

# UNDERSTANDING RECOGNITION PRACTICES FOR BUSINESS SCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS IN FRANCE

By MARIE-CATHERINE GLASER & TRACIE WELLS

Diplomas from French business schools have become more prevalent in admissions offices and evaluation services in recent years. Compared to university diplomas, which are fairly straightforward due to their national recognition, there have been few available English-language resources that aid in the understanding of professional qualifications earned at non-university institutions. This article aims to provide evaluation strategies and information on qualifications earned at business and management schools in France.

## The Coexistence of Several Types of Training Institutions in the French Higher Education System

Business and management schools in France represent one of the many types of institution that welcomes French students who wish to pursue higher education after the secondary *baccalauréat* examination. Higher education institutions in France include the following: universities and the university institutes of technology (IUT) which are also housed there; the *grands établissements*, which should not be confused with the *grandes écoles* that will be described more in-depth below; the *Écoles normales supérieures* (ENS); the preparatory classes for the *grandes écoles* (CPGE); and the *sections de technicien supérieur* (STS), which prepare students for the *brevet de technicien supérieur* (BTS). Additionally, there are separate engineering schools, paramedical and social schools, schools of architecture, higher artistic schools, other schools of diverse specializations (veterinary, journalism, administration, etc.) and schools of business and management. Higher education institutions can be either public, private or, in the case of business schools, consular (which means that they are administered by a chamber of commerce and industry).

The *grandes écoles* warrant a special discussion given their uniqueness to the French higher education system and the confusion they sometimes cause. Among the *grandes écoles*, one can find establishments of diverse statutes that prepare students for a variety of types of training, although the majority of them focus on engineering and management. The Conference of *Grandes Écoles* is an association (Law 1901) composed of public, private or consular higher education institutions that distinguish themselves from other higher education institutions in their manner of recruiting students, their pedagogy, their nationally recognized excellence in training and the prestige of their diplomas.

## Business and Management Schools

In an educational landscape that can often seem complex to navigate, business and management schools have become more and more popular in recent years. While the number of schools has remained relatively stable in the past ten years with 208 schools in 2008-09, the number of students enrolled has almost doubled, increasing from 51,329 students ten years ago to nearly 96,000 students enrolled in the 2008-09 school year. The appeal of these schools can be explained by the fact

that secondary schools diploma holders are seeking training where their progress and preparation for the professional world is closely monitored by the school. Indeed, these schools play a very active role in students' academic and professional lives and are focused on job placement and job security.

As mentioned above, the business schools can be either private or consular and are classified in one of three groups. Group I includes 81 educational institutions with State recognition and where at least one diploma has qualified for the visa of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (i.e. *diplôme visé*), the highest form of recognition possible. Group II is comprised of 39 institutions that are also recognized by the State, but which do not award any diplomas with the Ministry visa. Finally, the 88 schools that make up Group III are not recognized by the State and their diplomas are also not sanctioned by the Ministry visa.

The largest number of business students can be found in one of the recognized schools from the first group. Indeed, there were 74,000 students enrolled in a Group I institution in 2008-09. The schools from this first group mainly recruit students enrolled in preparatory classes for entrance into the *grandes écoles* or *baccalauréat* holders straight out of high school, in both cases based on their performance on a competitive entrance examination. Only 7,800 students attended the recognized schools from Group II in 2008-09. Slightly less competitive, these students include secondary diploma holders, university students or students from the STS or the IUT. Finally, Group III accepts only 14.7% of all business students in France even though this group incorporates the largest number of business schools.

## The State Seals

The business and management schools benefit from two types of state seal or recognition: the recognition of the institution by the State and the authorization to award diplomas sanctioned by the state visa (*diplôme visé*).

### State Recognition

State recognition suggests that an institution contributes something significant to the higher education structure. It stems from an inspection of the functioning of the institution, its offerings and its teaching and training personnel. State recognition also allows the school to provide students with state funding, while also permitting the hiring of teachers from the public sector and access to public grants to support institutional costs. Finally, state recognition allows an institution to request the authorization to award a *diplôme visé*.

State recognition is granted on a case-by-case basis by the Minister of Higher Education, following local and national

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proceedings. It is granted by ministerial order without a predetermined length of validity. That is to say, this recognition can be retracted.

#### *Authorization to Award the Diplôme Visé*

The authorization to award diplomas with the state-sanctioned visa can be granted by ministerial order to schools with state recognition following a rigorous pedagogical inspection of the training programs and the selection of admission and diploma committees.

Endowed with the visa, these diplomas boast the State's guarantee as to the quality of the program of study. They are awarded by the school in the name of the State.

The procedures to evaluate the quality of technical higher education institutions, both consular and private, have improved in the context of a European higher education system. In particular, the decree of March 2001 modifies the conditions in which the State visa is issued by imposing a time limit of six years or less to the validity of a visa in order to allow, if needed, the adjustments deemed necessary. This reform put an end to the ministerial visa without attached time limits that was granted in the past.

This decree was followed in April of the same year by another important decree leading to the creation of the *Commission d'Évaluation des Formations et Diplômes de Gestion* (Commission of Evaluation of Training and Management Diplomas) that carries out a general mission of supervision of the quality of training provided in consular and private institutions of advanced training in business and management.

#### **The Creation of the Degree of "Master"**

The decree 99-747 (August 1999) introduces the degree of "*mastaire*" as a higher education qualification, later slightly modified to be called "master." This stems from the desire for a common reference system for training and diplomas in Europe by using levels and internationally comprehended and comparable degree structures. The master, new to the French educational structure, puts a variety of diplomas and titles of comparable level under the same umbrella based on State recognition and visa and authorization to award a degree with this name, in the case of schools that are not part of the university structure.

Indeed, for the first time, higher schools of business and management are authorized to award a degree with the same name as a diploma of a similar level awarded by the university. It is important to note, however, that the authorization to award a *diplôme visé* does not automatically mean that a school can award the degree of "master." This authorization is granted by the Ministry of Higher Education following proceedings with the National Advising Committee of Higher Education and Research.

The criteria leading to the authorization to award the diploma

of master are demanding, especially regarding the place of the school in the network of international exchange and in the capacity of the pedagogical teams and institutions to create a valuable research environment leading to tangible results.

The list of higher technical schools and institutions authorized to award a *diplôme visé*, both with and without the degree of master, is published by ministerial law. [http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/pid20536/rubrique-bo.html?cid\\_bo=23771](http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/pid20536/rubrique-bo.html?cid_bo=23771)

#### **The National Commission of Professional Certification and the National Repertoire of Professional Certifications**

The National Commission of Professional Certification (CNCP) was created in January 2002. Its main mission is to itemize the various professional certifications in the National Repertoire of Professional Certifications (RNCP). The CNCP further aims to contribute to international and European efforts to make educational qualifications more transparent.

Although all the qualifications awarded by schools of business and management are not recognized by the State as academic qualifications (i.e. *diplôme visé* or master), they can all potentially be registered with the RNCP for professional recognition. In this case, information regarding the level of the qualification can be found on any qualification that is registered. In the case of older qualifications ("*Titres homologués*"), the level of homologation can be found in the RNCP. For the *Titres homologués*, the NSF code located on the certificate may be useful in locating information on the credential on the RNCP database.

There are two types of registration with the RNCP, automatic registration and registration following a formal request by the school. Qualifications recognized by the State are automatically registered with the RNCP. Other certificates are registered on a case-by-case basis following an investigation and assessment by the CNCP. It is important to note that an institutional request for registration with the CNCP is *not* automatic and can be rejected.

The certifications framework is organized by level in order to understand the professional worth of a given qualification. Two ways of designating levels have been used in the RNCP. The first was created in 1967 and defines the level of training by the number of years it takes to complete the program. With this type of level designation, qualifications of higher education may be considered Level III or I/II. Level III qualifications correspond to the professional equivalent of two years of study after secondary schooling and are comparable to BTS or DEUG training (Diplôme d'études universitaires générales). Level I/II qualifications refer to training that is comparable to the professional equivalent of the *Licence*, a diploma from one of the engineering schools, etc. These qualifications typically require a minimum of three years of study and often more.

The method of designating levels was slightly transformed in 1969 to refer to the level of responsibility needed to be

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employed in a company. The CNCP has the intention of adapting this level system further to allow for international and European comparisons. In fact, the question of the reform of these classifications was instigated by the LMD reform (License-Master-Doctorate), especially since the progressive disappearance of first cycle diplomas such as the DEUG.

The RNCP can be consulted online ([www.cncp.org](http://www.cncp.org)), but it is still a work in progress. It now covers all the national certifications that originate from seven certifying ministries (National Education, Employment, Agriculture, Youth and Sports, Social Affairs, Health, and Culture). The Ministry of Higher Education, also a certifying ministry, only has a limited number of certifications included in the registry currently (i.e. DUT, DEUST and the *Licence professionnelle*). However, additional certifications from this ministry and the *diplômes visés* will be added in 2010. Furthermore, the RNCP will continue to expand in the near future with translations of its registered qualifications in English, Spanish and German.

### The Example of the IDRAC School

In order to illustrate the presentation of the different types of recognition for qualifications from business and management schools, we will use the example of the IDRAC school. This school is a private business school that has State recognition and has a network of 7 locations throughout France (Paris, Lyon, Nice, Montpellier, Nantes, Toulouse and Grenoble). It belongs to the Group I category of schools since it offers a *diplôme visé* called the “*program école de commerce en 4 ans*,” which was recently replaced by another *diplôme visé* called the “*program international grande école en 5 ans*.” However, you will not find these qualifications registered with the RNCP since the *diplômes visés* have not yet been included in this database.

Furthermore, students can earn the nationally recognized *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur* and other diplomas registered with the RNCP at Level I (*Manager de la performance*) or II (*Responsable du développement commercial et marketing*, *Responsable du développement marketing et commercial interorganisationnel*).

On the next few pages, sample diplomas from IDRAC are included. The following are some helpful RNCP links:

Manager de la performance marketing et commerciale (Niveau I)

<http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/visualisationFiche?format=fr&fiche=2430>

Responsable du développement commercial et marketing (Niveau II)

<http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/visualisationFiche?format=fr&fiche=4388>

Responsable du développement marketing et commercial interorganisationnel (Niveau II)

<http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/visualisationFiche?format=fr&fiche=5308>

### Conclusion

Despite the relative complexity of determining the recognition of French business and management schools, the authors have attempted to provide information and resources on the recognition process for these schools. In order to recommend an academic equivalency in the United States, it is important to look first to see if the school is recognized by the State in France. If it is one of the schools that offers a *diplôme visé* and belongs to Group I, it has State recognition. Only the *diplômes visés* possess the State visa that guarantees their quality. However, qualifications that are not *diplômes visés* have an important professional value in France as long as the institution has state recognition. Diploma holders may even be more employable than those with traditional university diplomas given the specialized and individualized training they receive in the business and management schools. The RNCP is a great resource for determining the level of qualifications earned in the business schools. Although this database is not yet complete and does not contain information on the *diplômes visés* and many other qualifications that have not yet been registered, it is an important resource for those in international admissions and foreign credentials evaluation.

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[twells@ierf.org](mailto:twells@ierf.org)

Dom  
- Int  
- Int  
Tel./F  
89



Ecole Supérieure de Commerce  
International School of Management

Copie certifiée conforme

À l'original,  
A Thurins, le 18 Août 2008  
Le Maire,



# TITRE DE L'ALPF IDRAC RESPONSABLE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT COMMERCIAL ET MARKETING

code NSF 312F

Inscrit au RNCP - Niveau II vu l'arrêté ministériel du 16/02/2006 paru au J.O. n°95 du 05/03/2006 délivré à :

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

Né(e) le 23 Mars 1985 à Sigen

qui a suivi dans son intégralité le programme MARKETING ET GESTION DES ENTREPRISES  
durant les années universitaires 2005/2007

Dominante : *Management de la Communication*

A Sigen, le 21 Novembre 2007

Le Titulaire

Le Directeur de IDRAC Lyon

Le Président du Jury

IDRAC - Établissement Privé d'Enseignement Supérieur Technique reconnu par l'État  
PARIS • LYON • NICE • MONTPELLIER • NANTES • TOULOUSE • GRENOBLE

Dominique MARREAU  
Informatica - 18 rue de la République  
Département de la Loire  
42100 Saint-Étienne (France)  
Tél./Fax n° 47 42 22 22





# SUPPLEMENT AU TITRE



## DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT

This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international 'transparency' and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, content, context and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

### 1 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE HOLDER OF THE QUALIFICATION

- 1.1 Family name(s): ██████████
- 1.2 Given name(s): ██████████
- 1.3 Date of birth (day/month/year): 23/03/1985
- 1.4 Student identification number or code (if available): 1097040136F

### 2 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE QUALIFICATION

- 2.1 Name of qualification and (if applicable) title conferred (in original language):

**Titre de Responsable du développement commercial et marketing**

(Titre certifié niveau II par décret du 16 février 2006 publié au Journal Officiel de la République Française le 5 Mars 2006)

Usual name: Marketing et Gestion des Entreprises

- 2.2 Main field(s) of study for the qualification: **Business and Management Sciences.**

In full year (semester: 7 & 8) 10 months are offered:

Marketing & Business Negotiation, Corporate Communication, Marketing Strategy, Corporate Finance, Management of Small and Medium Sized Companies, Entrepreneurship, Purchasing Management, International Trade, Communication Management, Studies abroad, Management of Operational Units

- 2.3 Name and status of awarding institution (in original language):

**ALFF IDRAC** Etablissement privé sans statut associatif créé en AVRIL 1964, reconnu par l'Etat par Décret du 2/12/93 J.O. du 8/12/93, délivrant un Diplôme Certifié par arrêté du 16 février 2006, publié au Journal Officiel de la République Française du 05 mars 2006.

- 2.4 Name and status of institution administering studies (in original language):

**IDRAC LYON** : Etablissement privé sans statut associatif créé en AVRIL 1964, reconnu par l'Etat par Décret du 2/12/93 J.O. du 8/12/93, délivrant un Diplôme Certifié par arrêté du 16 février 2006, publié au Journal Officiel de la République Française du 05 mars 2006.

- 2.5 Language(s) of instruction/examination:

French, English

### 3 INFORMATION ON THE LEVEL OF THE QUALIFICATION

- 3.1 Level of qualification:

4 semesters of higher education studies which lead to a certified Master 1 (M1) level degree.

- 3.2 Official length of programme:

The total duration of studies required in order to obtain the degree is 4 semesters, which is equivalent to 120 ECTS credit hours.



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à Thuirins, le 12 Août 2008

Maire, [Signature]

Réseau IDRAC

Paris - Lyon - Nice - Montpellier - Nantes - Toulouse



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Association Française des Universités  
de Commerce et de Management

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### 3.3 Access requirements(s)

Admission to IDRAC is obtained by:

- By entrance exams in third year (semester 5) after having completed an undergraduate university programme (12)

According to the terms of its pedagogical programme, IDRAC Lyon admits:

- 180 students (approximately) in semester 5, after having completed an undergraduate university programme (12)
- 20 students (approximately) in semester 7, after having completed a graduate university programme (13)
- 20 part-time students (approximately) in semester 7 in professional training

## 4 INFORMATIONS ON THE CONTENTS AND RESULTS GAINED

### 4.1 Mode of study:

Full-time for 125 students with a volume of approximately 300 hours per semester on average during the 4 semesters, as well as:

- 12-week internship in Operational Marketing in semester 5
- A minimum 16-week final internship in semester 8
- A research thesis with a 10-week internship in semester 7

50 students are "company sponsored" (contract of apprenticeship) during semesters 5, 6, 7 and 8

30 students are part-time students in professional training

### 4.2 Programme requirements:

#### a) Aims:

IDRAC graduates are qualified in the following fields:

- Sales negotiation and management of customer/supplier relations
- Marketing and advertising
- Team and Project Management
- Communication Management

#### b) ECTS system:

Implementation scheduled for 2007/2008

#### c) Acquired skills:

#### 1. MARKETING SKILLS

Create and lead a market study on a national or international level, determine the specifications of a study, negotiate the terms of reference with a consulting firm, create and lead a competition study, a satisfaction study, set up a system of competitive and strategic watch, analyse the financial health of a client or a potential client, adapt these techniques to specific sectors of activity.

#### 2. SALES SKILLS

Create and implement a sales and purchasing strategy, analyse the clauses in a sales and purchasing contract, fix and negotiate the terms and conditions of sales and purchases (price, delivery time, terms of payment)

#### 3. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Analyse the financial health of a client or a supplier, determine an operating budget & forecast investments, set up a cash management plan, an interim profit and loss account, determine a method to analyse costs adapted to the sector of activity, analyse the differences between the budgeted objectives and the results, propose solutions.

#### 4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND TEAM MANAGEMENT

Define a job assignment or a job profile, and participate in a recruitment interview, integrate new members in a team, chair a meeting, set up annual reviews, define objectives for members of a team, set up performance charts, negotiate a work contract, lead a group project.

### 4.3 Programme details

The list of the courses completed and the grades obtained appear on the transcripts which have been delivered with the diploma.

The graduates chose the major Communication Management in semesters 7 and 8.



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## 4.4 Grading system:

Assessment System
Each subject is graded out of 0 to 20, 20 being the maximum grade.
A subject is automatically validated if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The grade is <math>\geq 8</math> for reports and professional projects</li> <li>The grade is <math>\geq 6</math> for final semester exams</li> </ul>
Subjects which are not validated must be retaken.
Promotion from one year to another is systematic with a grade point average of $\geq 10$ and all courses must be validated. The jury can propose a conditional promotion.
The degree is obtained automatically with a grade point average $\geq 11$ and all courses must be validated. For semesters or years abroad, the conditions for validation of the school or university abroad apply.

The course assessments can be broken down in the following manner:

- Continuous assessment (30 - 50% of the total assessment) generally case studies
- Reports and projects (30 - 50% of the total assessment)
- Semester exams (30% of the total assessment)

Internships and projects are systematically subject to a written report as well as an oral presentation in front of a jury. According to the type of internship, the breakdown of the grade points is 40% for the written part and 60% for the oral presentation (Applied Research Thesis)

## 4.5 Overall classification of the qualification (in original language):

Non concerned

## 5 INFORMATION ON THE FUNCTION OF THE QUALIFICATION

### 5.1 Access to further studies:

- Specialized Master's Degree (Master 3) of the French University System: Marketing Finance, Business Administration, Sales, Purchasing, Human Resources.
- MBA & MSc from universities and schools abroad

### 5.2 Professional status (if applicable):

- The degree does not give the right to privileged professional status nor the right to practice liberal professions.
- In France, certified degrees are governed by the Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle which delivers degrees after assessment of accreditation for a duration of 5 years, renewable.
- In France, the Level II Certified Degrees can give right to manager status, in accordance with certain professional branches and the duties performed, as well as with the Collective Agreement of the specific sector of activity.

## 6 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### 6.1 Student Degree Course

The student was admitted in fifth semester

Semester	School/Program	Language of Instruction	Additional information (internships)
5	IDRAC France	French	
6	IDRAC France	French	12 weeks mission in Marketing, Product and Environment Analysis Bureau Information jeunesse de Vienne
7	IDRAC	French, English	Applied Research Thesis Biométrieux
8	IDRAC	French, English	



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Maire

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6.2 Degrees obtained at the end of the Degree Course

Titre Responsable du développement commercial et marketing

## 7 CERTIFICATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT

7.1 Date: November 2007, the 21th

7.2 Signature: Denis de Bénazé

7.3 Capacity: THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR

7.4 Official stamp or seal:

**IDRAC-LYON**

Ecole Supérieure de Commerce

Reconnue par l'Etat

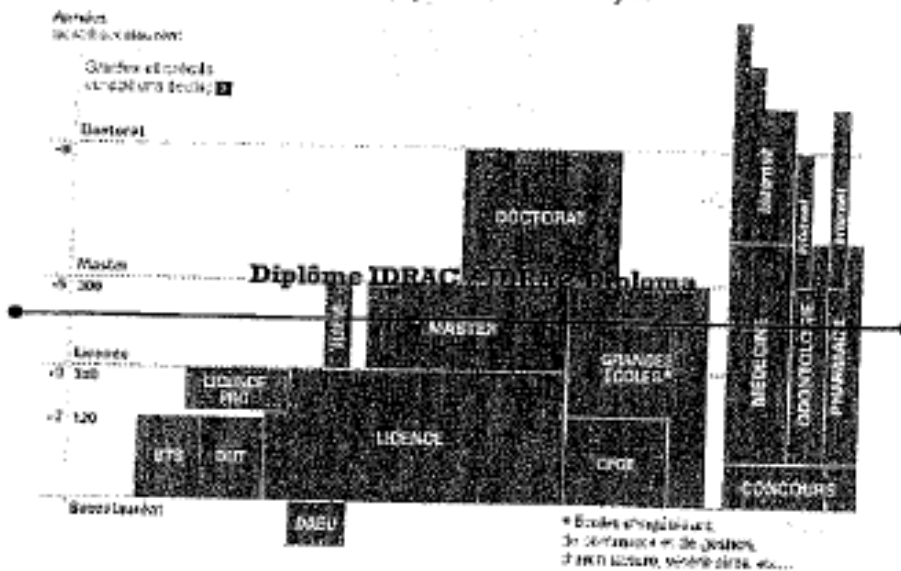
47, rue Sergent Michel Berthot

CP 697 - 69258 Lyon Cedex 09

Tel. 04 72 85 72 72 - Fax 04 72 85 72 49

## 8 INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

(Positionnement du programme dans le système éducatif français)



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A Thuriens, le 12 Août 2008  
Le Maire,

Réseau IDRAC

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