcare
- Business French
- French for International Relations
- “Green Horizons”: Sustainable Business French (this course includes travel; she took her class to northern France during spring break to study industrial decarbonization initiatives and participate in a range of sustainability-related activities.)

She also designed a new Maymester course titled “The History and Business of Luxury Fashion in France and Italy in the Era of Sustainability.” Nathalie led a group of 16 students on an experiential learning trip to Paris, Milan, and Florence in May 2024.



## Mr. Cuillé Lionel

**Teaching Professor of French Studies, Washington University in St. Louis ( WashU), St. Louis, Missouri (MO)**

An associate professor of modern French literature, Lionel teaches French literature at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri (United States). Nicknamed “WashU,” this private research university is ranked among the top 20 in the country and enrolls around 15,000 students, including nearly 8,000 undergraduates and 7,000 graduate students. The university has a selective admission rate of 14%. Undergraduate students most commonly major in biology, social sciences, or engineering. WashU is also known for its interdisciplinary programs and extensive research opportunities for students. Its School of Medicine is additionally ranked 5th in the nation.

**What’s next ?** :
Many American research universities are developing new degrees in Global Health. Thus far, these programs have been housed in our anthropology department, offering classes in Paris entirely in English. In the future, I believe our French program can capitalize on this new interest in global or public health through our FPS track. It is striking to note, for example, that 95% of American researchers at our university conduct fieldwork in English-speaking African countries. We can imagine that learning French for health professionals could interest many undergraduate and graduate students, as well as academics considering research in Francophone West African countries. Finally, we could develop partnerships like the one we have with the CHU Pasteur in Nice with hospital centers in West Africa that would accept our students for observational internships. In the future, I would like to propose to my colleagues a second French pathway for international relations and diplomacy. Following the FPS model, this pathway would allow students majoring in international relations or political science to internationalize their degree through French studies. Here again, it is necessary to convince students of the added value of this pathway by guaranteeing them a five-week summer internship in the French administration, for example.



## Ms. Deb Reisinger

**Professor of the Practice in French in the Department of Romance Studies,**

**Dean of Undergraduate Education,**

**Duke University , Durham, North Carolina (NC)**

Deb teaches at Duke University, a private R1 institution in the Southeast, with approximately 6,500 undergraduate students.

She is a French professor in the Department of Romance Studies and an affiliate faculty member in Duke's Global Health Institute.

She is currently the Dean of Undergraduate Education, where she has the pleasure of supporting innovative curricular projects.

She has been teaching courses in professional French studies for 15 years. The current version, titled "Travailler en français," is based on the textbook she co-authored, Affaires globales.

She also teaches courses in the "Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum" program, which she directs, offering L2 courses on specialized topics such as marketing, public policy, global health, and environmental studies.

Another area of her research focuses on community-based language learning. She works closely with refugee resettlement agencies as part of an annual service-learning course on global displacement.



## Ms. Mina Soroosh

**Assistant Professor (Teaching) of French at the University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles, California (CA)**

Mina is Assistant Professor (Teaching) of French at the University of Southern California (USC). She teaches in the Basic Language Program and is director of the USC Dijon Maymester program. Throughout her career, she has taught French language, culture, literature, business and civilization courses at Los Angeles-area schools and universities. Involved locally and nationally in the promotion and teaching of French, Mina is an active member of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF). Currently she serves as secretary for the AATF-SoCal chapter. Her research focuses on the historical presence and current use of French in Los Angeles, and she has co-published on the topic.

# Would you like more information?

## Contact

Laetitia Hedengren
International Project Manager
lhedengren@cci-paris-idf.fr

www.lefrancaisdesaffaires.fr