

Professional outcomes of University of Granada's French studies bachelor's graduates, post-Bologna process: A preliminary study

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to offer an overview of the professional trajectories pursued by graduates of the University of Granada's French Studies bachelor's programme in Spain, post the Bologna Process. It is notable that there are no existing studies addressing the employment outcomes of these graduates. An online questionnaire was designed and distributed to graduates who completed their studies between the academic years 2013/2014 and 2020/2021. The analysis involved 78 completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of 31%. Our preliminary findings uncover that a significant proportion of graduates (73.1%; 30/41) found employment as French language teachers, predominantly within the Spanish public educational system (56.6%; 17/30). This aligns with career paths outlined in the corresponding White Paper (*Libro Blanco*). Of these, 56.6% (17/30) were engaged in full-time positions, with 26.6% (8/30) securing permanent contracts as civil servants. The duration of the degree programme and prior professional experiences acquired during the course emerged as pivotal factors influencing graduates' integration into the labour market. These insights could prove valuable to stakeholders contemplating adjustments to the French Studies bachelor's program, ensuring its alignment with the evolving demands of the current job market..

Keywords: Follow-up study, labour market integration, Bologna Process, bachelor's degree in French Studies, Spain

Salidas profesionales post Bolonia del Grado en Estudios Franceses de la Universidad de Granada: Un estudio preliminar

RESUMEN: Este trabajo pretende ofrecer una visión general de las trayectorias profesionales seguidas por los egresados del Grado en Estudios Franceses (GEF) de la UGR, tras el Proceso de Bolonia. Cabe destacar la ausencia de estudios que aborden la inserción laboral de estos graduados. Se diseñó y distribuyó un cuestionario online entre los egresados que finalizaron sus estudios entre 2013/2014 y 2020/2021. El análisis incluyó 78 cuestionarios completados, representando una tasa de respuesta del 31%. Nuestros resultados preliminares

revelan que una proporción significativa de graduados (73,1%; 30/41) encontraron empleo como profesores de francés, predominantemente dentro del sistema educativo público español (56,6%; 17/30). Esto coincide con las trayectorias profesionales esbozadas en el *Libro Blanco* correspondiente. De ellos, el 56,6% (17/30) trabajaba a tiempo completo, y el 26,6% (8/30) tenía un contrato fijo como funcionarios. La duración de la titulación y la experiencia profesional previa adquirida durante los estudios resultaron ser factores fundamentales que influyeron en la inserción laboral. Estas percepciones podrían resultar valiosas para las partes interesadas que contemplen la posibilidad de introducir ajustes en el programa del GEF, garantizando su adecuación a la evolución de las demandas del mercado laboral actual.

Palabras clave: Estudio de seguimiento, inserción laboral, Proceso de Bolonia, Grado en Estudios Franceses, España

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1999, Spain has participated in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), known as the Bologna Process, which restructured university degrees into three cycles: bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies (European Commission, n.d.). This reform emphasises equipping students with the knowledge and skills relevant to the job market (García-Esteban & Jahnke, 2020). The new system focuses on enhancing employability and adopting a competency-based approach to ensure professional skills (García Manjón & Pérez López, 2008).

Despite millions of graduates entering the workforce annually (OECD, 2020), younger adults face precarious employment conditions (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016) characterised by temporary contracts, lower wages, unpaid overtime or undeclared work (OECD, 2018; OECD, 2019). European youth unemployment rates have remained high since the 2008 financial crisis, averaging around 20%, with southern European countries experiencing even higher rates (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016). This often leads to overeducation, especially in Spain, where it poses a significant risk compared to other European countries, occurring “when mass participation in higher education is not accompanied by a high rate of skilled employment creation” (Barone & Ortiz, 2011: 336).

Past research predominantly focuses on defining and measuring employability (Harvey, 2010), active labour market policies in Europe (Garrouste & Rodrigues, 2014; Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016), work transition (Monteiro et al., 2020), student perspectives (Tymon, 2013; Vargas et al., 2018; Pereira et al., 2019) and mobility effects on skills and employability (European Commission, 2014; García-Esteban & Jahnke, 2020). However, few studies explore employment outcomes of bachelor's degree holders in Spain (Tejada Artigas, 2001; Arquer-Montaño et al., 2009; Otero Espinar et al., 2020), with no inclusion of French Philology or Studies graduates except in one Nigerian study (Osunniran & Also, 2020). Methodologies in these studies primarily involve graduate questionnaires (tracer study) (Tejada Artigas, 2001; Arquer-Montaño et al., 2009; Otero Espinar et al., 2020) and/or semi-structured interviews (Arquer-Montaño et al., 2009).

Additionally, national and regional statistical institutions study graduate integration into the labour market. The National Institute of Statistics in Spain's (2019) survey reveals that Arts and Humanities degrees exhibit the lowest employment rate (76.3%) and the highest unemployment rate (13.4%) compared to other fields. Conversely, data from the Andalusian Institute of Statistics (n.d.) shows that Andalusian public university graduates in languages

have more professional opportunities. Therefore, this study focuses on the University of Granada (UGR) in Andalusia.

In Spain, a bachelor's degree in French Studies (BaFS) (four-year duration, 240 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)) is available at 8 universities¹, including 3 in Andalusia. The UGR offers the second highest number of places annually (65 in 2020/2021) after the University of Seville (75 in 2020/2021). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport's study focused on 2009/2010 graduates under the pre-Bologna curriculum, just four years after graduation. It found that 7% of UGR French Philology graduates were employed one year after graduation, with 50% in relevant jobs. Four years later, 39% were employed, with 45% in relevant roles. However, data on post-Bologna BaFS graduates, introduced in 2010/2011, is lacking.

According to ANECA (n.d.)², BaFS graduates are trained to access the career profiles outlined in the White Paper for the bachelor's degree in the field of language, literature, culture and civilisation (*Libro Blanco del Título de Grado en estudios en el ámbito de la lengua, literatura, cultura y civilización*)³. These include teaching; research; translation; language planning and consultancy; linguistic and intercultural mediation; publishing industry; linguistic and literary management and consultancy in the media; public administrations; cultural management; tourism management; management and consultancy in documentation, archives and libraries; and human resources management. This paper aims to provide insight into BaFS graduates' career paths at UGR from 2013/2014 to 2020/2021, post-Bologna implementation.

2. AIMS OF THE STUDY

Our paper aims to provide an overview of the employment outcomes of UGR graduates of the BaFS programme after the Bologna Process. This information is particularly relevant as it aligns with the objectives outlined in the respective White Paper. By better understanding the outcomes of this particular degree, the university can position itself as a stakeholder in making organisational or structural changes to the bachelor's degree, thereby improving graduate employability.

3. METHODOLOGY

Our questionnaire is based on the structure questions used in Otero Espinar et al.'s questionnaire for Mathematics graduates (2020), which is the only study, to our knowledge, that was carried out in Spain after the Bologna Process. Using closed and open-ended questions, we reveal the outcomes of the BaFS and provide an overview of graduate career paths.

¹ According to the Ministry of Universities, there were 84 universities active in Spain (50 public and 34 private ones) in 2020/2021.

² The White Paper results from the work carried out by a network of Spanish universities, supported by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), aiming to undertake studies and make practical suggestions in designing a degree adapted to the EHEA.

³ https://www.aneca.es/documents/20123/63950/libroblanco_lengua_def.pdf/04b2610a-b65f-c858-d531-ecfd6d7ce599?t=1654601680609

It was created with *Google Forms* and divided into three parts: personal data, education and occupation, containing 33 closed-ended and multiple choice questions (of which 20 were related to work), and 2 open-ended questions. More detail about our questionnaire is provided in section 4.

We obtained students' personal email addresses through an official request to the UGR, but encountered missing alumni information due to the university's outdated records. Furthermore, only those who consented on time were included. The online questionnaire underwent testing before dissemination via email and social networks (network sample). Participants had one month to respond (between January 31st and February 28th 2022), with assurance of confidentiality in accordance with Spanish data protection legislation (1999). All respondents provided informed consent. Out of 91 responses, 13 were excluded for not meeting the target criteria (as they were pre-Bologna Process graduates). We processed 78 responses from 252 former bachelor students (2013/2014-2020/2021)⁴ with a 31% response rate. The UGR's lack of contact with former students posed challenges, particularly almost 10 years post-graduation⁵. Detailed information about the participants is provided in subsection 4.1.

To analyse the data, we used an *Excel spreadsheet* generated by *Google Forms* and a *Word document* listing participants' employment status (cf. 4.2.1, 4.2.2). This allowed us to identify and compare relevant information; to process quantitative data, calculating percentages and mean \pm standard deviation; and to describe them in tables (1, 2, 3) and figures (1, 2, 3). Moreover, Kendall's rank correlation test was adopted to statistically determine the correlation between the average grade and study duration using SPSS 15.0 software. Regarding the qualitative results (cf. 4.3), the answers to the open-ended questions were classified according to topics and keywords, from which we calculated percentages.

4. FINDINGS

Regarding our findings, first, we examine the personal information of respondents (nationality, country of residence, gender, age and general academic background). Then, we analyse quantitative data, reporting the outcomes by groups: participants who found employment after graduation (G1) and those who did not (G2). Finally, results regarding the graduates' perceptions are presented without distinguishing groups.

4.1 Participants' academic background

The majority of participants held Spanish nationality (92.3%; 72/78). A minority (7.7%, 6/78) held other nationalities (1 Italian, 1 Romanian, 1 Canadian, 1 French) or dual French-Spanish nationality (2.6%, 2/78). Most respondents resided in Spain (87.1%), mainly in the region of Andalusia (of which 39.7% in the province of Granada), and some in other

⁴ According to the Employment Observatory of the Employment and Internship Center of the Vice-Rectorate for Social Innovation, Employability and Entrepreneurship of the UGR, 17 students of the BaFS graduated in 2013/2014, 30 in 2014/2015, 21 in 2015/2016, 34 in 2016/2017, 31 in 2017/2018, 33 in 2018/2019, 46 in 2019/2020 and 40 in 2020/2021.

⁵ The UGR alumni programme of the Vice-Rectorate for students and employability is relatively new (launched in 2018/2019) and former students are not required to participate.

European countries, such as France or Germany. The majority of respondents were female (80.7%) and 15 were male (19.2%). Regarding age range⁶, more than half (55.1%) were between 26 and 30 years old, followed by 27 participants (34.6%) ranging between 20 and 25 years old, 6 were between 31 and 35 years old, and 2 were older than 36 years (Table 1).

Table 1. Age range (in years) of participants and graduation year of the BaFS.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	TOTAL
20-25 y.	0	0	0	0	2	6	18	1	27
26-30 y.	1	5	6	13	9	6	3	0	43
31-35 y.	1	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	6
> 36 y.	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
TOTAL	2	7	7	15	11	14	21	1	78

First, in this sample of 78 participants, the duration of study to successful completion of the BaFS was between 4 and 9 years, with a mean duration of 4.85 ± 1.13 years (mean \pm standard deviation). Nearly half of the participants (47.4%) completed it within 4 years of full-time study (Figure 1). The majority obtained an average grade between 7 and 8.9 out of 10. Students who took longer than 4 years to graduate achieved a lower average grade. In addition, Kendall's rank correlation analysis revealed a negative correlation ($p=0.000$ and correlation coefficient $r=-0.469$) between the study duration and the average grade. This means that the longer students took to complete their studies, the lower the average grade obtained.

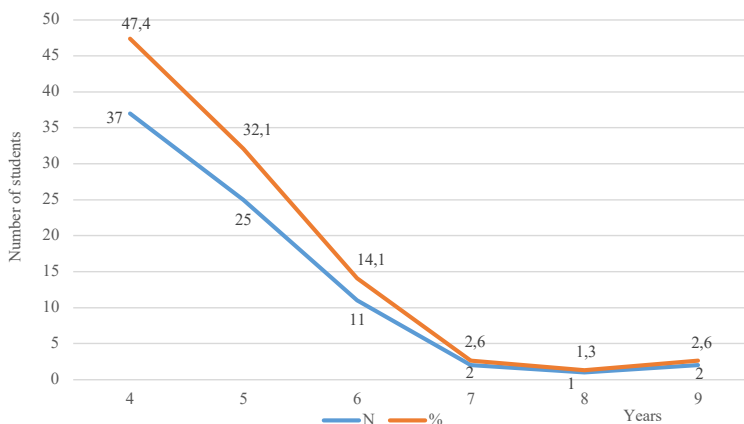


Figure 1. Study duration in years.

⁶ These ranges are informed by Otero Espinar et al. 's study (2020) and were designed according to the Spanish Higher Education system. In Spain, it is common to have students starting their university studies at the age of 17 (students can graduate at the age of 20 after a four-year university course). As students must enrol onto a minimum of 9 ECTS and a maximum of 90 ECTS in each academic year, they are also able to study more advanced subjects and graduate within three years instead of four.

In Spain, grades are awarded between 0 and 10: sufficient/satisfactory (between 5 and 6.9), good (between 7 and 8.9) and very good/excellent (more than 9)⁷. The minimum grade to pass is 5. Slightly more than half of the participants (51.2%; 40/78) achieved an average grade between 7 and 8.9, followed by 46.1% (36/78) between 5 and 6.9. 2.5% (2/78) obtained a higher average grade (more than 9).

Regarding further study, apart from the BaFS, a minority (15.3%; 12/78) completed another undergraduate degree and a majority (85.8%; 67/78) already held or were completing a master's degree (MA). We established four categories based on responses: (1) those who held one MA (33.3%; 26/78), (2) those who had completed more than one master's degrees (21.7%; 17/78), (3) those who were enrolled onto a master's programme and had previously completed one or more master's degrees (14.1%; 11/78), and (4) those who were enrolled on a master's programme (16.6%; 13/78). In addition, 3 participants (3.8%) were pursuing doctoral studies and 1 (1.2%) held a PhD.

Regarding (inter)national mobilities, 45 respondents (57.6%) completed an exchange. The majority of exchanges lasted one academic year, with one exchange lasting one semester only. The majority completed an exchange during their bachelor's degree (91.1%; 41/45), while one respondent completed exchanges during their bachelor's and MA. One respondent completed an exchange during their MA only. In relation to location⁸, 44 went to a French-speaking country such as France⁹ (N=42), Morocco (N=1, Université Cadi Ayyad) or Canada (N=1, Université de Montréal), and 2 completed exchanges in Spain¹⁰ (in one case the exchange lasted one semester during their MA at the UGR and in the other, the exchange took place over one academic year during the bachelor's degree at the University of Salamanca, Castile and León).

Of all the respondents, 48 (61.5%) obtained an official diploma in FFL of which 22 (28.2%) took the exam during their studies and 26 (33.3%) took it after their studies. Of the obtained European language levels, C1 is the most common level (50%), followed by B2 (31.2%), C2 (16.6%) and B1 (2%). More than half of those with a C1 level diploma (58.3%; 14/24) obtained it between one year and five years after graduating. 65 participants (83.3%) claimed to be able to speak at least one other foreign language, with English being the most common (89%; 58/65).

4.2 Quantitative results

In the following section, the quantitative outcomes are reported by group. Firstly, we analyse the responses of the participants who found employment (G1) after graduating, and, secondly, those who did not find employment (G2). We also highlight participants who found work after their bachelor's degree, but were unemployed at the time of the questionnaire.

⁷ According to the Vice-Rectorate of Internationalisation of the UGR, “aprobado”, “notable” and “sobresaliente” mean respectively ‘sufficient/satisfactory’, ‘good’ and ‘very good/excellent’ in English.

⁸ Two respondents did not mention the host university.

⁹ The host university that received, during one academic year, the highest number of students of the BaFS (16.6%; 7/42) was the Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier (region of Occitania).

¹⁰ The SICUE mobility programme allows students to carry out part of their studies in a Spanish university different from their own by benefiting from the SENECA scholarship.

4.2.1. Outcomes of G1 who found employment after graduation

First, slightly more than half of the respondents (52.5%; 41/78) who graduated between 2013/2014 and 2020/2021 (Figure 2) secured employment within a year of graduating. Further analysis in Figure 2 reveals that 100% of participants who graduated in 2013/2014 were employed, followed by 85.7% for the 2015/2016 cohort, 72.7% for the 2017/2018 cohort, and 71.4% for the 2014/2015 cohort. Over half of the 2016/2017 graduates (66.6%) also found employment. However, for graduates completing their bachelor's degrees later (between 2019 and 2021), the employment rate declined (Figure 2). Indeed, 30.8% of participants from the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 cohorts who did not secure employment were, at the time of the questionnaire, enrolled on a qualifying MA¹¹ with the goal of becoming French language teachers in regulated education. It is important to highlight that this master's programme has specific cut-off marks¹², leading many graduates to wait until the following year for acceptance. As for the remaining participants, their situation can be attributed to the requirement of passing a competitive examination if they intend to work in the public sector. Unfortunately, this examination is not held annually and cannot be taken immediately upon completion of the MA¹³.

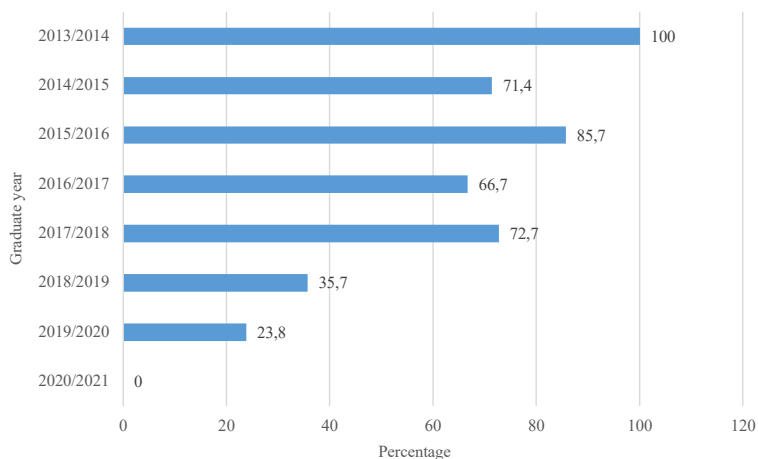


Figure 2. Presentation of the percentage of graduates (per graduate year) who found employment after completion of their university degrees.

Second, regarding the duration of study, participants who found employment after graduating spent an average of 4.8 years completing their bachelor's degree. Of the participants who stayed

¹¹ The MA is called "Máster en Profesorado de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanzas de idiomas" and lasts one year. According to the State Agency for the Official State Gazette (2008): "To teach in secondary education compulsory, high school, vocational training and language teaching, it will be necessary to be in possession of an official master's degree that accredits pedagogical and didactic training in accordance with the requirements of articles 94, 95 and 97 of Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, Education".

¹² The cut-off mark for the qualifying MA in French at the UGR in 2020/2021 was 7.30/10 (good).

¹³ The most recent calls were in 2018 and 2021.

in the same job, the average duration of their bachelor’s degree was 4.6 years. Participants who lost their first job took longer to complete their bachelor’s degrees, at an average of 4.9 years.

Third, regarding average grades for the BaFS, slightly more than half of the participants (53.6%; 22/41) achieved an average grade between 7 and 8.9 out of 10, followed by 41.4% (14/41) between 5 and 6.9. 2 (4.8%) obtained a higher average grade (more than 9 out of 10). The majority obtained one or more master’s degrees (78%; 32/41¹⁴) or were studying for (9.7%; 4/41) an MA¹⁵. On-site modality (N=29) was the most frequent, and the hybrid (N=5) and online (N=2) modalities were less frequent. 12.1% (5/41) did not complete an MA. 3 out of 5 participants who did not study for a master’s completed multiple bachelor’s degrees.

The following tables show a list of successfully completed master’s degrees in Spain and in France (Table 2) and a list of master’s degrees being undertaken in Spain and France at the time of the questionnaire (Table 3). As shown in Table 2, graduates of the BaFS tend to pursue master’s studies in Spain and France in different areas, mentioned in the respective White Paper. They most frequently enrol on FFL master’s degrees at Spanish universities, with the UGR being the most frequently chosen. Master’s degrees in areas such as translation or literature are also undertaken in Spain or in France.

Table 2. List of completed master’s degrees in Spain and in France.¹⁶

AREA	MASTER’S DEGREE	INSTITUTION AND N	COUNTRY	TOTAL N
Teaching (French as a Foreign Language)		<i>Universidad de Granada, Andalusia</i> (N=14)	Spain	21
	<i>Máster en Profesorado de Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanzas de Idiomas</i>	<i>Universidad de Jaén, Andalusia</i> (N=2)		
		<i>Universidad de Murcia, Murcia</i> (N=1)		
		<i>Universidad de Valladolid, Castile and León</i> (N=1)		
		<i>Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia, Murcia</i> (N=2)		
		<i>Doble Máster en Profesorado de Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanzas de Idiomas y Máster en Lenguas y Culturas Modernas</i>		
/	<i>Máster en Comercio Internacional</i>	<i>ESIC Business & Marketing School</i>	1	
Translation	<i>Master en Traduction Littéraire et Édition Critique</i>	<i>Université de Lyon</i>	France	1
/	<i>Littérature, art et culture françaises</i>	<i>Université Grenoble Alpes</i>		1
/	<i>Master Arts, lettres et civilisations</i>			1
Total				26

¹⁴ 13 out of 41 (7.3%) already obtained an MA, 13 out of 41 (7.3%) hold more than one MA, and 6 out of 41 (14.6%) were studying for an MA and held another MA.

¹⁵ Those with more than one MA only provided information about the last completed MA.

¹⁶ The master’s degrees that do not belong to any specific area mentioned in the White Paper as a possible professional profile for graduates of a BaFS are indicated with a /. The names of the master’s degrees and their respective universities are in the language of origin.

Similar outcomes are observed in Table 3, where an MA in FFL at Spanish universities is the most frequently selected. Participants also enrol in MA courses in other areas of teaching, such as specific education needs (in Spain) and teaching Spanish as a foreign language (in France); or in publishing (in France).

Table 3. List of master's degrees being undertaken in Spain and France during the completion of the questionnaire.¹⁷

AREA	MASTER'S DEGREE	INSTITUTION AND N	COUNTRY	TOTAL N
Teaching (French as a foreign language)	<i>Máster en Profesorado de Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanzas de Idiomas</i>	<i>Universidad de Jaén, Andalucía (N=2)</i>	Spain	6
		<i>Universidad de Alicante, Valencian Community (N=1)</i>		
		<i>Universidad de Almería, Andalucía (N=1)</i>		
		<i>Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia, Murcia (N=1)</i>		
Teaching (Specific education needs)	<i>Máster en Atención a la Diversidad y Necesidades Educativas Especiales</i>	<i>Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, Community of Madrid (N=1)</i>		1
		<i>Máster en Estudios Franceses y Francófonos</i>		
Publishing industry	<i>Master Livre et médiations (Édition, Commercialisation et Vie Littéraire)</i>	<i>Université de Poitiers</i>		1
Teaching (Spanish as a Foreign Language)	<i>Master Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Éducation et de la Formation - espagnol</i>	<i>Université Grenoble Alpes</i>	France	1
Total				10

Interestingly, of those who successfully completed an MA, the majority participated in an exchange programme during their bachelor's studies. Conversely, of those who did not pursue master's degrees, none studied abroad as undergraduates. Participants preferred exchanges at French universities, lasting one academic year (with one participant completing one semester only). Two participants completed an exchange in a non-francophone country within the European Union and two outside of it. One respondent completed a national stay.

Furthermore, 65.8% (27/41) indicated that they had an official French language diploma, and 44.4% (12/27) of them at C1 level. 33 participants out of 41 (80.4%) indicated speaking one or more foreign languages in addition to French, and 27 (81.8%) specified English.

Next, we present outcomes regarding participants' first employment after graduation (Figure 3). The results of the two largest groups are detailed below: more than half of the

¹⁷ The master's degrees that do not belong to any specific area mentioned in the White Paper as a possible professional profile for graduates of a BaFS are indicated with a /. The names of the master's degrees and their respective universities are in the language of origin.

respondents (58.5%; 24/41) found work either (1) in less than three months (31.7%; 13/41) or (2) between six months and one year (26.8%; 11/41).

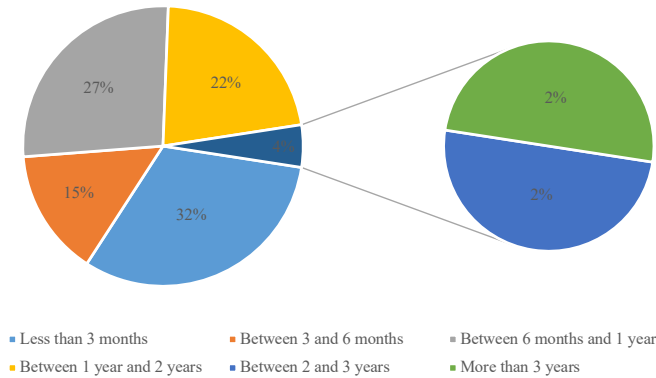


Figure 3. *First job secured after finishing the bachelor's degree.*

First, 31.7% (13/41) found a job in less than three months. In this first group, an employment contract of less than 12 months was the most frequent (61.5%; 8/13), followed by an open-ended employment contract (15.3%; 2/13), an employment contract of more than 12 months (7.6%; 1/13), a self-employed contract (7.6%; 1/13) or other (7.6%; 1/13). The majority had full-time employment (61.5%; 8/13), the rest (38.4%; 5/13) part-time employment. The most common place of work was Spain (76.9%; 10/13), although some found work abroad (23%; 3/13). The majority worked in teaching (84.6%; 11/13), in public (54.5%; 6/11), subsidised (27.2%; 3/11) or private (18.1%; 2/11) educational institutions, followed by a combination of positions in translation and teaching (7.6%; 1/13), or in an international trade consultancy (7.6%; 1/13). The type of FFL work varied from teaching in early childhood education (23%; 3/13)¹⁸, compulsory secondary education and baccalaureate (23%; 3/13), vocational training (7.6%; 1/13), language academy (7.6%; 1/13), to higher education or university (23%; 3/13). When answering the survey, a minority of participants (30.7%; 4/13) still held the same job. Those who no longer had the same job had a work contract, related to the BaFS elsewhere (77.7%; 7/9), for instance: a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months (55.5%; 5/9), a permanent contract (22.2%; 2/9) or other (22.2%; 2/9).

Second, 26.8% (11/41) found a job between six months and a year. In this second group, a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months was the most frequent (63.6%; 7/11), followed by a permanent contract (27.2%; 3/11) or self-employment (9%; 1/11). The majority had a part-time job (72.7%; 8/11) ahead of those with a full-time job (27.2%; 3/11). The most common place of work was Spain (100%; 11/11). 100% of them worked in teaching, in public (40%; 4/10), private (40%; 4/10) or subsidised (20%; 2/10) educational institutions¹⁹. The type of FFL work was varied: from teaching in early childhood education (27.2%; 3/11),

¹⁸ A combined Bachelor's degree in Primary Education and French Studies exists since 2016/2017 and allows graduates to teach French in early childhood education centres.

¹⁹ One of the respondents did not specify the type of educational institution.

compulsory secondary education and baccalaureate (27.2%; 3/11), vocational training (9%; 1/11), language academy (18.1%; 2/11), to higher education or university (9%; 1/11). One respondent was employed in extracurricular English teaching. When answering the questionnaire, a minority of participants (36.3%; 4/11) still held the same job. Those who no longer had the same job had a work contract related to the BaFS elsewhere (42.8%; 3/7), for instance: a fixed-term contract of less than 12 months (42.8%; 3/7), a fixed-term contract of more than 12 months (14.2%; 1/7) or other (42.8%; 3/7).

Comparing these two groups, a higher percentage of those who have found employment 6 months to 1 year after graduation (36%; 4/11) held the same job in FFL teaching (with permanent contracts being the most frequent), compared to those who found a job more quickly, also in teaching (with a contract of less than 12 months being the most frequent) (30%; 4/13).

Finally, 6.4% (5/78) of those initially employed after graduation stated that they were unemployed when completing the questionnaire.

The satisfaction with their university studies and the preparation for the labour market is presented below.

61% (22/36) of the participants who found a job at the end of their degrees and were working when they completed the questionnaire, had a first professional experience (e.g. internship, volunteer work or language assistant work) during their studies. Second, 92% (33/36) of the respondents who found a job after graduating and were working, considered that studying the BaFS was a good decision. Third, more than half (53%; 19/36) of those who found a job at the end of their degree and were working, considered that the BaFS helped them enormously to find the job they held.

4.2.2 Outcomes of G2 who did not find employment after graduation

Nearly half of all participants (47.4%; 37/78) did not find work after graduating, of which 59.4% (22/37) successfully completed a master's programme (FFL being the most represented master's programme) and 16.2% (6/37) did not²⁰. Of those who did not find employment, 43% (16/37) completed their studies in 2019/2020 and 2.7% (1/37) in 2020/2021. It is therefore unsurprising that these graduates had not yet found employment. 56.7% (21/37) finished the BaFS after the four-year period, within five years²¹. 57.1% (12/21) completed their bachelor's degree in five years and 28.5% (6/21) in six years. 19/37 (51.3%) of participants obtained an average grade between 5 and 6.9 out of 10 and the rest between 7 and 8.9 out of 10.

59.4% (22/37) indicated that they had an official French language diploma, and 36.3% (8/22) of them at level C1. Moreover, 32 participants out of 37 (86.4%) indicated speaking one or more additional foreign languages. 31 of them (96.8%) specified English.

With regard to mobility, a little more than half of the respondents (56.7%; 21/37) completed an international exchange (Erasmus exchange in French universities for one academic year, with one exception who stayed one semester only).

Regarding professional experience during their degree, only 38% (14/37) mentioned that they had prior experience.

²⁰ 10.8% (4/37) did other undergraduate studies and one person (who did not have an MA) was in the process of completing another undergraduate degree when answering the questionnaire (2.7%, 1/37).

²¹ One participant did the BaFS in three years.

Finally, fewer than half of participants who did not find a job after graduating (46%; 17/37) considered that they made the right choice by studying the BaFS. 27% (10/37) of the participants considered that the COVID-19 situation had slowed down their integration into the labour market.

4.3. Qualitative results

In this section, we present relevant findings from the two open-ended questions. The first question was: “Are you satisfied with your current job? Why/Why not?” and the second was: “After completing your undergraduate studies and with your current experience, what aspects of the French Studies degree do you think should be changed to facilitate the integration of graduates into the labour market (e.g., types of subjects, internships, etc.)?”. The responses have been translated into English while respecting the original text.

First, 100% of those who were in the same job as when they finished their bachelor’s degree were satisfied with it. Below is an example of a response that demonstrates the link between the application of knowledge acquired during the degree and job satisfaction:

(1) *“I am very satisfied because throughout the year and a half in which I have worked as a teacher of FFL, I have been able to put into practice all the knowledge that I acquired in the bachelor’s degree and the two master’s degrees, in addition to acquiring many professional and personal skills.”*

79% of the respondents (15/19) who changed jobs considered themselves satisfied with their current job. Those who were dissatisfied highlighted the lack of professional opportunities (2 and 3) and poor working conditions in charter schools²² (4):

(2) *“No, because hardly anything can be found.”*

(3) *“No, it’s not a job with enough hours to provide long-term stability.”*

(4) *“No, the charter schools provide worse conditions than the public ones.”*

In general, the participants asserted that there is little connection between the BaFS and the professional opportunities it offers (not restricted to teaching) and that the content and materials can be improved in this regard. 68% (53/78) consider that the programme should offer the possibility of an optional or compulsory internship. Below are some of the responses:

(5) *“The bachelor’s degree should offer a one-month minimum internship to really know what career path to choose and not go in blindly.”*

²² In Spain there are three types of schools which can be public (a), charter (b) and private (c). Public schools are funded and administered by the State. Their teaching staff are civil servants selected through competitive examinations.

(a) Public schools are the main choice in Spain.

(b) Mostly religious, charter schools are hybrid. Their administration is private, although their (main) funding is public. The selection process for teachers is similar to that of a private company.

(c) Private schools are educational companies. They are financed exclusively by fees assigned to families.

(6) *"Compulsory or at least optional internships should be offered, the internship I did I got through Icaro [platform], and it did not count in my academic record."*

(7) *"It is absolutely necessary to include internship periods (in companies, schools, institutes, associations, etc.) across bachelor's degree programmes, at least in the last two years, given that until then the degree contains exclusively theoretical content that, in many cases, does not really prepare you for performing well in the professional world."*

Finally, some participants suggested introducing specialisms during the final year of study (e.g. teaching, translation, etc.). One person suggested the creation of a platform to promote the professional integration of students²³.

5. DISCUSSION

In the following section, the most relevant results are contrasted against published research.

First, as discussed above, the most common professional sector for first employment was FFL teaching (73.1%; 30/41) -being one of the employment sectors mentioned in the White Paper- in public educational institutions in Spain (56.6%; 17/30). 56.6% (17/30) of employed participants were working full time and 26.6% (8/30) had a permanent position in a school as civil servants after completing a selective qualifying MA and passing a competitive examination. According to *Libre Mercado* (2023), 74% of Spaniards consider that being a civil servant offers a better quality of life. Following the Plan for the Promotion of Multilingualism in Andalusia and the progressive implementation of bilingual schools, there has been a significant increase in employment opportunities for French teachers in both secondary education and special education language teaching. In 2004/2005 there were 20 French-English bilingual schools in Andalusia and after fifteen years, in 2021/2022, this number has increased to 60, including 26 French bilingual schools (Junta de Andalucía, n.d.). This can explain the high interest in this work sector.

Second, a recent study (Aina & Casalone, 2020) found that prolonging the duration of a bachelor's degree is detrimental to students seeking employment (especially in the humanities) as they are perceived as "weaker" on the labour market. There may be a relationship between the duration of study and access to the labour market. Of the participants who did find employment, 51% (21/41) completed their degree on time. Of those who did not find employment, only 43% (16/37) completed the BaFS on time. The rest extended their studies for up to 9 years. In some cases, this may be due to the pandemic (COVID-19) (Aucejo et al., 2020). As mentioned above, the students who took longer than four years to complete their degree had a lower average grade. It is therefore important to note the duration of studies (especially for women) with regard to labour market integration and to ensure students are informed about its impact on their professional future (Aina & Casalone, 2020).

Third, fewer than half of the participants consider language skills to be very important. Of those who found a job, 43.9% (18/41) obtained an official certificate accrediting a high

²³ The Employment and Work placement Office promoted by the Vice-Rectorate for Students Services and Employability of the UGR already offers guidance to students and alumni on the labour market integration, but there is no specific platform for French Studies.

level, C1 (29.2%; 12/41) or C2 (14.6%; 6/41) in FFL. 80.4% (33/41) claim to know one or more other foreign languages in addition to French and 27 (81.8%) specified English. Of those who did not find a job, we observe that a slightly higher percentage (37.48%; 14/37) obtained an official certification accrediting a high level, C1 (32.4%; 12/37) but a lower percentage obtained C2 (5.4%; 2/37) in FFL. 86.4% (32/37) claim to know one or more foreign languages, and 31 (96.8%) indicated English. Given that according to *El Mundo* (2017), the main reason Spaniards study a new foreign language nowadays is because they believe they need it for their work (61.2%), this can explain why those who did not find a job are more prone to learn foreign languages²⁴.

Regarding mobility, 65.8% (27/41) of the participants who found employment completed study abroad in a French-speaking country during their studies, compared to a little more than half of the respondents who did not find a job (56.7%; 21/37). Past research (McManus et al., 2021) shows that study abroad can improve language skills by changing the learning context, but in order for it to be beneficial, students must be supported upon their return. For example, students can be encouraged to obtain an official French language certification after mobility to give students a competitive advantage when applying to become French language teachers in the public sector and to possibly facilitate obtaining a job²⁵. Furthermore, Garcia-Esteban & Jahnke (2020) believe that exchanges contribute to improved linguistic skills, personal development and (inter)cultural awareness.

While 61% (25/41) of those who secured employment after completing their degrees had undertaken work experience during their time at university, 62% of those who remained unemployed had gained no work experience while at university. Professional experience during the degree is therefore significant in finding subsequent employment. Beyond the possibility of finding employment more quickly (Le Saout & Coudin, 2015), one-year internships allow students to better understand their professional objectives as well as the labour market (Dapía Conde & Fernández González, 2016).

Finally, as this is a preliminary study, many of the participants had not secured employment as they had just completed the BaFS. A questionnaire should therefore be repeated in the future to see whether the participants who completed their degree in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 do secure employment.

6. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to provide insights into BaFS graduates' career paths at UGR post-Bologna which could prove valuable to stakeholders contemplating adjustments to the BaFS, ensuring its alignment with the evolving demands of the current job market. Despite the small sample size, this study was representative of 2013/2014-2020/2021 cohorts (central limit theorem) and provides useful findings upon which future research can expand. Consequently, universities must maintain contact with alumni to track their professional progress effectively.

We revealed that the duration of study plays an important role in finding employment (Aina & Casalone, 2020). We consider that it is the responsibility of the university to generate

²⁴ The Public Service of State Employment in Andalusia also offers English lessons for unemployed people.

²⁵ According to the scale for valuing merits, candidates can be given 1 point (level B2), 1.5 points (level C1) or 2 points (level C2) for an official French language certification.

awareness of this from the first year of the BaFS. Given that academically weaker students may extend the duration of their degrees due to the pandemic (Aucejo et al., 2020), it would be interesting to see its consequences on the new generations entering the labour market.

Finally, the inclusion of internships is demonstrably beneficial to graduate labour market integration (Le Saout & Coudin, 2015; Dapía Conde & Fernández González, 2016) yet remains uncommon (68% of our participants highlighted a lack of internship opportunities in the BaFS). The University of La Laguna's (Spain) bachelor's degree in Applied Francophone Studies, which includes a compulsory internship of 18 out of 240 ECTS, may be an interesting case study. A suggestion for further study is to seek the knowledge of professionals regarding the skills needed in French Studies to secure future employment to adapt the organisation, structure or content of the degree in the future (Sánchez-Sánchez et al., 2017).

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