

Belgium (French) Host School FAQ

When does the school year begin and end?

The school year runs from September 1st to June 30th. There is a one week vacation in early November, a two-week vacation at Christmas (winter break), a one week vacation around Carnival (February), and a two week break at Easter (spring break).

In what type of school will I be enrolled?

AFS students usually attend “general secondary schools” (academic high schools), though it is possible to attend a vocational school if the student wishes.

What is a typical school day? How many classes per day?

A normal school day starts between 8 and 8:30am and ends between 4 and 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Wednesday afternoons are free. Each class takes 50 minutes. There is a break of approximately 1 hour at noon. There are also one or two 10 to 15-minute breaks during the day. Students usually stay with the same group of students in the same classroom all day, while teachers move from one classroom to another.

In what grade level will I be enrolled?

AFS students are usually placed in the last or next-to-last year of high school.

Will I be able to choose my classes? What classes are available?

Compulsory school subjects are French, mathematics, history, geography, sciences, religion or ethics, and physical education. Optional courses include foreign languages, arts, and computer sciences. At the beginning of the school term, AFS students will meet with the school principal and they will decide their school schedule together. Students will have the opportunity to try out several courses for a few weeks in order to see how advanced they are before deciding upon their permanent class schedule.

In what language will the classes be taught?

All instruction, with the exception of foreign languages, is done in French.

Will I need to buy a uniform, books, or other school supplies?

Most schools do not have uniforms, though some might have very basic clothing requirements (such as requiring students to be dressed in dark blue or green). If a school does require a particular uniform, it will usually cost € 100-200. Most schools do have a uniform for PE class, which will generally cost about € 25 or less for a set. Students will also need to purchase school supplies. AFS will pay for any required textbooks.

Are extra-curricular activities available such as sports, music, or art?

Belgium schools are very academic and extra-curricular activities are rare. Sports teams are sometimes linked to school and usually meet on Wednesday afternoons or on the weekend, but they are not always available. Students who take part in extra-curricular activities usually do so in youth clubs or in special after-school art schools, but AFSers should keep in mind that such activities are usually not free.

Are high school graduates accepted?

AFS Belgium will accept high school graduates as long as they have not already started university in their home country. Keep in mind: graduates must be recent grads (less than three months since high school graduation), they must still be within the program age ranges, they must demonstrate that they understand they will be expected to participate fully in school, and they must understand that they may be placed in school with students younger than them.

Can I get an official transcript or a certificate of attendance?

Yes, but it is the responsibility of the student to acquire it. Students should speak to their host school at the beginning of the school year to find out what they should do to get this documentation.

Can I get academic credit for my study abroad?

Maybe, but we can't guarantee it. The amount and type of credit you receive is determined by your high school in the home country, so it's important that you talk with your teachers and guidance counselor before you depart to see what is needed in order to be granted credit. In most cases, AFS students have received language, history, or social studies credits. Be sure to keep a copy of any formal grades or transcripts you receive from your host school. It is your responsibility to obtain any written information about your attendance and grades in your host school before you return home. AFS cannot assist you with course or grade information after you complete the program.