

International entrepreneurial activities at ESSEC Business School



ESSEC Business School (French: École Supérieure des Sciences Économiques et Commerciales) was founded in 1907 and is recognised as **one of the leading business schools** in the world. ESSEC has two campuses in Paris, France (Cergy-Pontoise and La Défense), as well as one each in Singapore and Rabat in Morocco. ESSEC has approximately 7,400 students and seeks to maintain close connections with its 62,000 alumni. The Business School has eight departments: Accounting and Management Control; Economics; Finance; Information Systems, Decision Sciences and Statistics; Management; Marketing; Operations Management; and Public & Private Policy.

ESSEC is highly **international** and multicultural, and its approach is to create and disseminate cutting-edge knowledge, blending academic learning with practical experience, and to ensure multicultural openness and dialogue. This is manifested in the ESSEC campuses abroad as well as its range of international partner universities, professional alliances and company partners. In addition, faculty and students are drawn from a broad range of countries. According to ESSEC's Research Yearbook 2019-2020, the Business School's students represent more than 100 nationalities. The 160 ESSEC professors represent 37 nationalities. Beside its two campuses in other countries, ESSEC offers double degrees – i.e. students work for two degrees in parallel – with partner universities in Germany, China, Mexico and India. Moreover, ESSEC has further partnerships with more than 240 universities in all continents. In 2011, ESSEC was a founding partner of the Council on Business & Society, an international alliance between six of the world's leading business schools. On the corporate side, ESSEC has more than 500 company partners in all parts of the world.

ESSEC considers “inviting students to use their imagination and get into the start-up mindset” as central. Accordingly, ESSEC formalised “**Enlightening Entrepreneurship**” as one of the three pillars of the University's strategy RISE to strengthen the university's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Among ESSEC's actions under this pillar are doubling resources for entrepreneurship and training 100% of its students and participants in entrepreneurship. ESSEC pursues comprehensive activities in **entrepreneurship**, including education, research and support for start-ups. As regards **education**, ESSEC has six specific routes for teaching entrepreneurship. In its undergraduate and graduate programmes, ESSEC offers (1) an entrepreneurship track in the Master of Science in Management (MIM) – Grande École, (2) a Global Bachelor of Business Administration with an entrepreneurship contest, (3) a Specialised Master in Entrepreneurship and (4) an Innovative Product Creation Programme. In its executive education, ESSEC has (5) specialised modules in entrepreneurship and (6) special offers for female entrepreneurs. ESSEC's entrepreneurship teachers also conduct research, with ESSEC's Social Entrepreneurship Chair as a prominent example. Finally, ESSEC Ventures offers funding, incubation services and events for start-ups from the School. The Exhibit provides an overview of entrepreneurship activities at ESSEC.

Exhibit: ESSEC's activities in entrepreneurship

Education	
Undergraduate & graduate programmes	
1	<p>Entrepreneurship track in Master of Science in Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces students to fundamentals of entrepreneurship. Goes in depth for students wishing to acquire advanced tools to design and implement a start-up business plan. Multidisciplinary and practical approach to entrepreneurship gives students the ability to pave their own way in the international entrepreneurial landscape. Recommended for students who would like to benefit from the operational support of ESSEC Ventures incubators and seed fund.
2	<p>Entrepreneurship courses and contest in Global Bachelor of Business Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students in 3rd and 4th year can attend entrepreneurship courses. Dedicated compulsory 1st year entrepreneurship contest for Global BBA students.
3	<p>Specialised Master in Entrepreneurship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives students skills to develop a business plan and manage a new business.
4	<p>Innovative Product Creation (CPI) Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to support innovative corporate culture by familiarising both students and partnering businesses with the concept. Works with engineering, design and marketing students as well as partner firms to develop new products, services, and processes.
Executive education	
5	<p>Specialised modules in entrepreneurship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical modules covering everything from how to design/validate a business model, when and how to go to market with an innovative product and how to finance a start-up, to building and managing a team and fostering intrapreneurship projects within established firms.
6	<p>Special offers for female entrepreneurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training specifically designed for women, created in partnership with women's professional networks, providing fundamentals of law, marketing, and strategy. Support to help them grow and develop their projects. Workshops of the Club Génération Startupeuse (since 2017) and network of 130 female experts to help 30 young female start-up founders
Research	
	<p>ESSEC Research Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports and coordinates research efforts of ESSEC faculty members
	<p>Social Entrepreneurship Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched in 2002 – it was the first of its kind in France. Produces theoretical as well as applied research, organises conferences, and provides students with work experience opportunities. Dedicated research program on "Gender and Governance" run by the European Centre for Law and Economics, which includes a survey of European female entrepreneurship for the Women Initiative Foundation.
Startup support	
	<p>ESSEC Ventures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to startups from ESSEC through ESSEC Seed Fund, three different incubators, partnership in the French Tech Visa programme, and an expert workshop series.
	<p>Antropia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social entrepreneurship incubator that provides strategic, managerial, technical and financial aid to social entrepreneurs in the starting phase. Promotes the multiplication of social entrepreneurs in the Ile-de-France region. Creates a national network of social entrepreneurs.
	<p>Club Gen Startupeuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated session for Antropia female participants led with the Club Gen Startupeuse Expert community giving advice and mentoring to young female startup founders on WIRATE (crowd rating site) and on site

Source: <https://www.essec.edu/en/pages/about-essec/entrepreneurship/training/> plus details from ESSEC experts.

1. Internationalisation as an integral part of ESSEC's entrepreneurship education agenda

Entrepreneurship education at ESSEC has a largely international flavour. A large share of ESSEC's students come from other countries. In the **Master of Management (MIM)** programme at the Grand École, which is ESSEC's flagship programme, approximately 35% of the students have an international degree. Many come from China or India, followed by many other countries also including Northern Africa. Master students in management, of whom the majority are enrolled at the two campuses in France, are promised a "unique exposure to international experiences"¹. In the first year, students can start either in Singapore or France. In the second and third year, students can personalise their studies in France, Singapore or Rabat, or at a different location world-wide. A central entrepreneurship-oriented format for students of the MIM is the Startup Shaker in which students have 33 intensive hours to create a start-up concept and pitch it in front of their fellow students. Afterwards they can work on an entrepreneurial project, for instance in a mission for an existing company, or choose a 6-month entrepreneurial track. The entrepreneurship track offers an option to choose to conduct Master of Management students in Singapore. This track is deeply involved in the Singaporean entrepreneurial ecosystem: It has a partnership with the Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE) Singapore² and works closely with the Launchpad@JTC³ Science Park by the Government of Singapore. In Singapore, students can add a three-month internship in Asia. The campus in Singapore also offers special courses about innovation in Asia seeking to enhance entrepreneurial spirit – as a precondition for building new companies in Asia in the future. Moreover, in a joint programme named Asian Strategy Projects with Cap Gemini, the global digital business consultancy, students consult different Asian companies.

ESSEC's Global **Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)** is a four-year programme. In the third and fourth year, students can choose from hundreds of elective courses, including entrepreneurship.⁴ The Global BBA programme also has a dedicated entrepreneurship contest for its students.⁵ As the title suggests, internationalisation is at the core of this programme: Students from France have to spend a total of twelve months of course time abroad. The study also includes a one-month humanitarian project and up to 18 months of professional experience in internships, which may take place abroad.⁶ The **Specialised Master in Entrepreneurship** is a one-year programme designed and delivered in partnership with the École Centrale Paris⁷ (now CentraleSupélec). It gives students skills to develop a business plan and manage a new business. All students in this programme are from France and it is taught in French. The Master in Entrepreneurship is an example of combining both "internationalisation abroad" and "internationalisation at home". As all students in this programme are from the French education system, the programme focuses on multi-disciplinarity rather than internationalisation. The studies involve much project work with French enterprises that prefer conversation in French rather than English. However, the programme attracts

¹ Quoted from <https://www.essec.edu/en/business-school/>

² See <http://www.ace.org.sg/>

³ See <http://www.jtc.gov.sg/industrial-land-and-space/pages/jtc-launchpad-one-north.aspx>

⁴ See <http://www.essec.edu/en/program/global-bba/global-bba-international/program/>

⁵ See <http://www.essec.edu/en/global-bba/> for an introduction to the BBA programme and a video about the 2014 contest at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61g8fjChJ44>

⁶ See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ESSEC#ESSEC_Global_BBA_\(Bachelor_of_Business_Administration\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ESSEC#ESSEC_Global_BBA_(Bachelor_of_Business_Administration))

⁷ See <https://www.essec.edu/fr/programme/masters/ms-centrale-essec-entrepreneurs/> École Centrale Paris is a French higher education and research institute in engineering and science and one of the oldest and most selective grandes écoles (English: grand schools) in France.

many students with international roots who can absorb it in English. Group work in the programme ensures an international, multicultural flavour. Furthermore, this specialised Master programme includes international study trips, for example to the Silicon Valley.⁸

The **Innovative Product Creation (CPI) Programme**⁹ is designed and delivered in partnership with CentraleSupélec, Strate École de Design and La Sorbonne and is operated by the external partner school. It aims to support innovative corporate culture by familiarising both students and partner businesses with the concept. Since 2004, CPI has been working with teams of students from different engineering management schools as well as partner firms, most of them operating in international markets, to help encourage the development of new products, services, and processes. For instance, in 2017 students worked on the TiShelter Project, for the VINCI Company and Solidarités Internationale, evolving shelter camps for refugees in Haïti.

ESSEC Executive Education¹⁰ offers modules specifically designed for entrepreneurs. They cover issues such as how to design and validate a business model, when and how to go to market with an innovative product, how to fund a start-up, how to build and manage a team, and how to foster intrapreneurship projects within established firms. Specifically, the **Executive MBA** programme includes a partnership with the University of Mannheim in Germany and is, as such an international programme, involving deep interaction between both universities, as students work in groups on entrepreneurial projects. The programme also involves elective courses in Singapore as well as business trips to Europe, the US, and Asia.¹¹

ESSEC offers an eight-day training course in **female entrepreneurship** for women with an advanced business project or at least a concrete idea.¹² The training is specifically designed for women, created in partnership with women's professional networks, and designed to provide them with the fundamentals of starting their own business: law, marketing, and strategy. Participants receive support to help them grow and develop their projects.

Finally, the **PhD programme** is ESSEC's most international one. Almost all PhD students – 20 to 30 new ones every year – are from other countries. The PhD programme has no specific link with international partners, but students at the campus in Paris are encouraged to work with faculty in Singapore or Rabat or to spend some time at the other campuses, depending on their dissertation subject.

2. International activities in ESSEC's start-up support

Beyond teaching, ESSEC offers a dedicated support structure for students and graduates who wish to start a business. This support structure is named **ESSEC Ventures student incubator**,¹³ which is accessible to all students and participants willing to create a new venture. It provides coaching services and events that bring entrepreneurs, ecosystem partners and investors together. ESSEC Ventures supported 145 startup projects in the academic year 21-22 and in one year €3.2 billion of financing were raised by companies cofounded by ESSEC students and alumni.¹⁴ ESSEC is also a co-founder of the Paris Biotech Health Incubator. ESSEC Ventures also supports female entrepreneurs

⁸ See <http://www.essec.edu/fr/programme/masters/ms-centrale-essec-entrepreneurs/programme/>, "Le voyage d'étude".

⁹ See <https://www.theschoolab.com/en/expertises/cpi-innovate-create-with-student/> for details.

¹⁰ See <http://executive-education.essec.edu/en/>

¹¹ See <http://executive-education.essec.edu/en/program/embas-en/essec-mannheim-emba-modular-track/>

¹² See <https://executive-education.essec.edu/fr/programme/management-leadership/women-be-board-ready/>

¹³ See <http://www.essec.edu/en/pages/about-essec/entrepreneurship/essec-ventures/>

¹⁴ See <https://essec-ventures.essec.edu/home>

with the support system Club Generation Startupeuse, where projects are incubated with workshops and events with experts.¹⁵ For entrepreneurs in Africa, ESSEC provides a talent scout called In-Lab Africa that acts as an incubator of contents and pedagogy, supports the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Africa and acts as accelerator for youth entrepreneurship.¹⁶ In 2022, ESSEC Ventures launched the “Responsible entrepreneurship” scholarship program together with the ESSEC Foundation to support students with entrepreneurial ambitions.¹⁷ For the first round, three scholarships are planned with different focuses: full time entrepreneurship ambition, environmental and societal impact, and female entrepreneurship.

In 2022, in partnership with CY Cergy Paris University, ESSEC launched a groundbreaking initiative in academia: a **"StartUp Studio" dedicated to sustainable innovation**. By bringing together cutting-edge innovation developed by researchers and the entrepreneurial talents of the ESSEC ecosystem, the StartUp Studio will enable the development of large-scale business projects that meet today's environmental challenges.

A special international aspect of ESSEC Ventures is that it is a partner for the **French Tech Visa**, which is a fast-track procedure that allows international entrepreneurs to set up their start-up in France.¹⁸ The first step of the procedure requires an entrepreneur to be selected by a French Tech Visa partner incubator through its regular selection process. The further process depends on whether the entrepreneur already lives in France or not. ESSEC also runs an incubator for social entrepreneurs named **Antropia**.¹⁹ It provides strategic, managerial, technical and financial aid to social entrepreneurs in the starting phase. Antropia promotes the multiplication of social entrepreneurs in the Ile-de-France region and seeks to create a national network of social entrepreneurs. Antropia is also the European and African coordinator for the Global Social Venture Competition (GSVC) run by the University of California at Berkeley Haas School of Business.

3. How ESSEC supports the international mobility of its staff and students

ESSEC ensures international mobility of its staff and students mainly through its campuses in Singapore and Rabat. Most **students** have to spend a part of their studies at a different campus abroad (see the elaborations in section 1, above). There are also classical exchange programmes with international partner universities. Time abroad in these exchange programmes may take six months, a full study year, or students do a double degree at two campuses.

As regards **staff**, teachers from the French campus regularly go to Singapore to teach there for a certain period of time which may be up to two or three years long. For Rabat, ESSEC introduced a specific module in order to meet accreditation necessities: A professor from Paris runs the first two sessions, then teachers from Rabat take over, and the French professor takes over the final sessions again.

4. How ESSEC attracts international and entrepreneurial staff

At ESSEC, the departments are in charge of recruiting new teaching staff, including visiting professors. The departments regularly attend international job markets, for example at international conferences, and they use their wide international networks. Offering an international community is important for ESSEC to attract professors from

¹⁵ See <https://wirate.co/fr/clubs/generation-startupeuse-and-wo-men-experts>

¹⁶ See <https://www.essec.edu/fr/pages/essec-afrique/equipe-principales-missions/entrepreneuriat-maroc/>

¹⁷ See https://essec-ventures.essec.edu/news_1

¹⁸ See <https://lafrenchtech.com/en/how-france-helps-startups/french-tech-visa/visa-for-founders/>

¹⁹ See <http://www.essec.edu/en/pages/about-essec/entrepreneurship/social-entrepreneurship/>

other countries because US business schools can pay higher salaries. ESSEC also supports foreign teachers with paid French language courses, support for relocation, and help with legal affairs from the Dean's office. ESSEC has dedicated staff to support both international professors and visiting professors.

5. The international dimension in ESSEC's approach to entrepreneurship research

ESSEC considers itself as a research-driven academic institution. Research at ESSEC is generally international and it targets top-ranked international journals. ESSEC researchers are part of international research networks.²⁰ The School has a dedicated facility for research, the **ESSEC Research Centre**, founded in 1963. Its mission is to support and coordinate the research efforts of ESSEC faculty members and "help them imagine, present, discuss and implement their research ideas".²¹

A largely international scope also applies to entrepreneurship research. The **Social Entrepreneurship Chair** is a prominent example. The Chair evaluates and analyses social entrepreneurship activity in France in applied research and passes on its findings in course content, conferences and publications, nationally and internationally.²²

Finally, ESSEC seeks to become more strongly involved in research programmes with international organisations funded by the **European Commission**. For example, ESSEC was a partner in a Horizon 2020 project about Social Innovation and Civic Engagement from 2014 to 2017.

Source

This case study was prepared by Dr. Stefan Lilischkis from empirica Gesellschaft für Kommunikations- und Technologieforschung mbH, Bonn, Germany, through collection and analysis of broad documentation about ESSEC and an interview with Emmanuelle Le Nagard-Assayag, Professor for Marketing Department and Associate Dean for Pedagogy at ESSEC on 27 November 2017. It was updated by Maria Stalla from Technopolis Group, Germany through a follow up interview with Emmanuelle Le Nagard-Assayag, now Academic Director of the Master in Management (MIM) at ESSEC.

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Key links

ESSEC Entrepreneurship: <https://www.essec.edu/en/pages/about-essec/entrepreneurship/training/>

ESSEC Research Yearbook 2019-2020: <https://m.essec.edu/media/faculte-et-recherche/recherche/annuaire-recherche-2019-2020.pdf>

²⁰ See <http://www.essec.edu/en/pages/faculty-and-research/research/support-for-research-our-priorities/>

²¹ ESSEC research yearbook 2015, p. 5.

²² See <http://www.essec.edu/en/pages/about-essec/entrepreneurship/training/>