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BE French Community

General Education

In the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, compulsory pre-primary education begins at age 5. Primary education starts at age 6 and lasts for six years, divided into three two-year cycles. The curriculum includes French language, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, and artistic expression. Multilingual exposure begins early, with foreign languages introduced in later cycles. The system emphasizes inclusive education, democratic values, and social integration. Upon completion of primary education, pupils receive a *Certificat d'Études de Base* (CEB), granting access to secondary education.

Secondary education in Wallonia spans six years and is divided into three stages of two years each. In the first stage (common core), all students follow a broad curriculum. In the second and third stages, they choose a specific orientation among general, technical, artistic, or vocational streams. The general track leads toward higher education, while others prepare for employment or further study. Students receive a *Certificat d'Enseignement Secondaire Supérieur* (CESS) upon successful completion of upper secondary education. Recent reforms under the Pacte pour un Enseignement d'Excellence aim to reduce inequality and improve outcomes through a more unified and inclusive structure.

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education in Wallonia is offered within the secondary school system, starting from the second stage. It provides practical and work-oriented training in areas such as mechanics, construction, hospitality, and healthcare. Students follow a mix of general education and hands-on training, often including internships. Programs lead to qualifications such as the *Certificat de Qualification* or the CESS if general subjects are also completed. Dual education models that combine school and company-based learning are increasingly promoted. Vocational pathways can lead directly to employment or, if academic criteria are met, to higher education or specialized post-secondary training.

Higher Education

Higher education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation follows the Bologna model and is divided into short-type (professional) and long-type (academic) programs. It is offered by universities, university colleges (hautes écoles), and arts colleges. Degrees include bachelor's, master's, and doctorates, with short-type bachelor's focused on professional skills and long-type leading toward academic research or specialized professions. Instruction is primarily in French, but English-taught programs are increasingly available. Admission is generally based on the CESS or equivalent qualifications.

Higher Education Qualifications

- **Bachelier; Bachelier de spécialisation**

First cycle

Level 6

Level 6

The higher education system of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels is characterized by the

co-existence of “short-type” or professionally-oriented education and of “long-type” or academic education. In spite of the binary character of the higher education system, no legal distinction is made between similar degrees, irrespective of the type of higher education institution awarding them. However, a distinction should be made regarding the organisation of the programme according to the type of education. The “short-type” or professionally-oriented higher education programmes are organised in a single cycle of studies of at least 180 credits (Bachelor in Midwifery requires 240 ECTS) and are sanctioned by a Bachelor’s degree (bachelier de l’enseignement supérieur de type court). These types of degree are awarded by University Colleges.

Bachelier de spécialisation - specialised degree awarded after one year of study (60 ECTS) following a professionally-oriented Bachelier. The title of the degree is followed by the name of the speciality (i.e. Bachelier de spécialisation en pédiatrie, en art thérapie, en accessoires de mode, etc.).

Rights Granted

Admission to Master

Recognition Status

<http://www.enseignement.be>

Other Information

<http://www.enseignement.be>

<https://enic-naric.net/page-Belgium-French-Community>

• Master; Master de spécialisation

Second cycle

Level 7

Level 7

Second cycle of university and “long-type” or academic higher education. It includes 60 credits or 120 credits and is sanctioned by a Master’s degree.

Master de spécialisation - specialised degree awarded after at least one year of study (60 ECTS) following a Master degree. The title of the degree is followed by the name of the speciality. The Master de spécialisation (previously Master complémentaire) is delivered from the 2014-2015 academic year.

Rights Granted

Admission to Doctorat

Recognition Status

<http://www.enseignement.be>

Other Information

<http://www.enseignement.be>

<https://enic-naric.net/page-Belgium-French-Community>

• Doctorat

Third cycle

Level 8

Level 8

The Doctorate’s degree is awarded upon completion of a third cycle programme; it is awarded by a university after the defence of a thesis based on original research. The third cycle programmes comprise doctoral studies and work related to the preparation of a

doctoral thesis. It carries a fixed number of 180 credits. Only universities award the academic Doctorate degree.

Rights Granted

This is the highest academic qualification

Recognition Status

<http://www.enseignement.be>

Other Information

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Useful Links

- [Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation , Directorate General Higher Education, Life long learning Education and Scientific Research](#)
- [Belgium French Community profile on ENIC-NARIC portal](#)

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