

PRESS RELEASE – PARIS, AUGUST 26, 2020

Press release of ENS-PSL on how to interpret the admissions following the 2020 preparatory classes' entrance exam (CPGE)

The publication of the ENS-PSL 2020 entrance exams' results led to several posts on social media highlighting the increase of young women admitted to the A/L exam, after literary preparatory classes, and connecting it to the absence of oral tests this year due to Covid-19.

As it does every year, ENS-PSL will conduct an in-depth study of the results of its various entrance exams (preparatory classes' track and student track for young women and men who attended university undergrads). This data will be available over the upcoming weeks and made public. It will analyze a series of variables, including gender, geographic and social origin, to which the school has always paid great attention.

Several remarks regarding the preparatory classes' and the student exams can already be made:

- The 2020 ENS-PSL class will count approximately 28% of women in Sciences (scientific departments) and 62% in the Humanities, designated as "*Lettres*" in French.
- Among those admitted through the literary preparatory classes' track (A/L and B/L exams), 67% are women in comparison to 54% on average over the last years (2015-2019). The gap with the trends usually observed in the Humanities mainly comes from the A/L exam. In Sciences, statistics are stable since there are 18% of women admitted this year after a preparatory class, a share that is very close to those observed over the last years (2015-2019).
- In the A/L 2020 exam, the admission threshold reached 15.83/20, and the exceptional absence of oral tests resulted in closer scores and averages between all candidates.

The changes imposed on to the entrance exams, which ENS-PSL had to implement due to the health situation, also call for a certain caution when comparing the 2020 admissions with previous classes. The disruptions in the preparation of students, in the exams' schedule or the organization of tests are, in many respects, too exceptional not to have had any impact. As an example, in the A/L exam, all disciplines were evaluated with the same coefficient, without singling out the options that traditionally allow some candidates to stand out. These differences prove how difficult it is, at this point, to draw scientifically rigorous conclusions from the comparison of figures from 2020 with previous editions.

ENS-PSL wishes to reaffirm it is far from indifferent to the biases and dynamics of self-censorship and selection that can occur, notably on the basis of gender and social origins, from a very young age. The under-representation of women in scientific programs is a central concern of the school, and several in-depth survey researches have been carried out on the matter. Strict parity among jury members in oral examinations for the Humanities (A/L and B/L exams) has also been observed for long. The school is particularly attached to these oral exams as they contribute to correcting some of the biases attached to written tests. ENS-PSL also wishes to reaffirm its gratitude towards and confidence in its juries.

Finally, as announced in October 2019, following a report handed out to the government on social diversity and the accessibility of French *grandes écoles*, the school intends to go further in the diversification of its student body. Gender diversity and gender issues will continue to be addressed, including by taking a proper and unbiased look at the results of the very singular admission session that just ended.

ENS – PSL Press contacts

O'len Gaultier | T +33 1 44 32 31 75 | olen.gaultier@ens.psl.eu

Charlotte Dupenloup | T + 33 1 44 32 31 90 | charlotte.dupenloup@ens.psl.eu