

## **France: DAVA Besançon**

### **Supporting Disabled Workers towards the Validation of Experience (VAE)**

#### **Type of provider**

Rectorate of the Besançon Academy, under the Ministry of National Education:  
Academic Validation of Experience (VAE)

The support services are carried out by counsellors trained in validation.

#### **Objective**

Individuals with at least one year of work experience have the right to participate in VAE, based on the Work and Education Code. The VAE process takes approximately 15 hours. It involves the support of a counsellor who assists the candidate in preparing and submitting two booklets.

The first booklet is essentially an admission file. The second booklet is a description of professional experiences (a validation file). The latter helps to prepare the candidate for an oral interview, which will be assessed by a jury, a necessary step to obtain certification from the Ministry.

Workshops are organised to prepare candidates for the oral examination in front of the jury.

An example of the process describes how a hearing-impaired candidate obtained his culinary degree. This candidate was determined to validate his culinary degree (CAP) after having gained work experience. The candidate encountered speech and comprehension difficulties. The candidate, who was legally recognized as a disabled worker, attended a school for the hearing impaired until middle school level.

After failing the CAP formal examination, the candidate wished to validate his experience via VAE. He benefited from support and guidance by a counsellor close to his home.

This assessment process led the candidate to become familiar with the “Return to Experience” (REX) approach, by analysing activities and employing action methods. He also became familiar and at ease with the French repository of competences (Référentiel de compétences).

#### **Assessment approaches**

Preparation and Support for the VAE Process:

- understanding the second booklet (validation file)
- analysis of prior work experiences
- learning about the French repository of competences
- putting experience into words
- writing, development, organising and expressing responses for the jury.

Regarding content:

- preparing booklet 2: description and analysis of the candidate’s pathway, jobs and any significant experiences or activities.
- analysis of one’s prior professional experience and training
- analysis of the candidate’s non-professional background
- identifying the significant elements of the candidate’s career
- identifying organizations and jobs related to skills indicated in the repository of competences

## Target group

Anyone engaged in the labour market with at least one year experience

## Potential transferability/ scalability

### Introducing the VAE process

Initially unaware of the requirements connected to the validation process, the candidate submitted a booklet presenting his experience. It was not very detailed and barely legible. The VAE counsellor felt that the candidate would have no chance of obtaining his degree based on these first efforts. She contacted his social worker who provided additional information about the candidate's disability.

An interview was arranged with the candidate to evaluate his needs and the relevance of the VAE process. At the end of the interview, the counselor contacted the employer to arrange financing for the support services. She also contacted the Examination Division and the social worker in order to adjust the examination style, in light of his disability.

The candidate asked to be assisted for the written part of the process (the booklets), but not for the oral examination with the jury.

### Support Process

The support took place according to scheduled meeting times. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the DAVA counselor made herself available according to the candidate's needs. It should be noted that the candidate also solicited help outside appointment times, in order to complete the booklet or other documents.

The counsellor helped by:

- asking simple questions during interviews;
- teaching computer word processing;
- assisting in writing simple and short sentences;
- reformulating the skills and tasks described by the candidate.

The qualities required by the counsellor were patience, kindness, active listening and the ability to adapt to the situation.

After a first interview with the jury, it was decided that the examination would be adjusted to accommodate the candidate. This required collaboration among the social worker, the MDPH (Regional Disability Office), the DEC (Examination Division), the candidate and the counsellor. However, the candidate - who gained confidence throughout the support process - ultimately felt that he did not want any particular provisions to be made for him with regards to the oral examination process with the jury.

## Results

The candidate successfully graduated and received his diploma, after his oral examination with the jury.

Generally - in the case of partial validation - a follow-up appointment is proposed to the candidate to continue the certification process.

## Summaries or Basic elements of analysis

What made this experience successful was:

- the adaptability of the counsellor to identify and take into account the difficulties of the candidate, to individualize his teaching practice
- being attentive to the candidate's situation and being and respecting his needs and will
- working in a partnership with and coordinating between different professionals in social and professional contexts

## Steps

Following this experience, DAVA Besançon has begun developing a support system to protect disabled workers in the workplace

