



## TEST DE CONNAISSANCE DU FRANÇAIS

TCF<sup>®</sup>

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**D**eveloping international relations, and increasing mobility, as well as the need for an external linguistic policy based on the promotion of cultural pluralism and multilingualism, have led to the creation of a French language proficiency test, the *Test de connaissance du français (TCF®)*. The test provides [users of French as a foreign or second language](#) with a reliable, fast, simple, recognized way to evaluate and validate French language proficiency.

The TCF was developed at the request of the French Ministry of Education and is administered by the CIEP, a public institution that works towards international educational cooperation within the ministry. It also ensures the educational and financial management of the test.

The TCF is a standardized and calibrated [French language proficiency test](#) that ranks candidates on one of six levels on a scale defined by the Council of Europe (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*) and ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe). TCF score results are reliable measurements of language proficiency. It targets an audience that wishes to know its level of French proficiency for personal, professional or educational purposes. The test ensures strict methodology validated by a scientific committee composed of the best French and European specialists.

The TCF, along with a compulsory test of written expression (1½ hours), is the [official pre-entrance test](#) (DAP) for foreign students who wish to enter the first cycle of [higher education in France](#). The TCF is therefore required for admission to all French universities and schools of architecture, and some “Grandes Écoles” (*École Polytechnique, Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, INALCO, INSA de Lyon, etc.*).

There is also a version of the TCF [for international relations](#), which assesses the level of competency in French of future government officials and international diplomats.

Examination sessions for the "international relations" version of the TCF are organised at the UN, the OECD, and so on.

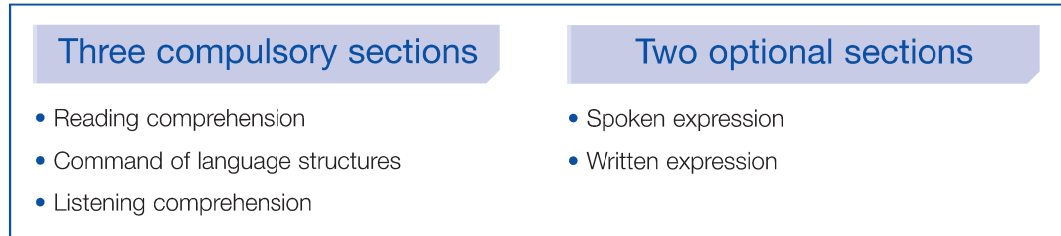
The TCF can also be a [political linguistic tool](#) for foreign ministers and French diplomatic assignments. The detailed test report gives a reliable state of language proficiency for a given population.

Since December 2002, the TCF has carried the [ISO 9001: 2000 certificate](#).

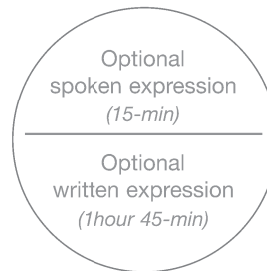
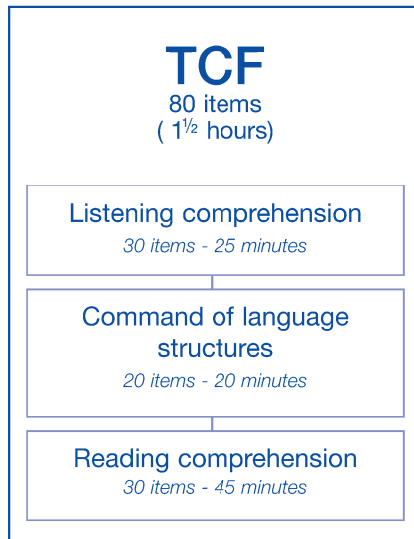
# 1 Presentation

The **compulsory parts** of the TCF are in the form of multiple-choice questions, with 80 items for which only one of four suggested answers is correct.

Two **optional tests** evaluate expression skills.  
The questions are designed according to progressive difficulty.



Compulsory sections always follow this order:



*The order for optional tests (written expression and spoken expression) is decided by the accredited test centre.*

The specific compulsory written expression test (1½ hours) for the pre-entrance test (DAP) for foreign students who wish to enter the first cycle of higher education in France is designed in collaboration with French Education Ministry's department of higher education.

All **test marking** is centralized at the CIEP.

Compulsory tests are marked by scanner. Optional tests are marked twice by a team of trained and accredited markers.

**TCF scores are ranked on 6 levels**, ranging from A1 level to C2 level, as defined by the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and adopted by ALTE, of which CIEP is a member. For clarification, the level names have been simplified.

A specific brochure with the grading levels grid is available at the CIEP.

The TCF ranks the candidate at his exact level of proficiency in each language skill. The test can be compared to a linguistic photograph of proficiency at the time of testing.

**The test report form** is sent within 48 hours in electronic format.

From the date the papers are received, the test report form is sent in paper format in



It includes the grading levels grid as well as the grade interpretation chart: one detailed grid per skill as well as an overall chart.

Levels are defined in terms of skills (“the person is able to...”) so that end receivers of test reports (educational authorities or employers) can understand what the certificate holder is able to understand or express in French.

*The certificate is valid for two years.*



## 2

### Elaboration of the TCF:

#### > technical and statistical aspects

The TCF was developed using very strict scientific methodology. No matter which test session or version, results remain comparable and ensure reliable candidate ranking.

#### Pre-test stage

Pre-tests are carried out in institutions that meet with strict quality requirements and have received accreditation, the same as test centres. The CIEP has access to twenty accredited pre-test centres in France and abroad.

Pre-tests are part of the item validation process that helps ensure test reliability, and guarantees psychometric qualities for each test item, placing the item at the exact proficiency level for the French language (item calibration).

On average, the CIEP conducts about ten pre-tests per year. The pre-tested population represents several thousand people.

## Item bank

The items on the TCF are filed in a database that centralizes information concerning content (listening and written material and distracters) as well as administrative information (item codes, drafters' profiles...).

Drafters draw up items on a specialized website. Thanks to this system, the in-house item validation committee can ensure distance monitoring and data control.

The TCF item bank collects information in a central database which is necessary for:

- using items to design pre-tests and tests for TCF accredited centres;
- managing content items (drafters' entries, team leader participation, in-house committee, pre-test score integration);
- administrative management (participant and order management).

## > scientific aspects

Every year, a scientific committee validates linguistic and psychometric options for the TCF.

**President, Bernard CERQUIGLINI**, professor at Louisiana State University, director of the Center for French and Francophone Studies, **Jean-Claude BEACCO**, professor, expert to the Council of Europe, **Robert BOUCHARD**, professor, **Jean-Claude BOUVIER**, professor, **Jean-Pierre CUQ**, professor, **Delphine DENIS**, professor, **André FLIELLER**, professor, **Suzy HALIMI**, professor, **Bernard HARMEGNIES**, director of the Institute of Linguistics, University of Mons-Hainaut, **Richard LESCURE**, professor, **Sophie LOVY**, assistant director for French, Department for Cultural Cooperation and French, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Jean-Marc LUSCHER**, University of Geneva, **Denise LUSSIER**, University of Montreal, **Jean-Marc MONTEIL**, director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research, **Michel PERRIN**, professor, **Christelle REGGIANNI**, professor, **Henriette WALTER**, professor.

A committee of experts makes sure that these directions are implemented.

## > qualitative aspects: ISO 9001 operations management process

Quality assurance efforts were initiated when the TCF was created, and in December 2002, it succeeded in obtaining the ISO 9001: 2000 certificate and has been renewed in January 2006 for 3 years. The systems set-up for quality management made it possible to give a standard form to management, design and development procedures, as well as TCF operations management.

Every year a supervisory audit guarantees smooth operations for procedures and quality assurance processes.

### 3

## Accredited centres, sessions and registration

### Who can open an accredited centre?

Both French and foreign structures may ask for accreditation to become a TCF test centre.

More than **600 accredited centres** have already been opened in **130 countries**. The number of TCF test centres within one country is not limited.

In France, there are more than **190 accredited centres** throughout the country (universities, “Grandes Écoles” and language centres). To cite some examples: the *Institut d'études politiques de Paris*, the *École Polytechnique*, the *INALCO* (National institute for oriental languages and civilisations), the *INSA* (National institute for applied science) have chosen the TCF to evaluate French language proficiency for their foreign students.

Abroad, more than **420 structures** have become test centres: universities, French embassies, cultural institutes and centres, Alliances françaises, training institutes.

Centres must meet a certain number of requirements which are described in the application for accreditation in the downloadable file on the website [www.ciep.fr/tcf](http://www.ciep.fr/tcf).

The list of accredited centres may be viewed on the CIEP website.



## *When are the test sessions?*

Accredited test centres may organise TCF test sessions every month, by choosing one or several dates during the last ten days of the month.

A thousand sessions are organised in this manner every year. Session dates can be obtained from accredited centres. Sessions are organised on the last Wednesday of each month by the CIEP.

Some centres, which have special equipment, allow candidates to sit an [electronic version of the TCF on a computer](#). Those centres should send a request to the CIEP (*Pôle évaluation et certifications*). The first examination sessions can start two months after the acceptance date.

## *How to register?*

By contacting an accredited centre.

For sessions at the CIEP, telephone +33 (0)1 45 07 60 60 or send an email to [tcf@ciep.fr](mailto:tcf@ciep.fr)

# 4

## Candidate profile

Since its creation in January 2002, more than 120 000 candidates have registered to take the TCF among which more than a half have also taken optional tests. Candidates come from all over the world.

Registered TCF candidates represent 151 different nationalities.

Half of the registered TCF candidates are between 19 and 26 years old (average age: 24).

## 5

### Preparing for the TCF

- > *Guide officiel, Test de connaissance du français, activités d'entraînement*, published by *Didier*
- > *TCF, 250 activités, Le Nouvel Entraînez-vous* collection, published by *CLE International*
- > *Cédérom d'entraînement au TCF, CIEP/CNED*
- > Candidate's guide to be downloaded from the CIEP website
- > Help in preparing for the compulsory sections of the TCF, on the *Editions Didier* website: [www.editionsdidier.com](http://www.editionsdidier.com)
- > Help in preparing for the listening comprehension sections of the TCF, levels 5 and 6, on the *Radio France Internationale (RFI)* website: [www.rfi.fr](http://www.rfi.fr)

## 6

### TCF documentation for accredited centres only

(documents to be downloaded)

- > guide for TCF test administrator .pdf
- > annual report .pdf
- > TCF psychometric qualities .pdf
- > TCF test centre application for accreditation form .pdf
- > test order form .pdf



For more information: [www.ciep.fr](http://www.ciep.fr)



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**QUALITY  
MANAGEMENT**  
Certificate

Voluntarily participating in regular  
monitoring according to ISO 9001:2000

