Pupils/Students assessment

Assessment is one of the aspects for which educational freedom is guaranteed for each network; in compliance with the relevant laws, decrees, and orders, each controlling authority may therefore define for the schools which it controls the type and frequency of assessments, the scoring system and the way results are communicated. However, the practice of formative assessment is obligatory.

The competencies and knowledge required at the end of the qualification stream, defining in concrete terms the level of study to be achieved, must help the educational teams to practise continuous formative assessment and school report assessments.

Various schemes have been introduced to ensure that pupils are assessed regularly: external non-certificative assessments (in the fourth and fifth years of secondary education) focusing on a particular discipline on each occasion, international tests (Pisa, IEA, etc.), internal assessment procedures within the controlling authority or the school (school reports) and the class (summary and formative assessments introduced by the teacher). A scheme to offer support to schools with the process of awarding the certificate of upper secondary education (TESS) at the end of secondary education is being introduced.

By way of illustration, the paragraphs below set out the content of the study regulations adopted by the French Community to govern the education it provides. These regulations define a certain number of standards and priorities which should lead pupils to produce high-quality schoolwork; assessment methods used by teachers; and procedures for the deliberations in the class councils and the communication of information relating to their decisions. It redefines the role of formative assessment, in which an error never penalises pupils but serves as an indicator for the teacher’s and their own use; and the role of summative assessment, which, at the end of one or more learning sequences, gives pupils and their parents an indication of their level of knowledge acquisition and their command of competencies. All exams must be followed by an analysis and remedial support (except final exams in June). Exams are organised in December and June. Pupils, their parents, and the class council are regularly informed about aptitudes and achievement via a school report. The school report is handed out three times: between mid-November and the start of the winter holiday, between mid-March and the start of the spring holiday, and at the end of June. Additionally, when examinations are organised in December, the results are communicated in a school report before the winter holidays.

External assessments and tools

External non-certificative assessments of pupils’ attainments at the start of the fifth secondary year are organised every year. They enable teachers to better measure the level attained by their pupils and, consequently, to adjust their teaching. The unit responsible for these assessments produces an
analysis of the results and develops teaching methods. The inspectorate ensures educational monitoring.

An Assessment Tools Committee is responsible for producing sets of assessment tests which correspond to the reference guides: assessment tools are prepared under the supervision of the committees, which are composed of representatives of the different controlling authorities. They are designed for schools and for teachers, and are made available to them, together with an accompanying guide, as a guideline, providing information about the types of questions that should be set for pupils and the expected level at given moments in the course of their studies.

**Assessment on an everyday basis**

Each teacher assesses his or her pupils in light of his or her objectives and teaching. This is usually done after one or more learning sequences.

Under the Decree on the Missions of School (24 July 1997), each school must allow every pupil the opportunity to progress at his or her own pace, by practising formative assessment and differentiated pedagogy. Formative assessment is defined as assessment conducted in the course of activity, and aimed at appraising the progress made by the pupil and understanding the nature of the difficulties the pupil has encountered; its purpose is to improve, correct or adjust the pupil’s path; it is partly based on self-assessment. Differentiated pedagogy is defined as an educational approach which consists of varying methods to take account of the heterogeneous composition of classes and the diversity of pupils’ learning modes and needs.

In the qualification stream, global comprehensive exams on grouped options are organized during the school year. These integrated exams, leading to the Qualification Certificate (CQ), encourage coordination between theoretical and practical lessons and prepare pupils for the qualification test. Certificates of competence are issued to pupils upon successful completion of these exams.

**Internal assessments**

Pupil assessments within classes are the responsibility of various bodies: some are associated with the controlling authority or the school (such as the school report, the class councils, etc.); others are arranged by the Centres for Psychological, Medical and Social Services (CPMSs); others again are organised by individual teachers.

The results of summary assessments are communicated to the pupils and parents via a school report. The intervals at which reports are issued and their content and form are defined by the controlling authority.

**Other parties involved**

The members of the qualification board from outside the school are invited to examine pupils’ work continually during the school year.

There must be continuity between learning in school and in the company. An internship must meet precise educational criteria. The teacher who is the internship advisor handles assessment preparation and guidance. He or she collaborates with the ‘tutor’, who is a company employee responsible for the student at the internship premises. According to predetermined criteria, the internship is continually assessed with the intern’s involvement. The assessment is formative. A report is issued upon completion of the internship (summary assessment).
Progression of pupils/students

In full-time education

One or two examination sessions are held each year. The primary purpose of the June exam is to ascertain whether pupils have achieved the minimum competencies needed to progress. A student deferred in June must take the final exam in September.

Procedure

The class council

The Missions Decree (24 July 1997) specifies that decisions about pupils’ progression to the next grade or cycle and the issue of diplomas, certificates and pass attestations within a secondary education institution are, with the exception of the certificate of primary education, the responsibility of the class council.

The class council is chaired by the head of school and consists of the members of the management and teaching staff responsible for educating a defined group of pupils. There are thus several class councils in an institution. The parents and pupils are not represented within the council. It bases its opinions on factors such as the pupil’s previous school record, interim period reports and exam results, information received from the Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services, and in some cases meetings with the pupil and his or her parents. The class council is responsible for preparing a mental aptitude, social and behavioural report on each student at regular intervals; drawing the appropriate educational conclusions; proposing any necessary guidance or remedial support and, if need be, orientations or re-orientations; establishing a common approach to each student. It takes the necessary decisions at the end of the year regarding promotion to the next grade (with or without restrictions), deferment (with the obligation of taking final exams in September), denying promotion and certification.

Appeal possibilities

A pupil who has reached legal age, or the parents or guardian of a pupil who is still a minor, may inspect, if possible in the presence of the teacher responsible for the assessment, any test which constitutes all or part of the basis for the decision of the class council. Each controlling authority defines an internal procedure for handling any disputes that arise regarding the decisions taken within the school and aimed at promoting the reaching of an understanding between the different parties. If the internal procedure fails to produce agreement, the pupil who has reached legal age, or the parents or guardian of a pupil who is still a minor, may submit an appeal against a decision that the pupil has failed or only achieved a restricted pass. The appeal must include detailed argumentation, and is sent by registered letter to the Administration, which passes it on immediately to the Chairperson of the Appeal Committee.

Progression within the second and third stages

Pupils who have successfully completed the 3rd year of general education or of transition-stream technical, or artistic education go on to the 4th year of the same form or the 4th year of qualification-stream technical or artistic education.

Pupils who have completed the 4th year of general education or of transition-stream technical or artistic education and wish to change orientation may attend a 4th reorientation year. It should be noted that this possibility concerns very few students.
The 5th year of general education or of transition-stream technical or artistic education may be entered by pupils who have successfully completed either the 4th year of these programmes or the 4th orientation year.

Pupils who have successfully completed the 5th year go on to the 6th year in the same stream and the same study orientation.

**In dual vocational education and training**

The rules set out for full-time education are subject to certain modifications in the case of dual vocational education and training (CEFA).

The decisions about pupils’ progression to the next grade or cycle and the issuance of diplomas, achievement certificates and attestations within a CEFA are the responsibility of the class council of secondary dual vocational education and training.

The ‘article 49’ students must reach the same level of competence as their fellow full-time students and may thus re-enter full-time education after having attended dual education and training.

In a general manner, a certificate of reinsertion in full-time ordinary or specialised secondary education can be given to a pupil who, having attended the CEFA for at least one school year, is judged apt to continue studies normally, in either the fourth or fifth year of vocational education.

In the dual vocational training courses organised by the small and medium-sized business associations (IFAPME and SFPME), although the length of the apprenticeship contract is usually three years, this may be reduced if the apprentice’s previous training or his or her progress during the apprenticeship justify doing so (but not to less than a year under any circumstances), or extended in accordance with current regulations and subject to the IFAPME’s agreement, in the event of the apprentice failing the mid-course or end-of-course assessment. The apprenticeship contract includes a three-month trial period.

**Certification**

**In full-time education**

Certification is carried out by the class council at the end of each school year.

**In the second stage**

Pupils who have successfully completed the first and second stages of secondary education receive a certificate of second stage secondary education (CES2D).

A certificate of intermediate competencies is issued to every student who has completed at least a fourth year of study in vocational or technical education upon leaving the school. This certificate is issued by the class council. It details each pupil's acquired competencies. It is issued in compliance with the training profiles.

**In the third stage**

An upper secondary education certificate (CESS) is awarded to regular pupils who have successfully completed the last two years of study in full-time general, technical, or artistic secondary education in the same form, stream and orientation of studies.
A sixth year vocational education certificate is issued to regular pupils who have successfully completed that year. Similarly, a certificate is issued for the fifth year of technical, artistic or vocational education to pupils who have attended and successfully completed the corresponding year.

Pupils who have successfully completed the 6th vocational year may attend a seventh complementary or specialisation year in the same discipline or in a corresponding discipline or a 7th year at the end of which they may gain the certificate of upper secondary education (CESS).

At the end of qualification-stream secondary education, a qualification certificate (CQ) is issued to confirm that the pupil’s skills match the training profile: this certificate is issued to pupils who have attended courses in a sixth year of qualification-stream education and have passed the integrated exams corresponding to the relevant qualification profile. These exams are taken in front of a board of examiners consisting of the head of school, teachers of the last two years, and people from outside the school chosen for their expertise in the qualification to be conferred (sixth year qualification certificate or CQ6).

Regular pupils need not necessarily successfully complete the year of study in question to be eligible for the qualification certificate, and vice versa.

In some streams (garage mechanic, beautician, hairdresser), a device (Certification by Units : CPU) has been implemented. This device aims at improving the attractiveness of vocational education by offering young people more marked routes, routes better adapted to the learning rhythms and most rewarding ones because more meaningful. After each qualification exam to validate learning outcomes by the qualification board, each student who succeeded is issued the certificate of the validation of the unit concerned.

At the end of certain years of vocational education, a complementary certificate of management knowledge (CCCG) is awarded to pupils who have completed a special curriculum involving vocational activities in small and medium-sized commercial or craft businesses. This certificate entitles the holder to admission to regulated professions.

**Validation by the authorities**

The authorities and official bodies of the French Community, and especially the schools, the services of the Ministry of the French Community and the General Inspection Service verify for their respective areas of responsibility that pupils’ studies are completed in accordance with the legal requirements in force in the French Community. The Ministry of the French Community affixes the seal of the French Community to the upper secondary education certificates issued by schools organised or subsidised by the French Community in accordance with the legal requirements in force in the French Community.

**Guidance for schools in the award of the upper secondary education certificate**

An ‘upper secondary education test’ or TESS, the purpose of which is to assist schools with the process of certificative assessment at the end of secondary education, is being introduced: tests are made available which relate to part of the required knowledge and competencies for each of the subjects concerned, and which are intended to be integrated with the assessment conducted within the institution. The instructions for siting the test, the questions and the marking criteria are the same for all pupils. Every year the government determines the subjects to which the tests relate as well as the forms, streams and options concerned. The Government is planning to assess one subject more globally (through various skills) in the TESS, and to refocus this test on a major subject – French
- from June 2014. The TESS is compulsory for all pupils in French (transition and qualification sections) and History (transition sections) from 2015 on.

The decision to award the certificate of upper secondary education to a pupil is based on the results obtained in the external examination with respect to the skill which has been considered in the evaluated discipline, and the results of internal assessments with regard to the other skills in that discipline. The weighting of the examination with respect to the other skills is left to the appraisal of the class council. If the pupil passes the external exam, the class council takes the view that the pupil has achieved the level of mastery of the skill that is expected in the assessed discipline.

**In dual vocational education and training**

The certificates and attestations delivered in ‘article 49’ dual education and training are identical to those delivered in full-time secondary education, except that they mention that the qualification was delivered in dual education and training.

A pupil in ‘article 45’ dual education and training who has attended the courses in a regular manner and has attained the competences defined for a specific training profile obtains a qualification certificate (this can be for a recognised training profile, or one with the same denomination as in full-time education, or one recognised as qualifying by the Minister).

The CEFAs may organise one-year business management training courses to enable learners to start their own business, at the end of which a management certificate will be issued.

If a pupil does not obtain any of the certificates or attestations mentioned in the previous paragraphs, he or she can obtain an attestation of vocational competences of the second vocational stage of dual education and training.

Pupils who successfully complete the dual vocational education and training courses organised by the IFAPME and the SFPME are awarded an apprenticeship certificate approved by the French Community which confirms their mastery of the trade and among other things entitles them to admission to the business management course.