



**Lisa McGurk**

## **The French Higher Education System**

### **Historical Development**

#### ***Medieval Beginnings***

During the twelfth century, the numbers of students who came to Paris dramatically increased due in part to its reputation as an intellectual centre. The church and monastery schools no longer sufficed to provide the education that the students demanded; therefore the Church authorised individual teachers to open schools outside the cathedral, usually in private houses.

The University of Paris was formed from the organising of these teachers into a corporation. It is hard to establish the date of when the University of Paris began its existence, although historians believe that it was during the period 1150 to 1180. The University was neither exclusively secular nor was it exclusively ecclesiastical. It came into being outside the ambit of the Church; the schools were established outside the cathedral precincts. However, the University was strongly influenced by the Church; until the sixteenth century it retained a strong ecclesiastical character.

During the Middle Ages, the University was divided into four faculties: theology, law, medicine and the liberal arts. Teachers and students in the faculty of arts were also grouped according to their nationality: French (Romance languages), Picardians (Low Countries), Normans, English (Germanic).

#### ***More Recent History***

Much of the current structure of universities came out of the reforms of the late 1960s. After the student revolt of 1968, it became apparent that changes to the university system were needed; and the Minister of Education, Edgar Faure initiated a series of reforms: teaching was to take place in small groups, although in lectures students could number in the hundreds; the concept of the professorial chair was supplanted by that of the department; institutions were to

be responsible for their own administrative organisation; and that there must be the possibility of interdisciplinary teaching.

Faure's Law of Orientation of Higher Education was passed in 1968 which fundamentally changed the organisation of the universities. The old faculty system was dissolved and the new grouping was to be the 'unit of teaching and research' (UFR) which was to embody both the principles of autonomy and interdisciplinarity. The UFRs determine their own teaching and research activities and their assessment procedures. There are some exceptions, the national diplomas in those areas such as medicine, pharmacy, law, and teaching are still regulated by the State. UFRs are headed by directors whose job is to coordinate pedagogical questions.

There are three types of UFRs: those with a teaching function only; the former university institutes, including the University Institutes of Technology (IUT); and those with a research function, including the preparation of future researchers through the doctorate. For example, when the UFRs were formed in the late 1960s, the former English department in the old Faculty of Letters in Paris was divided into a number of UFRs: one that combined the study of English language and literature with the history of ideas, one that produced future school teachers of English, one that produced translators, etc.

University bodies were set up with the concept of participation in mind: several different levels of councils were set up which had administrative, staff, and student representatives. This had the effect of increasing the say of the non-professorial staff by diminishing the considerable power once exercised by deans and professors.

In 1973, a two-year diploma, the Diploma of General University Studies, was introduced for law, economics, human sciences (philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, geography), letters (letters, letters and foreign civilisations, and applied foreign languages), and science (sciences of structures and matter, and sciences of nature and life). Two new fields were added: applied mathematics with social sciences, and economic and social administration. The Diplôme ('DEUG') could either be a terminal qualification or lead on to a first degree.

The Law of Orientation also reformed assessment, a credit-unit system was adopted. Guidelines for assessment procedures by universities were set down; however councils of the university were allowed to prescribe their own assessment procedures after receiving the recommendations of the UFR in the speciality concerned. Students had to accumulate thirty credit-units (currently thirty-two) at an optimal rate of ten per year in order to obtain a degree. The credit-unit represented three hours of teaching per week for one semester (Halls, 1976, p.220).

## Structure

### Higher Education Overview<sup>1</sup>

The French Higher Education system can be described by the term ‘mass higher education.’ It is characterised by a high level of diversity, both in terms of the type of education/training provided and in terms of the routes of access into the different branches of the Higher Education system. Within a highly centralised, largely state-funded education system; over 70% of each age cohort continue their secondary education to the baccalaureate (bac) level and the success rate at the bac is currently at around 65%. At the beginning of the 1990s, almost 100% of 19 year olds in France were still in the education system. This is a much higher rate than in most other EU member states and is reflected in the diversity of the training and education on offer.

The HE system (post-bac) can be divided into five main streams: Universities (which account for HE in the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Law, Medicine, Pharmaceuticals, etc.); Institutes of Technology (IUT); Higher Technical Sections(STS); Preparatory Classes for the *Grandes Ecoles* (CPGE); and Teacher Training Institutes (IUFM). To these, one should also add a number of ‘*Ecoles*’ providing vocational training in a number of specialised areas (engineering schools, business schools, social work schools, etc.). Access to these is selective and may require students to obtain a post-bac qualification before being eligible for admission.

The growth of the HE system over the past twenty years has been spectacular and there are currently almost two million post-bac students in France, of which almost two-thirds are studying in Universities. The recent explosion in student numbers has been largely concentrated in the ‘middle-range’ institutions, with relatively little change in the number of students entering the most prestigious levels of HE, the *Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Ecoles* (CPGE) which train the future ‘elite’ of French society.

### *Grandes ecoles*

The *grandes ecoles*, although technically not relevant to the research because they don’t offer doctorates, will be considered here because they are integral to the French HE system. The *grandes ecoles* stand at the pinnacle of the French education system. They are specialised institutions giving high-powered, professional courses; access to them is severely limited by competitive

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<sup>1</sup> This section is based on the Sigma National Report prepared by Nicky Le Feuvre for the DGXXII expert network on ‘Women’s and Gender Studies’ in 1995.

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examinations taken in a *lycee* or university one, two, or three years after the baccalaureate. The majority grew up during the nineteenth century where they stood outside the university faculties because their mission was to train elites for the armed forces, public service, the higher ranks of teaching and research, and private enterprise. They are grouped into four categories: commerce, veterinary medicine, sciences and the humanities (Halls, 1976, p. 221).

There are special post-baccalaureate classes for preparation for the competitive entrance examinations to the *grandes ecoles*. The courses in the humanities and the pure sciences attract the most applicants because they prepare for the advanced teacher training qualification (CAPES and *Agregation*) and the more prestigious scientific establishments. One of the most well-known of the *grande ecoles* is the *Ecole Polytechnic*. It is a military establishment whose director is a general and whose students are subject to military law. At the end of the two year course the student becomes a second lieutenant and does a year's military service, after having received the *Diplome d'Ingenieur de l'Ecole Polytechnique*. Those most highly placed on the pass list go on to one of the *ecoles d'application*, institutions of applied technology; and eventually on to the highest posts in the military, civilian and private sector.

Also highly esteemed is the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* whose original purpose was to train secondary schoolmasters; many of its graduates today enter a university career or research. They receive a salary while studying, and food and accommodation are provided at cheap rates in return for an engagement to serve the State for ten years. The students sit the usual university examinations, receiving the first degree and then the *agregation*, the State teaching qualification. They then usually go on to school teaching and then many complete the State doctorate and move into university work (Halls, 1976, p.227-228).

### ***Instituts Universitaires Technologiques***

The University Institutes of Technology (IUT) were set up in 1963 to provide two-year courses to train higher grade technicians for business and industry. Other institutions that were integrated into higher education were the *Ecoles Nationales Supérieures d'Ingenieurs* (ENSI). They were described as the first French technological universities.

### ***Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maitres***

Most teacher training takes place in specialised institutions: *Instituts Universitaire de Formation des Maitres* (IUFM), to which students may apply

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on a competitive basis, after obtaining a university Degree (Licence). Primary school teachers require a national diploma for which there is a *numerus clauses*, but once qualified, they are guaranteed a tenured job by the State. The same is true for the lower echelons of secondary school teaching. Students take national CAPES (*Certificat d'Aptitude a la Profession de l'Enseignement Secondaire*) exam in their chosen discipline and then obtain a tenured teaching position in a college or *lycee*. However, training for the highest echelon of the teaching profession: the *Agregation*, takes place in universities. In this case, students follow taught courses in their chosen discipline and sit the highly competitive national exams (either on a 'external' or 'internal' basis). The *Agregation* is one of the most prestigious qualifications in the French HE system: it has high academic standards and stringent selection procedures; it offers a tenured position in the most prestigious secondary schools and a comparatively reduced teaching load; and it qualifies people to apply for permanent positions within HE institutions without having to complete a doctorate.

### ***Universities***

Although universities account for over 73% of the students in French HE, contrary to the other HE institutions presented above, they generally exercise little control over student recruitment. Any student with a bac in any combination of subjects is entitled to a university place on the course of his/her choosing. Students are however restricted in their choice of university courses in so far as they are normally required to register at a university situated in the geographical area where they or their parents live. Although universities are not legally permitted to restrict access to first-year courses, it is common knowledge that an unofficial *numerus clausus* operates (mostly on a 'first-come, first-served' basis) in some institutions and/or for certain undergraduate courses (Charlot and Pottier, 1990, 33). This *numerus clausus* has been official for training in Medicine and Pharmaceutics since the end of the 1970s.

University registration fees are low in comparison with other European countries (approximately 250 ECUs/year for a first year undergraduate course in the Arts, Humanities, or Social Sciences) and it is not unusual for students who fail to obtain a place on their chosen selective course at another institution immediately after their bac to register with a local university for a year before resubmitting an application to their chosen institution the following year. Recent legislation has however made it impossible for a student to register more than three years running for a first-year undergraduate course in any combination of subject areas.

Although the entry requirements are lower at universities than in the other sections of the HE system, selection tends to take place once students are

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registered at university. The French HE system is organised in ‘cycles’ and is characterised by a relatively high failure and/or drop-out rate within and particularly between ‘cycles’. Each ‘cycle’ corresponds to one or more nationally recognised diploma or qualification and operates on a credit system. In order to obtain a DEUG (*Diplome d’Enseignement Universitaire General*), the qualification that marks the end of the first ‘cycle’, a student must obtain 32 credits (follow about 800 hours of taught courses). In theory, the DEUG represents two years of study, but in practice students may take up to four years to obtain this diploma.

Once a student has a DEUG, he/she may decide to leave university either to look for a job or to undertake a further period of professional training at another HE institution. Alternatively, he/she may decide to stay on at university and prepare a second ‘cycle’. In this case, a further year of study (fourteen credits) is necessary to obtain a *Licence* (the minimum qualification required to undertake, amongst other things, teacher training at an IUFM). Yet another year of study (fourteen credits) leads the student to the *Maitrise* level which includes the production of an extended research dissertation which marks the end of the second ‘cycle’. Following the *Maitrise* the student may be eligible for admission to the third ‘cycle’ and can choose between a DEA (doctoral programme one year foundation course), or a more vocational DESS. Both of these choices are subject to relatively strict selection procedures. The DEA operates as an entry requirement for registration as a doctoral student.

### **Recent Reform/Current Events**

France’s participation in the EU has resulted in attempts to make the French HE system more compatible with that of other member states. On 25 May 1998, the four ministers of education of Germany, France, Italy, and Britain signed a declaration to foster a European space for HE and called for other countries to join them in this effort. On 19 June 1999, twenty-nine European countries (fifteen EU) signed a declaration with several objectives; one of which was to facilitate the free circulation of students and of teachers throughout Europe. In order to make its degrees more comparable with those of other member states, France has attempted to align its HE qualifications with the European 3-5-8 model.<sup>2</sup> Although the two year BTS, DUT and DEUG qualifications have been maintained, attempts have been made to rationalise the intermediary level of HE. The term ‘Magistaire’ has been adopted for all bac + 5 qualifications. Professional and work experience and periods of study or training in other

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<sup>2</sup> The 3-5-8 model refers to the number of years of study required to obtain different types of HE qualifications: 3 for a BA or BSC degree; 5 for a Masters/Mphil; and 8 for a doctorate.

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European countries can count toward the 'Magistaire'. It is the first degree to be offered at both the universities and the *grandes ecoles* on the same basis.

Another recent innovation is the creation of the 'Professional Degree' (*Licence Professionnelle*), which is a vocational qualification completed three years after the bac. It aims to improve the employment opportunities for students who have previously obtained a university diploma (DEUG) or who have successfully completed a two year technological training course (BTS, DUT). Like the DESS and the BTS courses, the new Professional Degrees include a high proportion of vocational training, often offered by non-academic staff from outside the universities, and extensive periods of work experience.

Another recent area of reform has been the collaboration between business and universities. In a speech on 18 May 1999, Claude Allègre, the then Minister of National Education, Research, and Technology discussed the importance of working with industry. On 3 June he presented to the National Assembly the Law on Innovation which enables academic staff to work for up to six years in business (or start their own company) without losing their academic tenure or civil servant status. This permits the universities to have contractual relations with the business world thereby facilitating the opening of relations between the two.

## **Legal Status, Financing, and Administration**

### **Legal Status**

The French education system is divided between a State and private sector, with a large majority of students in the public sector. Within secondary and higher education, a total of 19.6 percent of students attended private sector institutions in 1987, of which just 4.6 percent were in higher education (Charles, 1991, p.68).

Universities have the legal status of national scientific, cultural and professional establishments; which means that they have pedagogical, administrative and financial autonomy. The curricula for each of the national qualifications offered at a given institution are examined every four years and have to be approved by a body of advisors to the Ministry of Education before the institution can offer the relevant courses to students. Each institution has autonomy over the university diplomas that it offers, however these are not recognised on a national level.

While the universities do have some autonomy, much of their resources come from the state, staff members are state employees, and the secretary-

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general (a position below the president) is appointed by the Ministry of National Education.

## **Financing**

The majority of financing in French Higher Education comes from the state in the form of the Ministry of National Education (see below). Since the 1984 reform bill, each HE institution prepares and signs a four year 'contract' with the Ministry of Education. Institutions are thus required to establish priorities in terms of course development, student life, links with industry, research, building and maintenance, international relations, library facilities, etc. Resources are allocated on the basis of student numbers and with regard to the specific educational policies developed by particular institutions. This process of contractualisation has no doubt reinforced the role of the President who is the exclusive interlocutor between the State and the university community.

The budget for the year 2000 was 52,463,000 francs; representing an increase of 2.63% from 1999 (Ministère de L'éducation Nationale, de la Recherche et de la Technologie, 2000, p.12). At the start of the 2000 school year, the government was expecting 800 new teaching jobs to be created (35% being university professors and 65% *maitres de conférences*). They also expected the employment of 1200 researchers and 50 associate teachers (Ministere de L'education Nationale, de la Recherché, et de la Technologie, 2000, p.12).

The funds for maintenance costs of HE establishments rose 135 MF including 15 MF more for libraries and 20 MF more for the new technologies (Ministere de L'education Nationale, de la Recherché, et de la Technologie, 2000, p.12).

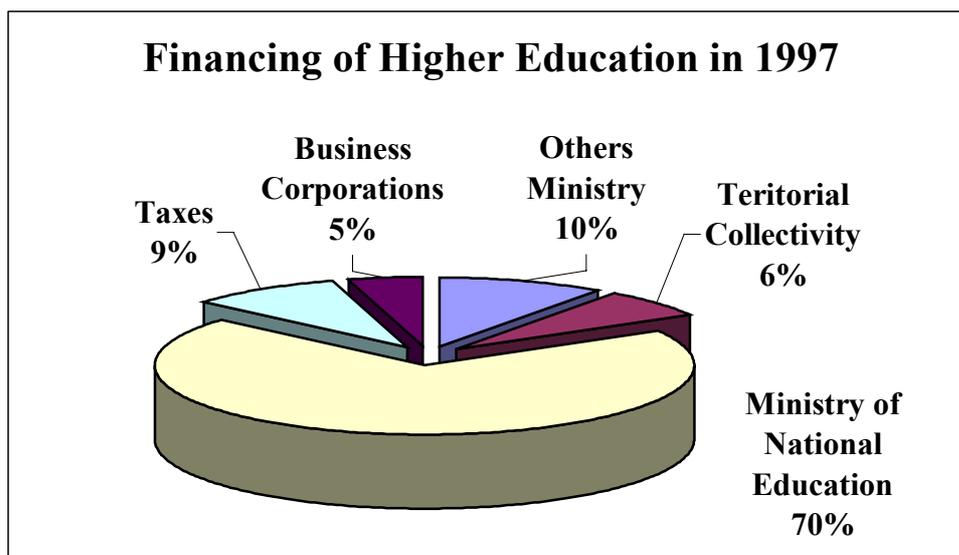
The Université du Troisième Millénaire (U3M) group is a government investment plan that is meant to: promote the contribution by HE to economic and technological development; improve the life of students; and promote international collaboration. For HE and research, the entire U3M plan represents more than 38 billion francs in programme authorisations, including, in the HE budget, 14 billion francs to the state share of the contract plans and 7.5 billion francs to promote job security and the creation of jobs (Ministere de L'education Nationale, de la Recherché, et de la Technologie, 2000, p.12). For 2000, with nearly four billion francs in programme authorisations, the real estate funds are meant to cover the costs of operations in safety and building rehabilitation work (an increase of 1086 MF, of which 100 MF is additional to traditional maintenance), of construction and repair costs (for an increase of 1985 MF), and the cost of specific operations such as the museums. In total, the destined property investment funds gave a return of over 25% more than in

1999, and more than 70% than 1997 (Ministere de L'education Nationale, de la Recherché, et de la Technologie, 2000, p.12-13).

For the year 2000, it is expected that 677 MF in student grants will be dispersed (Ministere de L'education Nationale, de la Recherché, et de la Technologie, 2000, p.13). The average expenditure per student in the French Higher Education system is 7683 euros (6100 euros per university student and 12000 euros per CPGE student), relatively low compared to the other European countries but compensated for by a longer average duration of study. It should be noted that 61% of a the current generation of eighteen year olds obtain a baccalaureate in France (Ministère de L'éducation Nationale, de la Recherche et de la Technologie, 1999, p.54).

There are three types of State financial assistance to students:

- \* Direct assistance- social or excellence grant, bank loans, housing assistance, tax advantages
- \* Indirect assistance- subsidies for university housing and restoration, student associations
- \* Health assistance- free medical care, prevention, and social assistance.



Source: Ministère de L'éducation Nationale, de la Recherche et de la Technologie, 1999

### *Administration*

Councils are the main decision-making bodies of universities. There are three councils:

- \*administrative council- top of hierarchy of councils
- \*scientific council- research policy
- \*CEVU- student life

The councils consist of different colleges which are made up of professors, *maitres de conferences*, other teachers, students, and administrative staff. Members are elected on the basis of trade union membership. There are also councils at the UFR level which are made up of teachers and students.

The president is elected for five years by the members of the three counsels (which he/she chairs). The council members are elected by both employees and students. Each UFR is managed by an elected counsel and directed by a director who is chosen by the counsel. The contractual policy between the state and the universities fixes for four years the policy of the university and the means which are allotted to the director. It is based on an exhaustive inventory of fixtures and defines strategies and action plans. It reinforces the role of the president who becomes the exclusive interlocutor between the state and the university.

### **Inner Organisation of Universities**

As mentioned above, councils are the main decision-making bodies in universities. The councils are made up many different elements which make it almost impossible for full professors to be a majority on decision-making bodies. If a full professor is not elected to councils, he/she could have practically no decision-making power (less than a secretary who is a member of the council). Once elected to the council, one becomes a member of the official power network. Like other organisations, universities also have informal power networks. Professors and *maitres de conferences* can negotiate with their heads of departments about what courses they teach ; but the number of hours are not negotiable. Each department has a modest amount of money to give bonuses to people who take on added responsibilities. Professors do have some influence through their supervision of doctoral students. They can to a certain extent define research policy but this is not related to access to resources (doctoral students can be taken on without a guarantee of financial assistance). The main decisions in terms of finances depend on criteria defined at the State level.

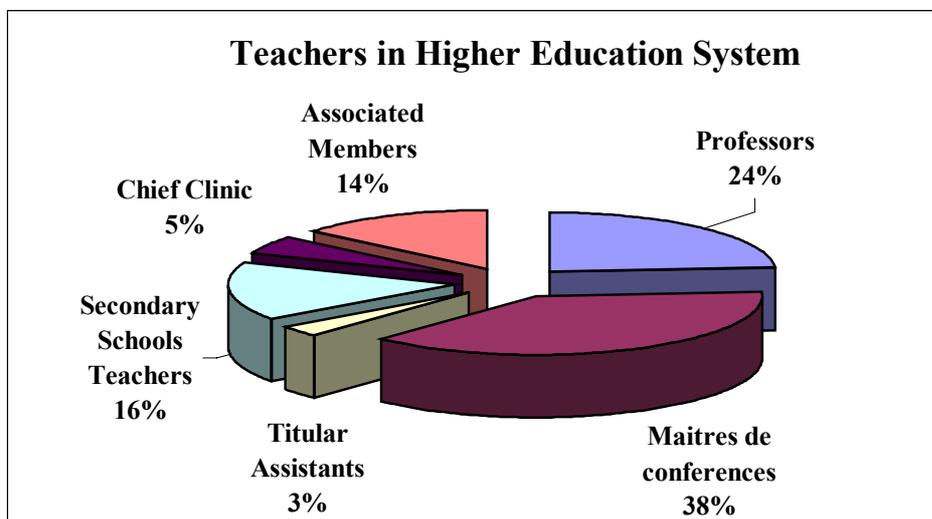
## Academic Staff

### Structure of Academic Posts

Within the French HE system, the hierarchy of positions from top to bottom is as follows: Full Professors; Senior Lecturers (*maitres de Conférences*); secondary school teachers who teach in university (PRAG/PGCE); Temporary Teaching and Research Assistant (ATER); and Contract Lecturers (*charges de cours*). The position of Assistant Lecturer is currently being phased out of the HE system and assistantships are usually transformed into Senior Lectureships once their incumbents have submitted a doctoral thesis. There are also part-time professorships or senior lectureships reserved for non-academic professionals who teach on the vocational courses (PAST). Professors, Senior Lecturers and Assistants occupy tenured positions, as do the secondary school teachers attached to institutions of HE.

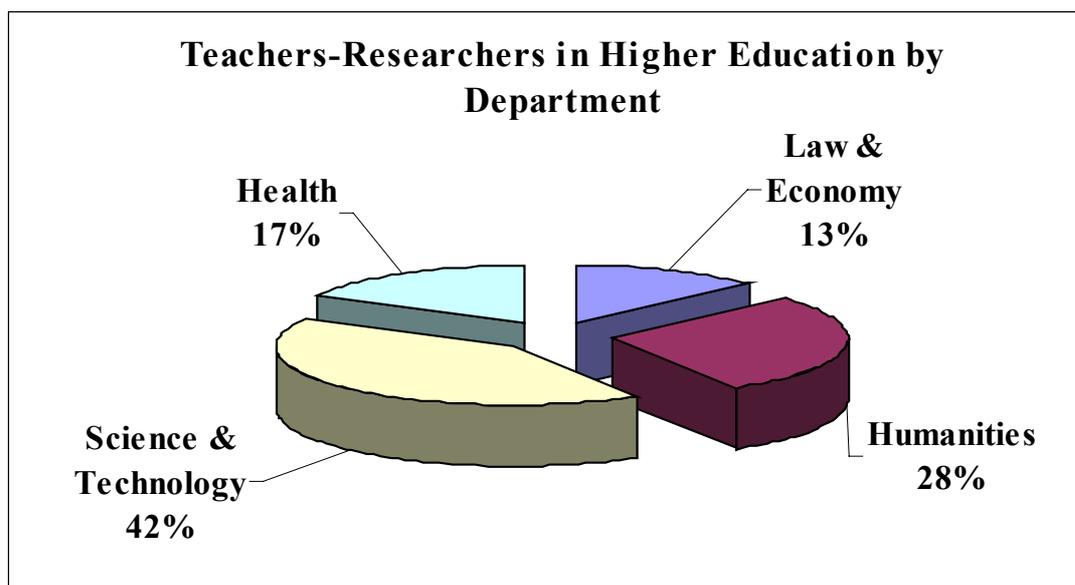
Thirty-eight percent of teachers in the French Higher Education system are *maitres de conférences*, and twenty-four percent are professors (please see table below).

### Graph 1



Source: Boukhobza, Noria, Huguette Delavault, and Claudine Hermann, 2000

The highest percentage of teachers-researchers in HE are in science and technology departments; while these departments have the lowest percentage of female professors. The percentage of female professors across all departments is 14.2%; while the percentage for female *maitres de conférences* is 36.5% (please see table and graph 2).

**Graph 2**

Source: Boukhobza, Noria, Huguette Delavault, and Claudine Hermann, 2000

### Teachers-Researchers in the French Higher Education System

	% of women	Number of Teachers	% of Total
<b>Professors in French Higher Education System, 1999-2000</b>			
Law and Economics	14.1%	2341	4.7%
Literature and Human Sciences	26.8%	3993	8%
Sciences and Technology	9.6%	7352	14.7%
Health	10.7%	4667	9.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>18353</b>	<b>36.7%</b>
<b>Maitres de conferences in French Higher Education System, 1999-2000</b>			
Law and Economics	34.6%	4129	8.27%
Literature and Human Sciences	46.6%	8750	17.5%
Sciences and Technology	28.9%	15498	31%
Health	48%	3199	6.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.5%</b>	<b>31576</b>	<b>63.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25.35%</b>	<b>49929</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Boukhobza, Noria, Huguette Delavault, and Claudine Hermann, 2000

## Recruitment Procedures

The recruitment procedure for academic staff within the HE system is highly centralised and codified. With the exception of Law, Economics and Political Science, access to tenured positions in most disciplines (Professorships and Senior Lecturerships) involves a two stage procedure: a) the successful submission of a doctoral thesis (*these nouveau regime*) for Senior Lecturerships or a State thesis *these d'etat*- officially phased out in 1884, but still used in some cases) or of a habilitation thesis (*these d'habilitation*) for a Professorship; and b) registration on the list of 'qualified' academics recognised by the disciplinary-based National Council of Universities (CNU). The majority of the members of the CNU sections are elected by their peers (tenured academics), whilst a minority are nominated by the Ministry of Education. They serve a four year term of office and may sit for re-election.

Qualification by the CNU and recruitment to academic positions takes place on a national basis once a year. Academic positions are not advertised in national newspapers, as is the case in most other EU countries, but in an internal publication of the Ministry of Education (*Bulletin Officiel de l'Education Nationale*). At the beginning of each civil year, the Ministry calls for applications for all the academic positions available in every single discipline in every single HE institution in the country; these include new jobs created, or positions made available through the geographical mobility or retirement of their incumbents the previous year. In order to apply for one of these positions, the future candidates must already possess the required qualification (doctorate or habilitation) and have been qualified by the relevant section of the CNU. Applications for the qualification have to be submitted at the end of the year preceding the job applications, as the CNU also only sits once a year. Candidates are required to present a CV, giving details of their academic publishing record, their teaching experience and their activities within the local, national, or international research networks. The report written by the members of the jury who accredited the candidate with a doctoral or habilitation thesis is also required by the CNU.

Once the candidate is qualified, he/she is then free to apply to as many institutions as desired, providing they have positions on offer in the disciplines for which he/she has been qualified. Competition for academic positions, particularly lectureships, has become increasingly fierce over the past 10 years and it is not unusual for institutions to receive more than 100 applications for a single senior lectureship. As well as the newly qualified candidates, job applications may come from academic staff already in a tenured position at another institution. Each HE department is responsible for organising a Recruitment Board, in accordance with the administrative guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Education, composed of 50% Professors and 50% Senior

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Lecturers for applications for Lectureships and of 100% Professors for applications to Professorships. Members of the Recruitment Board are elected by their colleagues for a four year term of office and academics can serve on the Boards of no more than three different institutions. Although it only takes place once a year, the recruitment procedure is extremely time-consuming and stressful, due to the tight time-limits imposed by the Ministry. Once the administrative validity of the applications has been verified by the Rectorate (the official representative of the Ministry of Education in each region), the applications are divided up amongst the members of the Board. A written report is provided on each application by at least two members of the Board and unsuccessful candidates are entitled to receive a copy of this report on request. Within approximately 10 days of receiving the applications, the Board sits to select a variable proportion of the candidates for interview. Once they have been called for interview at a given institution, the candidates are required to send copies of their doctoral thesis and a selection of their academic publications to the institution within an extremely tight time-limit (usually under a week). They must also make travel arrangements (at their own expense) to the interview and deal with the frequent occurrence of being called for an interview at two different institutions the same day...possibly at the same time. There is no coordination at a national level of the time-table of the different Recruitment Boards in a single discipline.

If the Recruitment Board receives an application from a Senior Lecturer from another institution, this application must be given priority over those from newly qualified applicants. Once the selected candidates have been interviewed the members of the Recruitment Board vote in order to rank a maximum of five candidates for each position. The ranking from each Board is then approved by the Administrative Council of the institution, before being transmitted to the Ministry of Education in Paris. Candidates are usually informed by phone of the results of each Recruitment Board and then, if they have been ranked in first position by at least one institution, have to confirm in writing that they accept the position offered.

Once the final nominations have been made, the successful candidates will not take up their new positions until the start of the following academic year. The newly recruited Senior Lecturers will usually serve a one or two year 'probationary period', before being given tenure and a civil servant status by the Ministry of Education, following the recommendations made by the Recruitment Board of the department concerned. It is extremely rare for tenure to be refused at this stage.

For the unsuccessful candidates, it is possible to start the whole procedure over again, in an attempt to obtain a one-year Temporary Teaching and Research Assistant (ATER) position. The departmental Recruitment Boards are again responsible for this procedure, which involves somewhat less paper work

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than the recruitment of tenured staff. In practice, an ATER position is usually the first step on any academic career ladder and candidates for a tenured position know that their chances of being recruited are higher in an institution that has already offered them an ATER position than at an institution where they have had no teaching experience. In practice, most ATER positions are filled by doctoral students from the recruiting institution, which obviously tends to place 'home candidates' in a favourable position when it comes to recruiting tenured staff.

If the ATER application fails, candidates can apply for a contract lectureship (paid on an hourly basis), but they have to be under twenty-eight years old or have worked more than 1000 hours in the previous year (contract lectureships are usually given to students preparing a DEA or those in the first years of their doctorate).

### ***Definition***

It would be best for the purposes of this research to consider both full professors and *maitres de conferences* in the statistical profile. Currently, there is little difference between the two positions; professors used to have a lesser teaching load but this is not so anymore. *Maitres de conferences* can be head of departments and members of the councils, therefore there is no indication that professors carry more institutional clout. The main difference between them is that professors can supervise doctoral students (although *maitres de conferences* often take this role but can't officially be supervisors). Therefore it would be interesting to consider both for the statistical profile.

### **Conclusion**

French women made significant inroads into Higher Education during the 1960s and 1970s and they currently represent over half the total number of students. However, their distribution according to type and length of study continues to reflect, at least in part, traditional gender divisions. Women students are generally over-represented on undergraduate university courses, particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences and significantly under-represented amongst students in the most prestigious *grandes ecoles* and on scientific/technical courses.

Likewise, women academics tend to be proportionally over-represented within the lower echelons of the Humanities and the Social Sciences in universities and to experience some difficulty in gaining access to posts within

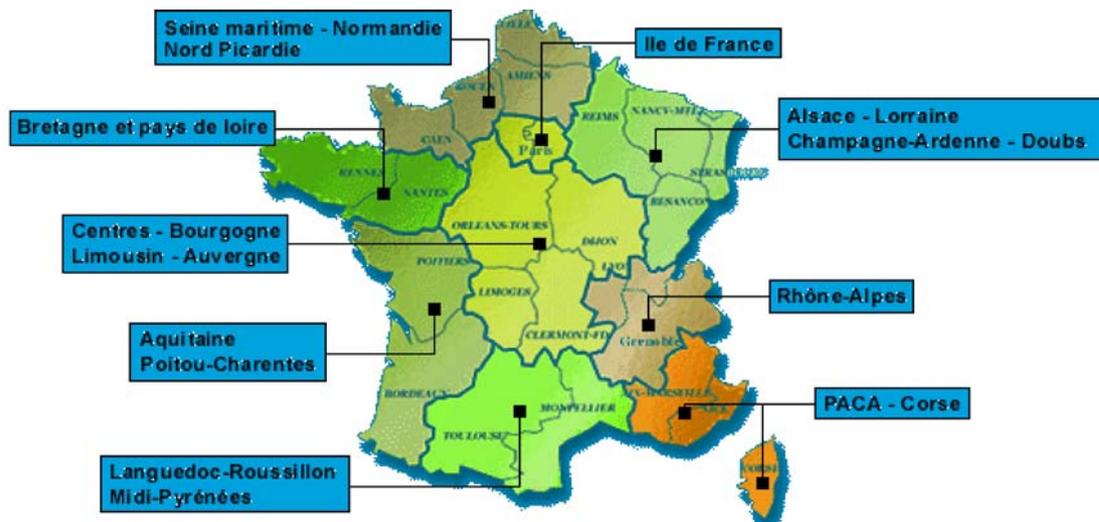
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the most prestigious HE institutions or to the most prestigious posts within universities. Although this uneven distribution of women academics within the HE system may be in part explained by their more recent entry into academic careers (women's average age and length of service is lower than men's), there is evidence to suggest that the collegial selection procedures for promotion to professorships tend to work to the disadvantage of women lecturers.

## Appendix I

### Map of French Regions

The cities with the largest numbers of students are Paris followed by Toulouse. The regions with the largest universities are Ile de France; Rhone Alpes- Alpes Pays de Savoie; and Midi-Pyrenees.



Source: [www.cpu.fr/](http://www.cpu.fr/)

### List of Universities by city/region

#### Aix-Marseille

UNIVERSITÉ DE PROVENCE : AIX-MARSEILLE I

UNIVERSITÉ DE LA MÉDITERRANÉE : AIX-MARSEILLE II

UNIVERSITÉ DE DROIT, D'ÉCONOMIE ET DES SCIENCES: AIX-MARSEILLE III

UNIVERSITÉ D'AVIGNON ET DES PAYS DU VAUCLUSE

#### Amiens

UNIVERSITÉ PICARDIE-JULES-VERNE : AMIENS

UNIVERSITÉ DE TECHNOLOGIE DE COMPIEGNE

#### Besançon

UNIVERSITÉ DE FRANCHE-COMTÉ : BESANCON

UNIVERSITÉ DE TECHNOLOGIE DE BELFORT-MONTBELIARD

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