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### Graduation by partial recognition

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## Graduation by partial recognition

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### Summary

Classical distant learning education offers a scheduled program for obtaining a bachelor. The standard student has some problems that make him impossible to follow a face-to-face teaching. Distance learning is thought as substitute for the usual high education process. More and more people are not in this position, for them distance learning is not an alternative but the solution. They cannot or they want not to be involved as regular student because their aim are not the same as others students. In the last decade, the large expansion of credits system and the deploying of the possibilities obtaining part of the credits by recognition of former studies or professional skills modify the settings of how organising our distant learning offer. This diversification leads us to offer new degree courses to these new publics. We shall notice another, less common, demands for just various amount of credits just for improving knowledge without aiming for a degree.

Responding to these new requests, we propose two devices a collective one by the way of an agreement with universities in a foreign country (just now outside European Union) and an individual one using the possibilities open by French laws as we will explain.

### Key words

Academic co-operation, process of Bologna, double diploma, international mobility, lifelong learning

### 1. Practical applications at the distance learning department of the economics faculty Pierre Mendés France University Grenoble France

Classical distant learning education offers a scheduled program for obtaining a bachelor; we will only describe our work in this framework. The standard student has some problems that make him impossible to follow a face-to-face teaching. Distance learning is thought as substitute for the usual high education process, and if it is possible they will go back to the common organisation. There are a lot of people, who are in this position and we can answer at their demands. We have to organize a complete degree course for each people. Now it is not entirely true, because more and more people are not in this position, for them distance learning is not an alternative but the solution. They cannot or they want not to be involved as regular student because their aim are not the same as others students. In the last decade, the large expansion of credits system and the deploying of the possibilities obtaining part of the credits by recognition of former

studies or professional skills modify the settings of how organising our distant learning offer. Since, we have answering to two kinds of demands. On the one hand, some of them wish for the bachelor not just to become graduated but for having the likelihood to applicant for a master in France or in another country, which takes part in the Bologna process. On the other hand, for a number of salaries the bachelor means the possibility improving their working position to avoid a lay-off or obtaining a best job and sometimes in the framework of life long learning programmes. This diversification leads us to offer new degree courses to these new publics. We shall notice another, less common, demands for just various amount of credits just for improving knowledge without aiming for a degree.

As answer, we propose two devices a collective one by the way of an agreement with universities in a foreign country (just now outside European Union) and an individual one using the possibilities open by French laws as we will explain. In each case, the students obtain a French level, more often they are registered in the third year of the bachelor (L3 in French licence), but not a degree and they have to complete their studies for obtaining the bachelor.

## **2. Universities' agreements**

The conventional device allows foreign students getting a double diploma one in their origin university and a second in our university. The very idea of our disposal is founded to offer double diploma on distance learning for students of higher education institution without moving. Double diploma is a means for distance learning to set up international cooperation which 1) are economic (out of money and time) for students 2) respectful partner institution 3) without risk for partner institution. European higher education area constitutes the legal framework and helpful structure for recognizing training periods (credits). We use the credit's system for recognition part of the results of involved students. In all case this double diploma needs an agreement between our university and another high education institution. In this paper we only explain how students may obtain the French bachelor degree (Licence) and the diploma of their home university.

A manner is commonly used and implemented by Distance learning department of economics Faculty (ESE) for double diploma: recognising part of the former credits and obtaining some of our own credits. We proposed two variants: bilateral double diploma or unilateral double diploma.

## **3. Bilateral double diploma**

We initiated this original conception in response to a demand from our one Swiss partner the FS-CH (University's distance learning Switzerland). This cooperation needs to put together the degree courses of the diploma. The two institutions may have a lot of meetings to decide which institution has the responsibility of each unit and how many credits for each. After that, we have to split the units between the institutions. Obviously, we have some standard units offered in our distant learning department; we cannot have different units for each partner. For each year the students will obtain 30 credits from each institutions. Such a program requires an absolute confidence between the partners. That is possible only with a very closed cooperation and a high level of quality insurance. The French jury examine the marks for the courses followed in the

French part of the diploma according to the French standards and endorses the decision of the Swiss jury in accordance with Swiss rules. The marks and the rules are evidently different. The result is for the student to follow just only one cursus that delivers two diplomas: the French licence and the Swiss Bachelor. Student obtains 180 credits, 90 from the Swiss side, 90 from the French side.

This configuration steels until now unusual, but it seems interested some European university with which we have Erasmus' agreement. The more general organization is the self-determined decisions from ours.

#### **4. Unilateral double diploma**

The pattern is somehow different from the last one and it is not the same as<sup>1</sup> if it concerns individual students or the partnership with an HEI. For foreign students we examine two items: the former scholarship, the experiences. In the field of the former academic study, we consider the results and the programs in accordance with our criterions when we have no information about agreements (very few) between France and other countries. Added to this we take care of the knowledge or skill acquired in practical activities or profession. Indeed, in the framework of our distant learning centre, we use, for individual student, a French mechanism based on the recognition of professional experiences and academic accreditations.

For high educational institution we propose another arrangement in which students may obtain a double diploma. We named this as master's preparation or better specific licence's year. In that case our faculty recognizes part of the formation followed in economics formation in the partner university for a certain amount of credits. It depends on the agreement with the abroad university, the mains plane either 135 credits or 120 credits, and the students follow, during their last local year, the missing French credits by distance learning. We, economics faculty of Grenoble, accept credits from university where the student comes from, without asking for reciprocal attitude. We just want that student pass their home exams. This explains why we speak about unilateral accreditation. The foreign credits are subject of a global recognition as credits. We do not investigate precisely the different contents of the courses but the results obtained do not have dealing for obtaining the French diploma. To obtain this, student has to obtain the average according to the French rules. In our thought, it is better to organize exams abroad when it is possible, for restricting the expenses. Students take their exams in the abroad university with which we work or in Grenoble when students live in France for students that have obtained their diploma abroad and have to stay in France for obtaining the recognition of the French diploma in their country, like in China. In addition student must obtain a language accreditation level B2 or so.

For the two kind of double diploma, the resources are in French but in some cases in English, in a small number of the language certification could be in English and sometimes, it is possible to gat some courses in French and others in English.

Besides, we put forward programme for individual students fit in with their former academic knowledge or professional skills.

#### **5. Individual routes**

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This programme is based on the recognition for education or work-related qualifications. Individual devices allowing the acquirement of the French bachelor's degree (licence in French) without obtaining all the credits are possible founded on French legislation.

## **6. General features**

Three possibilities for recognising part academic or working qualification are available: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), Recognizing higher studies (VES in French), Recognizing professionals experiences (VAP in French). Actual situation can often make use of two or three items. It is not unusual that a student obtained a two years diploma and had professional experiences for example. The objectives of these texts are to facilitate the obtaining of national degree by recognizing the skills acquired in the professional life or during high studies without the possibility to obtain a degree (It exists an another device that makes it feasible). It can involve foreign or French diploma, which do not seem sufficient for obtaining a degree in conformity with the French bachelor and to get access automatically to a master. Now we will explain the various possibilities to obtain a level or degree. Just a comment, in general, the jury gives permission for only 60 credits per year, as we consider around 8 hours face to face for a credit.

Three options are open

1 According to the student's file, the candidate can be registered in first, second or third year. The proposal depends on how many credits are accepted by the committee respectively between 0 and less than 60 for the first year between 60 and less than 120 for the second year and between 120 and less than 180 for the third year. The student has to do courses planned for the level of its registration.

2 A second solution, opened for engineers and the like consist of a programme which covers economics courses in the first and second level for 70 credits more than usual. This programme allows engineers to obtain the basic knowledge in economics.

3 The third programme is called bachelor in one year in general 60 credits but it depends on the profile of the candidate's performance rarely more, more often less. The committee has the choice of suggesting courses from the three levels, generally the main courses bringing together two or three face-to-face courses (15 credits). This programme is offered to people having a few knowledge in economics or experiences in position of responsibility.

## **7. Devices**

ECTS is the most simple, students had obtained credits in some high educational institution involve in what we said Bologna process. Admission committee take a look at the documents and decided how many credits are validated and what are the courses that the candidate must follow to obtain a level or the bachelor.

The second way is open for students who obtain some degree or credits outside the European Higher Education Area. The validation of the higher education allows a candidate to obtain all or part of a diploma by recognition of its studies followed in France or abroad. The studies sanctioned by an assessment, in a public or private institution are taken into account; whatever were the modalities and the duration. The file presented by the candidate has to clarify in reference to the postulated diploma the

knowledge and the capacities, which this one acquired during the studies for the validation of which he asks. It includes diplomas, certificates and quite other pieces allowing the jury to appreciate the nature and the level of these studies. The committee of admittance proceeds on examination of the file presented by the candidate. It determines the knowledge and the capacities, which he declares acquired towards the requirements, required to obtain the postulated level or degree and held account, if necessary, particular conditions were put in the obtaining of the diploma. The commission can formulate recommendations or advice to the student to facilitate the continuation of its studies

Recognizing Professional Experiences (VAP in French) is a process initiated in 1985. It allows to request the access the training in degree or a level for which the candidate detains not the lower level usually need to access to. Candidates must have at least two years in working position; in fact it is more than three years and to be year-old at least in the date planned for resuming studies. The valuables experiences are the ones related to:

- Working experiences acquired during salaried time or not
- Degree or diploma obtained, formation's period in France whatever are the modalities and the length
- Degree or diplomas acquired abroad
- Knowledge and the capacities acquired outside any system of teaching

Each candidate has to prove a significant experience in economics in a broad sense including financial competences and management. In Grenoble, we have a lot of people from international organizations based in Geneva who want to validate their experiences. It is important to bear in mind that the candidates don't have the diploma or degree giving authorization for a registration. The very idea, coming from the theory of human capital, admits that professional experiences, here in responsibility, are equal to a period of studying. This allows and facilitates the lifelong learning. Distance learning make easier resuming the studies because the student can work in his framework at is rate without having to be with younger students, that is sometimes not so easy. The commission checks the registration forms and makes a decision on the demand: accepted, rejected, accepted after tests, accepted at a lower level in each situation with the amount of credits recognized.

## 8. Conclusion

Distance learning and the flexibility of the devices make easier the double diploma process by virtual mobility and the lifelong learning programme by recognizing the working time as learning time.

Virtual mobility increases the chances for a student to obtain double-diploma. What we accomplish with countries outside European union might be possible with European universities. Commonly, European students do not wish for double diploma they had no interest to obtaining another, which do not improve their potential to find a job. But many of them involved in Erasmus program or bilateral agreements aspire getting co-diploma, which indicate their abilities using two languages and their capacities working in different cultural settings. Virtual mobility avoids, partly, the brain drain to promote the brain gain.

The lifelong learning programme appears an opportunity for people who need improving their knowledge and abilities in economics in a context processing job's

redeployments. For some who lost their employment, our distance learning programme could offer them a chance to obtain during the unemployment period a degree that would help them in their job searching.

## **Sources**

Décret n° 93-538 du 27 Mars 1993 relatif à la validation d'acquis professionnels pour la délivrance de diplômes nationaux de l'enseignement supérieur.

Décret n°85-906 du 23 août 1985 fixant les conditions de validation des études, expériences professionnelles ou acquis personnels en vue de l'accès aux différents niveaux de l'enseignement supérieur.

Décret n°2002-529 du 16 avril 2002 pris pour l'application des articles L.613-3 et L.613-4 du code de l'éducation et relatif à la validation des études supérieures accomplies en France ou à l'étranger.