

Press Release

21 July 2026

At ESSCA, the academic year does not begin in a lecture theatre

Participating in a community project, learning how to prevent risky behaviours, or imagining the company of tomorrow using artificial intelligence: at ESSCA, the start of the academic year is a time for real-world experiences for students.

While most students will be returning to the classroom, those at ESSCA will begin their year on a community project, taking part in an investigative game, or facing an entrepreneurial challenge centred on artificial intelligence. From 1 to 17 September, the School will roll out three educational experiences that will shape the start of the academic year for different cohorts. The aim is to immerse students in practical situations even before their first academic classes. Through these three flagship initiatives, ESSCA has chosen a start to the academic year that prioritises experience over speeches.

First challenge: building for others with IMPACT ESSCA

At ESSCA, induction is not simply about getting to know the School or fellow students. It begins with an encounter with a charity, a local community and a tangible need.

From 1 to 4 September 2026, nearly 400 first-year students from the Grande École Programme and the Bachelor in International Management at the Paris campus will take part in the sixth edition of IMPACT ESSCA.

For four days, they will leave the classroom behind and work at Les Marronniers, a children's social care home **in Versailles**. The organisation supports children aged 4 to 13 who are under child protection measures.

Alongside the educational teams, students will design and then build a new outdoor living space comprising play areas, social spaces, an educational vegetable garden and a dining area. The objective is not simply to complete a construction project, but to leave behind a useful facility that will continue to be used long after they have left.

Indicative programme for a typical day:

- 9.00 am – Arrival of participants
- 9.15 am – Safety briefing and project management session
- 9.30 am to 4.00 pm – Construction work

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- 4.30 pm – Debrief

This initiative forms part of IMPACT ESSCA, the School's community-focused induction programme, organised simultaneously across its six French campuses. For the first time this year, the scheme will also be rolled out at the international campuses in **Budapest** and **Málaga**, illustrating ESSCA's commitment to making engagement a shared experience for all its students.

"The first memory we want our students to take away is that of a project they have built together and can be proud of. From the moment they arrive, they discover that being a manager is above all about listening, cooperating and acting for others. This conviction has guided IMPACT ESSCA since its creation." Marie Courtois, Director of Student Experience & Corporate Partnerships

Second challenge: learning how to respond to high-risk situations with Flashbacks

Community engagement marks the beginning of the academic year, but it is not its only highlight.

Also **from 1 to 4 September**, at the ESSCA Paris campus, new students will take part in Flashbacks sessions organised each day from **10.00 to 11.30 am** and from **1.00 to 2.30 pm**. Sessions will also be offered on the Angers, Aix-en-Provence, Bordeaux, Lyon and Strasbourg campuses.

Through a collaborative game inspired by real-life situations, students will be encouraged to investigate, debate and make decisions in response to scenarios involving violence, addictive behaviours, harassment and other dangerous situations.

Developed by ESSCA, this prevention initiative enables them to acquire the right reflexes from the moment they enter higher education and to become active contributors to a more responsible student life.

Third challenge: creating a business using artificial intelligence

A few days later, **from 15 to 17 September 2026**, the focus will shift completely.

Fourth-year students will begin the academic year with the first edition of the AI Challenge, organised simultaneously across ESSCA's campuses in Aix-en-Provence, Angers, Bordeaux, Luxembourg, Lyon, Paris and Strasbourg.

Working in teams and following a theoretical introduction, students will have three days to imagine a business, design a product using more than thirty generative artificial intelligence tools, create its visual identity, website and presentation video, before pitching their project to a jury during a national final.

This immersive experience reflects ESSCA's determination to prepare students for emerging professional practices, in which mastery of artificial intelligence is becoming a driver of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

A start to the academic year that sets the tone for an entire educational journey.

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About ESSCA

Based on its rich 117-year history, ESSCA School of Management is a renowned and firmly established French and European institution. A pioneering school in terms of teaching innovation and social and economic inclusion, it has striven to evolve on a permanent basis to incorporate the demands and challenges of the modern world with a will to train responsible leaders and assist organisations undergoing change.

A private higher education institution of common interest built upon a not-for-profit associative structure and a member of the Conférence des Grandes Ecoles, ESSCA School of Management delivers an officially recognised 5-year postsecondary Master degree and also offers a fully accredited Bachelor in International Management degree programme and Master of Science programmes. The school also offers a range of training programmes designed specifically for senior executives, managers, and operational teams, with degree-awarding training (including an Executive Master in Global Management) and custom programmes. ESSCA is also developing online designed by ESSCA online campus.

Thanks to its AACSB, AMBA and EQUIS triple crown accreditation, a status held by only 1% of business schools around the world, the School is an internationally renowned institution. It features in the top 100 Masters in Management programmes in the world in the 2026 Financial Times ranking and 37th globally for custom programmes in executive education. In terms of impact and research, ESSCA is ranked by Times Higher Education and ARWU (Shanghai Ranking).

Strengthened by a multicampus structure that helps consolidate its appeal to local regions and the showcasing of French expertise in the areas of higher education and research, ESSCA can call upon a network of almost 22,800 alumni working all across the world and currently welcomes over 500 faculty and staff and 7,800 students on its campuses in France (Aix-en-Provence, Angers, Bordeaux, Lyon, Paris and Strasbourg), China, Hungary, Luxemburg and Spain.

www.essca.eu

ESSCA

**Marguerite Moulin /
Cloé Bousseau**

Tél. : 02 52 09 40 27 / 02 44 01 51 40
marguerite.moulin@essca.fr
cloe.bousseau@essca.fr

Communication

**Myriam Boukaïa/
Stéphanie Masson**

Tél. : 07 50 69 52 56 / 06 84 65 17 34
mboukaia@madamemonsieur.agency
smasson@madamemonsieur.agency