

Fleurier Quality Foundation

A decade of activity

The Fleurier Quality Foundation and the three founding brands – Bovet Fleurier, Chopard Manufacture and Parmigiani Fleurier – are proud to be celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Fleurier Quality Foundation (FQF) certification.

Thank to a decade of work, this certification has established itself as the most demanding of all in the watchmaking world, since it challenges timepieces in their entirety. Through the intransigent demands implied by its five complementary test procedures and the resulting constraints, the Fleurier Quality Foundation has driven the three founding brands to excel in terms of both expertise and progress. Even if the Fleurier Quality Foundation certification involves only a limited number of products, it has an impact on all its watchmaking developments. It is a quality benchmark that spurs on all those involved to achieve excellence in each and every creation.

Opening of the FQF-Lab

As of autumn 2014, the Fleurier Quality Foundation is making the revolutionary Fleuritest machine available to any Swiss brand not belonging to the Fleurier Quality Foundation but nonetheless wishing to have access to one portion of its analytical procedures. This opening is named "FQF-Lab". It aims at enabling third-party brands to benefit from cutting-edge facilities and offer them an opportunity to evaluate their production.

The Fleuritest now available to any Swiss watch brands is a simulator of wearing conditions especially developed for the Fleurier Quality Foundation and which is unique in the world. It consists of a large computer-guided propeller putting the

watches undergoing the test phase through a series of three-dimensional movements involving recreating everyday situations. The timekeeping precision of the watches is tested for 24 hours and this is one of the few tests in the world to deal with the finished product: a fully cased-up watch ready to be sold.

Calling upon the FQF-Lab does not afford access to being granted the Fleurier Quality Foundation certification, which implies four additional tests. Instead, it offers manufacturers a unique opportunity to evaluate their work and to continually optimise the industrial processes.

Fleurier Quality Foundation certification

The early days of the certification

The Fleurier Quality Foundation certification stemmed from exchanges between Karl-Friedrich Scheufele and Michel Parmigiani in the early 2000s. The respective presidents of Chopard Manufacture and Parmigiani Fleurier were both interested in forging a uniform definition of the terms “high-end” and “prestige” watchmaking. Together, they led the thought process right from the outset. What is horological quality? What does the final customer expect? What conflicts may arise between the quest for quality and the requirements entailed by series production? Finally, how could this quality be certified in a manner that is credible for clients? These questions led the two watchmakers to define the broad outlines of the most demanding certification to date and which is defined as follows.

The Fleurier Quality Foundation certification is open to all producers of Swiss mechanical Haute Horlogerie – and not only to those based in Fleurier as some might mistakenly think. It endows products with a set of high-level quality certifications. Geared towards the final customer, the demands guaranteed by the Fleurier Quality Foundation encompass precision in all circumstances; robustness and durability; as well as the impeccable quality of aesthetic finishes.

The five certification criteria

- *Manufactured 100% in Switzerland*

The materials may come from anywhere in the world; as too may the design and the theoretical conception of the project. On the other hand, the entire work of actually producing the timepiece and any phases involving even the slightest transformations of the material must be done in Switzerland. This criteria has been added to the certification process in 2012.

This criterion is thus clearly distinguished from the “Swiss Made” label, which involves very few additional controls, providing that 50% of the watch ‘head’ (meaning the watch before it is fitted with its strap or bracelet) has been produced in Switzerland. No exceptions are tolerated to this first criterion for Fleurier Quality Foundation certification and provenance is stringently verified in all instances.

- *Fine aesthetic workmanship*

Several exclusive aesthetic finishing criteria are laid down in an extremely precise set of specifications. Only traditional, precious or avant-garde materials may be used, and these must be the object of decorative work reflecting substantial expertise and generating aesthetic added value. Each part of the watch is subjected to microscopic scrutiny to evaluate its level of workmanship and to guarantee a quest for absolute excellence, yet without in any way affecting technical reliability.

- *COSC – the Swiss chronometer testing authority*

The COSC – the Swiss Official Chronometer Control Institute – is a neutral body dedicated to evaluating high-precision watches according to a set of specific tests involving changes in temperature and position spread over several days. Each movement is individually appraised and the certificate granted to models having emerged successfully from this battery of trials testifies to their faultless timekeeping precision.

- *Chronofiable tests*

The Chronofiable tests performed in an independent laboratory certify a movement's resistance to shocks, wearing, water, magnetism – to mention a few factors. Each model undergoes an ageing cycle corresponding to six months of normal wearing; tests designed to measure the push-and-pull forces on the winding stem and pushbuttons; tests on reactions to magnetic fields; and finally, shock-resistance tests using a heavy pendulum or striker.

- *Fleuritest – a wearing simulator unique in the world*

The fifth and last test in the Fleurier Quality Foundation certification process is probably the most impressive and undoubtedly the most exclusive. Developed exclusively for the Fleurier Quality Foundation, the Fleuritest machine features a wear simulator that is unique in the world. A large propeller performing three-dimensional movements is linked to a computer that enables it to identically recreate daily life situations such as putting on a pullover, going jogging or looking for something in a bag. These are followed by calmer phases aimed at corresponding as closely as possible to a full 24-hour cycle on the wrist. The timekeeping precision of the watch is measured with absolute accuracy by the Fleuritest machine which tolerates no differences outside the range of 0 to + 5 seconds per day, making it one of the most demanding devices in existence.

The most demanding certification of Swiss watchmaking world

Fleurier Quality Foundation certification is undeniably the most demanding in the world within today's watch industry and owes this status to three key aspects:

Neutrality

Its independence from the brands it represents ensures impartial judgement and guarantees that there is no risk of any preferential treatment or any accommodating concessions.

The complementary nature of the tests

The five tests comprising ensure that this certification takes account of all aspects of reliability and resistance that affect the life of a timepiece, while combining them with high aesthetic requirements and guaranteed Swiss provenance. Fleurier Quality Foundation certification is based on the premise that the complementary nature of the tests represents the only comprehensive and authentic response to the quest for uncompromising quality demands.

Industrial reproducibility

Fleurier Quality Foundation certification covers the industrial production of timepieces. This obliges brands to develop manufacturing processes that are reproducible while remaining of extremely high quality – and therein lies the main challenge. The demand for quality begins from the initial conception of the object with the necessity to develop a bedrock of excellence. It continues with programming machines and optimising their work. It calls for an ongoing dialogue between technicians and watchmakers, an approach yielding a wealth of positive results and conducive to continuous progress.