

Transition from upper secondary VET to higher technological education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 FRANCE

Timeline



ID number 28232

Objectives

The measure aims to facilitate access for new graduates of the vocational baccalaureate wishing to enrol into the higher technical section (*Section de technicien supérieur, STS*).

Description

A new scheme for progression from upper secondary VET to tertiary technological education is being piloted, from September 2017, for three years in three education districts (*académies*). The aim is to allow students who obtained the *baccalauréat* (end of upper secondary diploma) in vocational education to pursue their studies in higher technological education (*section de technicien supérieur, STS*).

Previously, admission to higher technological education programmes was preferably granted to holders of the *baccalauréat* obtained in the secondary technological pathway. Admission to higher technological education is also normally based on selection by the higher technological education institution. In the pilot, the responsibility for the admission decision will be transferred to the student's vocational high school, meaning that the admission process is being changed from a selection process to an orientation/guidance process. The overall intention is to support students who had achieved a sufficient standard, certified by the teaching team in the final school year, to continue further study.

More young vocational *baccalauréat* holders applied to enter a higher technical section (*section de technicien supérieur, STS*) in 2018: +8.4% compared to 2017. Those who received at least one offer for admission to an STS programme were 28% more than in 2017.

An additional 2 000 places in STSs will be created every year until 2022, the target being to reach a stock of 10 000 places by 2021. In 2018, the Ministry of Education has announced the future creation of bridging classes where vocational baccalaureate graduates that cannot be allowed to join the STSs can prepare during one year for joining them later.

Additional information and guidance tools have also been put in place to ease transition from secondary education (including VET) to higher education.

The Law on student guidance and success, known as the ORE, promulgated in March 2018, changed the rules for university access for all *baccalauréat* holders. Its aim is to reduce the failure rate in the first year of study. This law gives universities the right to set prerequisites in terms of competences and knowledge for admission to programmes. Applicants who do not fulfil the requirements may be offered support.

2017 Pilot

2018 Legislative process

2019 Implementation

Decree no 2019-215 of 21 March 2019 regulates the admission process to STS programmes: *baccalauréat* holders completing a bridge class programme can be admitted to an STS programme if, with advice from the teaching team, the head of the institution where this training was completed recommends it. Pilots were rolled out across all metropolitan areas in autumn 2019.

The reformed upper secondary VET path offers more guidance and support to learners and personalisation of their training pathways: over the training cycle, 265 hours are dedicated to the consolidation of skills acquired, personalised support and career planning.

To help students make an informed choice and build their post-*baccalauréat* career path, two modules are offered to them in the final year of the vocational *baccalauréat*: professional integration, and preparation for further studies. Since June 2019, two guides for the implementation of these training modules have been available online.

2020 Implementation

The measures put in place under the ORE law of 8 March 2018 relating to the guidance and success of students have transformed access to higher education by strengthening support for secondary school students in their choice of direction. A number of tools and resources useful for supporting secondary school students and informing families are available online.

2021 Implementation

The practical guide *Parcoursup 2021: practical guide to support secondary school students* brings together all the key information on the procedure for students from enrolment on the platform to the admission phase.

2022 Implementation

Resources to assist students in their career path selection and help them understand how *Parcoursup 2022* works, are available online. These resources include practical guides, communication tools designed for teachers to engage students and their parents, as well as support systems for applicants with disabilities or health conditions.

2023 - Implementation phase

Alongside the opening of the *Parcoursup* platform on 18 January 2023, there is a dedicated information site. To meet users' needs, the *Parcoursup* platform now offers a new search engine as well as course descriptions to help applicants and their families find out more about courses and make informed choices.

Links to *Inserjeunes* indicators (employment rate, completion rate etc. at the level of each institution) have been incorporated into the *Parcoursup* platform

2023 Implementation

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information site. To meet users' needs, the *Parcoursup* platform now offers a new search engine as well as course descriptions to help applicants and their families find out more about courses and make informed choices.

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As part of the 12 measures aiming to make vocational upper secondary education a pathway to success, one of the key measures aims to significantly increase the number of places available for learners wishing to follow one-year specialisation (BAC +1) programmes leading to recognised qualifications. The target set is to move from 4 500 to 20 000 spots by the start of the 2026 academic year. This initiative is designed to enhance the professional integration of upper secondary graduates.

A 2023 study by the Centre for studies and research on qualifications (CEREQ), based on the *Génération* surveys on professional integration of graduates, highlights the advantages for young people who acquire additional VET qualifications after completing their vocational baccalaureate (EQF level 4) upper secondary programme in terms of:

- (a) professional integration: 77% of those who acquired an additional vocational qualification after their baccalaureate have a more sustainable occupational integration, spending on average 34 out of 40 months in employment (compared to pathways where more labour market exit, late labour market entry or marginal employment are observed). In contrast, only 55% of graduates who entered the labour market directly after their vocational baccalaureate have similar employment success;
- (b) salary expectations: on average, holders of a VET specialisation (Bac+1) earn more than those who entered the job market immediately after their vocational baccalaureate (respectively, a net monthly salary of EUR 1 500 compared to EUR 1 370);
- (c) level of qualification on recruitment: 61% attain qualified worker status, while only 22% are classified as low-skilled. This contrasts with 40% of those who did not pursue further education and entered the job market directly after upper secondary education.

The new *Parcoursup.gouv.fr*, the national platform to apply for tertiary education studies, was launched in December 2023. The updated platform offers upper secondary graduates a comprehensive search engine to access training programmes. This tool aims to facilitate informed decision-making regarding educational pathways by offering:

- (a) access to 23 000 State-controlled programmes, and detailed descriptions for each programme;
- (b) search functionality: it is possible to filter by keywords, geographical area, and training modalities (such as boarding or distance learning);
- (c) transparency in admissions: a candidacy analysis grid offers transparency in the selection process, and students can view admission rates for 2023 to gauge the selectivity of various programs.

2024 Implementation

The reform of VET upper secondary schools continues to roll out in the academic year 2024/25, introducing a new organisation of the training cycle for the vocational baccalaureate programmes. The reform focusses on enhancing student success in further studies through several key initiatives:

- weekly support: students in the first and second years will receive weekly support of one hour, while those in the final year (*Terminale*) will benefit from one hour and half of guidance to aid their transition to further studies;
- final year preparation: the last six weeks of the last school year will be reorganised into a differentiated preparation course, focusing on either professional insertion or further studies.

A service note dated 4 March 2024 details the objectives, expectations, and organisation of these preparatory courses for educational teams and their students.

The centralised admission process of upper secondary graduates to tertiary education through the new *Parcoursup* online platform was concluded on 12 September 2024. More proposals were made to a larger number of candidates, in a shorter timeframe. The number of study programmes offered on the *Parcoursup* platform were of 24 000 post-baccalaureate programmes, including apprenticeship programmes. The platform enabled to manage 945 500 applications made by individuals.

The acceptance rate for secondary school students is as high as it was in 2023. The vast majority of applicants graduated from upper secondary schools who expressed interest for several programmes (92.8%) received at least one admission offer (candidates may express interest for more than one study programme and may or not receive an offer). The vast majority of the other applicants already in higher education and seeking re-orientation (84.2% of those who expressed wishes) received at least one offer.

The National committee for access to higher education (CAES) provided support to applicants who did not receive an offer in finding a suitable programme. For VET graduates, a guidance and orientation scheme, *Ambition Emploi*, was already implemented in their schools in collaboration with the network of local PES services, Missions Locales, specialised in supporting the social and professional integration of young people.

As each year, an opinion survey conducted by one polling organisation (CSA Institute) gathered feedback from upper secondary graduates registered on *Parcoursup*. The survey provides direct insights into their experiences during the 2024 session and evaluates the new measures aimed at improving and simplifying the process. The results indicate a positive trend: identification of support mechanisms at the upper secondary school level improved by five points compared to 2023. Furthermore, 71% of respondents believe *Parcoursup* has facilitated the development of their professional orientation project (+2 points from 2023), while 76% feel that the platform has assisted them in making the transition to higher education (+2 points from 2023).

The decree of 22 January 2024 introduced into the vocational baccalaureate timetable a differentiated six-week pathway at the end of the final year to better prepare students for post-graduation plans and support success in further study or immediate labour-market entry. Implementation was scheduled for the 2024-2025 school year. Preparations began in 2023-2024 with information sessions and support for schools, coordinated nationally by the deans of inspectors (*Inspecteurs de l'éducation nationale*, IEN) responsible for the vocational pathway. *Eduscol* published resources to help organise provision and identify pedagogical content for the pathways, particularly the one preparing for further study.

2025 Implementation

Monitoring by regional education authorities between January 2025 and the start of the pathways showed a balanced distribution of choices: 51% chose the employment pathway and 49% the further-study pathway. To support smooth implementation, planning began in February 2025 to identify teachers for examinations and adjust marking schedules. The General Inspectorate for Education, Sport and Research (IGESR) monitored implementation and conducted the evaluation of this first session.

The initial review led to several adjustments for 2025-2026: written exams were moved to late May-early June, pathways were prepared from the start of the school year, and the final phase was shortened from six to four weeks.

Further discussions were under way, coordinated by the Directorate-General for Higher Education and Professional Integration (*Direction générale de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'insertion professionnelle*, DGESIP), on possible changes to *Parcoursup*, the centralised online platform for admission to higher education, in connection with these pathways.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research
- Ministry of National Education and Youth (until 2024)
- Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation
- Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports (from 2020 till 2022)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Learners with disabilities

Thematic categories

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Circular concerning the autumn term 2017, No 2017-045 of 9 March 2017](#)

[Law No 2017-86 of 27 January 2017 relative to equality and citizenship](#)

[Information and guidance tools to ease transition from secondary education \(including VET\) to higher education](#)

[Decree 2017-515 of April 2017](#)

[Circular 2018-089 of 18 July 2018](#)

[Decree n°2019-215 of 21 March 2019](#)

[Vocational Aptitude Certificate \(Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle, CAP\) and Vocational baccalaureat - Schedules of compulsory general and vocational education in training under school status - Memorandum No. 2019-023 of 18-3-2019](#)

[Transformation of the vocational path - Vademecum, Preparation for further study, Ministry of National Education and Youth](#)

[Transformation of the vocational path - Vademecum, Vocational integration module](#)

[Student guidance and success Act \(loi orientation et réussite des étudiants, ORE\)](#)

[Career guidance material for the transition from secondary to higher education \(2021\)](#)

[Ministry of National Education and Youth, 2023. - Parcoursup 2023: clearer, richer and more transparent information](#)

The specialization certificate one-year programme for upper secondary graduates with a CAP or a vocational baccalaureate

Cereq. (2023). Press Release - pathways for youth in vocational baccalaureate Programmes

Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research. (n.d.). Building your professional future project with the Ambition Emploi programme

“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Transition from upper secondary VET to higher technological education: France. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28232>