

A Guide to Applying for an Academic Position in France

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This document available at

<http://www.gate.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article359>

1 Preliminary

Disclaimer. The present document gives indications to help apply to certain early academic positions in France. It is not a complete document on employment in the French academic system, nor does it discuss postdocs. It is not an official document and may contain errors and omissions ; it is offered as help for non-French-speaking people who consider applying in French academia. All deadlines are given approximately as the exact date changes every year.

This document is addressed to young doctors or near-completion. Holding a postdoc is not a requirement.

French academia has two distinct branches : Universities and Research institutions. Both branches offer permanent positions (as civil servant) from the beginning of the career ; permanent means here “for life”, with mobility options and complete scientific independance. Starting salary might appear low, about 2000€ gross of tax, but includes a set of subsidized services (social security, childcare, schools, transportation...) of very high quality. There is no apparent condition on nationality, however only citizens of any country of the EU + Iceland + Norway + Switzerland are free to move, stay and work in France accordingly with the "Arrêté du 24 juin 2008" published in the "Journal Officiel" 27 juin 2008, p. 10333, see

<http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F2739.xhtml/>

for details. Other nationalities might need a work permit – the present document does not address this issue.

Actually getting an academic job might appear like a hurdle race in which several “committees” have veto power ; if you miss one hurdle, the race is over. Thus, it is strongly advisable to move to France only when you receive an official (written) notification that you have indeed been awarded the job.

2 Application Process for “Maître de Conférence” – French University

At universities, the starting position is “maître de conférence” (MCF), similar to assistant or associate professor. There is a yearly teaching load of 126 hours “ex cathedra” or 192h teaching assistant (or a mixture of both). The first year is a period of probation and then the researcher becomes “titularisé”, i.e the job becomes permanent. It is unavoidable that sooner or later the MCF will be asked to teach in French. In all cases, the French university system is not designed to attract foreigners (excepting a handful of universities), so a smart move, if possible, is to get some help from someone from within.

2.1 Qualification

2.1.1 GALAXIE/ANTARES Portal

The process starts with enrollment to the “qualification” at the “Conseil national des universités” (CNU) (basically, experts who will state whether the applicant is suitable to apply to a position at any French university) ; the only way is through the GALAXIE/ANTARES portal (an online application which is only in French) at

<https://www.galaxie.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/ensup/candidats.html>

First you need to enroll to receive an applicant (“candidat”) number – make sure to write it down as that is the only one that will be delivered. **Enrollment starts mid september and ends at the end of october.** Enrollment can take place before the PhD defense. Qualification is within the relevant disciplinary section of the CNU, 05 for Economics (including Econometrics) and 06 for Management ; check the CNU website if you need another section :

<http://www.cpcnu.fr/accueil.htm>.

Prepare the following information (in English) before connecting to the ANTARES website :

1. Your identification number and your password (both will be created the first time you connect). These will remain the same from year to year, it is not possible to obtain new ones.
2. Your thesis title (at most 340 characters), date of defense (mandatory format : dd/mm/yyyy), list of members of the defense committee.
3. A text for the sections "Activité en matière d’enseignement" (teaching experience), "Thèmes de recherches et mots-clés de votre domaine" (research topics and keywords of your domain), "Activité en matière d’administration et autres responsabilités collectives" (administrative and other collective duties). At most, 400 characters each section.

The length of connexion for each screen is at most 30 minutes, after which ANTARES disconnects and prints out “Erreur 403”. Make sure to save between screens (“valider”). The software produces a “déclaration de candidature” that the applicant must print and keep. When the enrollment is properly completed, a message "Votre candidature a bien été enregistrée" should appear together with the section number (05 or 06 most likely) and the date ; a mail of confirmation will follow.

2.1.2 Detailed File

Next, the applicant must supply a detailed file (in paper and on CD) to each of his/her two “rapporteurs”, that is, the CNU experts who will examine his/her capacity to apply. The name and address of these “rapporteurs” will be communicated via the ANTARES website to the applicant around mid-November. If you enrolled in more than one section, you will receive a pair of rapporteurs for each section, possibly at different times. **The deadline for supplying the complete file is around mid-December** (the thesis must have been defended at the latest a few days before that). The complete list of documents to supply is the following :

1. Copy of the PhD diploma or some form of certification that the PhD has been defended. The CNU decides on diploma equivalence for foreign PhD. The candidate must provide his/her own translation to French of his PhD diploma as well as a copy of the original diploma and a “déclaration sur l’honneur” (declaration under oath) that the translation is faithful.¹
2. Detailed curriculum vitae (in English) including thesis title, date and place of defense and the names of the members of the defense committee, experience in teaching, research and administration or other collective duties (with proofs if possible) on two pages at most. The list of publications, on four pages at most, must present precise references (with names of coauthors, title, date, pages...) by category (papers, book, participation in books ; published or forthcoming ; reports, presentations at conferences...). Forthcoming papers must be authenticated. Authors order should not be modified.
3. Your three best papers (or book, book chapter, or any other scientific production – peer-reviewed publication being the most highly valued).
4. Copy of the “rapport de soutenance” : in France, the thesis defense committee writes a report. If you have one, include it, otherwise indicate that in your university/country, such “rapport” does not exist (preferably, have your dean sign that).
5. Copy of the “déclaration de candidature” from ANTARES (see above).

¹There are alternatives to holding a PhD, see <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid22668/enseignants-chercheurs-note-d-information.html>, but they imply that the candidate speaks French fluently.

6. It is advised to include a copy of the thesis.

The CNU establishes the list of qualified persons once every year (the list is published early in February via the ANTARES website), thus the French job-market is basically “one chance per year”. The qualification is valid four years.

2.2 Application

Once qualified, the candidate may apply to the job openings that are offered in the GALAXIE online application and also visible on this website :

https://www.galaxie.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/ensup/emplois_publics.html

Application is one job at a time. An application file must also be sent by postal mail within 30 days after the posting of the job. The content of this application file might be clearly defined in the opening, but otherwise the candidate should send the same file as the one sent to the CNU “rapporteurs”.

Most of the French job openings are made public jointly around Feb./Mar., so well after the deadline for qualification ; if you wait to see the openings first, you are guaranteed not to be able to apply. However, some universities might post jobs at different times during the year ; this is called “au fil de l’eau” job posting. It is necessary to be qualified to apply to these jobs.

2.3 Interviewing and the Rest of the Process

Each opening normally receives several applications. The universities have set up committees to select and possibly interview the candidates (the date and place of the interview are not normally negotiable). Candidates who are not selected for the interview may not receive a notification ; there may be no feedback after the interview. The university does not normally have the authority to contract with a specific candidate directly ; instead, it simply sends a ranking to the national administration who posts it on your GALAXIE/ANTARES folder.

For the regular openings (those that are opened all together around Feb./Mar.), the candidates should check the ANTARES website regularly for the results. Any candidate may be ranked on one or more openings. The candidate must then express his/her preferences for all the openings on which s/he is ranked. Do not rank first an opening on which you are not ranked first !

The candidates to an “au fil de l’eau” opening (see above) will received a mail when the posting university has ranked the candidates. They should then connect to GALAXIE and check the section "Acceptation/Refus proposition" to see the rank they have received. The candidate then has exactly 8 days to answer. If s/he refuses or does not answer within 8 days, the candidate ranked next then receives a mail and acquires first rank ; s/he then has 8 days to answer and so on.

3 Application Process for “Chargé de Recherches” at French Research Institutions

The starting position is “Chargé de Recherches”. The research institutions of interest for economists are :

- Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)
- Institut National pour la Recherche Agronomique (INRA)
- There are other research institutions such as CEMAGREF or INRETS that might be of interest for economists, but application is often “external”, meaning that all candidates must belong to the French administration. Consult the following website for currently opened positions :

<http://www.emploi-scientifique.info/?lg=en>

These institutions all offer permanent research positions without teaching requirement, although research centers are often associated with universities and researchers will be approached for teaching on a voluntary basis. CNRS and INRA are definitely more “foreigner-friendly”. The first year is a period of probation (as in the university) and then the researcher becomes “titularisé”, i.e the job becomes permanent.

3.1 CNRS

Application procedure in English is detailed at

<http://www.cnrs.fr/en/join/Tenured-researchers.htm>.

On average the CNRS opens only 3 to 5 junior positions in economics every year. For a junior position, it is usually recommended to have already at least 2 accepted publications. To apply for a CNRS junior position, the thesis must have been defended before the interview. The selection procedure is organized at the national level. The selection is made by a committee of 18 academic members. The application file consists of 2 documents : one that summarizes in about 10 pages the research achievements and one that develops the research projects for the next four years (about 6-10 pages).

The candidates must indicate the CNRS research center in which they would prefer to be assigned in case of success (typically, the research center is affiliated with both CNRS and a university). It is important to contact the director of the research center before the application is submitted. The list of CNRS research centers is available on the web site of the CNRS.

Indicative deadlines :

- Applications : late December to early January (January 5 for the year 2010). So far, all the candidates for a junior position are interviewed, without any pre-selection.

- Interviews are conducted in Paris between February and May ; an interview lasts about 30 minutes.
- Selection of candidates: the first selection is made the week following the interview; the final decision is made by another committee usually in June. The second committee confirms the decisions of the first committee in most cases.
- Expect to start October 1st.

3.2 INRA

Application procedure (similar to CNRS) in English is detailed at

http://www.international.inra.fr/join_us/positions/research_scientist_positions/1st_and_2nd_class_junior

It is a long address, it is split in two here in case you receive a printed version of this document :

http://www.international.inra.fr/join_us/positions/research_scientist_positions/1st_and_2nd_class_junior_scientist_open_competitions

Indicative deadlines :

- Applications : end of February (starts in mid-January)
- Selection of candidates : April to May (all applicants will receive a notification)
- Interviews : May-June
- Expect to start in September.

Best of luck !