RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

FRANCE compétences

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF:

The French qualifications framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area

► SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The report presents developments over the last ten years in areas directly related to the new French qualifications framework, i.e. education, higher education and professional training. It follows on from the report presented to the EQF (European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning) Advisory Group in October 2010.

In 2018, the Law of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's professional future, triggered far-reaching changes. This law provided legislative clarification of the French qualifications framework, which has been thoroughly revamped.

This framework is based on descriptors – knowledge, expertise and autonomy – that were agreed upon after extensive consultation with the stakeholders in the professional certification system.

The French government set the number of levels at eight, in order to facilitate comparison with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. However, since Level 1 does not have descriptors, this level is not related to EQF level 1.

France compétences – a new public institution whose responsibilities include the quality assurance of professional training and professional qualifications – is now responsible for the registration of qualifications in two specific directories: the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP), which registers qualifications according to a level in the national framework, and the Specific Register (RS), which lists qualifications of interest to the labour market that do not have an assigned level.

Matches have been established between qualifications that had a designated level before 2019 and the new levels.

This report also includes a chapter constituting a self-referencing report on the French Higher Education Framework in relation to the European Higher Education Framework.

2

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

3

GLOSSARY

BAC: Baccalauréat certificate awarded at the end of secondary school.

BUT: "Bachelor universitaire de technologie" (University Bachelor of Technology), a national higher education degree awarded after three years of study at a Technological University Institute (Institut universitaire de technologie – IUT).

CAP: Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle (Certificate of Professional Competence); level 3 diploma of the French National Education system.

CCN-UTU: National Advisory Commission of University Technology Institutes: evaluates DUTs.

CFA: Centre de formation des apprentis (Apprentice Training Centre).

CFEDG: Commission d'évaluation des formations et des diplômes de gestion (Commission for the Evaluation of Management Training and Diplomas).

CNESER: Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche (National Council for Higher Education and Research). This advisory body is consulted with particular regard to higher education and research strategy, the general guidelines for institutional contracts, the allocation of resources to institutions and reform projects relating to scientific employment. It ensures the representation of public scientific, cultural and professional establishments (Etablissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel – EPSCP) and of public establishments. Staff and students are elected by secret ballot and by separate boards.

Competency: a competency is the ability to combine a set of knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills in order to perform a task or activity. In the case of registration in the RNCP, it has a professional purpose and is contextualised.

It should be noted that in French, and depending on the context, competency can be translated as "skills". In the context of this report, competency relates to the notion of combining (rather than accumulating) knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills. "Skills" corresponds more closely to the descriptor "savoir-faire". The analysis of the competencies covered by a qualification determines its level. These competencies are expressed in terms of learning outcomes certified by an evaluation.

Commission de la certification professionnelle: this France compétences commission, created in 2019, sets out to adapt the certification system to a rapidly changing environment and to ensure that qualifications meet the economic and social needs. It is composed of 18 members (French State, Regions and social partners). Role and missions (defined by the French Labour Code):
▶ Issuing notices of assent related to applications for registration in the national registers (RNCP and RSCH);
▶ Drawing up a list of professions that are considered to be "emerging" or changing particularly rapidly;
▶ Sending requests to ministries and certifying bodies with a view to establishing total or partial matches between the professional qualification for which they are responsible and equivalent professional qualifications or those at the same level of qualification and their blocks of competencies;
▶ Reviewing draft recommendations (content and method of development);
▶ Contributing to the harmonisation of the terminology used for the titles of professional qualifications, the activities they cover and the competencies they certify;
▶ Ensuring the quality of information for individuals and businesses;
▶ Contributing to international work on the quality of qualifications.

CPC: The 11 inter-ministerial Professional Consultative Commissions (Commissions Professionnelles Consultatives – CPC) are responsible for examining professional diplomas and qualifications issued by the State, with a view to making them easier to understand and to ensuring that they are better adapted to companies' needs. They give their assent concerning professional qualifications. Social partners have a majority of voting rights and are represented by cross-industry trade union organisations and multi-professional or sectoral organisations.

CPF: The personal training account (compte personnel de formation – CPF) can be used by any working person, throughout his or her working life, including during periods of unemployment. It is used to fund training courses leading to recognised qualifications or certifications. For a full-time or part-time employee, €500 is paid into the account per year of work, up to a maximum of €5,000.

CQP: "Certificat de qualification professionnelle" (Professional Qualification Certificate) – a qualification created and issued by a sector of industry, which attests to the mastery of competencies related to an occupation. The 1,262 existing CQPs (133 of which are awarded by the technological industries sector) are intended to provide validation of the professional skills that are required for the performance of an activity, which are acquired by a training programme or a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme. CQPIs (Certificats de qualification professionnelle inter-branches) provide bridging solutions between sectors of industry.

CSLMD: Comité de suivi des cycles licence, master et doctorat (Monitoring Committee for Bachelor, Master and Doctorate Cycles).

CTI: Commission des titres d'ingénieurs (Commission for Engineering Qualifications).

DUT: Diplôme universitaire de technologie (University Technology Diploma) – a national higher education diploma created in 1996 and awarded after two years of study at a technological university institute (IUT). From September 2021, this DUT diploma will become an intermediate diploma, with students aiming to obtain the BUT (University Bachelor of Technology).

HCERES (also Hcéres): Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur (High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education), which is an independent administrative authority responsible for evaluating higher education and research institutions in France and abroad (on request).

IUT: Institut universitaire de technologie (University Technology Institute) (115 in France). Learning outcomes: statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to accomplish upon completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge and skills as well as responsibility and autonomy (definition of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 relating to the EQF).

National Pedagogical Commissions (CPN) at University Technology Institutes (IUT) are responsible for proposing the standards and programmes for University Diplomas of Technology (DUTs) and are consulted on all changes to training specialisms (24 DUTs) concerning them.

OPCA: Organisme paritaire collecteur agréé – an approved, jointly managed body that collects financial contributions from the enterprises in its field.

OPCO: Opérateurs de compétences (Competency Operators). Eleven Competency Operators are responsible for financing apprenticeships and the training needs of small businesses, helping sectors of industry to create and adapt professional qualifications, and supporting companies.

Regulated profession: a professional activity or a set of professional activities whose access, practice or means of practice are directly or indirectly restricted to holders of specific professional qualifications, by virtue of laws, regulations or administrative provisions.

RNCP: Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles (French National Register of Professional Qualifications).

RSHC or RS: Répertoire spécifique des habilitations et certifications (Specific Register of Accreditations and Qualifications).

Qualifications registered in the RNCP and RSCH are recognised by the State. The associated training programmes are eligible for public funding.

Sector: grouping of several companies belonging to the same sector of activity and covered by a collective agreement (source: Dalloz Code du travail).

VAE: (in French validation des acquis de l'expérience) one form of a Recognition of Prior Learning scheme.

At the end of 2020, there were 4,841 active records (2,744 registered by law, two thirds in higher education, and 2,097 registered on request). The inactive records (15,726) are no longer accessible but are stored in the information system to enable the issuance of certificates of national recognition attesting to their level for people who request them.

4

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

5

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first referencing report of France in 2010 concluded with plans to create a new national framework whose levels would be closer to those of the EQF. The framework did not include general education, and the general baccalaureate qualification awarded at the end of secondary school, (and first HE grade) had no level.

Many changes have occurred in the fields of education, higher education and lifelong learning; nevertheless, there is still a general agreement not to give a qualification level to general education, with the exception of general baccalaureate which has now the level 4.

The French system of qualifications allows for continuity in educational pathways and in training for all levels and higher education institutions participate in long life learning.

Training institutions or bodies are not systematically the awarding bodies. Therefore, students can study for a qualification at a training centre (possibly via an apprenticeship), and the certifying body will be responsible for determining and ensuring all aspects related to certification.

The national framework does not differentiate between the origins of different qualifications, however, the specific requirements for higher education are respected; the system aims also to provide bridging solutions between the various pathways.

There are two ways of assigning levels and registering in the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP): on request or by law, principles which have not changed since 2010. Registration by law applies to ministries that create qualifications after receiving the assent of a commission – here the members include representatives of social partners and ministries –; registration on request concerns all other qualifications, with the assent of a commission, composed of representatives of social partners, ministries and the Regions.

Since the Law of 5 September 2018, qualifications registered in the RNCP must be composed of units that are called blocks of competencies. They are defined as: "homogeneous and coherent sets of competencies that contribute to the autonomous exercise of a professional activity, which can be evaluated and validated ". These blocks of competencies were created by law in 2014 and became mandatory in 2018.

The national framework is part of a system that includes two registers: a register of qualifications without designated levels – the Specific Register (RS), and a register with designated levels – the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP).

The qualifications framework was created by official texts. It defines the levels, the descriptors, and indicates the levels of HE grades (including baccalaureate).

The qualifications are registered in the RNCP, which is a database under the responsibility, of France compétences, public organisation.

Chapter 1 summarizes the main developments in France over the last ten years including reforms in school-based training, apprenticeship system and changes in higher education and in vocational training, in relation with the national qualifications framework.

1. changes in school-based vocational training

They are related to a series of decrees that changed the EQF Levels 3 and 4 professional diplomas, effective from the start of the 2016 academic year. A block of professional activities (made up of one or more activities) that are important to the target jobs and professions corresponds to a block of professional competencies, which in turn corresponds to a certification unit. Each block is therefore evaluated.

It is also important to mention that there is transformation of the vocational pathway in order to increase its attractiveness.

2. changes in higher education

Since 2014, national diplomas at university degree level (bachelor's, professional bachelor's, master's) have been listed according to a classification of specialisations, which enables the definition, at national level, of the competencies of students holding a specific degree with specialisation. Cross-disciplinary competencies common to all degree specialisations (in bachelor's, professional bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees) are described in the national records, which sends out a strong signal to the labour market concerning the level of graduates. Professional experience is compulsory for professional bachelor's and master's degrees, whose main purpose is job-market integration. Bachelor's degrees will no longer be based on the duration of the course but rather on the learner's acquisition of ECTS credits.

3. reforms in the apprenticeship system

The apprenticeship contract is strongly regulated by laws and regulations under both the French Labour Code and the Education Code. Apprenticeships are the best-known way for trainees to acquire competencies in companies during a training programme, but they are not the only ones. Internships in companies have become a compulsory part of training. The Law of 5 September 2018 had two main objectives: to make apprenticeships a "pathway to excellence" and to kickstart their development.

4. changes in VET up to the law of 5 September 2018

With regard to qualifications, the 2009 law reinforced the role of the National Register of Professional Qualifications RNCP as a reference instrument for the financing of training actions for the active population and for job seekers. The Act also created a new instrument: the "Inventory". This register, designed from the outset as a database, was intended to raise the national profile of qualifications that are considered important for the job market, but which do not meet the criteria for awarding a level in the national framework because they do not correspond to the exercise of a profession (language skills, IT skills, etc.). The law created a new right – to "lifelong guidance" – and has reinforced the individual right to training (Droit individuel à la formation – DIF) (p.19), in which training rights are assigned to individuals, who retain them, even if they change jobs. This law has also simplified the financing of lifelong professional training. A quadripartite system of governance for vocational training was developed from the representatives of state, regions, social partners, employees and employers.

Chapter 2 provides the state of play of the French system. It includes necessary information about the legislative amendments, institutional arrangements, new French Qualifications Framework and quality assurance in the system. This Chapter helps readers to better understand the French system, legislative and institutional framework. The Chapter is also an introduction to Chapter 3 concerning the EQF Referencing Criteria.

The new French Qualifications Framework has 8 levels as the EQF. Although Level 1 has no descriptors, it corresponds to the mastery of basic knowledge, which is not enough to certify the ability to exercise a professional activity.

6

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

7

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 3 descriptors are knowledge, expertise and responsibility and autonomy.

The French qualification Framework uses "expertise" instead of skill: this shows the attachment to the notion of evaluation of competencies and the desire to give an operational dimension to the qualifications classified in the framework (qualifications in the framework relate to assessed learning outcomes, not learning objectives). There is also an introduction of an additional dimension – the work group – in the responsibility and autonomy descriptor.

KNOWLEDGE	EXPERTISE	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY
The descriptor concerns progression in knowledge to be able to carry out professional activities at the level (processes, materials, terminology relating to one or more fields, and theoretical knowledge)	The descriptor concerns progression: ▶ In the complexity and technical nature of a task, or activity in a process ▶ In the level of mastery of the professional activity ▶ In the mobilisation of a range of cognitive and practical skills ▶ In expertise in the field of communication and interpersonal relations in the professional context ▶ In the ability to communicate expertise	The descriptor concerns progression in the following areas: ▶ Organisation of work ▶ Reaction to unforeseen situations ▶ Awareness of the complexity of the environment ▶ Understanding of interactions in activities in other professional fields, in order to organise one's work, to correct it or give explanations to supervised staff ▶ Participation in collective work ▶ Level of supervision
-	-	-
Basic general knowledge and general knowledge specific to a field of activity	Perform simple activities and solve routine problems using simple rules and tools by mobilising some professional expertise in a structured context	Work under supervision, with a limited degree of autonomy Report on one's contribution to collective work
Knowledge covering the facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a specified field of activity	Perform activities and solve problems by selecting and applying methods, tools, materials and basic information, in a known context	Organise one's work in a generally stable environment Adapt the means of execution and one's behaviour to the circumstances Assess one's contribution in the collective work environment
Wide range of practical and theoretical knowledge related to a considered professional field	Carry out activities requiring the mobilisation of a wide range of skills Be able to adapt existing solutions to solve specific problems	Organise one's work autonomously in generally predictable contexts but which are subject to change Take into account interactions with related activities Participate in evaluating activities
Specialised and in-depth knowledge, regularly updated	Master expertise in a field of activity of known limits, to develop solutions to new problems Analyse and interpret information, by applying concepts Communicate expertise and methods	Take initiative to manage projects or carry out activities in an unpredictable context Supervise a team Manage a unit Self-assess one's performance

KNOWLEDGE	EXPERTISE	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY
Advanced knowledge in a professional field Critical understanding of theories and principles	Analyse and solve complex unforeseen problems in a specific field Identify solutions and set out arguments Collaborate with experts	Organise one's work in complex and changing environments Design and organise work processes Develop individual and collective competencies in one's team
Highly specialised knowledge, some at the forefront of knowledge in a field and at the interface between several fields of work	Prepare alternative strategies to develop activity Lead working groups in interdisciplinary or specialised fields, where necessary in a multicultural context	Organise and develop activities by combining scientific, societal and ethical issues Initiate and conduct professional collaborations Supervise the work of others Manage the transformation of complex professional contexts Assess the risks and consequences of one's activity
Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between several fields	Identify and solve complex and new problems involving multiple fields, and using the most advanced knowledge and expertise Design and lead projects and processes for research and innovation Make innovative contributions in high-level exchanges, and in international contexts	Manage and lead organisations or groups in complex or interdisciplinary activities Manage complex situations resulting in significant organisational changes Evaluate and anticipate possible consequences in the impacted fields

The introduction of "competency blocks" is a significant development to promote lifelong learning and labour-market integration. But it is necessary to note that these blocks are not considered as partial certifications that equate to a level.

The inclusion of the general baccalaureate and the technological baccalaureate at Level 4 of the Framework is another important change.

Chapter 3 provides responses to ten EQF Referencing Criteria to refer the French levels to the EQF levels.

For the time being, no qualifications have been registered in the RNCP at Level 2; however, the similarity of the descriptors and the characteristics of the qualifications registered at Level 3 and Level 4 lead to the conclusion that the two levels are comparable, insofar as it is the same logic of progression that prevails.

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities.

France compétences is the National Coordination Point for the EQF and has set up a review committee made up of members of the Professional Certification Commission. A proofreading committee has been proposed, including members from outside the Commission – Chambers of Trade and industry, the French assembly of skilled crafts, ENIC-NARIC France – whose opinions were taken into account for the submission of the report. The final report was sent to the Commission by the General Secretariat for European Affairs.

8

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

9

2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualification levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the EQF level descriptors.

The following diagram compares the French and European framework descriptors and shows broad similarities between them. Some differences need to be explained:

At the descriptor level

"Expertise" instead of skill: this shows the attachment to the notion of evaluation of competencies and the desire to give an operational dimension to the qualifications classified in the framework (qualifications in the framework relate to assessed learning outcomes, not learning objectives).

Some differences concern the **contextualisation** of qualifications (knowledge column, providing a constant reminder of the field of activity), expertise column where the context is systematically mentioned.

This does not exclude the existence of cross-disciplinary competencies, which can also be assessed as blocks of competencies, if deemed useful.

Introduction of an additional dimension – **the work group** – in the responsibility and autonomy descriptor.

The transfer of knowledge or expertise is an important element of differentiation of the French Levels 4 and 5 (qualifications for the "brevet de maîtrise", BTS, which respectively apply to the vocational training provided by craft industries and the academic world).

Finally, it was considered useful to note intercultural aspects and the international dimension for the highest levels.

However, these differences represent more of a contextualisation vis-à-vis the French framework, which is resolutely focused on professionalisation, also for higher-education degrees.

CORRESPONDENCE TABLE:

FRENCH LEVEL	EQF LEVEL
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8

Chapter 4

Compatibility of the French Higher Education Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education Area

This chapter describes the system of higher education and its quality assurance. It also deals with the role of Higher institutions for Lifelong learning and validation schemes that establish links between the world of work and the academic world, between the competencies developed during the exercise of professional activities and the competencies expected at the end of a training programme, the recognition of prior experience and learning is a priority in universities' lifelong professional training policies.

It emphasises that the range of study and training programmes is designed in such a way as to enable students to constantly progress or reorient their studies towards different levels of training or pathways; degrees and diplomas are also accessible through initial training (including apprenticeships), further training or the recognition of prior learning.

Verification of the compatibility of our higher education framework with the overarching framework of qualifications in the Higher Education Area

Criterion 1 - The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education.

Like all policy orientations that impact the organisation and functioning of the higher education system, the Minister for Higher Education has sole responsibility for decisions concerning the structuring of the academic system. These decisions are laid down in official texts (laws, decrees, orders), which are first discussed with the competent authorities and bodies and then put to a vote by the CNESER before being adopted. The official texts are all published in the "Journal officiel de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche" (JOESR – French Official Journal of Higher Education and Research) and can be consulted at www.legifrance.gouv.fr.

The French Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for managing the arrangements for obtaining university degree-level diplomas. In addition, the records relating to university degrees are registered by law in the national framework, by the Ministry of Higher Education, under its supervision (in the case of management schools, for example), or with its agreement (in the case of records relating to engineering qualifications, which are verified by the Commission for Engineering Qualifications (CTI)).

Criterion 2 - There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework.

The aims of each cycle are specified in Article L 612-2 of the French Education Code. They largely cover the learning outcomes expected of students at the end of each cycle, as set out in the EHEA Qualifications Framework or "Bologna Framework".

In addition, the main objectives of the bachelor's degree are defined in the Decree of 1st August 2011, and precisely translated into competency reference frameworks based on the Dublin descriptors. The reference frameworks for the main fields can be consulted on the Ministry of Higher Education's website: https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid61532/les-referentiels-de-competences-en-licence.html.

Like all policy orientations that impact the organisation and functioning of the higher education system, the Minister for Higher Education has sole responsibility for decisions concerning the structuring of the academic system. These decisions are laid down in official texts (laws, decrees, orders), which are first discussed with the competent authorities and bodies and then put to a vote by the CNESER before being adopted. The official texts are all published in the "Journal officiel de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche" (JOESR – French Official Journal of Higher Education and Research) and can be consulted at www.legifrance.gouv.fr.

Criterion 3 - The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS-compatible credits.

Higher education diplomas, regardless of the proportion of purely vocational training they entail, have all been registered by law (since the Law of 17 January 2002) in the "Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles" (RNCP – National Register of Professional Qualifications), which constitutes the French national framework for lifelong learning. Due to its strong labour-market orientation, which requires clear mention of the competencies certified by qualifications, RNCP requires these qualifications, and therefore higher education degrees and diplomas, to be described in terms of learning outcomes, and in particular, of vocational competencies.

The description of the expected outcomes of study programmes is one of the criteria used by the Ministry to accredit the diploma to which these programmes lead.

With regard to ECTS credits, Decree 2002-482 of 8 April 2002 "on the application of the construction of the European Higher Education Area to the French higher education system" sets out, among its general principles (Title I, Article 2): "the implementation of the European system of bankable and transferable teaching units, known as the 'European Credit Transfer System - ECTS'". Article 5 (Title II – Academic Provisions) specifies that "the number of European credits per teaching unit is defined on the basis of the total workload required by the student to obtain the unit".

To ensure the comparison and transfer of learning pathways in the European Higher Education Area, a common benchmark has been established, corresponding to the acquisition of 180 credits for the bachelor's degree level and 300 credits for the master's degree level.

The ECTS system is now considered a "normal" component of the French system; it is recognised and used by the entire university community. It has made a major contribution to the construction of more flexible career pathways and the decompartmentalisation of study programmes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Criterion 4 - The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent.

Qualifications awarded on behalf of the French State and created after consulting consultative bodies involving representative organisations of employers and employees are registered by law in the RNCP. This procedure is laid down by law.

The accreditation procedure provides for consultation with the National Council for Higher Education and Research (Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche – CNESER). In addition, the records describing degrees and diplomas are discussed by the monitoring committee for bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in which France compétences participates.

Qualifications awarded on behalf of the French State and created after consulting consultative bodies involving representative organisations of employers and employees are registered by law in the RNCP.

The legal registration of national higher education degrees and diplomas is based on the fact that their status is guaranteed by the State through clearly defined evaluation and accreditation procedures. The accreditation procedure provides for consultation with the National Council for Higher Education and Research (CNESER).

Criterion 5 - The national quality assurance systems for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process.

Prior to the implementation of the Bologna process and the Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, quality was, to a certain extent, inherent to a system in which the notion of degree-level status (in French: "grade", corresponding to a guarantee of the attainment of a level) is distinct from that of the degree itself, with only the State being entitled to award degree-level status according to criteria it has defined.

Since the establishment of independent evaluation bodies in accordance with European references for the quality of higher education within the EEA, the quality of French higher education programmes is based on both the existence of evaluation procedures and on the evaluation of the actual content of programmes leading to national higher education diplomas conferring university degree-level status.

Criterion 6 - The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements.

In the National Directory of Professional Certifications (NDPC), for each of the diplomas, the level at which it is classified at national level and the corresponding level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) are mentioned. Diploma records can be consulted on the France compétences website.

The RNCP record for a diploma has been designed to cover the majority of the items contained in the Diploma Supplement. The correspondence between the level of the diploma at national level and one of the levels of the European lifelong Qualification Framework is one of these items.

Criterion 7 - The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published.

All procedures for the creation of diplomas and accreditation are clearly mentioned in official texts.

The procedures for engaging in dialogue with stakeholders are also described in texts (internal quality assurance procedures bringing together the stakeholders (employers, trainers, representatives of graduates), for each diploma. The stakeholders (employers, trainers, representatives of graduates) are also mentioned in texts.

The CNESER, and the monitoring committee for bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, which are forums for dialogue, are also created by official texts.

Finally, the Ministry of Higher Education is a member of the Professional Certification Commission.

12

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

13

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the new French National Qualifications Framework and its compliance with the recommendations of the 2017 Recommendation. *The term qualification is used for the English version, as it is the term used for the referencing reports, but the word used in France is "certification professionnelle", where "certification "describes a process and the result of this process. Qualifications very often mean that there was a discussion and that there is a social agreement which underpins the use of qualifications.*

The previous report, sent to the Commission in October 2010, described the French framework in force since 2002 and its integration into the national system; in particular, it indicated how the framework fitted into the training and education systems, and its links with the labour market.

It presented the steps taken to reference the levels of the French framework with the EQF levels in accordance with the criteria of the 2008 Recommendation, and indicated the difficulties encountered. Finally, the report concluded with plans to create a new national framework whose levels would be closer to those of the EQF.

The members of the EQF Advisory Committee, given the "mature" nature of the framework, had issued essentially two criticisms: the framework did not include general education, and a level had not been assigned to the general baccalauréat qualification awarded at the end of secondary school. Many changes have been made over the last ten years in the fields of education, higher education and lifelong learning.

However, certain characteristics of the French professional certification system remain:

▸ The system is open to any organisation, provided that it meets the regulatory requirements for awarding bodies, and that its qualification has met the criteria for registration in the National Register, which enable it to be classified according to a given level of qualification;

▸ This is a "bottom-up" system for access to registration in the framework: qualifications can be offered without the existence of a pre-established scheme at the national level. Several qualifications may therefore be applicable to the same occupation;

▸ Apprenticeships are not restricted to national education or higher education diplomas, or to qualifications awarded by other ministerial departments; the majority of qualifications listed in the RNCP can be obtained through apprenticeship schemes. If apprentices have an employment contract, their curriculum will be monitored by the awarding body as part of an educational pathway, and young people under 30 years of age in initial training are the beneficiaries of such schemes;

▸ General education remains outside the system of qualification levels: even though the learning outcomes of pupils in general education are assessed in terms of competencies, these are not professional competencies. There is a consensus in France that the competencies acquired during schooling (nursery school, primary school and the first cycle of secondary education [collège]) cannot be linked to occupations. Units are systematically used only in higher education (ECTS);

▸ For all qualifications, including national education diplomas and university degrees, there is no difference in value according to the route by which they were obtained (initial education, further education, VAE);

▸ Two initial professional training routes are available to young people: the academic route, and training under an apprenticeship contract (specific employment contract);

▸ The levels of qualifications reflect all of the professional competencies acquired (while the learning outcomes are more a means of expressing what learners have accomplished);

▸ The system is flexible; it allows for continuity in educational pathways (especially at the university level) and in training for all levels. It aims to provide bridging solutions between the various pathways;

▸ To be eligible for registration in the RNCP at a designated level of the national framework, all qualifications – including academic diplomas – must be accessible via the VAE scheme. Only specific official texts, e.g. concerning the regulation of an activity, may derogate from this principle (one text per certification exempt from VAE);

▸ The national framework does not differentiate between the origins of different qualifications: there are no separate sub systems. However, the specific requirements for higher education are respected;

▸ Qualifications can be of public or private origin. In France, universities can create and issue professional qualifications under their own responsibility, as can public establishments under the authority of the Ministry of National Education (in this case, qualifications do not have an academic nature). For example, an institution such as the CNAM (Conservatoire national des arts et métiers) issues diplomas at university degree level and professional qualifications at various levels. The training institutions or bodies are separate from the awarding bodies. Therefore, students can study for a qualification at a training centre (possibly via an apprenticeship), and the certifying body will be responsible for determining and ensuring all aspects related to certification. The same registration criteria must be respected, in order to guarantee the protection of users, while also ensuring compliance with the criteria for attributing levels. That is why formal and informal terms may be used in the training sector, but they are not used in the professional qualification field in France.

▸ However, there are two ways of assigning levels and registering in the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP): on request or by law, principles which have not changed since 2010. Registration by law applies to ministries that create qualifications after receiving the assent of a commission whose members include representatives of social partners and ministries. As the registration of qualifications is not compulsory, some qualifications may not be required by the ministries;

▸ Registration on request concerns all other qualifications, with the assent of a commission composed of representatives of social partners, ministries and the Regions;

▸ The levels of the framework relate to qualifications and diplomas that have an occupational integration objective, an economic dimension, a social benefit and clear links with the labour market (use for collective agreements). In this respect, the French Ministry of Higher Education considers that all diplomas at university degree level seek to facilitate labour-market integration. The term is not used for the national framework in France;

▸ Registration in the framework must be driven by demand from users, i.e. the economic actors (workers and companies) and not by the training provision. The framework is based on the principle of competencies, described in terms of the assessed learning outcomes, and on the development of lifelong learning. Since the Law of 5 September 2018, in order to facilitate lifelong learning, the qualifications registered in the RNCP must be composed of units: blocks of competencies. Created by law in 2014, these blocks became mandatory in 2018. They are defined as: "homogeneous and coherent sets of competencies that contribute to the autonomous exercise of a professional activity, which can be evaluated and validated " (Art. L. 6113- 1 of the French Labour Code). The Law of 2018 authorised the establishment of bridging solutions between different qualifications registered in the RNCP, which required changes to the way in which qualifications are formulated. The national framework is part of a system that includes two registers: a register of qualifications without designated levels – the Specific Register (RS), and a register with designated levels – the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP);

▸ The Law of 5 September 2018 introduced the possibility of bridging solutions between the blocks of competencies for qualifications registered in the RNCP and qualifications registered without a designated level in the other register. This report will present the main changes in the French education and training system (initial, further) in relation to the new national framework. Incorporating the description of the framework into the general qualifications system will thus enable the establishment of links with the EQF;

▸ Distinctions are made between the quality of the training organisations, the quality of the training, and the process of registration in the framework (each qualification is analysed individually).

The new framework, with its levels, and the procedures for registration in the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP) will be described in the second part.

The manner in which the various criteria set out in the Recommendation are met will be described.

Finally, in accordance with the Recommendation, a specific section will be devoted to higher education in France and its compliance with the descriptors of the European higher education system.

This report was produced by France compétences, a public institution created in 2018. The missions of France compétences include acting as both the National Coordination Point for the implementation of the Recommendation on the EQF, and the National Coordination Point for the implementation of the Recommendation on the Professional Training Quality Framework.

The report was prepared by an Editorial Committee consisting of members of the National Commission for Professional Qualifications (including the Ministries of National Education and Higher Education, and representatives of social partners). Indeed, this Commission "contributes to the international projects on the quality from qualifications" (Art. 6113-7 of the Labour Code).

The Editorial Committee produced a draft report, which was submitted to an extended Proofreading Committee that included a representative of the ENIC-NARIC France network and representatives of Chambers of Trade and Industry (see annex 1 for the composition of the committees).

14   UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA   15
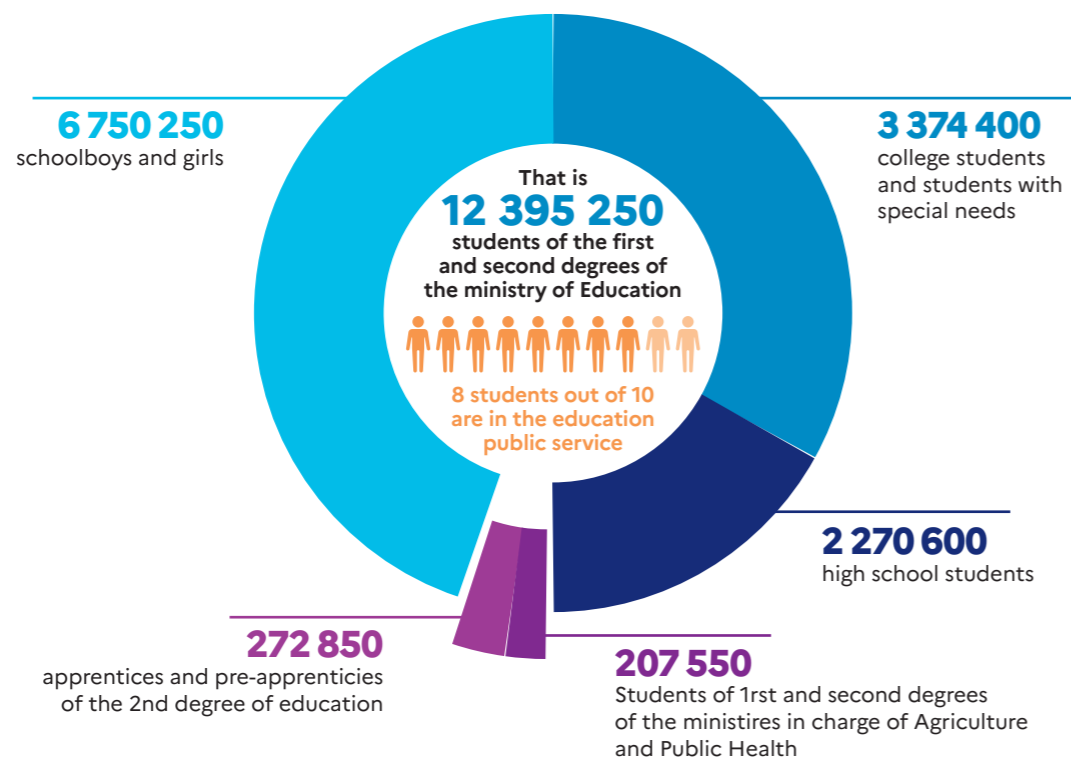
MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS
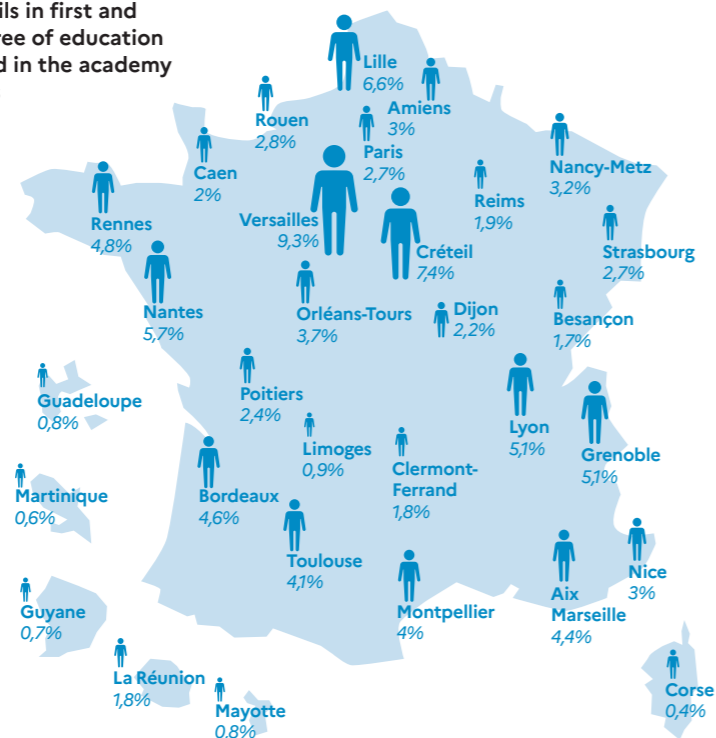
1. OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND ORGANISATION OF STUDIES

First and second degree of national education pupils and apprentices

12 875 650 students and apprentices

6 750 250
schoolboys and girls

3 374 400
college students
and students with
special needs

That is
12 395 250
students of the first
and second degrees of
the ministry of Education

**8 students out of 10
are in the education
public service**

2 270 600
high school students

272 850
apprentices and pre-apprenticies
of the 2nd degree of education

207 550
Students of 1rst and second degrees
of the ministires in charge of Agriculture
and Public Health

**9,3% of pupils in first and
second degree of education
are schooled in the academy
of Versailles**

Lille 6,6%
Amiens 3%
Rouen 2,8%
Paris 2,7%
Nancy-Metz 3,2%
Caen 2%
Reims 1,9%
Versailles 9,3%
Créteil 7,4%
Strasbourg 2,7%
Rennes 4,8%
Orléans-Tours 3,7%
Dijon 2,2%
Besançon 1,7%
Nantes 5,7%
Poitiers 2,4%
Guadeloupe 0,8%
Limoges 0,9%
Lyon 5,1%
Grenoble 5,1%
Martinique 0,6%
Bordeaux 4,6%
Clermont-Ferrand 1,8%
Toulouse 4,1%
Nice 3%
Guyane 0,7%
Montpellier 4%
Aix Marseille 4,4%
La Réunion 1,8%
Mayotte 0,8%
Corse 0,4%

Overview of the academic (initial education) and apprenticeship-based professional training pathways

After the first cycle of secondary education (collège), students can study for:
▶ A two-year Certificate of Professional Competence (certificat d'aptitude professionnelle – CAP);
▶ A three-year vocational baccalauréat professionnel diploma.

Bridging solutions exist between the two diplomas, enabling students on CAP courses to change track and continue their studies in the final year of the vocational baccalauréat, for example, or students in the second year of a vocational baccalauréat to cross over into the second year of the CAP.

Students can also continue their training by enrolling on other VET diplomas after a CAP, such as the two-year brevet professionnel (a high-level professional diploma prioritising professional integration), or the two-year brevet des métiers d'art (a high-level professional diploma specialising in the art and heritage fields).

After a CAP or a vocational baccalauréat, an additional one-year "mention complémentaire" (specialised course) can also be taken (examples: "restaurant dessert chef" after a CAP in cooking; "aeronautical and aerospace sheet metalwork technician" after a vocational baccalauréat in sheet metalwork, bodywork or aeronautical structures).

It should be noted that the training programme always includes periods of in-company training, which are a compulsory and evaluated component of the diploma (see the corporate sector's role in different forms of training in annex 3).

Vocational diplomas accessible via different pathways

Students can study for vocational diplomas awarded by the national education system in vocational schools (lycées); apprentices and adults can also take these courses in institutes of further education.

Finally, these diplomas can also be taken without prior training (by "independent" candidates), or via VAE.

Studying for the CAP

These courses usually last for two years after the first cycle of secondary education (collège). They are taught either in a vocational secondary school (lycée) or in an apprentice training centre. There are around 200 specialisms.

The Certificate of Professional Competence in Agriculture (CAPA), under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, is taught in agricultural vocational schools, with the possibility of apprenticeships in companies or on farms.

Outside the apprenticeship component, students follow theoretical courses and carry out practical work in workshops, laboratories or on work sites according to their specialism. A balance is struck between general education (French, mathematics-sciences, history-geography, moral and civic education, physical education and sport, health and safety and, depending on the speciality, a modern language) and technical and vocational training. An in-company training period of 12 to 14 weeks is a mandatory component designed to reinforce the professional dimensions of the training.

Studying for the vocational baccalauréat

These courses are taught at a vocational school (lycée professionnel), an agricultural vocational school for the agricultural vocational baccalaureate, or at an apprentice training centre.

The vocational baccalauréat curriculum lasts three years, from the first year of studies at a vocational school (known as "seconde professionnelle") to the third and final year (known as "terminale professionnelle").

The courses are based on the mastering of professional techniques. Students perform practical work in workshops or classrooms and carry out several months of in-company training (18 to 22 weeks). This professional experience helps them become operational on the labour market. During in-company placements, the students work under the responsibility of a tutor or training supervisor. They have student trainee status and are monitored during in-company placements by the teaching team, which carries out visits to ensure the smooth running of each placement and to take stock of the situation.

The training also includes general courses. Pupils take courses in French, history-geography, moral and civic education, mathematics, a modern language, physical education, applied arts and artistic culture and, according to the specialisms: economics/management or economics/law, and physics and chemistry or a second modern language.

There are nearly 100 vocational baccalauréat specialisms.

18

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

19

2. REFORMS IN SCHOOL-BASED VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The main change in national education diplomas vis-à-vis the principles of the national framework has been the implementation of blocks of competencies.

This implementation has taken place gradually since the Law of 5 March 2014, which authorised the creation of blocks of competencies.

Following work carried out by the Ministry of National Education, in line with projects carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture in particular, a series of decrees made changes to the EQF Levels 3 and 4 professional diplomas, effective from the start of the 2016 academic year. (CAP Decree 2016-772 of 10 June 2016, Vocational baccalauréat Decree 2016-771 of 10 June 2016).

The following block-based system of identification was adopted; the vocational diploma consists of units of competencies (blocks of general competencies or blocks of professional competencies). Each block is evaluated by an examination.

A block of professional activities (made up of one or more activities) that are important to the target jobs and professions corresponds to a block of professional competencies, which in turn corresponds to a certification unit. Each block is therefore evaluated.

Since these decrees in 2016, adult candidates who choose to sit only part of the diploma examinations receive a certificate issued by the chief education officer (recteur d'académie), recognising the acquisition of the blocks of competencies corresponding to the units/examinations they have validated.

These documents attest to the mastery of the competencies related to a block, which enables individuals to mention their acquisition of these competencies in the context of further training and with regard to employers. Given that little time has elapsed since the implementation of the system, studies are not yet available for analysis.

EXCERPTS FROM THE 2016 CAP DECREE:

"Irrespective of the form of examination chosen, candidates studying for the Certificate of Professional Competence via the continuing vocational training route or via the Recognition of Prior Learning scheme shall receive a certificate issued by the chief education officer for the units of the diploma taken, either for the current session or during the previous five years, which have been awarded a mark of at least 10 out of 20 or met the requirements for the Recognition of Prior Learning, whether they were obtained through the academic or apprenticeship-based route. This certificate shall recognise the acquisition of the competencies constituting these units of the diploma."

As of the 2020 examination session and pursuant to the Decree 2020-726 of 12 June 2020 amending the provisions of the French Education Code concerning the recognition of the acquisition of blocks of competencies for five vocational diplomas, students and apprentices who have followed the initial training for these EQF Level 3 and 4 diplomas, and who have failed the examinations for these diplomas but have nevertheless validated a particular block of competencies constituting the diploma, will also receive certificates confirming that they have met the requirements for the blocks they have obtained. Chief education officers will be responsible for issuing these certificates, following the deliberations of examination panels. This certificate does not have a designated level.

For candidates, blocks are obtained for an unlimited period of time. In the event of a change in the diploma, correlation tables may be drawn up.

Some of the education reforms have improved coordination in the initial vocational training sector, between State representatives at the regional level and the Regions, especially following the Programme Law for Restructuring State Schools in July 2013, and the Law on the New Territorial Organisation of the Republic in 2015. The diplomas are national and therefore valid in all regions, but this does not prevent them from being adapted to regional or local specificities (e.g. roofers trained in Brittany will have more practical experience in slate roofs than those trained on traditional tile roofs in the Occitanie region, but they will also acquire knowledge and expertise that will enable them to adapt, in the practice of their trade, to local contexts (materials, specific implementation constraints, etc.).

With regard to organisation at the territorial level, the joint definition of an initial vocational training map, and the creation in 2014 of the Campus des métiers et des qualifications (Campuses of Trades and Qualifications) should be mentioned. These structures bring together, at the regional level, the resources provided by the regional councils and institutions of the Ministry of National Education and Higher Education, in order to promote the fluidity of learners' pathways concerning occupations in innovative professional sectors. These Campuses of Trades and Qualifications have gradually been opened up to businesses and further education, as part of the reform of the vocational pathway.

Finally, in 2018, the Minister for National Education launched a transformation of the vocational pathway in order to increase the attractiveness of this training pathway, which can be accessed after the first cycle of secondary education (collège), but also to support "paths to excellence" (parcours d'excellence), professional integration and success for young people. This transformation relies on the mobilisation of several levers, such as: better links between vocational and general education, greater complementarity between apprenticeship-based and academic pathways, more personalised pathways that encourage progressive learning and the construction of career projects, the introduction of modules for further study or professional integration in the final year of the vocational baccalauréat, and the creation of a "masterpiece" during the vocational baccalauréat and CAP courses.

All the baccalaureates (vocational, technological and general) give access to higher education.

Even if further training for vocational baccalaureate is most of the time in short technical training level 5, it is also allowed to enter university for longer training courses and upper levels. In this case some additional courses may be proposed by HE institutions.

https://www.education.gouv.fr/upper-secondary-general-or-technological-school-new-grade-10-and-grade-11-classes-5465

20

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

21

3. CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN RELATION TO THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The various reforms that have taken place have had the following consequences:

▶ Making higher education programmes part of a lifelong learning programme, especially in the context of initial training, but also as part of work-study training (apprenticeship and professionalisation contracts), in further education and through the RPL scheme;

▶ Improving the clarity of the competencies and learning outcomes certified by the national bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees (development and implementation of the new training framework);

▶ Facilitating guidance for students and making it easier for them to change direction during the course of their studies;

▶ Placing the emphasis on professionalisation during the course of studies (for bachelor's degrees, in particular, the emphasis has been placed on opportunities to enter professional life immediately after obtaining this degree, whereas bachelor's curricula previously tended to encourage students to continue their studies by enrolling on master's degrees with a research or professional orientation);

▶ Finally, in view of the demand and changes in the labour market, a new type of diploma has been created: the professional bachelor's degree awarded by IUTs. This is a Level 6 degree: the University Bachelor of Technology (Bachelor universitaire de technologie – BUT);

▶ Changes in regulations have led to the individualisation of learners' programmes according to lifelong learning principles, and have also led to a greater emphasis on professionalisation in university degree level qualifications.

The passing of the Law of 24 July 2013 on the reform of higher education laid the foundations for the changes to higher education degrees and learners' pathways in line with the measures adopted in the framework of Europe 2020 measures. The Law of 2013 defined conditions for the implementation of agreements between secondary schools with preparatory classes and higher education institutions (including universities), while also creating bridging solutions between bachelor's degrees, in order to prevent students from dropping out of their studies without obtaining a diploma.

Since 2014, national diplomas at university degree level (bachelor's, professional bachelor's, master's) have been listed according to a classification of specialisms, which enables the definition, at national level, of the competencies of students holding a specific degree specialism. These learning outcomes can take the form of specialisms within the framework of the programmes taught in universities. However, the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for registering national records describing the learning outcomes of holders of a degree specialism in the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP), which constitutes the national framework. Cross-disciplinary competencies common to all degree specialisms (in bachelor's, professional bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees) are described in the national records, which sends out a strong signal to the labour market concerning the level of graduates; these cross-disciplinary competencies are supplemented by competencies specific to each specialism.

Other laws have made changes to schemes in higher education (such as Law 2018-166 of 8 March 2018 on student guidance and success), but the objectives of improving the clarity of degrees and facilitating lifelong learning have been pursued and clarified.

The descriptions of degrees were defined more precisely by two decrees published on 30 July 2018, which respectively describe a "national training framework" leading to the awarding of bachelor's, professional bachelor's and master's degrees and, more specifically, the organisational procedures for the bachelor's degree. The text creating the new framework also describes degree courses based on the acquisition of ECTS credits, in accordance with the Bologna Process.

"The organisation of training programmes is based on the acquisition of European credits, in order to facilitate the comparison of training courses and student mobility.

Each teaching unit has a defined value in terms of European credits.

The number of European credits per teaching unit is defined on the basis of the total workload required to obtain the unit. This workload which, according to European standards, corresponds to between 25 and 30 hours for a European credit, is estimated on the basis of the total workload imposed upon the student according to the characteristics of the course and, in particular, the number of teaching hours, the different academic activities carried out, and the independent work required.

This workload takes into account the use of digital technologies by determining the equivalence with the amount of face-to-face teaching required to acquire the same competencies.

The institutions shall ensure that the distribution of European credits within the training programme of each student is consistent with the training objectives.

European credits are obtained when the validation conditions defined by the knowledge and skills assessment procedures have been met."

The new organisational structure of degrees incorporates academic support measures for people undergoing initial and further training, to enable their progressive specialisation and to bring their training projects into line with the knowledge and competencies they acquire.

Universities should be involved in the guidance phase before students make their final choice of study programmes prior to entering higher education, and should take part in student information, guidance and reorientation schemes. Institutions must now also establish bridging solutions and integration mechanisms designed to help students enhance their programmes or choose different courses, either at the same institution or at a different one. They must also facilitate the recognition of their students' prior learning, even if they do not obtain the full degree, by issuing a certificate validating their acquisition of a proportion of the knowledge and competencies in the degree curriculum, which should be expressed in the form of blocks in the future.

The decree on the organisation of the bachelor's degree also stipulates that each training establishment must enter into an "academic contract for student success" with its bachelor's degree students, defining the study programme and the support measures put in place.

The study programme must thus enable the acquisition of technological, professional and pre-professional competencies, and will be based on knowledge of the occupational fields associated with the training and, where appropriate, on professional experience enabling the development of a career project. However, this professional experience is compulsory for professional bachelor's and master's degrees, whose main purpose is job-market integration.

The study programmes are divided into semesters, organised into blocks of knowledge and competencies, and also into teaching units. These are the learners' training pathways, corresponding to the description of degrees in the form of blocks of competencies in the RNCP.

The new bachelor's degree takes each student's background and aspirations into account in order to facilitate the development of their talents. This personalisation of pathways will be proposed by institutions in the framework of the "contrat de réussite pédagogique" (contract for academic success), and will make it possible to offer "fast-track courses" to students wishing to complete their bachelor's degree in two years. Bachelor's degrees will no longer be based on the duration of the course but rather on the learner's acquisition of ECTS credits.

France has adopted the designations of "licence" (bachelor's degree), "master" (master's degree) and "doctorat" (doctorate) for diplomas leading to a university degree in higher education.

"Licence" is frequently translated into English as "bachelor", and many "bachelor programmes", of varying duration and quality, have flooded the market, generally aiming to facilitate quick job-market integration.

Some of these "bachelor programmes" are also registered in the RNCP, under the name of the professions for which they prepare, as they meet the conditions required in terms of the quality of the qualification and job-market integration.

Over the years however, there has been growing ambiguity between these study programmes and traditional bachelor's degrees, particularly professional bachelor's degrees, especially for people who have taken such courses and wish to continue their studies at university, and have been prevented from doing so because their "bachelor's degree", designed outside the BMD (bachelor, master, doctorate) system, does not give them the opportunity to do so.

3.
CHANGES
IN HIGHER
EDUCATION IN
RELATION TO
THE NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORK.

Analyses were therefore carried out, and following a report and studies, partly in conjunction with the "grandes écoles" (see the role of the "grandes écoles" in Chapter IV), the Minister decided that certain bachelor programmes could be granted "licence" (French bachelor's degree) status, subject to compliance with the specifications. The Ministry of Higher Education therefore published an order in January 2020, effective from the start of the 2021 academic year, with the aim of harmonising study programmes under the BMD system, and improving the clarity of degrees, particularly for learners. The Decree of 27 January 2020, relating to the specifications for university bachelor's and master's degrees, thus sets out the criteria that enable bachelor programmes to be awarded "licence" (bachelor's degree) status.

This was the context – taking into account the specificities of IUTs (University Technology Institutes) and the need to transform the DUT (University Technology Diploma) – in which the BUT (University Bachelor of Technology) degree was created.

A NEW LEVEL 6 DEGREE: THE UNIVERSITY BACHELOR OF TECHNOLOGY (BUT)

The Decree of 6 December 2019, reforming the professional bachelor's degree, created a new Level 6 diploma. This "bachelor universitaire de technologie" (BUT) is a specific type of professional bachelor's degree awarded by university institutes of technology (IUT). IUTs are institutions attached to universities, which are authorised to award university diplomas certifying short university courses at Level 5, called university technical diplomas (diplômes universitaires de technologie – DUTs). These diplomas are classified according to specialisms, which correspond to professional sectors. The new university bachelor of technology degree is defined by these same specialisms, which equate to the traditional "mentions".

The BUT is part of the national framework defined by order of the Minister for Higher Education. For two thirds of the total number of hours in the programme, the BUT is based on a national programme defined following consultation with the National Advisory Commission of the IUTs. For the remaining one third of the total number of hours, the BUT is based on local adaptations of the study programme defined by the Commission on Training and University Life, at the proposal of the IUT Board.

Students can access the programme after obtaining a baccalauréat diploma or a Level 4 qualification registered in the RNCP.

In initial training, students are expected to obtain a university bachelor of technology degree as their final diploma. However, if they are unable to complete the curriculum, it is still possible for them to obtain the university technical diploma (DUT). Students can continue their studies after obtaining this degree.

Since 2010, the various reforms of initial training have sought to give students easier access to the job market. The reform of the apprenticeship system is an example of this.

4. REFORMS IN THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

In France, **work-study programmes include two types of contracts:** the contrat d'apprentissage (apprenticeship contract) and the contrat de professionnalisation (professionalisation contract), which both address the same aims of enabling the acquisition of competencies and providing a qualification that combines working in companies with theoretical training.

The apprenticeship contract is strongly regulated by laws and regulations under both the French Labour Code and the Education Code, although the Law of 2018 gives the Labour Code a much stronger role in the regulation of apprenticeships.

This normative burden tended to be an obstacle to the recruiting of apprentices. It was something of a "psychological" hurdle for employers who may have been reluctant to employ an apprentice because of the significant administrative and regulatory burden that such a recruitment represented, i.e. having to do research and look for information in the Labour and Education Codes, and needing to be a "specialist" on apprenticeships in order to understand the issues, because the system at that time was very different from the ordinary law of the Labour Code. Bringing the status of apprentices closer to that of employees under ordinary law makes it easier for employers to take on apprentices, especially in small businesses.

In addition, employers used to complain about excessive compartmentalisation between the training centre-based and in-company components of apprenticeships, which resulted in a juxtaposition of alternating periods rather than a truly complementary system. Graduation was seen by apprentices as the result of learning outcomes obtained in the training centre more than the fruit of their activities in the workplace.

Finally, employers were critical of the arrangements for remunerating apprentices. This remuneration, fixed by law and dependent on the apprentice's age group, amounted to paying an apprentice, on a pro rata temporis basis, sometimes as much as an employee earning the minimum wage, in addition to the costs incurred for tutorship in the company.

An in-depth review of the apprenticeship contract system needed to be performed, in order to bring it into line with ordinary employment contract law and therefore facilitate the recruiting of young people on apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are the best-known way for trainees to acquire competencies in companies during a training programme, but they are not the only one. Internships in companies have become a compulsory part of training (see Annex 3 The corporate sector's role in training).

Recently, legislative changes were made to the apprenticeship system in the general context of tackling mass unemployment in France. Their aim was to facilitate and encourage access to this system and to allocate the resources required for it to fulfil its main vocation: ensuring the employability of young people.

The statistics speak for themselves: in the seven months following the end of an apprenticeship contract, 7 out of 10 apprentices find a job, 60% of which are on permanent contracts. Another observation: in European countries with a low youth unemployment rate, 20% of young people in the same age group obtained a qualification through work-linked training, at a time when the apprenticeship access rate in France was only 6%. As a result, on 31 December 2017, 22.3% of young people aged 15 to 24 were not in employment in France. This rate stood at 16.1% in the European Union. The development – both quantitative and qualitative – of apprenticeship training aims to promote access to qualifications for young people and their integration into employment.

The Law of 5 September 2018 had two main objectives: to make apprenticeships a "pathway to excellence" and to kickstart their development.

The main changes to the apprenticeship system in France

▸ **Transfer of the governance of apprenticeships to sectors of industry,** supported by 11 OPCOs (Competency Operators) – bodies created by the Law of 2018, which are responsible for financing apprenticeships, assisting sectors of industry with the creation of professional qualifications, and helping small and medium-sized enterprises to define their training needs.

The sectors of industry set the levels for covering the costs of training programmes carried out in apprentice training centres, including education, and they ensure pedagogical supervision.

Indeed, apprentice training centres (CFAs) are the only organisations accredited to train apprentices. CFAs may also be run by private or Chamber of Commerce and Industry-run further education organisations, public or private secondary schools, and universities. Since 2018, companies have also been allowed to establish CFAs. Therefore, the cost-per-qualification-taken rule, called the "contract cost", is the same for all organisations.

24

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

25

▸ **Apprentice status draws closer to the realm of ordinary labour law:**

Companies can dismiss apprentices, as is the case for all employees although dismissal remains highly regulated;

▸ Apprentices may resign;

▸ The age limit for access to the contract has been extended to 29 years of age and sometimes beyond.

▸ **Deregulation of training provision:**

▸ Removal of administrative restrictions on offering apprenticeship places (e.g. administrative authorisation at regional level for the creation of a CFA).

▸ **Financial assistance:**

▸ For employers with fewer than 250 employees who enter into an apprenticeship contract associated with a diploma or a vocational qualification at baccalauréat level or below;

▸ Exemption from social security charges;

▸ Assistance with financing an apprentice's driving licence, with teaching, board and lodging costs, costs linked to the international mobility of apprentices, and costs linked to initial equipment purchases.

The role of the **Apprentice Supervisor** (maître d'apprentissage) has also been clarified and strengthened. He or she must be an employee of the company hosting the apprentice, possessing the necessary qualifications and experience. Apprentice supervisors must support and train apprentices during their working time, make themselves available to answer apprentices' questions, and monitor their progress at the CFA. They must be capable of evaluating the competencies acquired, and cooperating with the CFA to monitor the learner's progress, while acting as a link between the two training locations. The conditions of access to the role of apprentice supervisor must be laid down as part of a collective sectoral agreement.

5. CHANGES IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING UP TO THE LAW OF 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

The contribution of the different laws:

The previous referencing report was written in 2010, when the implementation of the Law of 24 September 2009 began. This law reflected the desire to use vocational training as a lever to improve the management of human resources throughout life, and to help improve the forward-looking management of jobs and competencies.

With regard to qualifications, the 2009 law reinforced the role of the National Register of Professional Qualifications RNCP as a reference instrument for the financing of training actions for the active population and for job seekers.

The Act also created a new instrument: the "Inventory". This register, designed from the outset as a database, was intended to raise the national profile of qualifications that are considered important for the job market, but which do not meet the criteria for awarding a level in the national framework because they do not correspond to the exercise of a profession (language skills, IT skills, etc.).

The law created a new right – to "lifelong guidance" – and has reinforced the individual right to training (Droit individuel à la formation – DIF), in which training rights are assigned to individuals, who retain them, even if they change jobs. This law has also simplified the financing of lifelong professional training.

The Laws of 5 March 2014 and 8 August 2016 made changes to the lifelong learning system along similar lines, by:

▸ Simplifying the vocational training landscape (clustering of professional branches);

▸ Simplifying the framework for financing vocational training (for companies, a single contribution collected by the collection bodies (OPCA), with the abolition of the obligation to justify training expenditure for tax purposes);

▸ Simplifying the procedures for access to the VAE scheme (reduction in the duration of prior professional practice required for applicants); VAE became only possible for qualifications registered in the RNCP.

The 2014 and 2016 laws on vocational continuing training and employment broadened the access to VAE. It was extended to the persons exercising a trade union responsibility or functions as councilors in a town, a "département" or a region. The length of the experience was relaxed for the people who have not reached the level 3 of the EQF by including in the 3 years the periods of initial or continuing training achieved in the work place.

The reduction from 3 year to 1 year of the required duration of the experience was brought in 2016. Furthermore, the periods of initial or continuing training carried out in a professional environment are included in the one year of experience, thus permitting to new publics.

In 2014, a legal basis was given to the admissibility stage of the application to the VAE, the nature of the support offered to the candidates to write down and analyse their experience precisely described. The 2016 Labour Law provides for the creation of a single form of admissibility that applies to all the applicants and organizations awarding qualifications. The same law removed the 5 years' time limitation to acquire the missing parts of the qualification. The qualification parts that correspond to a "skills block" (see below) are definitively valid and can be considered for the renewal of the application.

The 2018 law covered the Quality assurance field. First the law brings a new definition of the training activity: it is "an activity contributing to skills development" ; training activities but also skills audits and VAE are included in this definition. A more demanding quality is required from the providers of these types of activities which must be certified by a quality certification organism itself recognized by the national organism COFRAC (Comité français d'accréditation) or by France compétences, the national organism responsible for the governance of the whole professional qualification system, on the basis of a national standard.

▸ Implementing quality assurance procedures for training providers (establishment, in 2014, of a body responsible for implementing the Recommendation on the quality of vocational training), and the obligation for funders to ensure that the training providers they finance are able to provide high-quality training;

▸ Developing a quadripartite system of governance for vocational training (State, regions, social partners, employees and employers).

One of the consequences of these laws is that lifelong training in France has become more focused on the individual, with the creation of the personal training account (CPF) in 2014, which is primarily used to obtain qualifications listed in the RNCP, and the inventory (which later became the Specific Register), in the form of a "bank" account provisioned with training hours.

In companies, these laws have shifted the obligations in terms of training and social dialogue towards more bilateral dialogue between employers and employees (introduction, in 2016, of a professional interview at least every two years).

THE FRENCH SYSTEM IN 2020

A SYSTEM RADICALLY CHANGED BY THE LAW OF 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

1. CHANGES DUE TO THE LAW OF 5 SEPTEMBER 2018: "ON THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ONE'S PROFESSIONAL FUTURE"

▶

The aim of the 2018 Law was to adapt the French system to the major transformations experienced by French companies and entire sectors of the economy (digital and robotic revolutions, emergence of an economy taking much more care over its use of resources). These changes had significant effects on the organisation of work, on occupations and hence on the competencies expected from workers.

To facilitate these transformations, the Government wanted to introduce far-reaching changes into employment and professional training, including the initial and further education professional training system.

The idea was to simplify the systems, clarify them, not only for companies but also for individuals (see chapter on apprenticeships, for example), and regulate them. In the context of professional training, this resulted in a synergy of the different training pathways (initial and continuing).

A few points should be noted, to provide some context for the national framework, such as the decrease and grouping together of the professional sectors that create professional qualifications, and the simplification of procedures for funding vocational training to facilitate such schemes.

The Law further simplified an individual's right to access lifelong learning, notably by reducing the number of financial intermediaries, and further cutting back the number of professional sectors.

The definition of training (in the context of lifelong vocational training) was redefined and expanded as follows:

Training is an educational pathway enabling the learner to achieve a professional goal "... and which can be carried out either in total or in part, remotely or in a work situation".

The law defined 4 types of lifelong vocational training:

▶ Training schemes;
▶ Competency assessments;
▶ Schemes providing VAE;
▶ Training through apprenticeships.

In lifelong professional training, the law explicitly included the importance of "action for workplace learning" (action de formation en situation de travail - AFEST).

In addition, experiments are underway to link workplace training schemes and VAE.

Public financing and funds derived from companies' compulsory contributions for vocational training will be focused on this type of action.

The law continued with the principle of simplifying the landscape of vocational training by reducing the number of bodies funding lifelong training and the number of professional sectors.

The law also introduced a number of innovations:

▶ Change in the personal training account (CPF), which will in future be credited in Euros. Links between the possibility of using the account and the registration of qualifications in the register without levels, now called the Specific Register, and the RNCP are maintained;

▶ Quality of professional training.

The national framework for the quality of training in France is the result of a long regulatory process.

The Law of 4 July 1990 concerning crediting training programmes, and the quality and monitoring of continuing professional training, provides for the accreditation of training programmes to ensure that they maintain quality and that they meet expressed needs. In 1995, as the law included various social measures, it introduced authorisations for training bodies, issued in relation to their financial capabilities, the human and material resources used and the quality of the training provided. In the 2000s, since it was now common practice to purchase professional training via public procurement, it became necessary to professionalise the act of purchasing; it was then necessary to refer to the quality of not only the training offer, but also of the purchase.

The national interprofessional agreement of 13 December 2013, between representative social partners at national level, was very ambitious, placing the industrial sectors and the OPCAs at the heart of the quality system. It called on these sectors "to conduct a policy of improving the quality of training for the benefit of enterprises and employees", while the OPCAs were invited to "take all necessary steps to ensure the quality of the training schemes they were financing or cofinancing".

The Law of 5 March 2014 concerning vocational training, employment and social dialogue gave financing institutions the responsibility for ensuring that the training provider was able to deliver a good quality training scheme.

This system also introduced the possibility, which was strongly encouraged, for training bodies to hold a certification or a quality label which was included in the list published by the Conseil national de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelle (National council for employment, training and vocational guidance - CNEFOP).

However, these quality assurance measures developed as a result of the 2014 reform did not lead to full harmonisation of practices, or ensure their clarity for companies, workers, and especially the general public.

It therefore seemed necessary to create a single national quality reference framework on the basis of which training bodies could obtain certification. This reference framework should also make it possible to extend the quality requirement to all training actions, including work-study and apprenticeships, and for all funding, whether public or shared. Thus the Law of 5 September 2018 went a step further in terms of quality assurance and required all training providers who wished to receive funding from the professional training fund to be certified in advance in accordance with a single national reference framework. It was no longer up to the funding body to ensure the quality of the training schemes that were purchased, it was now the responsibility of each body who wished to receive public funding. The direct consequence of this was the greater transparency of "quality" training for the general public, who had now become the main player in developing their competencies with the introduction of the personal training account (CPF). The basic idea was that everyone could obtain all the information they required on the methods, aims, targeted results and success rates of each training or support scheme (return to work, impact on salary trajectory, etc.).

30

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

31

1.
CHANGES DUE
TO THE LAW OF
5 SEPTEMBER
2018: "ON THE
FREEDOM TO
CHOOSE ONE'S
PROFESSIONAL
FUTURE"

THE NEW SINGLE QUALITY FRAMEWORK CONSISTS OF 7 CRITERIA, BROKEN DOWN INTO 32 INDICATORS

CRITERION 1
Conditions for informing the public about the services offered, time limits for accessing them and results obtained.

CRITERION 2
Identifying precisely the objectives of the services offered and how they are adapted to the intended public at the design stage.

CRITERION 3
Adapting services and hosting, support, monitoring and assessment methods to the beneficiaries.

CRITERION 4
Ensuring that educational, technical and support methods are adequate for the services provided.

CRITERION 5
Defining and developing the knowledge and competencies of the staff responsible for delivering the services.

CRITERION 6
The service provider's involvement and commitment to the professional.

CRITERION 7
Collecting and considering evaluations and complaints expressed by stakeholders about the services provided.

The **subject of disability** is very much to the fore in the indicators of the new national quality framework, mainly via obligations to ensure that training organisations are accessible to people with disabilities and that they have a disability adviser.

In the field of vocational training, training organisations will have to be accredited by COFRAC, the French accreditation committee. COFRAC is a member of the European co-operation for accreditation (EA), itself a member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation.

Accreditation applies to the organisations, not the programmes.

France compétences is able to select more bodies for accreditation every 3 years, in addition to COFRAC.

QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Law of 5 September 2018 provides for a modified procedure for higher education institutions in the new quality assurance framework. For these institutions, the quality assurance of the Bologna Process was considered sufficient. As part of the regular assessments carried out by the Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur (High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education - HCERES), the Commission des titres d'ingénieurs (Commission for engineering qualifications - CTI) and the Comité consultatif de l'enseignement supérieur privé (Consultative committee of private higher education - CCESP), the institutions concerned "are deemed to have satisfied the certification requirement". They will not have to undertake any further certification requirements. However, in order to ensure the consistency of the criteria for assessing the quality of training programmes, irrespective of the institution, an annual conference has been set up from 2020 onwards between France compétences, HCERES and the CTI.

2. THE PROGRESSION TOWARDS A CLEARER AND MORE TRANSPARENT SYSTEM FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND THE CREATION OF FRANCE COMPÉTENCES

France compétences is a public institution under the supervision of the Ministry for Employment and Professional Training, with a Board composed of representatives of the State, the Regions and social partners. Its main aim is to regulate the professional training market (including apprenticeships), in order to better identify the competencies required and create a better synergy between professional training stakeholders. To do this, the institution is provided with financial regulation resources, but also relies on the publication of a great deal of data, thereby improving the transparency of the system.

This public institution has taken over the missions of four bodies, including that responsible for ensuring the quality of professional training and the Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle (National Professional Certification Commission), previously in charge of maintaining the two national directories of qualifications. France compétences replaced the national bodies responsible for supervising apprenticeships (COPANEF, CNEFOP) and absorbed the Fonds paritaire de sécurisation des parcours professionnels (Joint Fund for the Security of Professional Pathways - FPSPP) which contributed to funding vocational training actions to provide certification or recertification for employees and job seekers by combining vocational training funds.

In law, France compétences acts as a national coordination point for the quality of professional training and is also the national coordination point for implementing the EQF.

With regard to qualifications, the law confirmed that there should be an overall system with a register in which qualifications are identified and classified according to a level that corresponds to the classification set out by the national framework, the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP), and a specific register containing "qualifications and accreditations that correspond to professional competencies in addition to professional qualifications" (Article L.6113-6 of the French Labour Code).

There are still two ways to register in the RNCP: the first is registration by law, for academic diplomas and qualifications supported by a ministerial order after receiving assent from consultative commissions representing ministries and the Professional Consultative Commissions (CPCs); the second is registration on request, after examination by the France compétences certification board and the Professional Certification Commission.

For diplomas other than university degree level, professional consultative commissions have been established. The composition of these commissions is determined by law, which differs from the previous legislation which did not stipulate this. Since Decree no. 2019-958 of 13 September 2019, these commissions have become inter-ministerial and deal with an entire sector (e.g. agriculture, industry, etc.). They report to a minister and make rulings for a sector and for all professional diplomas in this sector (www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/decret/2019/9/13/2019-958/jo/texte). Ministerial working groups may be set up, but the proposal will be studied between ministries and the ministers must either agree or take no decision (assent principle), except in the case of regulated professions.

The Ministry of Higher Education has no CPC for university level diplomas. As previously, discussion at the Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche (National Council for Higher Education and Research – CNESER), where social partners are also represented, takes on the CPC role. A body that reports to the Ministry of Higher Education, the Comité de suivi licence, master et doctorat (Monitoring Committee for Bachelor, Master and Doctorate Cycles – CSLMD) and in which France compétences takes part, now works on writing the documents describing the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate cycles in the RNCP and contributes to quality assurance (see section on quality assurance of the framework in chapter 2 - part 3).

For registration on request, a Professional Certification Commission has been created. It is composed of representatives of the State (ministries), the Regions and social partners. It is chaired by an independent person and passes its decisions to the Director General of France compétences for qualifications to be accepted on the RNCP. An investigation by the professional certification board of France compétences is a basis for the decisions of the Commission. It may propose a change of level or of title, and it proposes the duration of registration, which may not exceed five years. This assent is forwarded to the Director General of France compétences who then has only two courses of action: to accept the Commission's assent, or to take no decision at all (notice of assent procedure). The registration methods are fundamental to the quality procedure and will be described in chapter 2 - part 3.

To promote lifelong learning, the law required that all professional training qualifications, or those whose aim is labour-market integration, should be made up of competency blocks. These are defined as follows: "homogenous and coherent sets of competencies that contribute to the autonomous exercise of a professional activity, and which can be evaluated and validated." Regulated professions are not concerned by this stipulation.

These blocks are not considered as partial certifications that equate to a level. Rather they are constituent parts of certification, which a person acquires in order to obtain a qualification that matches his or her capabilities and availability, and with a view to employability related to the access pathway to the qualification (see an example of certification based on blocks in Annex 5). The aim of the law is also to make it possible to move from one qualification to another as a result of the "transparency" of the blocks, which will ensure that there is a pooling of competencies between certifying bodies, or recognition of competencies acquired through another awarding body.

This requirement dates from the end of 2018. As a result, many qualifications and diplomas have had to be rewritten, because the principle of learning outcomes does not translate systematically into a block-based structure, especially for the assessment of competencies. Even if blocks are part of qualifications, their: assessment and awarding have to meet the same level of quality than for the "whole" qualification.

Regarding professional qualifications for the regulated professions, the notion of autonomy ("contributing to the autonomous practice") excludes any division into competency blocks. In this case, in order to practise a profession, the full professional certification must be completed (professions such as aeroplane pilot). Some adjustments to this principle are possible, however, in order to facilitate access pathways to the qualification.

In 2019, higher education produced guidelines for university degree level diplomas, and work is underway with higher education institutions.

France compétences has also clarified the notion of blocks and has issued recommendations for structuring them in order to register qualifications.

An experiment was permitted by the Law of 2018 to allow competency blocks to be acquired in the context of a professionalisation contract, one of the instruments for lifelong learning.

3. THE NEW FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

▶

The French national framework covers continental France and the overseas departments (French Guyana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Reunion Island, Mayotte). It was created by the Law of 5 September 2018, which replaced the old levels in the national framework with new ones. It is described in more detail in a Decree then an Order (https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/id/LEGISCTA000038024669/2019-01-10).

The framework has 8 levels and 3 descriptors

The national professional qualifications framework "defines the level of qualification associated with each professional certification according to criteria for grading the competencies necessary for the practice of professional activities" (D. 6113-18 French Labour Code).

The framework levels are described in more detail in Article D. 6113-19 of the French Labour Code:

I. "The national professional qualifications framework has eight levels of qualification. It specifies the grading of competencies associated with each level.

II. **Level 1** of the national professional qualifications framework corresponds to the mastery of basic knowledge.

III. The other qualification levels are defined as follows:

▶ **Level 2** certifies the ability to perform simple activities and solve routine problems using simple rules and tools and applying professional expertise in a structured context. The associated professional activity is carried out with a limited level of autonomy;

▶ **Level 3** certifies the ability to perform activities and solve problems by selecting and applying methods, tools, materials and basic information, in a known context, and the ability to adapt the means of implementation and one's behaviour to the circumstances;

▶ **Level 4** certifies the ability to perform activities requiring the mobilisation of a wide range of skills, to adapt existing solutions to solve specific problems, to organise one's work autonomously in contexts that are generally predictable but liable to change, as well as participating in assessing activities. The national baccalauréat diploma is classified at this level of the national framework;

▶ **Level 5** certifies the ability to master expertise in a field of activity, to develop solutions to new problems, to analyse and interpret information by applying concepts, to communicate know-how and methods;

▶ **Level 6** certifies the ability to analyse and solve complex unforeseen problems in a specific field, to formalise know-how and methods and exploit them. Diplomas conferring Bachelor degrees are classified at this level of the national framework;

▶ **Level 7** certifies the ability to design and implement alternative strategies for developing professional activity in complex professional contexts, and to assess the risks and consequences of one's activity. Diplomas conferring Master degrees are classified at this level of the national framework;

▶ **Level 8** certifies the ability to identify and solve complex and new problems involving numerous fields, by using the most advanced form of knowledge and expertise, to design and direct research and innovation projects and processes. The national diploma of Doctorate is classified at this level of the national framework.

IV. The criteria relating to knowledge, expertise and levels of responsibility and autonomy, as defined in Article D. 6113-18, are fixed for the qualification levels mentioned in III by joint decree by the ministers responsible for health, social affairs, vocational training, national education, higher education, culture, agricultural education, sports and the sea".

Levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 are accessible to professional and academic programmes.

34

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

35

**3.
THE NEW
FRENCH
QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORK**

The decree that created the framework established an automatic equivalence between levels V to II of the old system and levels 3 to 6 in the new framework:

CLASSIFICATION APPROVED ON 21 MARCH 1969 BY THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND SOCIAL PROMOTION STANDING GROUP	NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
Level V	Level 3
Level IV	Level 4
Level III	Level 5
Level II	Level 6

One of the major objectives of the framework is to set up a system that is more easily understandable by users, and which, as a result of the obligation to structure into blocks of assessable competencies, encourages the acquisition of competencies and qualifications throughout a person's working life, if necessary by alternating the acquisition of blocks with periods of employment.

The official texts stipulate that people who have acquired competency blocks keep them for life.

These blocks are only recognised in the qualification(s) in the RNCP where they are mentioned specifically. An isolated block does not have a level in the framework; this is only possible for a full qualification. This is the reason for the work planned for years to come, to ensure that competency blocks are common to several qualifications.

National framework and classification of qualifications with a framework level. The qualification framework is a series of texts which define the levels, and set the level of the baccalaureate and of higher education diplomas. The qualifications are registered in the national database (RNCP). The texts about the RNCP define the rules and requirements for registration, and the process for levelling.

The law retained the RNCP, which classifies professional qualifications by level and by sector of activity. "Professional qualifications are classified by level of qualification and field of activity. Classification by level of qualification is established according to a national qualifications framework defined by decree, which determines the criteria for the hierarchy of competency levels with regard to jobs and possible matches with qualifications in other European Union States" (Article L.6113-1 of the French Labour Code).

Qualifications drawn up under the responsibility of social partners (CQP) must now have a level in order to be registered in the RNCP.

The Commission in charge of registration in the RNCP (France compétences certification commission) had to examine qualifications formerly at level I that were not at the Master degree grade (now classified at level 7 or 8) and reclassify them at levels 7 or 8. After examining each qualification, it was decided that only Doctorate diplomas would be reclassified at level 8. However, this level is not reserved specifically for Doctorates. By law, professional qualifications may be aligned at this level.

As with level 2, no qualification presented to date for registration on request has been found suitable for classification at this level. The stated principle is that professional qualifications at this level will have to justify more specifically that the targeted professional activities do indeed constitute, when taken as a whole, a real job and not a simple professional activity.

The new system gives much more protection to individuals than before, insofar as the Commission in charge of professional qualifications is able to analyse the blocks and ask certifying bodies to create bridging solutions between qualifications. In the event of repeated refusals, the sanction is removal from the RNCP. Given the work required to rewrite the competency blocks, qualifications are not all presented in this form, and this work to encourage the creation of bridging solutions at the instigation of the certification commission has not yet started.

The creation of inter-ministerial CPCs is a factor that, for the State, supports the design of diplomas that include more bridges from one to another.

Another objective of the framework is to monitor the evolution of occupations more quickly by allowing blocks to be replaced, but without changing the entire qualification (e.g. introduction of new techniques, which do not alter the occupation itself).

Finally, to ensure that the qualifications adapt better to the needs of the labour market and in order to monitor changes such as the rise of digitalisation and the "greening" phenomenon, the official texts allow for "an exemption procedure to derogate from registration on request for emerging occupations or those that are evolving rapidly". New qualifications may be registered in the RNCP without having analysed the cohorts of holders of the qualification, which is normally a very important element for France compétences when considering applications. These qualifications are analysed by a scientific committee, which relies on statistics or research for an in-depth discussion of foreseeable developments in the labour market, and which then dialogues with the Certification Commission.

Qualifications are registered after assent from the Professional Certification Commission, which deliberates on cases presented by a scientific council nominated by the minster in charge of employment. The scientific council analyses cases submitted as a result of a public call for proposals launched by France compétences.

Article R. 6113-10, created by Decree no. 2018-1172 of 18 December 2018 stipulates that "Under II of Article L. 6113-5, the Professional Certification Commission establishes, on an annual basis and from a proposal by a scientific committee composed of qualified figures appointed by order of the Minister responsible for professional training, a list of occupations considered to be changing or emerging particularly significantly. Registration carried out according to the procedure described in this Article is for a maximum duration of three years".

France compétences may choose the themes or the stakeholders for the calls for applications. (See Annex 6 for an example of a certification published after the results of the call for applications).

EXAMPLE

Example of call for applications launched at the start of 2020.

4 priority themes were targeted:
▸ Ecological transition
▸ Strategy to relocate economic activities
▸ Modernisation of networks and infrastructure
▸ Digitalisation and artificial intelligence

also **2 sectors of specific activities:**
▸ The personal services sector – including health and social dimensions – in response to changes in our society, with the development of new services
▸ The industrial sector particularly concerned by relocation strategy and by structuring/consolidating sectors of occupations that contribute to national production

Framework descriptors:

These descriptors are defined by an order signed by the main certifying ministries. It describes the dynamics of the levels (vertical and horizontal progression), but does not stipulate how the weighting should be carried out. The awarding bodies are free to combine knowledge, expertise and autonomy when applying the weighting in order to determine a level, which is discussed either by the CPCs, or by the Professional Certification Commission. Based on the clarification provided by the descriptors and through contextualisation, the different sorts of qualifications (including higher education diplomas) can be classified at a level that demonstrates parity when evaluating the exercise of a professional activity.

▸ **Complexity of the knowledge associated with the exercise of a professional activity;**

▸ **Level of expertise, assessed mainly according to the complexity and technical nature of an activity in a work process;**

▸ **Level of responsibility and autonomy in organising work.**

It has become mandatory to use descriptors to determine levels for diplomas registered "by law".

The framework provides details of the grading of competencies associated with each of these qualification levels, differentiating Level 1 from the other levels.

In fact, Level 1 has no descriptors: "Level 1 of the national framework of professional qualifications corresponds to the **mastery of basic knowledge**" which is not sufficient to certify the ability to exercise a professional activity.

The descriptors of the French framework, implemented after criteria defined by the national Commission of qualifications convey the sense that the competencies acquired after a training process must be identified and assessed against activities, and for VET qualifications against working situations. The definition of the blocks of competencies: "homogenous and coherent sets of competencies that contribute

36   UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA   37

**3.
THE NEW
FRENCH
QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORK**

to the autonomous exercise of a professional activity, and which can be evaluated and validated" is based on this conception. It is the reason why the term expertise was chosen to translate "savoir faire". Skills is now broadly used for different meanings and may be considered as a catch -all term ("skills agenda" whose field is very broad) ; the term skills can also be used in a more restrictive sense (transversal skills and competencies). The different variants of the terms are very well expressed by the CEDEFOP publication on transversal skills may be confusing for non-English speaking people. It is the reason why expertise was chosen, as it refers to the mastery of an activity by expertise, competency, experience, specialisation.

The English translation of some descriptors could induce some misunderstanding. But "expertise" refers to a field of technical competencies and "autonomy and responsibility" refers to work organisation.

For example: collaborate with experts means to be able to demonstrate advanced mastering of one's own technical field, in order to be able to communicate (explain and understand) with experts of the same field. It refers to a degree of expertise at level 6.

It refers to one's own core field of technical competences "compétences-métier". "Initiate and conduct professional collaboration" means to be able to coordinate work between various technical fields, which the person would not necessarily be able to perform himself, in order to reach a complex objective, the accomplishment of which is under his only responsibility, and not under that of the rest of the team. It refers to a degree of "autonomy and responsibility" at level 7.

It refers to managerial competencies, in a cross technical fields approach.

The descriptors must be read both vertically and horizontally: in terms of progression in the same descriptor (vertical progression), in terms of consistency between descriptors on the same line (overall consistency of the level).

LEVEL	KNOWLEDGE	EXPERTISE	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY
DEFINITION	The descriptor concerns progression in knowledge to be able to carry out professional activities at the level (processes, materials, terminology relating to one or more fields, and theoretical knowledge)	The descriptor concerns progression: ▶ In the complexity and technical nature of a task, or activity in a process ▶ In the level of mastery of the professional activity ▶ In the mobilisation of a range of cognitive and practical skills ▶ In expertise in the field of communication and interpersonal relations in the professional context ▶ In the ability to communicate expertise	The descriptor concerns progression in the following areas: ▶ Organisation of work ▶ Reaction to unforeseen situations ▶ Awareness of the complexity of the environment ▶ Understanding of interactions in activities in other professional fields, in order to organise one's work, to correct it or give explanations to supervised staff ▶ Participation in collective work ▶ Level of supervision
1	-	-	-
2	Basic general knowledge and general knowledge specific to a field of activity	Perform simple activities and solve routine problems using simple rules and tools by mobilising some professional expertise in a structured context	Work under supervision, with a limited degree of autonomy Report on one's contribution to collective work
3	Knowledge covering the facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a specified field of activity	Perform activities and solve problems by selecting and applying methods, tools, materials and basic information, in a known context	Organise one's work in a generally stable environment Adapt the means of execution and one's behaviour to the circumstances Assess one's contribution in the collective work environment

LEVEL	KNOWLEDGE	EXPERTISE	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY
4	Wide range of practical and theoretical knowledge related to a considered professional field	Carry out activities requiring the mobilisation of a wide range of skills. Be able to adapt existing solutions to solve specific problems	Organise one's work autonomously in generally predictable contexts but which are subject to change Take into account interactions with related activities Participate in evaluating activities
5	Specialised and in-depth knowledge, regularly updated	Master expertise in a field of activity of known limits, to develop solutions to new problems Analyse and interpret information, by applying concepts Communicate expertise and methods	Take initiative to manage projects or carry out activities in an unpredictable context Supervise a team Manage a unit Self-assess one's performance
6	Advanced knowledge in a professional field Critical understanding of theories and principles	Analyse and solve complex unforeseen problems in a specific field Identify solutions and set out arguments Collaborate with experts	Organise one's work in complex and changing environments Design and organise work processes Develop individual and collective competencies in one's team
7	Highly specialised knowledge, some at the forefront of knowledge in a field and at the interface between several fields of work	Prepare alternative strategies to develop activity Lead working groups in interdisciplinary or specialised fields, where necessary in a multicultural context	Organise and develop activities by combining scientific, societal and ethical issues Initiate and conduct professional collaborations Supervise the work of others. Manage the transformation of complex professional contexts Assess the risks and consequences of one's activity
8	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between several fields	Identify and solve complex and new problems involving multiple fields, and using the most advanced knowledge and expertise Design and lead projects and processes for research and innovation Make innovative contributions in high-level exchanges, and in international contexts	Manage and lead organisations or groups in complex or interdisciplinary activities Manage complex situations resulting in significant organisational changes Evaluate and anticipate possible consequences in the impacted fields

38

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

39

CHAPTER 2

The descriptors were finalised after discussions between representatives of the State, the Chambers of Trade and Industry and French Assembly of skilled crafts chambers and social partners, employers and employees; a working group met from the national Professional Certification Commission and on two occasions submitted suggestions on the descriptors to the ministers and trade union leaders and employers' representatives. Originally, the "knowledge" descriptor had not been suggested among the first descriptors and the classification was the subject of new discussions, before a shared definition was arrived at which did not reflect theoretical and academic knowledge. The "knowledge" descriptor was defined as being the processes, materials and terminology relating to one or more fields, as well as theoretical knowledge. With this meaning it is easier to define the weighting between descriptors for some qualifications, given the French context.

Particular attention was paid to contextualising the different levels, to ensure that they correspond to professional situations and can be transferred to a wide variety of professional fields.

The French national framework is the result of some in-depth technical work, and a political choice.

Level 2 could not be agreed unanimously. Since the committee was operating under the unanimity rule and a compromise accepted, a 7–level proposal was put before the Minister, with no satisfactory agreement being reached over the existence of Level 2, the entry level. The descriptors for all the levels were discussed, however, and were constructed using the same methodology.

It was then the task of the ministers to take the decision regarding an 8-level framework, where Level 1 has no descriptors. By using the same 8 levels as in the EQF the intention was to clarify the framework and demonstrate the correlation between the French and European levels.

Regarding Level 1, the decree goes back to the 8 levels of the EQF, listing "mastery of basic knowledge" for Level 1.

To complement this, the order to implement the decree gives details of the levels and the descriptors applied in the French framework: thus the 3 French descriptors are all linked to a professional situation and contextualised from a professional perspective.

As Level 1 has no descriptors, it was not considered possible to register any professional qualification in the RNCP at this level.

A change in the regulations would be needed in order to register a qualification at Level 1.

It is also for this reason that Level 1 in the French framework cannot be compared to Level 1 in the European framework. As no comparison is possible between descriptors, the transparency and confidence criteria cannot be fulfilled because these levels cannot be compared.

Regarding Level 2, where the descriptors are comparable to those of the EQF, no qualification has yet been registered in the RNCP.

Another particularity is the baccalauréat national diploma. Obtaining the baccalauréat is a social indicator of level in the labour market, even with no professional context.

The decree creating the national framework explicitly included the baccalauréat at Level 4. Thus, since the 2018 reform, all university diploma levels appear in the national framework (the baccalauréat being the first level in the French university system).

It should be noted that there are 2 separate official texts: one relating to the national framework, which sets out the levels and puts the baccalauréat at Level 4, and one relating to the RNCP and the procedures for registering qualifications in this register.

Thus, although they have no specific file recorded in the RNCP, the general baccalauréat and the technological baccalauréat are part of the national framework, at Level 4.

On the other hand, the RNCP does include records for all professional baccalauréats.

NB: Social and professional inclusion for the very low qualified is not considered in France as a matter of "qualification" or of "level", but a full process including many other tools, that are mostly put in place at regional level, with the local stakeholders.

Some examples: The " plan for investment in competencies" (PIC in French), whose amount reaches almost 15 billion euros, aims at funding actions to develop the competencies of unskilled workers and of young people without qualification. A special attention is given to people who are disabled or are coming from underprivileged areas.

Most of the measures have a strong proportion of guidance and of tailored training courses. This is the case of measures such as "préparation opérationnelle à l'emploi" for young people with an objective of acquisition of basic skills and/or interpersonal skills before starting apprenticeship (https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/emploi/mesures-jeunes/pacea).

It is also the case of a special program to improve one's professional image for unemployed people. This program has collective and individual aspects and lasts two to three weeks in order to:

▶ Help to understand the importance of the notion of competence within three dimensions: professional knowledge, skills, and soft skills.

▶ Identify and take into account the expectations of firms compared with one's professional project and with the sought sector or employment.

▶ Identify and reinforce one's acquired competencies in terms of soft skills and learn how to valorise them.

▶ Identify and develop some missing soft skills, in order to better meet the expectations of firms.

This program may be tailored, through a pass giving access to diverse guidance or training activities (such as how to use of computer).

In many cases, the main purpose is to enable the persons to be successful when passing CLéA, a qualification registered in the Répertoire spécifique, whose outcomes are the ability to master basic competencies in literacy, numeracy and digital competencies. The length of the training courses depends on the person.

Digital skills based on the European standard DIGCOM P are also evaluated by a platform. Depending on the results, training courses towards digital qualifications may be proposed.

The training courses may be certified by a qualification, most of the time registered in the RS.

40

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

41

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE SYSTEM

The general process

▸ The level descriptors must be used by all certifying bodies. The choice of level is therefore more transparent;

▸ The commissions in wich qualifications are discussed now have more independence: the professional certification commission, which operates within France compétences, is legislative in its origins. In parliamentary debates the minister responsible for professional training was committed to ensuring its independence: as a result, its members are appointed by ministerial order, and not by a decision from the director general of France compétences, unlike the other commissions within this organisation.

Regarding the CPCs, their missions and their general composition are determined by decree. Now that they are inter-ministerial, this should ensure more uniformity between qualifications from the different ministries for the same professional sector.

The opinions given by these commissions are notice of assent, which means that the ministers and the director general of France compétences must accept them, or refrain from making a decision (which may be contested by litigation). This procedure guarantees the commissions' autonomy.

Regarding DUTs (University Technology Diploma), from the beginning of the 2000s, the French Ministry of National Education decided to extend the assessment principle to all university institutes of technology (IUTs). This is the result of a co-construction between the ministerial departments and the main coordinators of the national network of IUTs. The IUT national consultative commission, a body that brings together academics and representatives from the business world, and which was already in charge of monitoring and revising programmes, has been given the task of managing the new system.

Regarding bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, and engineering diplomas, the role of the different commissions taking part in the accreditation of diplomas was defined in 2019 by Article D 6113-27 of the French Labour Code created by Decree n°2019-434 of 10 May 2019 – Art. 1. This sets out the prior consultation procedure required when putting forward projects to create, revise or remove higher education diplomas registered in the RNCP by law, thus improving quality in terms of learning outcomes and links with the labour market.

▸ 1 National diplomas at university degree level (bachelor, master and doctorate) and higher education technological diplomas, excluding engineering diplomas, are examined by the body responsible for consultations leading to the regular revision of the classifications of specialisms for these diplomas – monitoring committee for bachelor, master and doctorate degrees. For each diploma, a two-person team composed of a lecturer-researcher or a lecturer and a figure from the corresponding socioeconomic field presents the qualification to this committee; the consultation schedule is presented annually;

▸ 2 Engineering qualifications for graduates are examined by the CTI;

▸ 3 University technology diplomas are examined by specialist commissions (set up by Article D. 643-60 of the French Education Code);

▸ 4 State-approved management diplomas are examined by the commission established from the Commission for the Evaluation of Management Training and Diplomas (created by Decree n° 2001-295 of 4 April 2001).

For engineering diplomas, the CTI and France compétences work in partnership, as the "RNCP alignment" is of recognised importance in the context of the CTI accreditation procedure.

For registering higher education diplomas in the RNCP, coordination between the different commissions dealing with the regulation of diplomas and quality assurance in higher education and the departments of France compétences is an important factor, as it avoids any juxtaposition of sub systems within the system, and improves its quality.

Quality provided by registration in the RNCP

The RNCP classifies qualifications by level and by sector of activity (using the national classification of training sectors - NSF).

The new law clarifies a number of points, thus improving the quality of the qualifications:

▸ The duration of registration, limited to five years for all certifying bodies, obliges all these bodies (ministerial or otherwise) to update the content of their qualification (RNCP records for certifying bodies by right, new accreditation with the Certification Commission);

▸ The Law of 5 September 2018 establishes a definition of the certifying bodies for the first time. The title of certifying body is now conditional on holding at least one valid qualification registered in one of the two national registers.

The law also clarifies the notion of co-certifier:

Thus a body may present the qualification concerned alone, but may also deposit it jointly with other bodies. In this case, all the bodies are considered to be certifying bodies and co-certifiers of the qualification concerned.

▸ A certifying body may also adopt a procedure to delegate the implementation of qualification assessments while retaining full responsibility;

▸ The official texts (law and decree) also clarify the obligations of certifying bodies, with the aim of protecting users; thus for the duration of the registration period for their qualifications, certifying bodies must meet the "conditions of professional good character for certifying bodies and must not pursue any goals other than those linked with professional qualifications";

▸ France compétences ensures that the access pathways declared by the certifying bodies are lawful and verifies the existence of a compliant and relevant application of RPL;

▸ Certifying bodies are also obliged, by decree, to provide France compétences, at least every two years, with statistical data on the professional integration of holders of professional qualifications registered in the RNCP;

▸ They must also inform France compétences of any change regarding the accreditations they issue to organisations preparing to acquire, assess or issue professional qualifications.

For communication actions (e.g. websites of certifying bodies), they must ensure that it is possible to identify the main characteristics of the qualification: title, content, access pathways, and level of one or more qualifications registered in the RNCP, as well as any training course(s) recognised by the professional qualification.

Quality assurance has also been widely focused on for registration on request, according to criteria established for registration in the RNCP:

Nine criteria set out in Decree no. 2018-1172 of 18 December 2018:

▸ **1.** Sufficient number of jobs in relation to the occupation targeted by the draft professional qualification, by analysing at least two year groups who hold the draft professional qualification;

▸ **2.** Impact of the draft professional qualification in terms of access or return to work, assessed for at least two year groups of qualification holders and compared to the impact of qualifications targeting similar or related occupations;

▸ **3.** Quality of the standards for activities, competencies and assessment;

▸ **4.** Establishment of monitoring procedures for all organisational arrangements for assessment tests;

▸ **5.** Consideration of legal and regulatory constraints related to the practice of the occupation targeted by the draft professional qualification;

▸ **6.** Possibility of accessing the draft professional qualification via VAE;

▸ **7.** Consistency of the competency blocks that make up the draft professional qualification and their specific assessment methods;

▸ **8.** Where appropriate, consistency of total or partial matches put in place with equivalent professional qualifications and at the same level of qualification and competency blocks;

▸ **9.** Where appropriate, the arrangements for involving joint national employment commissions of sectors of industry in the drafting or approval of reference frameworks (case of vocational qualifications prepared by professional sectors - CQP).

(See full text in annex 6).

42

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

43

The reference frameworks are now accessible in electronic format, in addition to the RNCP records.

It should be noted that a qualification is registered in the RNCP on the basis of statistical cohorts of holders of the qualification (certifying bodies have therefore taken an economic risk). This is a retrospective analysis.

Only cohorts of holders of the qualification who are working in France are taken into account in the documents submitted to the Professional Certification Commission, as this is easier for analysing integration into the labour market.

In addition, the cohorts of people continuing their studies after obtaining the qualification are not taken into account in the analysis by France compétences when attributing a level. It is of course possible to continue studying after obtaining the qualification, but for analysing its use value in the labour market, this methodology has proved to be preferable.

Quality of qualifications

Each qualification must be expressed in terms learning outcomes (see chapter 2).

The evaluation is based on standards, which are published and have the same basis: the evaluation must check that there is a clear correspondence between the standards of evaluation and the learning outcomes. This is at the same time QA for the registration, but also QA for each qualification, and the principle is the same for blocks of competenccies, which must have the same quality of assessment than the whole qualification. These principles are official, clearly expressed and only for assessment of learning outcomes. There are other criteria of QA for training courses, as they may depend on the type of public, the type of training.

It is compulsory to have mechanisms which enable the providing bodies to make an analysis of the evolution of a qualification. This role may be played by inspections, commissions or committees, depending on the type of the qualifications. For the ministry of education, for VET qualifications, the association of parents and pupils, for initial VET is now part of the process.

For HE, the Bologna process criteria are respected (see chapter 3 and 4) and representatives of students are involved for the creation and evaluation of diplomas, through different committees.

For registration on demand there must be a proof of a follow up of the qualification through meetings with users, alumni and employer and of self-evaluations. It is very often called "comité de suivi" even if this form is not compulsory.

Significant financial resources are implemented for instance to follow up of cohorts, to finance the meetings of the different commissions and committees and give clear information on the websites. Awarding bodies which are unable to finance these elements are not accepted. This is one of the aspects of the regulation of the system.

At the national level, all the ministries which provide qualifications have a system of inspection for their own services or of the institutions which create qualifications, and procedures of follow-up for France competences have been published.

44

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

45

REFERENCING OF THE FRENCH FRAMEWORK WITH THE EQF PURSUANT TO ANNEX 3 OF THE RECOMMENDATION

FRANCE HAS REQUESTED THAT THE LEVELS OF ITS FRAMEWORK BE RELATED TO THE LEVELS OF THE EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING CORRESPONDENCE TABLE:

FRENCH LEVEL	EQF LEVEL
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8

For the time being, no qualifications have been registered in the RNCP at Level 2; however, the similarity of the descriptors and the characteristics of the qualifications registered at Level 3 and Level 4 lead to the conclusion that the two levels are comparable, insofar as it is the same logic of progression that prevails.

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities.

France compétences is the National Coordination Point for the EQF and has set up a review committee made up of members of the Professional Certification Commission.

Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to meet physically. The making of the report started in march, under the responsibility of the national Professional Certification Commission of France compétences which is entitled to work on foreign classifications and systems concerning qualifications.

Members of the Commission volunteered to be part of the team which would make the state of play write the report (see list of organisations represented in annex 1).

Due to some bad conditions for audio or videos meetings for some members, it was decided to share written information and documents and to work on shared messages and drafts.

After the presentation of the state of play to the EQF advisory group in June, the "editorial committee" decided to modify some elements of the report, and to come back to the members of the Professional Certification Commission.

A proofreading committee, approved by the Commission of professional certification, has been proposed, including members from outside the Commission – Chambers of Trade and industry, the French assembly of skilled crafts, ENIC-NARIC France, also of representatives of institutions on charge of the quality in HE.

In October, the proofreading committee was consulted. The consultation lasted two months and most of the remarks were considered.

The General Secretariat for European Affairs sent the final report was sent to the Commission, on the request of the ministry in charge of labour and employment where the final report was read and totally approved.

2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualification levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the EQF level descriptors.

The following diagram compares the French and European framework descriptors and shows broad similarities between them. Some differences need to be explained:

At the descriptor level

▸ **"Expertise" instead of skill** (see chapter 2 - 3): this shows the attachment to the notion of evaluation of competencies and the desire to give an operational dimension to the qualifications classified in the framework (qualifications in the framework relate to assessed learning outcomes, not learning objectives);

▸ Some differences concern the **contextualisation** of qualifications (knowledge column, providing a constant reminder of the field of activity), expertise column where the context is systematically mentioned.

This does not exclude the existence of cross-disciplinary competencies, which can also be assessed as blocks of competencies, if deemed useful.

Introduction of an additional dimension – the **work group** – in the responsibility and autonomy descriptor.

The transfer of knowledge or expertise is an important element of differentiation of the French Levels 4 and 5, (qualifications for the "brevet de maîtrise", BTS, which respectively apply to the vocational training provided by craft industries and the academic world).

Finally, it was considered useful to note intercultural aspects and the international dimension for the highest levels.

However, these differences represent more of a contextualisation vis-à-vis the French framework, which is resolutely focused on professionalisation, including for higher education degrees (chapter 4).

The diagram below shows the specificities of the French national framework descriptors.

LEVEL 1					
FRANCE			**EQF**		
			KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
No description			Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context

LEVEL 2					
FRANCE			**EQF**		
KNOWLEDGE	**EXPERTISE**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
Basic general knowledge and general knowledge specific to a field of activity	Carry out simple activities and solve common problems using simple rules and tools by mobilising some professional expertise in a structured context	Work under supervision, with a limited degree of autonomy Report on one's contribution to the work group	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy

LEVEL 3					
FRANCE			**EQF**		
KNOWLEDGE	**EXPERTISE**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
Knowledge covering facts, principles, processes and general concepts within a given field of activity	Carry out activities and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information in a familiar context	Organise one's work in a generally stable environment Adapt the means of execution and its behaviour to the circumstances Assess one's contribution to the work group	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	Take responsibility for the completion of tasks in work or study Adapt one's own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems

48

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

49

LEVEL 4

FRANCE			EQF		
KNOWLEDGE	**EXPERTISE**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
Wide range of practical and theoretical knowledge related to the professional field under consideration	Carry out activities that require a wide range of skills Be able to adapt existing solutions in order to solve specific problems	Organise one's work autonomously in contexts that are generally predictable but subject to change Take into account interactions with related activities Participate in the evaluation of activities	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities

LEVEL 5

FRANCE			EQF		
KNOWLEDGE	**EXPERTISE**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
In-depth specialist knowledge, regularly updated	Master expertise in a field of activity whose limits are known, in order to design solutions to new problems Analyse and interpret information, by mobilising concepts Transmit expertise and methods	Take initiatives to manage projects or carry out activities in an unforeseen context Lead a team Manage a unit Self-evaluate one's own performance	Detailed, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge in a field of work or study, and awareness of the limits of this knowledge	Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change Review and develop one's performance and that of others

LEVEL 6

FRANCE			EQF		
KNOWLEDGE	**EXPERTISE**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
Advanced knowledge in a professional field Critical understanding of theories and principles	Analyse and solve complex unforeseen problems in a specific area Identify solutions and defend them Collaborate with experts Build up and formalise expertise and methods	Organise one's work in complex and changing environments Design and organise work processes Develop the individual and collective skills of one's team	Advanced skills in a field of work or study requiring a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects by taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups

LEVEL 7

FRANCE			EQF		
KNOWLEDGE	**EXPERTISE**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field and at the interface of several fields of work	Develop alternative strategies for the development of an activity Lead working groups in interdisciplinary or specialised fields, where appropriate in a multicultural context	Organise and develop activities by integrating scientific, societal and ethical issues Initiate and conduct professional collaboration Supervise the work of others Manage and transform complex professional contexts Assess the risks and consequences of one's activity	Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches Take responsibility in order to contribute to professional practices and knowledge, and/or to review the strategic results of teams

50

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

51

LEVEL 8					
FRANCE			**EQF**		
KNOWLEDGE	**EXPERTISE**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**	**KNOWLEDGE**	**SKILLS**	**RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY**
Knowledge at the forefront of a field of work or study and at the interface between several fields	Identify and solve complex and new problems involving multiple fields, by mobilising the most advanced knowledge and expertise Design and manage research and innovation projects and processes Make innovative contributions to high-level exchanges, and in international contexts	Manage and lead organisations or groups in complex or interdisciplinary activities Manage complex situations that result in significant changes to organisations Assess and anticipate possible consequences in the impacted fields	Knowledge at the cutting edge of a field of work or study and at the interface between several fields	The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research

Examples are given in annex 7.

3. The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems (see Annex 4).

Qualifications must be presented according to three reference frameworks:

▶ An activity framework that describes the work situations and activities carried out, and the occupations or jobs involved;

▶ A competency framework that identifies the competencies and knowledge, including of a cross-disciplinary nature, which are derived and formulated from them, in terms of learning outcomes;

▶ An evaluation framework that defines the criteria and methods for evaluating learning;

▶ Strict correspondence is required between competencies and their assessment, so as to obtain qualifications based on assessed learning outcomes.

Article L.6113-1 of the French Labour Code, created by Law 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's professional future, specifies that "professional qualifications registered in the RNCP shall enable the validation of the acquired competencies and knowledge required to carry out professional activities" (see annex 6).

The first two frameworks are used to enable candidates enrolled on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme to demonstrate that they possess the competencies evaluated for the qualification, according to the activities they have performed. The evaluation framework is different because it must include representatives of employers and employees.

Since 2019, qualifications must be composed of blocks of competencies, which can be acquired through lifelong learning programmes. Blocks of competencies are also used as a means of promoting the recognition of prior learning.

4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.

All the procedures are laid down in the texts published in the Journal Officiel (French Official Gazette) and are explained on the France compétences website. The criteria for evaluation by the Commission have been set by decree.

The decisions of France compétences (decisions made by the Chief Executive, after deliberation of the Certification Commission) are published on the France compétences website and then in the Journal Officiel de la République Française.

Documents including doctrine notes and information for organisations wishing to apply for certification are also published on the France compétences website.

5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in annex 4 to this recommendation.

With regard to higher education, constant links are maintained between the Ministry of Higher Education, the bodies consulted for the creation of degrees and diplomas (BMD monitoring committee, CCN IUT) and those in charge of their evaluation – CTI, HCERES and CFEDG.

Higher education degrees refer to the levels of the National Framework and include an internal monitoring system. The work of these various commissions is analysed by the Ministry of Higher Education and validated after discussion with the CNSER, a broader forum for dialogue.

For quality of training institutions see subsection 1 of Chapter 2.
For quality in the system see subsection 4 in Chapter 2.

All professional training diplomas (under the authority of the Ministry of National Education, other ministries, or those accredited by France compétences) are subject to internal quality assurance procedures (inspections, inter-ministerial professional consultative commissions (CPCs) for qualifications registered by law, and are subject to periodic accreditation.

Internal quality assurance procedures are required for qualifications that are awarded a level at the end of the France compétences accreditation process (carried out by an improvement council composed of employers, former qualification holders and representatives of the certifying body).

The analysis criteria are public, and accreditations are limited to five years.

6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.

The bodies responsible for the quality assurance of qualifications are the various ministries concerned, which are represented on the France compétences Certification Commission or are consulted by it, as well as CTI and HCERES, which are involved in the referencing process.

52   UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA   53

7. The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing reports shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.

The final report is accompanied by the reactions of Mr Joseph Noesen, an international expert, and Mr Sorin Zaharia, Professor at the Polytechnica University of Bucharest.

8. The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.

The competent authorities worked together on the referencing report, and the ENIC-NARIC France network is represented on the Proofreading Committee. France compétences, which brought together members of the Professional Certification Commission, is also the National Coordination Point.

One chapter of the report relates to the self-certification of the French Higher Education Framework with reference to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

9. Within six months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.

France undertakes to provide the final report, as it did in 2010.

10. Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

After acceptance of the report by the EQF Expert Group, the RNCP records and the certifying bodies' "parchments" will contain a mention of the European level. The RNCP records enable the automatic publication of the qualification supplement containing the EQF level.

Conclusion

The national qualification framework is one of the main elements to structure the lifelong learning system.

Since 1 January 2019, public authorities, social partners, and more generally all the participants in the training system have been mounting an sustained effort in order to improve the transparency and the quality of the system, to reinforce its ability to adapt to the changes of the labour market for an increased willingness to train from employed people or future employed people.

Hence, in the context of changing occupations, the objective of the structuration of qualifications in blocks of competencies is to increase possibilities in a global framework of alternance between working life and training.

Concerning this in-depth transformation, the most important challenge is a framework sufficiently regulated in terms of visibility and quality in order to:

▶ develop the matching between offer and demand of competencies for the labour market based on a signal of qualification;

▶ to be sure that proposed and followed training courses are a safe investment serving the importance of the value of work within the companies.

The new qualifications system is also a basis for the expression of new potentialities of the training system through:

▶ the development of the "competencies passport" based on the personal training account (CPF);

▶ a reinforced modularisation which gives far more importance to the recognition of experience in career paths;

▶ and last quality approach for training.

54   UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA   55

COMPATIBILITY OF THE FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

WITH THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

This chapter constitutes the self-assessment report for France concerning the self-referencing of the National Qualifications Framework with reference to the overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), adopted in Bergen in 2005 and revised in Paris in 2018 for the short-cycle level:

www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/EHEAParis2018_Communique_AppendixIII_952778.pdf

In accordance with the commitments made by ministers for higher education in Bergen in 2005, the purpose of this report is to establish the compatibility of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, taking into account the criteria defined in the report drawn up in 2005 by the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks:

www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/WG_Frameworks_qualification/71/0/050218_QF_EHEA_580710.pdf

56
UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA
57

1. POSITIONING OF THE FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

At national level: one single qualifications framework

Higher education has always been part of the National Qualifications Framework.

The creation of the National Directory of Professional Certifications (RNCP) in January 2002 heralded a new conception of certification covering all access routes (initial and further training, validation of non-formal and informal learning), all levels of education and training systems (secondary, higher education), and all certifying bodies (public and private).

Like all qualifications with a professional purpose, which are awarded by the State and whose creation has been validated by a joint body bringing together representatives of the State and the social partners (for higher education, this is the National Council for Higher Education and Research – CNESER), higher education qualifications are registered "by law" (in French: "de droit") in the RNCP. Bachelor's degree (licences in French), master's degree and doctorate-level degrees are respectively ranked at Levels 6, 7 and 8 of the National Qualifications Framework by the text that creates the French National Framework, respecting both the academic character of higher education degrees and emphasising the capacity of these degrees to promote labour-market integration.

In addition, short-cycle higher education diplomas (DUT, BTS), which are now integrated into the Bologna process as a specifically differentiated level of qualifications (and no longer part of the first cycle), are now ranked at Level 5.

The French Higher Education Framework and the overarching framework for the European Higher Education Area

The adoption of a Qualifications Framework by ministers for higher education in Bergen in May 2005 was a decisive step towards the convergence of the higher education systems of the 48 countries that are now part of the Bologna Process (with the accession of a 49th country – San Marino – in November 2020).

The construction of a European framework that can serve as a reference for the national frameworks has important implications for the national systems. Beyond the comparison and mutual recognition of diplomas which it facilitates, the European framework raises the question of the very conception of our higher education systems.

The organisation of studies in three cycles is the central aspect of the European framework. The definition, by the "Dublin descriptors", of the levels that should be attained by students at the end of each of the three cycles puts the emphasis on a conception of training influenced by a "competency-based" approach with expected learning outcomes, replacing the traditional content-based approach. Totally rethinking the content of all training courses on the basis of what we want students to know and be able to apply at the end of a training process, beyond the confines of training for purely professional purposes, has not been the easiest of tasks facing higher education, and remains challenging to this day.

The European Framework also places the question of quality and the conception of this quality at the heart of the convergence process – the quality of the diplomas and the teaching they validate, of course, but more generally the quality of all higher education systems – since the framework impacts all aspects of them, from the structuring of training provision to the methods of access, pedagogy and teacher training. In so doing, it encourages the national authorities to rethink the system as a whole and to introduce far-reaching reforms.

The French Higher Education Framework is not an official text that simply reproduces the architecture of the cycles and level descriptors adopted in Dublin for its own purposes. It concerns the application of the advances and principles promoted by the Bologna Process to the realities of institutions and the daily lives of the higher education and research community – students and professors alike – with a view to constructing the European Higher Education Area. The adoption of the European Qualifications Framework by ministers at Bergen in 2005 was one of the key stages on the path to the construction of this project. The application of this framework in France has made significant changes to the structure and contents of our higher education system: implementing a three-cycle architecture of studies that incorporates a "competency-based" approach linked to "learning outcomes" combined with ECTS credits (with the exception of the doctorate), ensuring progression between cycles, decompartmentalising fields of study, improving student mobility – both internal and external, targeting the professional integration of students and its corollary – the professionalisation of training, and recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning, to mention only the fundamentals, are all proof that the French authorities have taken account of the overarching qualifications framework for the Higher Education Area.

The 2013 Law on higher education reform, followed by the creation of the national training framework (as described in chapter 1), illustrate the reforms that have been carried out in line with the European framework.

The reform of access to the first cycle of health training programmes is further striking proof. Article 1 of Law 2019-774 of 24 July 2019, as amended, on the organisation and transformation of the health system, initiated a reform of health studies, revamping the procedures for accessing medical, pharmaceutical, dental and midwifery studies, removing the numerus clausus, and enabling access to these studies through a variety of channels. However, this access will remain demanding and selective in order to guarantee a high level of competency in future professionals. It allows students to enrol in a variety of learning pathways leading to health sectors and other opportunities for further study, and to benefit from a progressive orientation towards the training programme that is best-suited to their knowledge, competencies and skills. These programmes may lead to national bachelor's degrees, while also offering courses in the health field ("LAS" bachelor's degree with access to health). They may include a first year that is specifically designed to provide access to the health sector and the pursuit of studies in other fields (specific health access pathway known as "PASS"). Finally, they may also act as admission pathways from paramedical training programmes (cf. Article 1 of Law 2019-774 of 24 July 2019 on the organisation and transformation of the health system, and Decree 2019-1125 of 4 November 2019 on access to training in medicine, pharmacy, dentistry and midwifery).

The application of the bachelor-master-doctorate (BMD) system to the four health fields (medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and midwifery), by organising the training in the form of semesters and teaching units, enables the acquisition of European credits. Bridging solutions between curricula have now been put into practice.

58

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

59

2. THE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

A highly diversified education and training landscape

The French higher education system is characterised by its extreme diversity, due to the coexistence of a plurality of institutions and programmes whose aims, administrative structures, admission requirements and organisation of studies sometimes differ greatly. Within this highly diversified landscape, the public sector plays a dominant role, accounting for 80% of student enrolments and the majority of post-secondary education and training.

The range of study and training programmes is designed in such a way as to enable students to constantly progress or reorient their studies towards different levels of training or pathways; degrees and diplomas are also accessible through initial training (including apprenticeships), further training or the recognition of prior learning.

Higher education courses include short and long courses, the vast majority of which are part of the European BMD scheme.

Short training programmes lead to essentially two types of diplomas:

▸ **The Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS – advanced vocational training certificate),** a national diploma requiring two years of study in a Section de technicien supérieur (STS – advanced technical studies unit) based in a secondary school – offers a hundred or so specialisms in the fields of production and services or the agricultural sector; D. 643-1 to D. 643-35-1 of the French Education Code;

▸ **The Diplôme universitaire de technologie (DUT – university technology diploma),** a national higher education diploma created in 1996, awarded after two years of study at a University Technology Institute, offers 25 specialisms in the production and service sectors.

Long study programmes

Long-term higher education is mainly provided by the 76 universities around France. Universities include different components such as schools and colleges, especially engineering schools, and institutes such as University Technology Institutes (IUTs) or Business Administration Institutes (IAEs).

Apart from the universities that provide the public service of higher education and which, with the exception of the health sector, are theoretically open to all students as long as they have the baccalauréat or a diploma with recognised equivalence, various schools offer training in a wide variety of fields. These schools may be public or private, with private education accounting for 20% of students.

Public schools are either supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education (teacher training colleges), or supervised by other ministries, such as the Ministry of Education: Culture (for establishments offering training in the field of visual expression, architecture, heritage and performing arts), Health (paramedical and social colleges), Defence (military colleges such as the Ecole Polytechnique), Agriculture (agronomy colleges, veterinary schools) or Industry (mining or telecommunications colleges).

All these institutions aim to train students to a high level of excellence and carry out selection prior to admission. Most of them recruit their students by competitive examination after two years of "classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles" (CPGE – advanced courses preparing for the competitive entrance examinations for the highly selective "grandes écoles" [elite higher education institutes with highly competitive admission requirements]).

The "Grandes Ecoles" designation encompasses the "écoles normales supérieures (highly selective teacher training colleges), veterinary schools, engineering schools, business and management schools.

In spite of this diversity, and with regard to the degree and diploma system that interests us in this report, the Ministry of Higher Education grants university degree level qualifications, whether these are awarded by universities or by institutions supervised by other ministries (in this case the other ministers are co-signatories). The majority of these institutions are engineering schools and business and management schools.

FOCUS ON ENGINEERING SCHOOLS AND BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCHOOLS

▸ **The 205 engineering schools** established in France as of 1 September 2019 (Decree of 28 January 2020) consist of 152 public and 53 private schools. At the beginning of the 2019 academic year, 30% of the students were in private institutions: 41,780 students versus 81,425 students in public institutions supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI).

Of the public institutions, 116 come under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education. Most of the other schools and colleges are supervised by the Ministries of Defence, Agriculture, the Economy, Telecommunications and Transport. All institutions run three- or five-year academic programmes. Students can access engineering training programmes by competitive examination after the baccalauréat (in the case of five-year schools), or after two years of preparatory classes, or on the basis of their application after following a study programme validated by a BTS, DUT or bachelor's degree.

▸ **Qualified engineer status** is awarded by a public or private institution that has been accredited by the State after evaluation by the Commission for Engineering Qualifications (CTI). It confers a master's degree level qualification. 30,000 degrees are obtained in this way every year. Graduate engineers account for nearly two thirds of graduates obtaining a master's degree in scientific and technical training in the French higher education system.

▸ **Business and management schools** have private status (registered as associations) or are run by Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

As long as they are recognised by the State, these schools can issue degrees that are "certified" ("diplômes visés") by the Ministry for Higher Education and, where applicable, lead to a master's degree level qualification. Authorisation to issue a certified degree is granted after a periodic evaluation of training programmes by the Commission for the Evaluation of Management Training and Diplomas (CEFDG). In 2018, 105 programmes at these schools led to a certified three-year to five-year degree, and of these 95 certified degrees, 52 were granted master's degree status after evaluation by the CEFDG.

In addition to private engineering and business schools, **private higher education institutions** also provide general education programmes. These institutions may be denominational (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, etc.) or secular in nature. They are encouraged by the State to promote high-quality training that complements the programmes offered by public institutions, and to strengthen cooperation with the public education sector.

Pursuant to the provisions of Article L 613-7 of the French Education Code, there are two ways for students from these institutions to obtain national diplomas:

▸ By way of an agreement either with a public higher education institution in the education authority (académie) in which the private institution is located, or – according to their scientific and pedagogical project – with public institutions located in other education authorities. In this case, the agreements signed in application of Article L.613-7 of the Education Code enable the organisation of relationships and the definition of the respective commitments, whether in terms of the structure of the courses or the implementation of tests of skills and knowledge. National diplomas are then awarded to students in private higher education institutions by the accredited public institution. This system is encouraged by the State;

▸ The second option provided for by Article L 613-7 is recourse to local education authority boards in the absence of agreements with public institutions. In this case, the study programmes are evaluated by scientific advisers from the Directorate General for Higher Education and Professional Integration at the time of the initial application, and by the High Council for the Evaluation of Higher Education and Research (Hcéres).

60
UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA
61

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

3.1 THE QUALITY SYSTEM AND THE EVALUATION OF TRAINING COURSES

From the standard to evaluation

Two important and interrelated elements form the backbone of the degree system:

▶ The first concerns the distinction made in French law between the level of the degree or diploma ("grade") and the degree or diploma itself ("diplôme");

▶ The second element is that the state has a monopoly on the awarding of academic degrees and qualifications. **Based on the levels of the Bologna framework, the degree levels define the main reference levels common to all fields of study in higher education.**

The different levels in France are "baccalauréat" (corresponding to the examination taken at the end of secondary education), "licence" (bachelor's degree level), "master" (master's degree level) and the "doctorat" (doctoral degree level).

The degrees or diplomas themselves, on the other hand, attest to each stage in the course of higher education studies in a particular field of training mentioned in the title of the qualification.

The consequence of this distinction between level of the degree or diploma and the degree or diploma itself is that only certain qualifications, set out in a list established by decree, confer a university degree level qualification.

In addition, the State (Ministry of Higher Education and other "certifying" ministries) has a monopoly on the awarding of national qualifications in France. In addition to national qualifications, higher education institutions are authorised to organise study programmes under their own responsibility, which lead to their own diplomas: "diplômes d'université" or institutional diplomas.

The objectives, content, number of hours, and methods of testing knowledge and competencies for a certain number of national higher education diplomas – including the "brevet de technicien supérieur" (BTS) and the "diplôme universitaire de technologie" (DUT), which are two-year short-cycle diplomas – are still established by regulations.

The inclusion of French higher education in the European Higher Education Area has meant that degrees and diplomas are now presented for accreditation by the Ministry of Higher Education, while respecting the scientific and pedagogical autonomy of the institutions. Standardised learning outcomes must be achieved by graduating students. These are organised by specialism and published. They are described in terms of competencies. However, the programmes that students follow (specialisms), are freely organised by the universities.

In addition, if universities feel that they can create diplomas leading to a university-level degree, they are free to create them; of course, these will be evaluated and may or may not be accredited.

In this new context, evaluation has become crucial and is the main regulating factor in higher education. Regulation is therefore carried out exclusively through evaluation, which consists of an assessment of the quality of the study or training programme, but also of the institution's governance and strategy, and of its strengths and weaknesses.

The evaluation of study programmes and diplomas

The evaluation of existing programmes is carried out at several levels. Initially, projects to create study programmes are evaluated by the various national authorities, taking into account the characteristics of the training sector and the specific objectives for the training in question. These authorities include:

▶ Hcéres (formerly AERES) – evaluates university bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees and the master's and doctoral level training courses of certain schools and colleges, and the training courses of institutions supervised by other ministries (culture, agriculture, health, etc.);

▶ The Commission for Engineering Qualifications (CTI) – evaluates engineering programmes;

▶ The Commission for the Evaluation of Management Training and Diplomas (CEFDG) – evaluates study and training courses offered by business and management schools;

▶ The CCN and the CPN – evaluate programmes offered by IUTs (National Advisory Commission of University Technology Institutes and National Pedagogical Commissions for the specialisms concerned).

In a subsequent phase, the National Council for Higher Education and Research (CNESER) is consulted. This body represents both public scientific, cultural and professional institutions (EPCSCP), and major national interests – particularly educational, cultural, scientific, economic and social interests. These representatives are appointed by the Minister for Higher Education and Research.

Lastly, the Ministry, with the advice of the two aforementioned authorities, accredits the institutions to deliver a range of study and training programmes for the duration of the five-year contract that applies to the examination of an institution's study and training provision. An order published in the "Bulletin Officiel" (Official Bulletin) for Higher Education and Research sets out a list of programmes for which each institution is accredited.

The scientific and academic advisers of the DGESIP, and the Monitoring Committee for the bachelor's, master's and doctoral cycles mentioned in Chapter 2 are also involved in the reflections on the quality of diplomas.

The different evaluation bodies and their roles

The High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) is an independent administrative authority created by the Higher Education and Research Law of 2013. Its governing body is composed of 30 members – 15 men and 15 women – appointed by decree for a four-year term, renewable once, and responsible for:

▶ Evaluating higher education institutions and their consortia, research organisations, foundations for scientific cooperation and the National Research Agency or, where appropriate, ensuring the quality of evaluations conducted by other bodies;

▶ Evaluating research units at the request of the institution to which they are attached. In the absence of the validation of evaluation procedures, or in the absence of a decision by the institution to which these research units are attached, they are responsible for referring the evaluation to another body or, where appropriate, for validating the evaluation procedures of research units by other bodies. Where a unit is under the responsibility of more than one institution, only one evaluation shall be carried out;

▶ Evaluating the certified diplomas ("diplômes visés") of higher education institutions or, where appropriate, validating evaluation procedures carried out by other bodies;

▶ Ensuring that the evaluations of higher education and research personnel take into account all the missions assigned to them by law and their specific statuses;

▶ Ensuring the promotion of activities contributing to the dissemination of scientific, technical and industrial culture in the careers of higher education and research personnel;

▶ Carrying out the ex-post evaluation of investment programmes and of private-law organisations receiving public funds for research or higher education.

As a member of ENQA, Hcéres is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). This registration confirms that Hcéres substantially meets the European requirements for quality assurance as defined in the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), which were adopted in Bergen in 2005 and revised in Yerevan in 2015.

The Commission for Engineering Qualifications (CTI)

The CTI (Commission des titres d'ingénieur) is a commission established by law in 1934 and whose role and functioning are defined by Articles 642-3 et seq. of the French Education Code, and Articles R. 642-5 et seq. It issues opinions (for public institutions) and decisions (for private institutions) prior to the authorisation to award graduate engineer status, which is granted by the Ministry to institutions that request it.

It is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and as such meets the requirements of independence: moral, financial, and in relation to human resources. It is also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). The CTI cooperates with other French and international quality assurance agencies, either through bilateral agreements (ABET, AEQES, AAQ, Hcéres, CCN IUT, CEFDG, France éducation international, IEAQA, etc.) or within the framework of networks such as FrAQ-Sup, ECA, ENAEE, etc.

Its composition is based on equal representation (of universities, schools and social partners), and consists of 32 members:

- ▸ 4 members chosen from the staff of public scientific, cultural and professional institutions awarding qualifications leading to graduate engineer status;
- ▸ 4 members chosen from the staff of schools and institutes under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and awarding qualifications leading to graduate engineer status;
- ▸ 8 members chosen on the grounds of their scientific and technical expertise;
- ▸ 8 members chosen by the most representative employers' organisations;
- ▸ 8 members chosen by the most representative professional engineering associations and organisations.

The accreditation of an institution to award a qualification leading to graduate engineer status is granted for a maximum of five years after an evaluation procedure carried out on site and according to documentation by a group of experts (CTI members, international experts and students). This procedure concludes with the presentation of a report at plenary session of the CTI, at which opinions and decisions are not formulated until after a vote. The main evaluation criteria relate to the organisation of the institution, openness and partnerships, recruitment, training and the professional integration of students, as well as the quality system and continuous improvement policy. Its assessment procedures – standards and guidelines – developed in light of the above-mentioned European standards, known as ESGs, are public (www.cti-commission.fr/fonds-documentaire R&0 2020), as are the conclusions of its deliberations.

The Commission for the Evaluation of Management Training and Diplomas (CEFDG)

The CEFDG (Commission d'évaluation des formations et des diplômes de gestion) is made up of 26 members appointed by several bodies including the two supervising Ministries: of Higher Education and the Economy (for schools under the authority of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry – CCI). Its composition was modified in accordance with Article L. 6113-3 of the French Labour Code, created by Law 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's professional future, which established the principle of consultation with employees' trade unions and employers' professional organisations prior to the creation of higher education diplomas for professional purposes. The composition of the commission was modified accordingly.

The Commission for the Evaluation of Management Training and Diplomas is now composed of 26 members appointed by a joint order of the Ministers for Higher Education, Industry and Trade.

They represent business and academic circles (universities, business and management schools and training programmes), as well as qualified personalities:

- ▸ 10 representatives of economic and social interest groups, including representatives of trade unions and employers' organisations;
- ▸ 6 professors in the field of commerce and management;
- ▸ 6 representatives of private and Chamber of Commerce and Industry-supervised business and management schools and training programmes;
- ▸ 4 qualified personalities.

The term of office is 4 years, renewable once only. Half of the members are renewed every 2 years.

The CEFDG's mission is to organise quality control procedures for higher education business and management training programmes with a view to constructing the European Higher Education Area. It also examines the development of higher management training courses in line with the overall system of existing higher education programmes.

Within the framework of the authorisation procedure for the issuance of a certified diploma – initiated by the Decree of 8 March 2001 "relating to diplomas awarded by private and Chamber of Commerce and Industry-run technical higher education institutions recognised by the State" – the Commission, through its evaluation of training courses and the opinions issued, contributes to regulating the institutions.

The documentation submitted by the institutions is analysed with regard to the training programme as well as the institution in its educational, economic and professional environment, which enables the institution's position within the overall training system to be determined. As is the case for the CTI, the evaluation criteria are public.

(www.cefdg.fr/CEFDG/Autres/Documents/2019/Référentiel_CEFDG_juilt2019_v10-7_pr_site.pdf)

The **Commission's website** (www.cefdg.fr), targeting a broad audience, was launched in July 2011. By drawing attention to training programmes that are recognised and certified by the State, this website sets out to inform students and the various stakeholders, and to provide them with clear and transparent information about the results of evaluations according to academic, scientific and professional integration criteria.

The CTI and the CEFDG work in cooperation with Hcéres, with a view to developing common standards and carrying out joint evaluations, in order to avoid placing an excessive burden on institutions.

3.2 THE PROGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

The French Education Code, and specifically Article L. 612-1 on the sequencing of higher education studies in cycles, states that "the sequences of higher education studies are organised in cycles. The number, nature and duration of the cycles may vary according to the studies taught. "Each cycle, according to its specific objectives, includes student guidance, general education, the acquisition of components of a professional qualification, training for entrepreneurship, research, and the development of the student's personality, sense of responsibility and aptitude for individual and teamwork".

During each cycle, national higher education diplomas are awarded, attesting to the knowledge, competencies or components of professional qualifications acquired. Bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees are awarded in the first, second and third cycles, respectively.

The implementation of this new architecture, which began in 2002, has enabled higher education institutions to reconfigure their overall study and training provision, while placing greater emphasis on their specificities. Universities have gradually committed themselves to this approach, sometimes even anticipating the contractual periodicity. Since the start of the 2006 academic year, all universities have been adapting their programmes to the new system, which reflects their interest in an approach that not only gives them greater freedom for pedagogical initiative, but also tends to improve the clarity and professionalisation of their courses, and to reinforce their site policies in order to create scientifically robust centres, for the benefit of students and the country as a whole.

The bachelor's degree cycle

These reference frameworks are explicitly based on the Dublin descriptors, which define the levels of the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA (or QF-EHEA) in terms of expected learning outcomes: "The level of competencies and learning outcomes referenced conform to the Dublin descriptors for the first cycle, which refer to the following five aspects: "knowledge and understanding", "application of knowledge and understanding", "forming opinions", "communication", and "training and educational skills". The reference frameworks can be consulted on the French Ministry of Higher Education's website: www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr.

The professional bachelor's degree

The adjustment of the French higher education system to the principles of the Bologna Process began in 1999, notably with the creation of the "licence professionnelle" (professional bachelor's degree), which enhanced the range of three-year higher education programmes, in application of the principle of professionalisation of studies in the first cycle of higher education, adopted at the European level. Defined by the Order of 17 November 1999 on the professional bachelor's degree, this diploma, which prepares students for professional integration, involves professional partners at all levels, in designing the degree programmes, the procedure leading to accreditation, and in teaching or internships.

There are currently two types of these bachelor's degrees. Some of them are highly specialised and focused on a trade or an occupation; they are primarily aimed at students who have already developed a solid technological background after following short technological and professional training programmes, i.e., mainly holders of a "diplôme universitaire de technologie" (DUT - University Technology Diploma) or a "brevet de technicien supérieur" (BTS - Advanced Vocational Training Certificate).

The others, covering a broader professional spectrum, prepare students for all professions in a single category or "family". They are increasingly integrated into the "general" bachelor's degree courses and thus become accessible to students following these programmes at the end of the second year of the bachelor's degree.

64
UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA
65

"Diplômes universitaires de technologie" (DUT – University Technology Diplomas)

Although the original aim of this diploma awarded by University Institutes of Technology (IUTs) was to satisfy the demand from students wishing to enter the labour market quickly while meeting the economic sector's needs for advanced technicians, it has been observed that 78% of students continue their studies after obtaining the DUT.

In order to reconcile the students' desire for immediate integration and further studies, a new organisational structure of studies has been defined in order to enable the integration of the DUT into the European Higher Education Area and into the bachelor, master, doctorate (BMD) scheme. The pathways now include a "major" (the principal field of study accounting for 80% of the total volume of training), which guarantees the identity of the DUT and the core competencies in the professional field in question, and complementary modules designed to prepare students for immediate professional integration or further study.

The organisation of the training provision into semesters aims to improve the fluidity of programmes of study. In order to help students develop their course curriculum in a progressive manner, each programme must include specific courses designed to promote the development of their personal and professional projects. This gives students a clear idea of the occupations they will be entering, and of specialisms and skills they need to develop. The teaching units acquired by students can now be "banked" and lead to the awarding of European credits. To obtain a DUT, 120 credits are acquired at the rate of 30 European credits per validated semester. As indicated in Chapter 1, the DUT is now considered as a bridging diploma towards the new bachelor's degree.

The master's degree cycle

The master's degree level qualification ("grade de master") was created in France by Decree 99 - 747 of 30 August 1999, as amended, relating to master's degree level status.

Master's degree level status is a high-level qualification benchmark. This level corresponds to a common core of knowledge, skills and competencies that can be acquired via different pathways. **It combines specialised and professional training, enables students to supplement and further their general knowledge, and introduces them to scientific research.**

Master's degree level qualifications have been automatically awarded (Decree 99- 747 of 30 August 1999 as amended) to holders of various degrees, first and foremost, the national master's degree ("diplôme national de master").

The Decree of 23 May 2016 laid secure foundations for the start of the 2016-2017 academic year by establishing a legal basis for the selection process that was carried out in the second year of the master's programme, as part of a broad debate with stakeholders in the academic community that ended with a memorandum of understanding on 4 October 2016, legally translated by Law 2016-1828 of 23 December 2016 adapting the second cycle of French higher education to the bachelor-master-doctorate system. It affirms two principles of the curricula:

▶ The curriculum leading to the national master's degree is a four-semester degree course based on an actual recruitment process at the beginning of the curriculum which leads to the examination of students' applications;

▶ Every holder of a national bachelor's degree ("diplôme national de licence") must be offered the opportunity to continue his or her studies in a second-cycle degree course.

Pursuant to the provisions of Article L612-6 of the French Education Code, access to a master's degree is open to holders of diplomas certifying first-cycle studies, as well as to beneficiaries of Article L613-5 or the exemptions provided for in the regulations. Institutions can define their admission capacities for access to the first year of the second cycle. Admission is then subject to passing a competitive examination, or to the examination of the candidate's application file.

However, if they so request, holders of the national bachelor's degree who are not admitted to the first year of a national master's degree are offered the opportunity to enrol in a second-cycle programme, taking into account their professional project and the institution in which they obtained their bachelor's degree.

Exhaustive information on the available programmes now enables all students to find out about the complete range of master's degree courses taught in France via the national portal www.trouvermonmaster. gouv.fr, established in February 2017. This portal is updated and improved every year at the same time. In addition, it acts as a "teleservice" that enables students who have not received a positive response to their master's degree applications to contact the chief education officer of their local education authority so that they can be offered a place on a master's programme in their home region that corresponds to their background and professional project.

The national master's degree, (Order of 25 April 2002 relating to the national master's degree, and Order of 22 January 2014 defining the national framework for programmes leading to the awarding of national bachelor's, professional bachelor's and master's degrees) issued on behalf of the State, is obtained after the acquisition of 120 "bankable" credits, acquired over four semesters, after the bachelor's degree. **The training provided includes theoretical, methodological and applied teaching and one or more periods of experience in a professional environment, in particular in the form of internships.** It also includes **an introduction to research and, in particular, the writing of a dissertation or other personal study project.** The national master's degree can only be awarded after validation of the **ability to master at least one modern foreign language,** which must be taught in the standard study pathways. Master's degrees are aimed at a high level of professional integration, after five years of higher education, and enable the pursuit of doctoral studies

Each degree breaks down into fields, specialisms and courses divided into semesters, and is organised according to a modular structure. Each teaching unit is assigned ECTS (European credit transfer system) credits, which are defined according to the total workload required of students (supervised training, internships, personal work, etc.).

The target outcomes upon completion of the degree, which have been proposed by the committee, correspond very precisely to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level: links with research; interdisciplinarity to improve the understanding of key issues at the interface between disciplines; integration of knowledge and competencies to enable students to understand the complexity of professional situations; management/responsibility of teams; development of the autonomy and adaptability required to be able to continue one's training in an autonomous manner; ability to express opinions and understand the social and ethical implications related to the application of knowledge and opinions; communication skills in various contexts.

The doctorate

In 2016, the Ministry of Higher Education revised the texts relating to doctoral training, with the aim of guaranteeing doctoral students a very high level of training while ensuring better national recognition of their qualifications and facilitating professional integration in the academic field and in the private sector.

The Order of 25 May 2016 establishing the national training framework and procedures for awarding the national doctorate degree thus became the new reference framework. It respects the autonomy of institutions and doctoral schools, and the role of thesis supervisors, while promoting doctoral training at the level of groups of institutions, in connection with a clear site policy. It is aligned with international standards, and specifically the European Commission recommendations, regarding the duration of the thesis, best practices and the quality system.

Consequently, the Order of 25 May 2016 affirms the unique status of the doctorate as the degree awarded at the highest level of higher education. It also clarifies each stakeholder's role. It also makes doctoral training outcomes clearer to employers, specially by expressing these outcomes in terms of transferable competencies, and thus offers support for professional integration or for the doctoral student's further professional development.

These measures have improved the monitoring of doctoral students, through the establishment of a monitoring committee, better preparation for professional life and professional integration. Finally, bringing doctoral training in line with international standards facilitates the incoming and outgoing mobility of doctoral students, young researchers and more experienced researchers.

The implementation of the decree on doctoral training was accompanied by the concomitant revision of the decree on the doctoral contract, notably in order to align the two texts on the issues of the duration of the doctoral contract and the opportunities to extend or suspend it in the case of a sabbatical year.

66

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

67

3.3 THE PROGRESSIVE INTEGRATION OF DIPLOMAS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE

▶ **Advanced study programmes in secondary schools (lycées)**

Advanced study programmes under the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education, in addition to university courses, also include "advanced classes" in certain secondary schools. These are mainly the "sections de techniciens supérieurs" (STS – advanced technical studies units) and the "classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles" (CPGE – advanced courses preparing for the competitive entrance examinations for the highly selective "grandes écoles").

▶ **Sections de technicien supérieur (STS)**

Students in STS units follow a two-year curriculum leading to the "brevet de technicien supérieur" (BTS). This advanced vocational training certificate was integrated into the European architecture of studies by Decree 2007-540 of 11 April 2007. Students who have obtained a BTS are awarded 120 European credits. The certificate is still largely based on a final one-off examination. However, students who fail the examination obtain a number of credits corresponding to the units they have passed, according to their coefficient. To facilitate student mobility, the Decree of 11 April 2007 provides for the issuance of a descriptive certificate of the learning pathway, which mentions the knowledge and skills acquired, in addition to the number of credits obtained.

▶ **Classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles (CPGE)**

Decree 2007-692 of 3 May 2007 officialises the entry of these advanced preparatory classes into the BMD system and the European Higher Education Area. It provides for the issuance of a descriptive certificate of the study pathway followed by students, mentioning the number of European credits acquired at the end of their first and second year of study (60 and 120 ECTS respectively). The mention of ECTS credits is based on the analysis of the student's individual work and competencies, evaluated without reference to academic or competitive rankings, and applies when students are considered by the entire teaching team as fit to continue their studies in higher education, particularly at university. Grades (from E to A) are awarded for each component of the curriculum and for the entire course. They are intended to give students an opportunity to showcase their strengths, in order to move into universities more specialised than the generalist CPGEs. If CPGE students repeat their second year, they do not receive additional credits. On the other hand, "letters" mentioned on the transcript of results may highlight any progress made during this third year.

▶ **Diplomas leading to bachelor's degree level status**

Other applications are under consideration.

▶ **The awarding of master's degree level status to degrees other than the master's degree**

Certifying ministries other than the Ministry of Higher Education and Research have requested that master's degree level status be awarded to holders of their degrees. For example, the Ministry of Culture has obtained master's degree level status for programmes in the plastic arts, architecture, music and dance, after periodic evaluations of their programmes by Hcéres.

Other ministries, notably those in charge of Defence and Agriculture, are working towards the inclusion of their programmes in the European Higher Education Area.

▶ **The awarding of master's degree level status to engineering and management degrees**

Qualified engineer status is awarded by an institution and is protected by law (Articles L642-2 et seq. of the French Education Code). An engineer is always a "graduate engineer of [name of institution]". **Qualified engineer status, which validates engineering training in France, attests to academic knowledge, recognises professional skills and confers master's degree level status. It can only be awarded by a public or private higher education institution if the latter has been accredited to do so by the State.** On the basis of an evaluation carried out by the Commission for Engineering Qualifications (CTI) and an opinion issued by the latter, authorisation to award qualified engineer status is granted by order of the Minister for Higher Education when the institution comes under this Minister's sole jurisdiction, or by joint order of the Minister for Higher Education and another Minister when the institution is supervised by a ministry other than the Ministry of Higher Education (Agriculture, Industry, etc.).

While only **public** institutions can award a **master's degree,** certain private institutions may award a different degree conferring **master's degree level status.** "It (master's degree level status) is also conferred on holders of degrees awarded on behalf of the State, of an equivalent level, mentioned on a list drawn up, after a periodic national evaluation of these degrees, by order of the Minister for Higher Education after consulting the CNESER [National Council for Higher Education and Research]". Only engineering and business schools fall within the scope of this decree.

Master's degree level must guarantee a high level of training, both professionally and academically. Therefore, it is automatically granted to an engineering degree awarded by an accredited institution after evaluation by the CTI.

As far as business school courses are concerned, their recognition by the Ministry of Higher Education can take two different, non-exclusive forms: "endorsement" (with the degree bearing the signature, or

"visa" of the Minister for Higher Education), and the awarding of master's degree level status (in French: "grade de master"). The evaluation criteria leading to each of these forms meet different objectives.

Endorsement attests to the high quality of professional training in the management field; **master's degree level status must guarantee a high level of training, both professional and academic.**

The criteria leading to the awarding of master's degree level status are particularly stringent with regard to the integration of institutions in the international exchange network, and the ability of teaching teams to engage in a veritable research dimension leading to tangible results. Particular attention is paid to the scientific output of institutions in the management science field. The Commission for the Evaluation of Management Training and Diplomas (CEFDG) also assesses the human resources allocated to the study programme, both quantitatively and qualitatively, i.e. the number of tenured professors of management, and professors holding a PhD or a higher doctorate with accreditation to supervise research (HDR). It also considers the institution's site policy and social policy.

Considering these criteria, the evaluation commission issues differentiated opinions in accordance with the quality of the study programmes, leading to the authorisation to issue an endorsement and to confer master's degree level status for varying durations.

Authorising non-university institutions to award university-degree level qualifications is an undeniable asset for the "grandes écoles", which, once recognised, can take advantage of global university "standards". Master's degree level status, certifying a high level of training, ensures immediate international comprehensibility.

3.4 THE IMPACT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN DEGREE ARCHITECTURE

Decompartmentalisation of study programmes

The Ministry of Higher Education has begun work on decompartmentalising the various academic tracks that make up the first cycle in order to ensure greater fluidity of the pathways between general and professional courses:

▶ By establishing bridging solutions (in French: "passerelles"), as provided for by Article 9 of the Order of 1 August 2011 on the bachelor's degree, between study programmes as well as specific "crossover" student reception systems. The order establishes the principle of the signature of agreements between all types of establishments to facilitate these bridging solutions. It also stipulates that "the chief education officer of the local education authority", university chancellor, shall chair an annual academic commission on post-secondary study programmes. One of the tasks of this body is to take stock of bridging solutions and programme changes and make the entire range of post-secondary education offerings more coherent;

▶ By continuing to renew the "sections de techniciens supérieurs" (STS) through the implementation of the experiments begun at the start of the 2011 academic year. These experiments concern, on the one hand, the "modularisation" of courses in five specialisms of the"Brevet de Technicien Supérieur" (BTS – advanced vocational training certificates) in order to make it easier for students to change their programmes of study or return to their studies at a later date, and, on the other hand, the implementation of local projects relating to support for students undergoing a change of programme, and the admission arrangements for holders of vocational baccalauréats;

▶ By encouraging the creation of partnerships between secondary schools running "Classes Préparatoires aux grandes écoles" (CPGEs) and universities. This CPGE-university link takes two forms:

  ▶ Academic agreements: these agreements, which are fairly common, make it easier for students to continue their studies at the co-signatory university;

  ▶ "Partnerships" which aim, beyond the above-mentioned agreements, to associate the teaching teams of the two partner establishments. This may lead to the joint selection of students seeking admission to a CPGE, or the participation of professors in courses taught in the preparatory class, etc.

68

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

69

Links with research

University programmes are strongly linked to research. The links with research are evaluated in terms of the scientific and managerial potential of the institutions, including the presence of teaching and research staff involved in the work of recognised research units or partnerships with accredited research units.

To a certain extent, the bachelor's degree, and even more so the master's degree, as well as doctoral training, assume that all students benefit during their university courses from an introduction to research via the use of documentary resources, in addition to training on the methodology of writing a research thesis and on its defence.

Professionalisation of diplomas and the "competency-based approach"

Over the last twenty years, concern for the labour-market integration of young people has been a major factor in guiding the training policy of the Ministry of Higher Education.

This "learning outcomes-based" approach to training, which is more familiar to those responsible for programmes with a very strong professional profile, is gradually taking over as the dominant principle in the design of the entire range of study programmes provided by institutions.

As a result, each diploma specialism is described in terms of transversal or professional skills and knowledge.

Preparing for professional integration

To promote the professional integration of students, study and training curricula:

▶ Seek to strike a balance between knowledge, cross-disciplinary competencies and professional competencies, in line with the training objectives and the targeted professions. Cross-disciplinary competencies in digital technologies and foreign languages are subject to a recognised qualification in line with the level of the degree required for the training;

▶ Provide for periods of work experience in the training;

▶ Take account of the development of competencies acquired in the context of activities linked to student life.

By making it possible to guarantee the mastery of both the knowledge and competencies related to a discipline, and the competencies that can be subsequently applied to a professional activity, the approach based on the expected outcomes of studies combines two non-contradictory objectives: a high level of academic rigour and the "employability" of students. The competency reference frameworks designed for the new bachelor's degree very clearly illustrate the application of this approach.

The professionalisation of courses therefore covers two dimensions: the acquisition of recognised professional competencies, but also the provision of support for students in their studies with a view to their future labour-market integration. The following measures reflect these two focuses:

▶ The addition of a "personal and professional project" module to the bachelor's degree curriculum, which enables students to gain a better understanding of the professions to which their studies may lead, and to progressively refine their choices according to their personal tastes and competencies;

▶ The introduction of pre-professional or professional teaching units into the curricula, which are designated as such in the training plan, and can be directly linked to discipline-specific courses;

▶ The acquisition of "additional" competencies, especially in modern foreign languages and in the fields of office automation, computing and digital technologies;

▶ The implementation of pedagogical methods, such as project-based pedagogy, which encourage the contextualisation of acquired knowledge and its application to pre-professional or professional situations;

▶ The generalisation of internships. Long-term internships are compulsory in training courses with a direct professional orientation, such as the university technology diploma (DUT), professional bachelor's degrees, and professional master's degrees. They are becoming widespread in other training courses, with the main obstacle to their development being the ability of companies to host larger flows of trainees;

▶ The development of entrepreneurship programmes, either as part of the acquisition of the additional skills mentioned above, or in the framework of specific curricula.

The competency-based approach is currently the subject of intense activity by universities, which are joining forces to develop tools, notably digital tools such as competency portfolios for students, and digital competency platforms, which aim to help students to identify their competencies and teachers to describe diplomas in terms of learning outcomes. These tools also help candidates who are seeking to obtain recognition of their prior learning (RPL) to determine where they stand in relation to the competency reference frameworks of diplomas.

The role played by the registration of higher education degrees and diplomas in the professionalisation of training courses

Although benefiting from registration "by law" in the RNCP, higher education diplomas must nevertheless meet a certain number of requirements laid down by law in order to be effectively registered: the linking of the diploma to a sector of activity or to types of jobs, the description of the professional competencies certified by the diploma, and the professional integration rate of graduates over the last three years.

The registration of diplomas in the National Register of Professional Qualifications, and the awarding of the Diploma Supplement to the student, both reinforce the professional dimension of study programmes, the former by emphasising professional competencies and the link made with the professions or family of professions open to the diploma holder, and the latter by mapping out the learning pathway and highlighting the knowledge and competencies acquired.

Lifelong learning and validation schemes

Lifelong learning has several objectives: to ensure adaptation to employment, to help reintegrate job-seekers into the labour market, to promote social development and participate in cultural development, and to combat inequalities.

As fully-fledged players in the continuing vocational education of employees since the 1971 Delors Law on continuing education, all institutions can now offer a range of training programmes adapted to these different objectives. Universities play an important role in lifelong professional training, thanks to their openness to the business world, the professionalisation and modularisation of their study programmes, the development of distance learning, and the creation of courses leading to recognised qualifications that correspond to the needs of companies and employees.

Because it establishes links between the world of work and the academic world, between the competencies developed during the exercise of professional activities and the competencies expected at the end of a training programme, the **recognition of prior experience and learning** is a priority in universities' lifelong professional training policies.

The French higher education sector has extensive knowledge and experience of the recognition of prior learning: a field that it has pioneered, in a manner of speaking, since the first form of recognition dates back to 1934. This was the "State-certified engineer" ("ingénieur diplômé par l'Etat") scheme, which still operates today and enables people who work as engineers without having recognised engineer status to obtain the State-certified engineer diploma through the recognition of their competencies.

French higher education institutions can implement a comprehensive range of recognition schemes to take into account the entire prior knowledge and experience – both personal and professional – of candidates.

The recognition of prior learning and experience is based on three main systems which have two different purposes: admission to further studies or the direct issuance of a diploma, without following a training programme.

▶ **The recognition of personal and professional experience, commonly referred to as "VAP 85" ("validation des acquis personnels et professionnels"),** a system established by the Decree of 23 August 1985, enables candidates to access any level of higher education studies without possessing the required diploma. In this way, candidates may be admitted to a bachelor's degree programme without having the required secondary education qualification (baccalauréat) or admitted to a master's degree programme without holding a bachelor's degree, provided that the competent educational commission recognises that their personal or professional competencies or previous studies are sufficient for them to be able to follow the programme in question. This method of recognition remains the most widely used today, with nearly 13,000 applications granted each year;

▶ **The recognition of advanced studies ("validation des études supérieures" – VES)** carried out in France or abroad enables successful candidates to obtain a partial or complete diploma. All previous studies, regardless of their methods and duration, are taken into account by the validation panel;

▶ **The recognition of prior learning (RPL) ("validation des acquis de l'expérience – VAE).**

Created by the Law of 17 January 2002, on "social modernisation", the RPL scheme mainly concerns secondary vocational education diplomas and all higher education diplomas. Decree 2017-1135 of 4 July 2017 on the implementation of the recognition of prior learning (https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORF-TEXT000035104177) specifies the procedures for implementing RPL in higher education institutions. Provided that proof can be provided of having acquired at least one year's professional experience, whether in paid employment, self-employment or voluntary service, anyone may apply for recognition of their prior learning in order to obtain a higher education qualification. A selection board consisting of teachers and professionals evaluates the knowledge and skills acquired by the candidate on the basis of the latter's application file, and decides whether or not to award the diploma, either fully or partially. Approximately 4,000 recognitions, more than half concerning full diplomas, are awarded by universities and schools each year.

70

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

71

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The findings of numerous research projects – particularly on the most sensitive component of RPL, i.e. evaluating professional experience and matching it to the expected outcomes of study programmes – have enabled academic teams to base the RPL scheme on solid conceptual foundations, and in so doing, have managed to eliminate the associated negative preconceptions and to change people's way of thinking. Moreover, insofar as the RPL scheme can only be correctly implemented by creating reference frameworks for activities or occupations, RPL reinforces the "competency-based logic" that now prevails in the design of qualifications.

The blocks of competencies defined for each diploma are components that enable the promotion of the recognition of prior learning.

Student mobility

The Law on "Freedoms and Responsibilities of Universities" of 10 August 2007 gave universities a new public service mission – to participate in "the construction of the European Higher Education and Research Area" – an essential priority that must ultimately reinforce the comprehensibility, quality and attractiveness of our system and our programmes. It is thus recommended that higher education institutions, under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, endeavour to include in their development strategy the European projects they plan to carry out as part of their European and international policy. They are therefore invited to contribute to attaining the objective that the European Ministers for Higher Education, meeting in Leuven in May 2009, set for student mobility by 2020, i.e. for at least 20% of graduates in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to have benefited from a period of study or training abroad. This objective was reiterated by the ministers in Rome in November 2020.

Since the Bucharest Communiqué (2012), the need to intensify efforts to fully develop student and teacher mobility has been strongly reaffirmed.

In this perspective, the "EHEA Mobility Strategy 2020", which the ministers adopted in 2012, recommends a series of measures which were intended to inspire European, national and institutional strategies to develop mobility by removing persistent obstacles, whether financial and linguistic or linked to an information deficit, a lack of reliable statistical measures, or an absence of recognition for periods of study and diplomas. In this sense, the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework, compatible with the overarching qualifications framework (legal concept of "qualification" as defined by the Lisbon Convention: degrees, diplomas, academic titles, certificates) for the EHEA, and based on the concept of "learning outcomes", is of paramount importance to facilitate the recognition of diplomas, which is one of the three key Bologna commitments reaffirmed by the European Ministers in Paris in 2018.

In line with this student mobility objective set by the Bologna Process, the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research is developing an active policy in this area. In April 2007, France established an agency – Campus France – dedicated to international student mobility and the promotion of French higher education abroad, and to the management of foreign grant or scholarship holders by the French government and foreign governments.

At the same time, the Ministry promotes the development of diplomas in international partnerships and supports the new opportunities offered by the networks of European universities, which are likely to be decisive levers for supporting and facilitating mobility, in particular student mobility in the EHEA. It is also developing bilateral agreements on the mutual recognition of diplomas.

Bilateral agreements on the recognition of higher education qualifications have been promoted in three situations:

▶ When the implementation of the intergovernmental Bologna Process and, in particular, the creation of two- and then three-cycle university systems has not eliminated all the difficulties relating to the recognition by French higher education institutions of all diplomas obtained in the countries concerned by this process, or the recognition of French diplomas by higher education institutions in the partner countries. The agreement then has an informative, descriptive, explanatory and pedagogical purpose vis-à-vis the institutions;

▶ When there are significant student mobility flows between France and the partner country in at least one direction; in this respect, Erasmus mobility statistics are a useful indicator;

▶ When there is a diplomatic reason for forging closer ties between the ministry in the partner country and the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The drafting of a recognition agreement helps to strengthen the links between ministerial departments and representative conferences of the two countries, and to improve mutual knowledge of higher education systems. Such agreements may be drawn up by the ministries of higher education, in liaison with the representative conferences of heads of higher education institutions.

Study programmes based on international partnerships

National diplomas and institutional diplomas may be awarded through international partnerships. An international partnership is organised by an agreement entered between one or more French higher education institutions and one or more foreign higher education institutions. French institutions must have been accredited by the State to award the diploma concerned with the international partnership. When the awarding of this diploma is the subject of a joint accreditation involving several French establishments, the partnership agreement is signed by each of these institutions.

Foreign institutions that are party to such agreements must have the capacity to award a diploma recognised by the competent authorities of their country, at the same level and in the same field of study.

Mobility statistics

In this general context, the Erasmus initiative, which is now open to internship mobility, is the focal point of the Lifelong Education and Learning Programme ("Education et formation tout au long de la vie" – EFTLV). More than 340,000 French students have participated in the Erasmus programme since the programme was launched in 1987, out of 2,152,000 European participants (French students represent 16% of all Erasmus students, with the French population equivalent to 11% of the total 33-member EU). Between 2016 and 2017, more than 43,200 learners participated in a higher education mobility scheme under the Erasmus programme.

The hosting of foreign students in France

https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000038396848/

French higher education institutions are encouraged to organise student mobility through partnership agreements, and to adopt provisions enabling special attention to be paid to the hosting, supervision and monitoring of foreign students in order to help them succeed in their studies.

The policy of hosting foreign students aims to attract students from countries undergoing rapid economic growth – particularly emerging countries – in a certain number of pathways to scientific excellence at master's degree and doctorate level, and also to offer academic mobility opportunities to students from countries in the Global South, in a spirit of solidarity and partnership.

72

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

73

4. SUMMARY OF THE VERIFICATION OF THE COMPATIBILITY OF OUR HIGHER EDUCATION FRAMEWORK WITH THE OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

▶ The criteria were defined by the Bologna Group on Qualifications Frameworks in its report to the Ministers for Higher Education in Bergen in 2005.

Criterion 1: the national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education.

Like all policy orientations that impact the organisation and functioning of the higher education system, the Minister for Higher Education has sole responsibility for decisions concerning the structuring of the academic system. These decisions are laid down in official texts (laws, decrees, orders), which are first discussed with the competent authorities and bodies and then put to a vote by the CNESER before being adopted. The official texts are all published in the "Journal officiel de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche" (JOESR – French Official Journal of Higher Education and Research) and can be consulted at www.legifrance.gouv.fr.

The French Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for managing the arrangements for obtaining university-degree level diplomas. In addition, the records relating to university degrees are registered by law in the national framework, by the Ministry of Higher Education, under its supervision (in the case of management schools, for example), or with its agreement (in the case of records relating to engineering qualifications, which are verified by the Commission for Engineering Qualifications (CTI)).

Criterion 2: there is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework.

The aims of each cycle are specified in Article L 612-2 of the French Education Code. They largely cover the learning outcomes expected of students at the end of each cycle, as set out in the EHEA Qualifications Framework or "Bologna Framework".

In addition, **the main objectives of the bachelor's degree are defined in the Decree of 1 August 2011, and precisely translated into competency reference frameworks based on the Dublin descriptors.** The reference frameworks for the main fields can be consulted on the Ministry of Higher Education's website: https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid61532/les-referentiels-de-competences-en-licence.html

Like all policy orientations that impact the organisation and functioning of the higher education system, the Minister for Higher Education has sole responsibility for decisions concerning the structuring of the academic system. These decisions are laid down in official texts (laws, decrees, orders), which are first discussed with the competent authorities and bodies and then put to a vote by the CNESER before being adopted. The official texts are all published in the "Journal officiel de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche" (JOESR – French Official Journal of Higher Education and Research) and can be consulted at www.legifrance.gouv.fr.

Criterion 3: the national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS-compatible credits.

Higher education diplomas, regardless of the proportion of purely vocational training they entail, have all been registered by law (since the Law of 17 January 2002) in the "Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles" (RNCP – National Register of Professional Qualifications), which aligns qualifications in the French national qualification framework. Due to its strong labour-market orientation, which requires clear mention of the competencies assessed by qualifications, RNCP requires these qualifications, and therefore higher education degrees and diplomas, to be described in terms of learning outcomes, and in particular, of professional competencies.

The description of the expected outcomes of study programmes is one of the criteria used by the Ministry to accredit the diploma to which these programmes lead.

With regard to ECTS credits, Decree 2002-482 of 8 April 2002 "on the application of the construction of the European Higher Education Area to the French higher education system" sets out, among its general principles (Title I, Article 2): "the implementation of the European system of bankable and transferable teaching units, known as the 'European Credit Transfer System - ECTS'". Article 5 (Title II – Academic Provisions) specifies that "the number of European credits per teaching unit is defined on the basis of the total workload required by the student to obtain the unit".

To ensure the comparison and transfer of learning pathways in the European Higher Education Area, a common benchmark has been established, corresponding to the acquisition of 180 credits for the bachelor's degree level and 300 credits for the master's degree level.

The ECTS system is now considered a "normal" component of the French system; it is recognised and used by the entire university community. It has made a major contribution to the construction of more flexible career pathways and the decompartmentalisation of study programmes.

Criterion 4: the procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent.

Qualifications awarded on behalf of the French State and created after consulting consultative bodies involving representative organisations of employers and employees are registered by law in the RNCP. This procedure is laid down by law.

The accreditation procedure provides for consultation with the National Council for Higher Education and Research (CNESER). In addition, the records describing degrees and diplomas are discussed by the monitoring committee for bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in which France compétences participates.

The legal registration of national higher education degrees and diplomas is based on the fact that their status is guaranteed by the State through clearly defined evaluation and accreditation procedures.

Criterion 5: the national quality assurance systems for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process.

Prior to the implementation of the Bologna process and the Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, quality was, to a certain extent, inherent in a system in which the notion of degree level status (in French: "grade", corresponding to a guarantee of the attainment of a level) is distinct from that of the degree itself, with only the State being entitled to award degree level status according to criteria it has defined.

Since the establishment of independent evaluation bodies in accordance with European references for the quality of higher education within the EEA, the quality of French higher education programmes has been based on both the existence of evaluation procedures and on the evaluation of the actual content of programmes leading to national higher education diplomas conferring university-degree level status.

Criterion 6: the national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements.

In the National Directory of Professional Certifications (RNCP), for each of the diplomas, the level at which it is classified at national level and the corresponding level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) are mentioned. Diploma records can be consulted on the France compétences website.

The RNCP record for a diploma has been designed to cover the majority of the items contained in the Diploma Supplement. The correspondence between the level of the diploma at national level and one of the levels of the European lifelong Qualification Framework is one of these items.

Criterion 7: the responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published.

All procedures for the creation of diplomas and accreditation are clearly mentioned in official texts.

The procedures for engaging in dialogue with stakeholders are also described in texts (internal quality assurance procedures bringing together the stakeholders (employers, trainers, representatives of graduates), for each diploma. The stakeholders (employers, trainers, representatives of graduates) are also mentioned in texts.

The CNESER, and the monitoring committee for bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, which are forums for dialogue, are also created by official texts.

Finally, the Ministry of Higher Education is a member of the Professional Certification Commission.

74

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

75

> **ANNEX**

COMPOSITION OF THE EDITORIAL AND PROOFREADING COMMITTEES

The Editorial Committee is composed of members from the France compétences Professional Certification Commission (Commission de la certification professionnelle):

- ▶ 1 representative of social partner organisations (employers) CPME;
- ▶ 1 representative of social partner organisations (employees) CGT;
- ▶ 2 representatives of the French National Education System ;
- ▶ 1 representative of the Ministry of Higher Education;
- ▶ 3 representatives of France compétences (National Coordination Point for the EQF, National Coordination Point for the quality of vocational training, Directorate for Vocational Certification, etc.).

Proofreading Committee:

- ▶ Members of the Professional Certification Commission:
- ▶ 2 representatives of social partner organisations (employees CFTC, CFDT);
- ▶ 1 employer representative: MEDEF;
- ▶ **ENIC-NARIC FRANCE;**
- ▶ **HCERES** (High Council for Research and Higher Education) - member of ENQA;
- ▶ **CTI** (Commission des titres d'ingénieurs) - member of ENQA;
- ▶ **CCI FRANCE** (Chambers of trade and Industry);
- ▶ **CMA FRANCE** (Chambers of Trade and Craft Industries).

76 UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA 77

ARCHITECTURE OF STUDIES IN FRANCE FROM CERTIFICATE OF GENERAL EDUCATION

The organisation of studies in Higher Education

The presented courses may be accessed directly after the baccalauréate. Other ways to access exist, as well as pathways.

There are pathways between these courses

University

Universities provide general and professional courses. Universities also prepares for medical courses.

Specialised schools and institutes

These schools provide training in various fields: communication, arts, industry, tourism, trade, transportation, social and paramedical services.

Secondary schools

Secondary schools provide level 5 and level 6 courses.

Grandes écoles

Engineer or business schools, "Ecoles normales supérieures" institute for political sciences, and public arts schools issue level 7 diplomas.

Number of years

12	Specialist physician
11	Specialist physician
10	Specialist physician
9	Dental specialist / Pharmacist specialist / Specialist physician
8 — DOCTORATE D3	Dental specialist
7 — D2	
6 — D1	Dentist / Pharmacist
5 — MASTER DEGREE M2 / INSPE	Midwife
4 — M1	
3 — BACHELOR DEGREE L3 / BUT	
2 — L2 / DEUST / DUT	
1 — L1	

Baccalaureate

*CPGE — Advanced courses preparing for entrance examinations for "grandes écoles".

■ Issued diploma

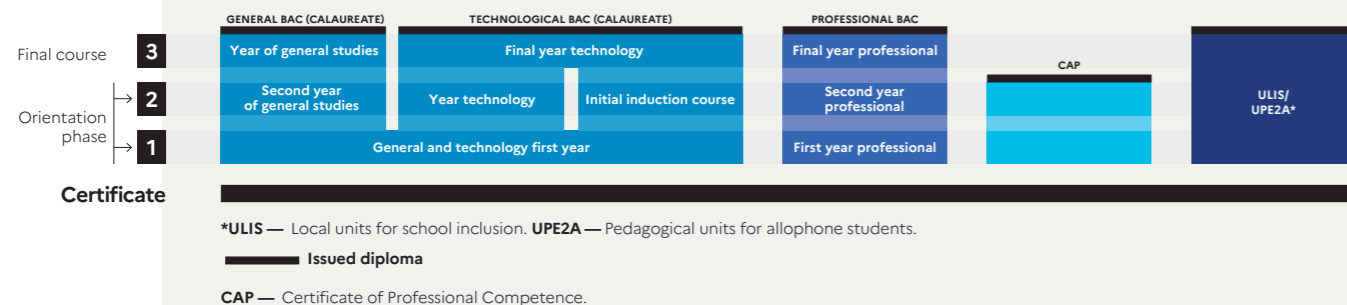**BTS —** Higher technician's certificate. **BUT —** University Bachelor of Technology. **DCG —** Accounting and management diploma. **DE —** State Diploma. **DEUST —** Scientific and technical university degree. **DN MADE —** National Diploma in Crafts and Design. **DTS —** Diploma of Superior technician. **DTS IMRT —** Diploma in medical imaging and radiology technology. **DUT —** University Technology Diploma. **ENS —** The École normale supérieure. **IEP —** Institute for political sciences. **L1 —** First year of bachelor degree (licence). **M1 —** First year of master degree (licence). **D1 —** First year of doctorate.

Specialised schools and institutes: Physiotherapist / Speech therapist / Audioprosthesist / Orthoptist / STATE DIPLOMA / Massage therapist / Social worker / Educator / Nurse / Imaging technician / Laboratory technician / STATE DIPLOMA / DN MADE

Secondary schools: SCHOOLS DIPLOMA / DTS IMRT / DCG / DN MADE / BTS

Grandes écoles: STATE DIPLOMA / Veterinary Technician / SCHOOLS DIPLOMA / MASTER / CPGE* / CPGE

Architecture of secondary school

from certificate of general education.

	GENERAL BAC (CALAUREATE)	TECHNOLOGICAL BAC (CALAUREATE)	PROFESSIONAL BAC	CAP	ULIS/UPE2A*
Final course — 3	Year of general studies	Final year technology	Final year professional		
Orientation phase — 2	Second year of general studies	Year technology / Initial induction course	Second year professional	CAP	ULIS/UPE2A*
— 1	General and technology first year		First year professional		

Certificate

*ULIS — Local units for school inclusion. **UPE2A —** Pedagogical units for allophone students.

■ Issued diploma

CAP — Certificate of Professional Competence.

THE ROLE OF THE CORPORATE SECTOR IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In the French system, companies are involved in training in general education, in university education, and of course, in professional or vocationally oriented qualifications (with all university diplomas being considered vocationally oriented).

All provisions are governed by the regulations, which have changed significantly since 2011 in order to encourage students to carry out in-company work placements directly related to their study programmes.

Training periods spent in the workplace and on work placements are integrated into a school or university academic curriculum, according to procedures defined by decree. A minimum pedagogical volume of training in the institution, as well as the supervision procedures for periods of training in the workplace or work placement periods by the educational institution and the host organisation, are established by this decree and specified in the work placement agreement (Article L.124-1 of the French Education Code).

General education

Within the framework of compulsory schooling (general education), pupils in troisième (aged around 14, in the fourth and final year of collège [first cycle of secondary general education]), or in lycées (second cycle of secondary education), must carry out a period of observation in a company, an administration or an association *("Within the framework of the individual programme of information, guidance and introduction to the economic and professional world defined in Article L. 331-7, observation periods in a professional environment, in a company, an administration or an association, lasting no more than one week, may be proposed during the school holidays to pupils in the last two classes of collège, or to pupils in lycées, in order to develop their career orientation plans" Art L.332-3-1 of the Education Code).*

The aim is to introduce students to professional life, and to teach them to describe and present their competencies in their first Curriculum Vitae.

Vocational education pathway

Preparations for vocational training can begin in troisième:

"During the final year of the collège (first cycle of secondary school), these institutions may prepare students for vocational training and, to this end, may include State-controlled work placements with approved professionals. Lycées professionnels (vocational high schools) and agricultural education institutions can be associated with these preparations. In agricultural education institutions, this educational provision may include State-controlled work placements with approved professionals during the last two years of schooling at the college" (Article L 332-3 of the Education Code).

Within the framework of vocational training, which begins after the final year of the collège, each training course provides for work placement periods, under working conditions governed by the provisions of the French Labour Code.

These training programmes may also be followed as part of an apprenticeship. Under French law, students can study for most diplomas or vocational qualifications registered in the French National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP) under an apprenticeship contract. The term "diploma or vocational qualification" covers:

▶ Professional qualifications issued on behalf of the State (National Education diplomas, professional qualifications from the Ministry of Labour, etc.);

▶ Private certificates (training organisations, sectors, chambers of trade, craft chambers, etc.).

Professional Qualification Certificates (certificats de qualification professionnelle – CQP) established by the Joint National Employment Commissions (CPNE) of sectors of industry are not accessible under apprenticeship schemes.

Higher education

The internship scheme varies according to the degree: on some programmes, internship periods are a mandatory requirement for obtaining a degree. These internships cannot exceed six months.

An agreement must be signed between the training organisation and the institution in which the internship takes place in order to enable the integration of these internships into academic programmes. These agreements cannot be entered into for the purpose of replacing an employee of the company, or as a source of additional labour to cope with a seasonal increase in activity.

Internships play an important role in the university technical diploma (diplôme universitaire de technologie – DUT), professional bachelor's degree (licence professionnelle), and advanced technical course (section de techniciens supérieurs) curricula, reflecting strong links with the world of work.

At university, the frequency of internships increases as students progress through their study programmes. At bachelor's level, for example, the proportion of interns among the 2014 bachelor's cohort more than quadrupled between the first and third years (61%), with wide variations according to sub-specialisms. This proportion rises again in the first year of master's degrees (72%).

In business and engineering schools, internships are fully integrated into the curriculum. Internships are most commonly carried out in the fourth year of engineering school and in the fourth year of business school, when the longest internships take place.

Students find internships with the support of their education institution in one third of cases and through speculative applications in three out of ten cases. More than half of students carry out their internships in private companies.

(Ministry of Higher Education and Research Briefing Note; October 2020)

European and non-European foreign students conducting an internship in France benefit from the same French internship regulations:

▶ Foreign students from the European Union can come to France as participants on the Erasmus + programme;

▶ Foreign students from outside the European Union also have this opportunity and can obtain a temporary residence permit for their internships.

These internship periods should not be confused with obtaining degrees by apprenticeship, which is possible for a large number of degrees.

The CIFRE (industrial training agreement) scheme

This scheme enables a company to receive financial aid to recruit a young doctoral student whose research work, supervised by a public research laboratory, leads to the conferral of a doctorate (fact sheet: Applying for the CIFRE scheme?).

CIFRE agreements bring together three partners:

▶ A company*, which appoints a doctoral student to carry out a research project on the subject of his or her thesis;

▶ A laboratory, outside the company, which is responsible for the scientific supervision of a doctoral student;

▶ A doctoral student, who already holds a master's degree.

The company recruits a young graduate with a master's degree, provides a minimum annual gross salary of €23,484 (€1,957/month), on a three year permanent contract (contrat à durée indéterminée – CDI) or a fixed-term contract (contrat à durée déterminée – CDD), and asks him or her to carry out a research project on the subject of his or her thesis. The company receives an annual grant of €14,000 from the National Association for Research and Technology (ANRT) on behalf of the State. A collaboration contract is drawn up between the company and the laboratory, specifying the conditions under which the research will be carried out and the ownership clauses for the results obtained by the doctoral student. The doctoral student's work is eligible for the Research Tax Credit (CIR) under the same criteria applicable to any researcher working in a company.

There are no nationality or age requirements for the doctoral student.

The CIFRE scheme guarantees the smooth running of the thesis programme under satisfactory financial conditions for the doctoral student (more than 98% of doctoral students, all disciplines combined, defend their thesis).

Since 1981, 26,450 doctoral students, 9,000 companies and 4,000 research teams have benefited from the CIFRE scheme in a wide range of sectors and scientific fields.

Lifelong learning

Companies participate in professional integration, in the framework of lifelong learning, in two ways:

▶ The professionalisation contract is an employment contract entered into by an employer and an employee. It enables the acquisition – within the framework of continuing vocational training – of a **professional qualification** (degree, qualification, professional qualification certificate, etc.) that is **recognised by the State and/or a sector of industry.** The objective is the professional integration or return to employment of young people and adults.

On the beneficiary side

▶ Young people aged between 16 and 25, to enable the completion of their initial training;

▶ Job seekers aged 26 and over;

▶ Beneficiaries of certain public aid schemes;

The purpose of the professionalisation contract is to enable learners to get a recognised professional qualification:

▶ A professional diploma or professional qualification listed in the French National Register of Vocational Qualifications – RNCP;

▶ A professional qualification certificate (CQP) awarded by a sector of industry or an inter-sector body;

▶ A qualification recognised in the classifications of a national collective agreement.

*Since 2006, associations, local authorities or chambers of trade, commerce or craft industries acting within the framework of a public and societal action have been eligible for this scheme.

On an experimental basis for a three-year period, the contract may define a "tailor-made" training pathway that will not necessarily lead to a qualification or certificate (and therefore not be registered in the RNCP or in a specific register).

The flexibility of this contract should enable people excluded from the labour market to gain access to tailor-made training programmes that are better adapted to their needs. It will also enable companies to recruit employees who, from the outset, will be specially trained to meet the company's real, practical needs.

This experiment will be evaluated by a national monitoring committee involving the State, representatives of social partners and certain competency-oriented operators. The committee will meet at least once a year.

All employers governed by private or public law participating in the financing of continuing vocational training, are concerned, with the exception of the State, local authorities and their public institutions of an administrative nature.

What kind of employment contracts and working conditions apply to the professionalisation contract?

Employment contract: Professionalisation contracts can be entered into in the context of fixed-term or permanent employment contracts.

Fixed-term contracts must be entered into for terms of between 6 and 12 months. Longer terms may be specifically offered to members of certain categories facing the greatest difficulties in finding a job.

Hosting of employees on professionalisation contracts by several companies

Professionalisation contracts may include periods in which contract-holders acquire expertise in several different companies. Agreements can be entered into for this purpose between employers, host companies and employees holding professionalisation contracts. The content of the agreement and the arrangements for hosting the beneficiaries are laid down in Articles D.6325-30 to D.6323-32 of the French Labour Code.

Professionalisation contracts may include periods spent working abroad, typically for a maximum period of one year.

The duration of a contract carried out abroad can be extended to 24 months with 6 months of compulsory presence in France.

In a mobility situation, the host company or training organisation is solely responsible for the conditions in which the work is performed, as determined by the legal and contractual provisions in force in the host country.

Work Experience Period (Période de Mise en Situation en Milieu Professionnel – PMSMP) – Immersion period

This procedure allows employees to spend time with other employers in order to develop their experience and expertise, and enables job seekers to reacquaint themselves with the professional working environment.

This type of placement can be used to facilitate career changes, in the framework of lifelong learning procedures.

The training programme must be approved by Pôle Emploi (French public employment agency) as part of the job seeker's personalised employment-access plan.

80

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

81

BLOCKS OF COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATION BRIDGING PROCEDURES

The Law of 2002, by introducing the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), by establishing it as a right, and by creating a direct link with the qualifications entered in the RNCP, led to the rewriting of professional qualifications, which gave rise to discussions, followed by changes in the description of qualifications.

Contractual agreements had developed over time between certifying bodies (including between universities and sectors of industry), which created bridging solutions within initial and continuing vocational training programmes.

In the meantime, the way to express and to write qualifications had prompted proposals to present them in the form of competency units called "blocs de compétences".

This method of presentation was formally authorised by law in 2014 and led to projects that were considered sufficiently beneficial to be made general rules in the Law of 2018.

Since then, competency blocks can be considered as units of qualifications, which can be expressed in terms of learning outcomes and validated on the basis of their identification with regard to the activities that they enable learners to master.

EXAMPLE

SAMPLE PRESENTATION OF A QUALIFICATION PRESENTED IN TERMS OF COMPETENCY BLOCKS

Project manager information system Level 7

Unit 1: Carry out technological and business monitoring
- Identify technological and business developments
- Take account of feedback from the main types of projects
- Write an advisability study/feasibility study

Unit 2: Prepare for a project launch
- Characterise the context for a project launch
- Develop the project organisation system
- Organise the kick-off meeting
- Devise and draft the founding documentation

Unit 3: Plan project processes
- Draft the expression of customer needs, requirements and specifications (General Functional)
- Plan activities, human resources and costs
- Identify and measure risks and the corresponding action plan
- Plan communications
- Plan the project quality requirements
- Set up and operate the project decision-making bodies

Unit 4: Implement the project and monitor all its dimensions
- Specify the content
- Manage quality/carry out tests
- Define the IS Security process
- Train the project team
- Manage the project team
- Manage customer relations
- Select suppliers

Unit 5: Ensure the finalisation of the project and the performance of the overall assessment
- Guarantee the integration of the different elements and modules
- Manage the customer acceptance process
- Draw up and exploit the project review
- Manage the production or launch process

These units are required for the following activities

Target activities:
- "Information System Project Managers" may operate in any type of company. They are responsible for ensuring the success of IS projects (primarily digital, IT or multimedia) of a highly cross-functional nature (in terms of the structures and business lines impacted).

  In terms of their main activities, they carry out technological and business monitoring, which enables them to make proposals for new project launches in line with corporate strategy. They make preparations to avoid wasting time upon the launch of selected projects, define the planning of project processes, manage the technical implementation of projects, and carry out overall project reviews.

THEY PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FOLLOWING COMPETENCIES

Assessed competencies:
- Identify developments
- Take account of feedback from the main types of projects
- Write an advisability study/feasibility study
- Characterise the context for a project launch
- Develop the project organisation system
- Organising the kick-off meeting
- Devise and draft the founding documentation
- Draft the expression of customer needs, requirements and specifications
- Plan activities, human resources and costs
- Identify and measure risks and the corresponding action plan
- Plan communications
- Plan the project quality requirements
- Set up and operate the project decision-making bodies
- Specify the content managing quality/carrying out tests
- Define the IS Security process
- Train the project team
- Manage the project team
- Manage customer relations
- Select suppliers
- Guarantee the integration of the different elements and modules
- Manage the customer acceptance process
- Draw up and exploit the project review
- Manage the production or launch process

The units have several objectives:
- Enabling the staggering of a training pathway leading to certification according to an individual's needs. Assessing competency blocks enables the clear identification of all their learning outcomes;
- Making qualifications clearer and easier to understand, by establishing a rule for the construction of their constituent units, expressed in the form of learning outcomes;
- Facilitating the recognition of prior learning (RPL), which improves the identification of candidates' shortcomings, and enables the proposal of any remedial solutions that may be required;
- Leading to the eventual creation of bridging solutions between qualifications. These bridging solutions will be created by identifying units that are comparable – in terms of their learning outcomes – for several qualifications, irrespective of whether they are issued by the same certifying authority.

This last function of competency blocks is a consequence of changes impacting the labour market, on which most stakeholders have observed greater openness between professions. These stakeholders sometimes operate in different economic sectors, characterised by a multitude of more cross-disciplinary professional pathways, and requiring changes to certification pathways.

The work carried out to date on the recognition of units proposed by two certifying bodies has mainly concerned qualifications required for the exercise of an identical profession. For example, this applies to qualifications in the cleaning sector, for a qualification recognised by the sector – Professional Qualification Certificate (CQP) – and a qualification approved by the Ministry of Employment. This recognition was formalised by a government order in 2017.

82

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

83

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Block relating to the professional title of cleaner

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION CERTIFICATES (CQP) of the professional branch of cleaning (ministerial order of 17 March 2017 about registration in the RNCP)	PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE LABOUR MINISTRY Cleaner (present ministeriel order)
CQP cleaning machinist and CQP maintenance and renovation	Professional qualification of the Labour ministry for cleaner
CQP cleaning machinist	CCP1 – Clean manually
CQP maintenance and renovation officer	CCP2 – Clean or restore mechanically

More recently, in the retail watch and jewellery sector, efforts have been made to enable the recognition of equivalence between industry qualifications – CQP – and chambers of trade and industry qualifications. For one of the qualifications, (watch and jewellery sales adviser), this work has led not only to recognition of the equivalence of competency units, but also to the mutual recognition of the entire qualification, via an equivalence agreement. In addition, a bridging solution has been established between the watch and jewellery store manager CQP (sector qualification) and the distribution manager qualification listed in the RNCP (level 6), which requires candidates to obtain, in addition to the CQP, one of the competency units included in the RNCP-listed qualification (the unit entitled "Managing a team").
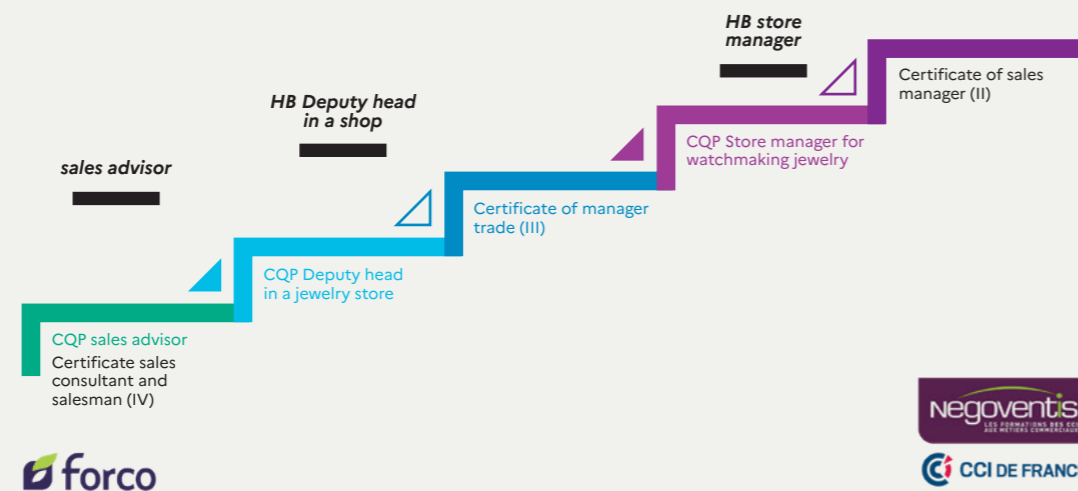
Describing university degrees in terms of competency units has also led to the recognition of students cross-disciplinary competences in degrees of an equivalent level.

However, the identification and recognition of units common to several qualifications has other medium-term objectives:

▸ In the framework of lifelong learning: to enable individuals to develop less linear career pathways;

▸ In the framework of initial vocational training: to provide greater opportunities to change career.

These schemes are developed over the long term since the implementation of common competency blocks presupposes the prior revamping of the qualification-building process.

This process is underway for a number of certifying bodies, particularly within sectors of industry.

Less than two years after the implementation of the law, there has been insufficient time for certifying bodies to sign agreements on the pooling of competency blocks that are officially registered in the RNCP, which is itself quite a long process, assuming the need to consult with the social partners in the majority of cases, according to different procedures depending on the nature of the certifying body.

Finally, it should be noted that the law permits qualifications from the Specific Register (Répertoire spécifique – RS) that registers specific competencies, without a given level, to become competency blocks of qualifications listed in the National Register (Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles – RNCP), by agreement between certifying bodies.

To this end, the information system, which identifies each competency block enables the transfer of qualifications registered in the RS to the RNCP.

EXAMPLE OF A QUALIFICATION REGISTERED UNDER THE SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURE: AQUAPONIC WORKER

(Extract from RNCP 34622) www.francecompetences.fr/recherche/rncp/34622/)

This occupation is considered one of the emerging or profoundly evolving professions, after analysis by the Scientific Council and publication of the list of the professions concerned.

Objectives and context of the qualification

Aquaponics (a contraction of the words AQUAculture and hydroPONICS) is a technique that combines plant cultivation and fish farming to produce healthy human food in an economical and environmentally friendly manner. It consists in an above-ground agro-ecological system based on the recirculation of water between fish-farming and plant-cultivation compartments, which brings bacteria and micro-organisms into play. It is a production principle based on the idea of facilitating the establishment of the most complete ecosystem possible in order to provide food for human consumption. This technique is adaptable to almost all climatic and spatial conditions, and can even be used in city centres. Aquaponics offers the following advantages:

▸ Water savings: 80 to 90% savings on water compared to traditional cultivation in open ground;

▸ "Clean" crops for healthy food: no use of pesticides and no toxicity risks for producers, consumers and the environment;

▸ Higher yields and productivity than conventional field crops:

  ▸ Energy-efficient above-ground production;

  ▸ Systems can be set up anywhere (basements, industrial wastelands, urban and rural areas);

  ▸ Dual fish and vegetable production (dual income) and symbiotic production: the waste from fish farming becomes plant food.

Aquaponics is a booming industry worldwide, especially in the USA, Australia and Asia. Many aquaponic installation projects have also been launched in Europe in recent years, particularly in France. This rapid growth is consistent with sustainable development principles and, for efficient production, requires the certified competencies of professionals trained in aquaponic techniques.

Target activities

Aquaponic workers, with employee status, are employed by companies (aquaponic farms or other enterprises) under the responsibility of the company manager and/or an aquaponic technician.

Their work takes place outdoors, in greenhouses or inside buildings that are specially equipped for aquaponic production.

Aquaponic workers perform all manual tasks related to dual aquaponic production: plant production and aquatic livestock production. They may participate in the installation of aquaponic systems in conjunction with their managers.

They ensure the upkeep and maintenance of the systems in conjunction with their managers. They may be required to inform a client about the principles of aquaponics. They report to their superior on the work carried out, any difficulties encountered, and also report any malfunctions.
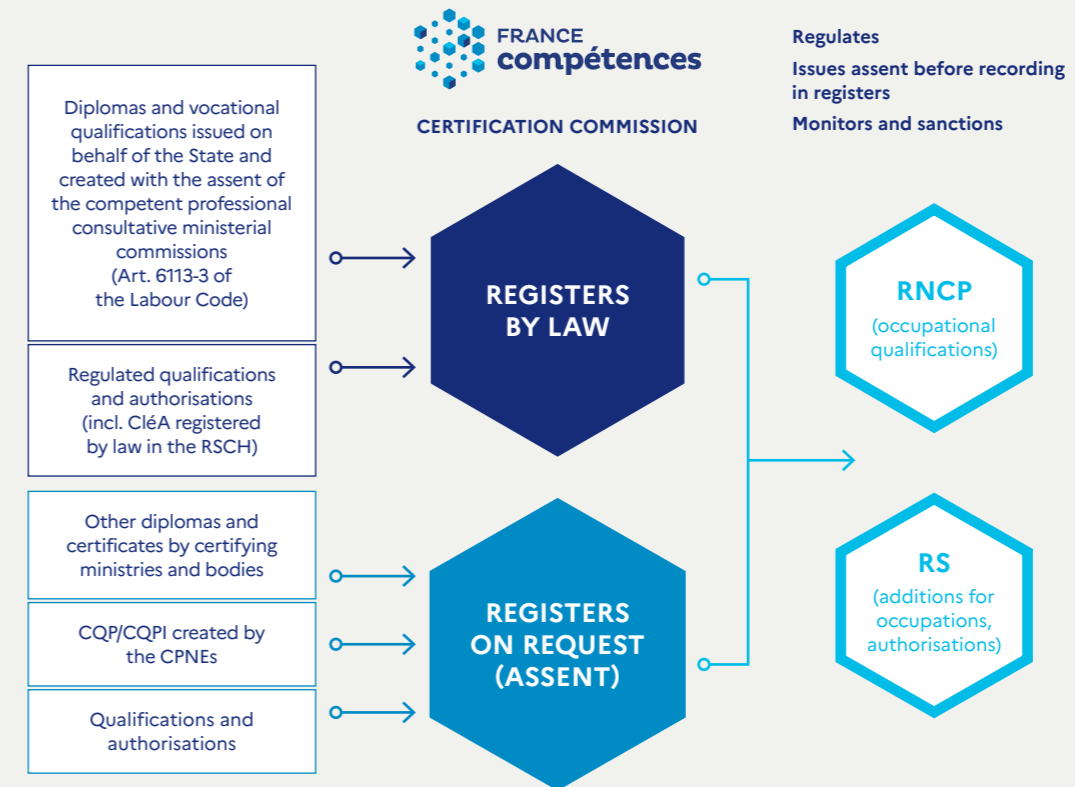
All of their activities comply with the principles of sustainable development.

84

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

85

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

EXAMPLE
OF A
QUALIFICATION
REGISTERED
UNDER
THE SIMPLIFIED
PROCEDURE:
AQUAPONIC
WORKER

Assessed competencies

▸ **C1** Present aquaponics in a simple and positive way by describing the specificities and characteristics of this dual production system in order to make the concept of aquaponics accessible to any audience by adapting the professional discourse.

▸ **C2** Under the supervision of a manager, ensure the performance of all operational actions related to the day-to-day management of the technological aspects of an aquaponic installation by carrying out the appropriate inspections and analyses in order to guarantee the optimum operation and development of the activity.

▸ **C3** Under the supervision of a manager, ensure the upkeep and maintenance of an aquaponic installation by identifying the causes of malfunctions and implementing problem-solving measures in order to maintain the system in good working order.

▸ **C4** Under the supervision of a manager, perform all operational actions related to the management and optimisation of inputs into an aquaponic system, by integrating alternatives that are consistent with sustainable development principles in order to limit the economic and environmental impacts of production.

▸ **C5** Under the supervision of a manager, perform all operational actions related to the management and optimisation of waste from aquaponic production in order to optimise its reuse: conventional composting and worm composting, sludge mineralisation, etc. by implementing the appropriate techniques.

▸ **C6** Carry out all operational procedures specific to the aquaponic cultivation of plants in greenhouses or outdoors, adapted according to the type of plant production, by taking account of different biological needs and technical constraints in order to maximise plant production while facilitating the work.

▸ **C7** Ensure, under the monitoring of a supervisor, all operational actions related to satisfying the nutritional needs of plants and managing diseases or parasites, while prioritising the use of environmentally friendly methods in order to guarantee healthy, qualitative and profitable plant production.

▸ **C8** Harvest and package plant products by implementing best practices in order to guarantee their quality and meet customers' orders.

▸ **C9** Carry out all operational procedures specific to the raising of aquatic livestock, adapted according to the type of aquatic livestock produced, by taking account of different biological needs and technical constraints in order to maximise production while facilitating the work.

▸ **C10** Ensure, under the monitoring of a supervisor, all operational actions related to the management of diseases or parasites, while prioritising the use of environmentally friendly methods in order to guarantee healthy, qualitative and profitable production.

▸ **C11** Prepare, process and package animal products by implementing best livestock health and well-being practices in order to guarantee quality and meet customers' orders.

REGISTRATION IN THE RNCP

FRANCE compétences

CERTIFICATION COMMISSION

Regulates

Issues assent before recording in registers

Monitors and sanctions

Diplomas and vocational qualifications issued on behalf of the State and created with the assent of the competent professional consultative ministerial commissions
(Art. 6113-3 of the Labour Code)

Regulated qualifications and authorisations (incl. CléA registered by law in the RSCH)

Other diplomas and certificates by certifying ministries and bodies

CQP/CQPI created by the CPNEs

Qualifications and authorisations

REGISTERS BY LAW

REGISTERS ON REQUEST (ASSENT)

RNCP (occupational qualifications)

RS (additions for occupations, authorisations)

Where appropriate, arrange for joint national employment commissions of sectors of industry to be involved in the drafting or approval of reference frameworks.

Legal basis

Decree 2018-1172 of 18 December 2018 relating to the conditions for the registration of professional qualifications, certificates and certifications in national registers "Chapter 3 'VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATION', Section 1 'Vocational Certification Commission'". Art. R. 6113-1. I. - The France compétences commission in charge of vocational certification, provided for in Article L. 6113-6, is called the "Vocational Certification Commission" (Commission de la certification professionnelle). In addition to its Chair, it is composed of the following members, appointed for a five-year term by order of the Minister responsible for vocational training: "1 Eight representatives of the State, respectively appointed by the Minister for Vocational Training, the Minister for National Education, the Minister for Higher Education, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Sport, the Minister for Agriculture, the Minister for Social Affairs and the Minister for Culture; 2 "Two representatives of Regional Councils or Overseas Deliberative Assemblies exercising the powers devolved to Regional Councils in the vocational training sector, appointed by the Minister for Vocational Training, as proposed by the Association des régions de France (Association of French Regions); 3 One representative of each representative trade union organisation of employees at the national and interprofessional level, as proposed by their respective organisations; 4 One representative of each representative professional employers' organisation at the national and interprofessional level, as proposed by their respective organisation." II. - The following participate in the debates, without voting rights: "1 At the request of the Ministers concerned, a representative of the Minister for the Economy, a representative of the Minister for Sustainable Development, a representative of the Minister for Labour, a representative of the Minister for Youth, and a representative of the Minister for Defence; 2 The rapporteurs to the Commission, on applications for registration provided for in II of Article L. 6113-5 and in Article L. 6113-6, of the draft applications provided for in Article L. 6113-7, and of the draft annual list of professions considered to be changing particularly significantly or emerging, provided for in Article R. 6113-12; Art. R. 6113-5. – The Commission shall draw up its rules of procedure, which shall in particular specify the rules for preventing conflicts of interest. This regulation is applicable after its approval by the France compétences Administrative Board. Art. R. 6113-6. – The Commission shall meet when convened by its Chair, who shall draw up its annual work programme and set the agenda for each meeting. The Chair may request, as necessary, the opinion or expertise of public authorities for the assessment of the criteria for examining applications for registration in the national registers set out in Articles R. 6113-9 and R. 6113-11.

86

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

87

Art. R. 6113-7. – In the exercise of its missions defined in Articles L. 6113-4 to L. 6113-8, the Commission: 1 Contributes to the harmonisation of the terminology used by departments and certifying bodies for the titles of vocational qualifications, the activities they cover and the competencies that they certify; 2 Ensures the quality of information, intended for individuals and companies, on professional qualifications and qualifications and authorisations registered in national registers, and on qualifications recognised in the Member States of the European Union or parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area and ensures, in particular, that the reference standards for vocational qualifications registered in the French National Register of Vocational Qualifications are accessible to the public; 3 Contributes to international projects on the quality of qualifications; 4 May examine any question relating to professional qualifications referred by ministries and joint national employment commissions of sectors of industry. "In carrying out its tasks, the Commission shall take into account the work of the regional, national and international employment and qualification observatories, the French Centre for Studies and Research on Qualifications (CEREQ) and the prospective observatories on professions and qualifications established by the joint national employment commissions of sectors of industry. It may ask the France compétences Administrative Board to implement any measures it deems necessary for the evaluation of vocational certification policy.

Registration by law: (extract from the decree of 4 January 2019)

In order to enable the registration of a degree or qualification for professional purposes in the French National Register of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP) under the conditions provided for in I of Article L. 6113-5 of the Labour Code, the certifying Ministries shall transmit: 1 Information enabling the exhaustive completion of the information sheet on the degree or professional qualification to be published in the French National Register of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP), in particular the duration of registration, the level of qualification, the field of activity and the breakdown of the certification into competency units as defined by the fourth paragraph of Article L. 6113-1 of the French Labour Code, and, where applicable, the consistencies with other professional qualifications and their competency units; 2 Where applicable, the opinion issued by the competent professional consultative commission; 3 The reference standards for the degree or professional qualification, as defined by the second paragraph of Article L. 6113-1 of the French Labour Code and any other document constituting the diploma or professional qualification.

Registration on request

▶ To enable the registration of a degree or qualification for professional purposes in the French National Register of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP) under the conditions provided for in I of Article L. 6113-5 of the Labour Code, the certifying Ministries shall transmit: 1 Information enabling the exhaustive completion of the information sheet on the degree or professional qualification to be published in the French National Register of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP), in particular the duration of registration, the level of qualification, the field of activity and the breakdown of the certification into competency units as defined by the fourth paragraph of Article L. 6113-1 of the French Labour Code, and, where applicable, consistencies with other vocational qualifications and their competency units;

▶ Elements enabling the examination of the vocational certification project in light of the registration criteria set out in Articles R. 6113-9 and R. 6113-10 of the French Labour Code, as well as the desired level of qualification and registration period; 3 The reference standards for the vocational certification project, as defined by the second paragraph of Article L. 6113-1 of the Labour Code and any other document constituting the vocational qualification; 4 For a certifying body, as defined by Article L. 6113-2 of the Labour Code, Bulletin no. 3 of the criminal record, dated within the last three months, of persons holding, in law or in fact, management or administrative functions in this body, in order to ensure compliance with the condition of professional good character laid down in Article L. 6113-8 of the Labour Code; 5 For a vocational qualification certificate, documents attesting to the creation of the vocational qualification certificate by one or more joint national employment commissions of a sector of industry as well as the identification of the legal person holding the intellectual property rights; 6 Where appropriate, authorisations issued to bodies in order to prepare for the delivery of vocational qualifications or to organise examination sessions on behalf of the Ministry or the certifying body.

EXAMPLES OF THE RECONCILIATION OF FRENCH QUALIFICATION LEVELS WITH THE EQF

EXAMPLES

TWO EXAMPLES WERE CHOSEN WITH TWO DIFFERENT METHODOLOGIES.

AN EXAMPLE OF A QUALIFICATION LISTED IN THE RNCP, DERIVED FROM AN INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATION, AND A RECONCILIATION OF LEVELS FOR ANOTHER QUALIFICATION.

Example of French qualifications based on "international qualifications": football

International qualifications in football are established via an agreement known as the UEFA Coaching Convention, which sets out the rights and obligations of UEFA and the parties to the Convention regarding UEFA coaching qualifications at all levels of football and futsal (indoor football).

UEFA (Union of European Football Associations), brings together and represents the national football federations. UEFA chairs the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for professional football, created on 1 July 2008.

The French Football Federation (FFF) is a signatory member of the UEFA Coaching Convention. The purpose of the FFF is to develop and monitor the coaching, practice and organisation of all forms of football in France.

The UEFA Coaching Convention

The conditions and content of UEFA's qualifications are defined in the UEFA Coaching Convention. The agreement lays down minimum requirements for trainers of coaches, admission criteria, organisation, duration, content, learning methods, course completion and the awarding of diplomas, further training, and the validity of UEFA diplomas for all UEFA-approved courses.

The professional football sector is based on qualifications that comply with UEFA standards but also conform to French laws and regulations: those laid down in the Sports Code (Code du sport) and those concerning procedures for registration in the French national framework (RNCP). The standardised format of the UEFA (parchment) diploma mentions the titles of the national football association diploma and of the UEFA diploma.

UEFA diplomas entitle their holders to practise professionally at a level defined by each party to the Convention on its own territory. Responsibility for the assessment of national levels is left to each States.

Table of the architecture of football qualifications

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE	UEFA		FEDERAL CERTIFICATIONS	
Coaches of professional players and national team selectors	UEFA Pro diploma		BEPF Professional Football Coaching certificate	Professional qualification of the FFF LEVEL 6 FRENCH AND EQF
Coaches of Training Centres or Hope Centres	UEFA Elite Youth A diploma		BEFF Coach Trainer's certificate	Professional qualification of the FFF LEVEL 6 FRENCH AND EQF
Coaches of the highest regional and national youth level	UEFA A diploma		BEF Football Coach's certificate	Professional qualification of the FFF LEVEL 5 FRENCH AND EQF
Amateur football coaches (all ages)	diploma		BFM Football instructor's certificate	Professional qualification of the FFF LEVEL 4 FRENCH AND EQF

Professional football qualifications registered in the French national framework (RNCP) are recognised at three levels: Federal, State, and UEFA.

French legislation allows for the establishment of a formal link between the European Qualifications Framework, the National Qualifications Framework and the international qualifications introduced by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA).

EXAMPLES OF THE RECONCILIATION OF FRENCH QUALIFICATION LEVELS WITH THE EQF

Method of referencing professional football qualifications with the national and European frameworks

The EQF professional credentials are built on learning outcomes, as defined in the EQF Recommendation, i.e. on what the learner knows, understands and is able to accomplish at the end of a learning process.

The referencing was carried out by analysing all reference standards in the football sector and the three categories of descriptors, those of the national framework and those of the EQF.

To ensure the clarity of the referencing method, the presentation below only covers the "Brevet d'entraineur professionnel de football" (BEPF) qualification (Professional Football Coaching Certificate). The exercise consisted in identifying the main learning outcomes related to the three descriptors of the two frameworks. In the national framework, learning outcomes are contextualised in an identified profession.

	PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES (non-exhaustive list)	KNOWLEDGE	NQF DESCRIPTOR 6	EQF 6 DESCRIPTOR 6
UC 1: Lead the sporting project of a professional football club	Design Manage Regulate the sporting project of a professional football club	▸ Incorporate the sporting project into the general policy of the club or national federation ▸ Develop a policy defining needs and recruitment requirements in line with the professional club's capabilities and objectives ▸ Build high-level performance analysis tools ▸ Master the legal and regulatory framework of a professional football club ▸ Know the financial and administrative rules to be respected in the management department. ▸ Commit actively to the prevention of addictive behaviours (doping)	Typology and status of sports stakeholders: FFF, elected representatives, administrators, professional players, referees, coaches, sports agents, medical staff, trade unions, international bodies (FIFA, UEFA) Legal environment of the activity (institutional, legislative, regulatory, contractual): labour law, HR management, liability and insurance, licences, contracts (sponsoring contracts, sponsorship, player transfers, audio-visual rights) Basis of accounting: provisional budget, balance sheet Project methodology Management techniques Biomechanics, traumatology, physiology Theories and protocols related to the safety and well-being of practitioners: principles of adaptation and recovery of the body to effort; anti-doping rules and methods for detecting addictive and deviant behaviour; first aid, safety standards related to the practice of football and its environment The Laws of the Game and their application to high-level competition Coaching pedagogy: conducting training sessions; physical, tactical, technical and mental preparation Functional performance analysis IT and digital technologies Video editing Communication techniques (written, oral) Foreign language (written, oral) Maintenance technique Marketing techniques Coaching in competition Group dynamics Conflict management Change management Intercultural management Ethical principles Tacit knowledge resulting from experience or action	Advanced knowledge in a professional field Critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills in a field of work or study requiring a critical understanding of theories and principles
UC 2: Safely manage the training system of the first team in a professional football club	Organise Lead Adapt the training system of a professional club Train the players of a professional club to achieve high-level performance in football	▸ Master all the knowledge required to devise high-level training sessions ▸ Design specific tools for the coach's use ▸ Evaluate the training system ▸ Manage training loads: effort/recovery, training/competition ▸ Formalise a didactic and pedagogical approach adapted to high-level sport ▸ Use specific software to propose training content			
UC 3: Manage the first team of a professional football club in competition	Lead the first team of a professional football club Manage the first team of a professional football club in competition Evaluate the performance of a first team Optimise the performance capabilities of a professional club's first team	▸ Ensure that one's team adopts the most competitive playing system ▸ Analyse an international competition and the evolution of the high-level game ▸ Strategically prepare the first team of a pro club to face a particular opponent (specific game, key issues, environment) ▸ Create a video montage that can optimise the first team's collective performance ▸ Organise (with the recruitment unit) the observation of players whose profile is compatible with the sporting project ▸ Analyse the team's performance using computer programmes			
UC 4: Manage a professional football club	Manage the players, the first team and the different groups of staff in a professional club Interact with the different stakeholders in a professional club Successfully manage the stress generated by football competitions Manage one's communication with the environment and various media	▸ Manage the different sportsmen and women and groups of participants in the life of a pro club ▸ Organise human resources by taking account of competencies and needs ▸ Discuss objectively with managers (projects, results, progression, prospects) ▸ Communicate via all the media involved in a professional club ▸ Conduct public relations activities ▸ Actively participate in communication activities produced by the club or national federation (TV, internet, forums) ▸ Master a foreign language ▸ Manage crises and conflicts			

90
UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA
91

EXAMPLES OF THE RECONCILIATION OF FRENCH QUALIFICATION LEVELS WITH THE EQF

Know-how

	PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES (non-exhaustive list)	EXPERTISE	NQF DESCRIPTOR 6	EQF 6 DESCRIPTOR 6
UC 1: Lead the sporting project of a professional football club	Design Manage Regulate the sporting project of a professional football club	▸ Incorporate the sporting project into the general policy of the club or national federation ▸ Develop a policy defining needs and recruitment requirements in line with the professional club's capabilities and objectives ▸ Build high-level performance analysis tools ▸ Master the legal and regulatory framework of a professional football club ▸ Know the financial and administrative rules to be respected in the management department. ▸ Commit actively to the prevention of addictive behaviours (doping)	Be able to: ▸ Formalise the strategy of the action plan for the sporting project ▸ Integrate all the legal, economic, political and cultural issues related to this type of project ▸ Measure the financial, social and environmental impacts of project decisions ▸ Define strategic development objectives in the short, medium and long term ▸ Recruit players, technical and medical staff in a responsible manner ▸ Manage the physical and mental preparation of the players in complete safety ▸ Programme training plans with varied objectives ▸ Conduct training sessions focused on the attainment of high-level performance ▸ Conduct a training session according to the identified game plan ▸ Adjust the training system according to the performance results ▸ Design activity indicators, and individual and collective performance assessment indicators ▸ Analyse athletes'/teams' performance using innovative technologies or tools such as sport code ▸ Conduct assessment interviews ▸ Take action upon the appearance of divergent behaviour (nutrition, over-training, doping, discrimination) ▸ Identify types of injuries and administer first aid ▸ Evaluate the quality of coaching in a high-level competition situation ▸ Use video editing to analyse different game phases in high-level competition ▸ Monitor performance in competition and define any remedial measures required. ▸ Express oneself in public (written press, radio, tv) in different situations ▸ Express oneself using different communication tools ▸ Regulate interpersonal relations ▸ Deal with stakeholders in a responsible manner ▸ Manage the social cohesion of a group ▸ Use tacit knowledge resulting from experience or action	Analyse and solve complex unforeseen problems in a specific area Identify solutions and defend them Collaborate with experts. Build up and formalise expertise and methods	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study
UC 2: Safely manage the training system of the first team in a professional football club	Organise Lead Adapt the training system of a professional club Train the players of a professional club to achieve high-level performance in football	▸ Master all the knowledge required to devise high-level training sessions ▸ Design specific tools for the coach's use ▸ Evaluate the training system ▸ Manage training loads: effort/recovery, training/competition ▸ Formalise a didactic and pedagogical approach adapted to high-level sport ▸ Use specific software to propose training content			
UC 3: Manage the first team of a professional football club in competition	Lead the first team of a professional football club Manage the first team of a professional football club in competition Evaluate the performance of a first team Optimise the performance capabilities of a professional club's first team	▸ Ensure that one's team adopts the most competitive playing system ▸ Analyse an international competition and the evolution of the high-level game ▸ Strategically prepare the first team of a pro club to face a particular opponent (specific game, key issues, environment) ▸ Create a video montage that can optimise the first team's collective performance ▸ Organise (with the recruitment unit) the observation of players whose profile is compatible with the sporting project ▸ Analyse the team's performance using computer programmes			
UC 4: Manage a professional football club	Manage the players, the first team and the different groups of staff in a professional club Interact with the different stakeholders in a professional club Successfully manage the stress generated by football competitions Manage one's communication with the environment and various media	▸ Manage the different sportsmen and women and groups of participants in the life of a pro club ▸ Organise human resources by taking account of competencies and needs ▸ Discuss objectively with managers (projects, results, progression, prospects) ▸ Communicate via all the media involved in a professional club ▸ Conduct public relations activities ▸ Actively participate in communication activities produced by the club or national federation (TV, internet, forums) ▸ Master a foreign language ▸ Manage crises and conflicts			

92

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

93

EXAMPLES OF THE RECONCILIATION OF FRENCH QUALIFICATION LEVELS WITH THE EQF

Responsability and autonomy

	PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	LEARNING OUTCOMES (non-exhaustive list)	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY	NQF DESCRIPTOR 6	EQF 6 DESCRIPTOR 6
UC 1: Lead the sporting project of a professional football club	Design Manage Regulate the sporting project of a professional football club	▸ Incorporate the sporting project into the general policy of the club or national federation ▸ Develop a policy defining needs and recruitment requirements in line with the professional club's capabilities and objectives ▸ Build high-level performance analysis tools ▸ Master the legal and regulatory framework of a professional football club ▸ Know the financial and administrative rules to be respected in the management department. ▸ Commit actively to the prevention of addictive behaviours (doping)	Mobilises competencies enabling the design, mastery, diagnosis, and technical, procedural and decision-making control of a professional activity involving decision-making in multiple fields (financial, human, legal, medical) **Level of responsibility** ▸ Takes responsibility in the budget estimates prepared in the performance of tasks ▸ Has delegated authority concerning personnel policy and representation in dealings with external partners **Degree of autonomy** ▸ Initiates, designs, develops and controls all segments of the professional club's sporting project. ▸ Sets the goals and targets to be achieved	Organise one's work in complex and changing environments Design and organise work processes Develop the individual and collective skills of one's team	Manage unpredictable complex technical or professional activities, or projects requiring a new strategic approach Take responsibility in order to contribute to professional practices and knowledge, and/or to review the strategic results of teams
UC 2: Safely manage the training system of the first team in a professional football club	Organise Lead Adapt the training system of a professional club Train the players of a professional club to achieve high-level performance in football	▸ Master all the knowledge required to devise high-level training sessions ▸ Design specific tools for the coach's use ▸ Evaluate the training system ▸ Manage training loads: effort/recovery, training/competition ▸ Formalise a didactic and pedagogical approach adapted to high-level sport ▸ Use specific software to propose training content			
UC 3: Manage the first team of a professional football club in competition	Lead the first team of a professional football club Manage the first team of a professional football club in competition Evaluate the performance of a first team Optimise the performance capabilities of a professional club's first team	▸ Ensure that one's team adopts the most competitive playing system ▸ Analyse an international competition and the evolution of the high-level game ▸ Strategically prepare the first team of a pro club to face a particular opponent (specific game, key issues, environment) ▸ Create a video montage that can optimise the first team's collective performance ▸ Organise (with the recruitment unit) the observation of players whose profile is compatible with the sporting project ▸ Analyse the team's performance using computer programmes			
UC 4: Manage a professional football club	Manage the players, the first team and the different groups of staff in a professional club Interact with the different stakeholders in a professional club Successfully manage the stress generated by football competitions Manage one's communication with the environment and various media	▸ Manage the different sportsmen and women and groups of participants in the life of a pro club ▸ Organise human resources by taking account of competencies and needs ▸ Discuss objectively with managers (projects, results, progression, prospects) ▸ Communicate via all the media involved in a professional club ▸ Conduct public relations activities ▸ Actively participate in communication activities produced by the club or national federation (TV, internet, forums) ▸ Master a foreign language ▸ Manage crises and conflicts			

94

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

95

**EXAMPLES
OF THE
RECONCILIATION
OF FRENCH
QUALIFICATION
LEVELS WITH
THE EQF**

MASTER BAKER CERTIFICATE LEVEL 5 – ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO EQF LEVEL 5 DESCRIPTORS

Competencies have been selected and matched to Level 5 descriptors.

EQF Level 5 Descriptors: colour-coded

Detailed, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge in a field of work or study, and awareness of the limits of this knowledge;

Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge;

Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change. Review and develop performance of self and others.

**COMPETENCY UNIT 1
Prepare, organise and supervise the production of bakery products:**

▸ Plan and select the resources required for the production of bakery products;
▸ Organise purchases;
▸ Organise and manage stocks;
▸ Define a process for the bakery to enable high-quality production;
▸ Integrate a quality system for production and environmental protection;
▸ Carry out or ensure the routine maintenance and technical maintenance of equipment and premises;
▸ Apply and enforce health and safety rules;
▸ Ensure the hygiene of raw materials;
▸ Guarantee the hygiene of products sold to consumers and local authorities;
▸ Ensure traceability.

**COMPETENCY UNIT 2
Create and produce traditional or innovative bakery products:**

▸ Make, cultivate and use all types of lactic acid or acetic acid pre-fermentation - Make all types of bread:
  ▸ Standard bread;
  ▸ Traditional french bread;
  ▸ Special breads;
  ▸ Regional breads;
  ▸ European breads;
▸ Make all types of traditional and innovative pastries:
  ▸ With leavened dough;
  ▸ With puff pastry;
▸ Make savoury or sweet bakery products based on leavened dough, shortcrust dough, puff pastry, sweet dough, choux pastry;
▸ Make innovative and creative sandwiches;
▸ Make decorations using bread dough, dead dough, piping gels, icing mixture for lettering.

**COMPETENCY UNIT 3
Create and develop a bakery:**

▸ Carry out a business creation, takeover or business development project;
▸ Devise the entrepreneurial project, and the business model for the creation and development of the company;
▸ Identify and activate the financial and administrative support levers (tools & organisations);
▸ Develop a commercial argument, a presentation, and a "storytelling" strategy to defend your project in a manner that is adapted to your audience, e.g. investment bankers, customers, etc.

**COMPETENCY UNIT 4
Market bakery products and services:**

▸ Define the commercial policy of the bakery;
▸ Determine a pricing policy applicable to the bakery's production and services;
▸ Present bakery products to customers and advise them;
▸ Respond to objections and adapt the offering, if necessary;
▸ Design communication tools;
▸ Supervise the bakery's sales and after-sales service;
▸ Conduct a commercial negotiation with a customer or a consumer motivator;
▸ Organise after-sales service and the follow-up of services within the framework of individual orders or services for local authorities;
▸ Develop arguments aimed at employees;
▸ Present your company and your business in English;
▸ Negotiate with a supplier or a customer in a foreign language;
▸ Present your professional projects.

**COMPETENCY UNIT 5
Ensure the financial and economic management of the bakery:**

▸ Draw up the company's financial documentation for external partners (bank, mutual guarantee company, etc.);
▸ Define the company's strategy based on the accounting documents drawn up by the chartered accountant;
▸ Justify and/or explain the company's strategy with reference to the profit and loss accounts and balance sheets for the last few financial years: consequences and reasons for investments made, recruitment, etc.;
▸ Develop a realistic financing plan for the bank, and negotiate a loan, or liquidity facilities for investments;
▸ Identify the company's financial health indicators and use them as an argument in dealings with clients and financiers;
▸ Manage the bakery's profitability on a daily basis;
▸ Establish the break-even point for each type of product, in each product range;
▸ Monitor the value and rotation of inventory;
▸ Manage customer payment terms, particularly for orders or contracts with local authorities;
▸ Negotiate supplier deadlines.

**COMPETENCY UNIT 6
Manage the bakery's human resources:**

▸ Develop employees' competencies;
▸ Develop the bakery's training plan to integrate technical and regulatory innovations and the personal development of employees;
▸ Provide support for employees during product manufacturing: advise employees on how to improve their "job execution";
▸ Lead the bakery and shop sales teams;
▸ Recruitment: define the profile; write the job description;
▸ Form teams according to the nature of the products; draw up schedules;
▸ Conduct professional interviews (appraisal, target-setting and regulatory interviews, etc.), and periodic reviews;
▸ Analyse employee behaviours and manage employee relations with each other and with customers.

RNCP34454BC07 Recruit, host and train an apprentice or a work-study trainee:

▸ Organise and lead the recruitment of an apprentice or a work-study student;
▸ Decide which candidates have the most suitable profiles (age, qualifications) for the company;
▸ Host young people and organise their apprenticeships according to the qualification reference framework;
▸ Implement the specific provisions of the collective agreement and labour law;
▸ Organise the evaluation sequences for young people in the bakery and transmit them to the apprentice training centre.

96

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

97

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

COMMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

▶

MR Joseph Noesen and MR Sorin Eugen Zaharia

This referencing report is not only an updating, but rather upgrading work, as in its entirety it describes a new approach of education and training in France. In addition to the evolutions since the presentation of the first referencing report in 2010, the law of 5 September 2018 "for the freedom to choose one's professional future" is the impetus for a modified VET system. This new approach, which is described in this report, considers all the sub systems, that is education, higher education and VET.

This transformation also has an influence on the core element of this report, the French qualifications framework as it concerns descriptors as well as the introduction of eight levels. It is nevertheless necessary to stress that despite these evolutions, the report points out that some characteristics remain, for example the certifications of the general education are not part of the qualifications framework and also that the aligned certifications "aim at professional insertion, have an economic dimension and a social utility, and a stated link with the labour market".

Nevertheless, it is necessary to state that the notion of lifelong learning is limited to professional education and training and thus to the qualification framework. It is necessary to ask why measures such as the "civic engagement account" and other measures are implemented without consideration in order to valorise the achieved learning outcomes by an aligned certification. In that line, in contrast with the former report, the alignment on Level 4 of the general baccalauréate because "it constitutes a social indicator of level for the labour market, even without a professional contextualisation" could be a first step consideration on a reflexion towards a broader framework.

Another element which is for me a source of question is the Level 1 of the framework without descriptors. In the field of employability, I wonder if there are no preparation measures for professional integration at this level. This is an approach of progression towards Level 2, which for the time being has no qualification aligned. When considering the choice of professional future for some kind of persons (for instance unskilled workers), it should be taken into account that these first levels may also be a signal to the labour market, as certifications at other levels do.

In addition to the former comments, it seems to me interesting to follow some of the new developments (working areas) launched by the law of 5 September 2018. A to establish a link with both the revised French Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework. As an example, I would quote "the blocks of competencies" which are a core element of the system. If their aim is totally significant for continuing training, using them in the field of employment maybe questionable: are they significant in the field of employment and are there consequences for people with a complete qualification? Another element concerns the adaptation of qualifications to the needs of regions. Though this idea is meaningful, it seems necessary to be sure that the acquired competencies enable their holder to be able to adapt.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the authors of the report to have been able to describe the new landscape of education and training in France and thus to establish a link with both the revised French Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework.

VERIFICATION OF THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKAND THE EQF

▶

Comments by Sorin Eugen Zaharia University Professor, University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest, Director of UNESCO ,Chair of "Engineering for Society"

INTRODUCTION

The qualifications framework of the member states of the European Union has a multi-dimensional purpose. It is a response to a political dimension which is broader than the geopolitics of a sole member state, it meets the economic objectives to support competitiveness, innovation and closer links with the labour market. The framework ensures that its social dimension is sufficient to facilitate mobility, transparency and attractiveness. Its cultural dimension provides the bridge between the diversity of national education systems and qualifications of member states of the European Union.

In my view, the version of December 2020 of the self-evaluation report on the correspondence between the new French national framework and the European qualification framework for lifelong learning (EQF) copes with all these diverse aspects in a most adequate way. It also presents very well the numerous changes within the last ten years, in the fields of education, higher education and lifelong learning. The former report, sent to the Commission in October 2010, described the framework existing since 2002 and how it was integrated in the national system; it specially pointed out the integration of the framework within the systems of training and education, as well as the links with the labour market.

The French education map is vast and diverse. This report is a structured attempt to answer three overarching goals:

The first one aims to present the evolution of the French system since 2010, related to the NQF and particularly the French system in 2020, a harmonised national system, based on quality, clarity, transferability and progression.

The second one is represented by the referencing of the French framework, in conformity with the annex II of the Council recommendation of 22 May 2017.

The third one is focused on higher education in France and its conformity with the descriptors of the European system of higher education.

STRENGTHS POINTS

The report is a well-structured attempt to meet three overarching objectives mentioned above. It is divided into four chapters which describe how the French framework is positioned towards the European one. The first chapter is about the evolution of the French system since 2010, related to the national qualifications framework, the second one focuses on the specific identity of the French education and training system in 2020, its objectives and the activities which were developed to connect the French system to the European modernisation of education, and to the EQF. Chapters 3 and 4 present the referencing of the French NQF to the EQF, in conformity with Annex III of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 and the referencing to the European framework for higher education, the impacts of the implementation of the European qualification framework and of the framework for higher education. The annexes illustrate that the principles defined in the four chapters are expressed through concrete evidence by extracts of the French legislation which regulates important structures for education and training.

VERIFICATION
OF THE
CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN
THE FRENCH
QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORK
AND THE EQF

The report presents a number of strengths that are worth mentioning, such as:

▶ The evolution of the French system of education and training guarantees the successful implementation of the European Education Area by 2025 (communication from the commission to the european parliament, the council, the european economic and social committee and the committee of the regions) com (2020) 625 final.

▶ The French system for education and training is well positioned to develop the employability of young people; the progress registered thanks to the laws of 2014, 2016 and 2018 help this objective. The law of 5 September 2018 creates a greater proximity between VET and the expectation of firms for young people's competencies.

▶ A very high degree of flexibility: the system ensures the continuity of paths for education (especially for the higher education field) and for training for all levels. Pathways are offered between different courses in education and the training system.

▶ Competencies blocks are a very good tool for coherent training courses and for "Validation des Acquis d'Expérience".

▶ The conception of a framework based on learning outcomes.

▶ The introduction of contextualisation of the qualifications for knowledge and skills is a very good point because a competency is always related to a context, at work or for study.

▶ The existence of "France compétences" and of all the devices it created.

▶ The professionalisation of training courses in higher tertiary, with the two following dimensions: acquisition of recognised professional competencies, but also guidance for students during their studies towards their future integration in the labour market.

▶ The adoption of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

▶ A quality assurance policy for qualifications which are aligned in national frameworks or systems and have a correspondence with the European qualification framework (EQF).

▶ A policy to bridge the worlds of education and work.

▶ Good assessment procedures for prior learning.

▶ Annexes which explain the devices that the French training institutions may use to be compliant with the strategies of developing education and training.

▶ Stakeholders were widely associated with the creation and development of the framework.

▶ Consultation the two international experts.

ELEMENTS TO BE FURTHER DEVELOPED AND ADDED TO THE REPORT

I propose the following precisions and added elements for a final version of the report:

▶ A special chapter on the objectives and the methodology adopted for the referencing of the French framework to the EQF; in this chapter, it would be a good practise to present the working group for the report and the steering committee in charge of the approval of the report, which should include the representatives of all the organisations interested in the process.

▶ A more detailed presentation of the French RNCP which is good practice for the European systems.

▶ As in France there are traditions and good practice between the two worlds of education and work, I recommend that the framework be used to contribute to improving the links.

▶ A list of meetings and and consultation with the dates and stakeholders should be added in the report, and if possible, their main message.

▶ An executive summary before the first chapter would be welcome.

Comments on the referencing to the framework for higher education:

▶ Precise the relations between France compétences and the evaluating institutions for higher education for the implementation of the refencing report for higher education.

▶ More developments on the compatibility between the French framework for higher education and the European framework for higher education could bring more added value to the report; there are many elements in chapters I and II which could be elements to check the compatibility with the criteria, and which could be either written again in this part or only in this part.

▶ It would be necessary to present in a clear way the situation of regulated professions, specially for medical studies, and there must be a clear distinction between the two cycles (bachelor and master). In some cases, the end of the curriculum at the bachelor level, as for midwives, and in some cases bachelor and master are linked and the end of the training course is directly at the master level (300 credits) as is the case for general medicine. I recommend there be a clearer presentation of these situation and that a precise indication be given on the final levels.

▶ A clearer explanation of the difference between "bachelor" and "licence" would be welcome; from an outside point of view, as "bachelor" is the translation of "licence" in English, using these terms for two different things could be confusing at the European level.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Overall and in my opinion, this report has achieved its objectives to provide a transparent link between the French system and the European Qualification Framework.

In my view, the report is functional, informative and selects the right information for the potential beneficiaries. This report is also comprehensive with a view to:

▶ Reinforcing the necessary capacities for accreditation and quality assurance.

▶ Making education and training more attractive and relevant for the labour market.

▶ Creating structures for standards and procedures and finally.

▶ Developing a base for futher communication, cooperation and trust between all the educational and training institutions in France and in the EU.

This report increased my understanding of the rich diversity that exists within the system of education and training in France, of dynamic interactions within and between public and private stakeholders, as well as the key policymakers and the numerous institutions and organisations which underpin education and training in France.

All the criteria for the referencing of the French NQF to the EQF were fulfilled and well explained in the report.

I fully support this report where the verification of the compatibility between the French NQF and the EQF is concerned.

6 of January 2021

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

LEVEL(S)	TYPES OF QUALIFICATION
8	**Doctorate** *Qualifications awarded by the ministry of employment ** *Professional Qualification Certificate (CQP) ** *Professional Qualifications **
7	**Master degree** **Diploma of engineer** (master degree) *Qualifications awarded by the ministry of employment ** **Professional Qualification Certificate** (CQP) **Professional Qualifications**
6	**Bachelor** **Bachelor degree** **University Bachelor of Technology** **National diploma in arts** **Qualifications awarded by the ministry of employment** **Professional Qualification Certificate** (CQP) **Professional Qualifications**
5	**Advanced vocational training certificate** **Advanced vocational training certificate in agriculture** **Diploma in crafts** **One of the best workers in France** (MOF) **University technology diploma** **Master craftsman certificate** **Qualifications awarded by the ministry of employment** **Professional Qualification Certificate** (CQP) **Professional Qualifications**
4	**Professional, technical and general baccalaureate** **BMA** **BPJEPS** – Professional brevet for youth, adult education and sports **Higher technical diploma in craftsmanship** **Qualifications awarded by the ministry of employment** **Professional Qualification Certificate** (CQP) **Professional Qualifications**
3	**CAP** – Advanced vocational training certificate diploma of the French National Education ministry **CAPA** – Advanced vocational training certificate in agriculture (Diploma of the French National Agriculture ministry) **CPJEPS** – Professional certificate for youth, adult education and sports **CTM** – Certificat technique des métiers **Qualifications awarded by the ministry of employment** **Professional Qualification Certificate** (CQP) **Professional Qualifications**
2	*No qualification for the time being*

* Qualifications awarded by the ministry of Employment (Titres professionnels) qualifications under the responsibility of social partner (CQP) and qualifications on demand may be classified at each level. The asterisk means that even if it is possible, there is no registration at this level.

– Registration by law
– Registration on demand

OTHER BY LAW REGISTRATION

LEVEL(S)	TYPES OF QUALIFICATION
7	• **Master degree** • **Diploma of « Grand etablissement »** (master degree) • **Diploma approved by the ministry of Higher education and with a master degree** • **DNAP** – National diploma of plastic arts • **DNSEP** – National diploma of plastic arts with master degree • **DE** – State certification of professional competence of speech therapist • **DE** – State diploma of social engineering • **DE** – State diploma of advanced practise nurse • **Diploma of institute of political sciences** (master degree)
6	• **DE** – State Diploma • **DEEA** – Architecture State diploma • **DEJEPS** – State professional diploma for youth, adult education and sports • **DESJEPS** – Advanced professional State diploma for youth, adult education and sports • **Diploma approved by the ministry in charge of Higher education** • **Diploma approved by the ministry in charge of Higher education with a bachelor degree** • **DNAT** – National diploma in arts and technology • **DNSP** – Professional higher diploma • **DSTS** – Higher diploma in social work • **Grade Licence** – Bachelor degree and diplomas with a bachelor degree • **DE** – National diploma of social worker • **DE** – National diploma of orthoptis • **DE** – National diploma of nursery teacher • **DE** – National diploma of specialized educator • **DE** – National diploma of home economist • **DE** – National diploma of specialized technical educator
5	• **Advanced technician's certificate** • **DEUST** – Diploma in maritime scientific and technical studies • **DNMADE** – National diploma in art and design
4	• **BEATEP** – State certificate for youth, adult education and sports • **BEES** – State certificate of sports instructor • **BP** – Professional certificate • **BT** – Technician certificate • **BTA** – Technician certificate in agriculture • **BTN** – Technological baccalaureate • **CAPD** – Basic legal diploma • **CS** – Specialization certificate • **MC4** – Complementary mention 4
3	• **BEP** – Professional studies certificate • **BEPA** – Professional studies certificates in agriculture • **BPA** – Professional certificate in agriculture • **MC5** – Complementary mention 5
2	-

102

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

103

UPDATE OF THE REFERENCING REPORT OF THE FRENCH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

FRANCE **compétences**

11 rue Scribe –75009 Paris
01 81 69 01 40

FOLLOW US ON:
www.francecompetences.fr