WSET® Level 4 Diploma in Wines and Spirits

Examiners' Report for 2018-19

Contents

Introduction

This report is designed to assist students and those involved in the teaching of the Diploma by giving feedback on examination performance in the 2018-19 academic year. Statistical data on the pass rates for Diploma examinations for the past six years, together with general information on grade bands, appears in the Appendices.

Please note this is the final report for the Diploma in Wines and Spirits. Candidates studying for the Diploma in Wines should use the resources available on the online classroom as their primary source for guidance but may find this report useful in identifying common pitfalls and mistakes students often make.

The information provided in this report relates to examinations held during the 2018-19 academic year and reflects assessment procedures in force at that time. You are advised to read this report in conjunction with the latest editions of the Specification and Candidate Assessment Guide.

Unit 1 – The Global Business of Alcoholic Beverages

Assessment for Unit 1 takes two forms: the open-book coursework assignment and the case study which is researched in advance but completed in a closed-book examination. The pass rate for both assessment types is high.

Coursework assignments

Coursework assignments are marked out of 100. 80 marks are allocated to the content of the assignment, as set out in the assignment brief. The remaining 20 marks are available for the candidate's bibliography, presentation (including spelling, grammar and legibility) and the structure and style of the assignment (including overall coherence, flair, fluency and use of examples).

Key observations from coursework assignment examiners are as follows:

- Candidates must address **every section of the assignment brief**. Failure to do so results in an automatic fail grade.

- Marks will be withheld where work is presented with **spelling and/or grammatical errors**; with computer spellcheck functions, such errors are unacceptable. Candidates are advised to check their work carefully.

- The **bibliography** is an essential part of the coursework assignment. It should list a variety of sources (books, trade journals, internet articles, interviews, etc.).

  As to be expected, internet sources feature strongly in most candidates' bibliographies, but these should be used in conjunction with other types of source material such as textbooks, personal contact with subject experts and the trade press. Sources should have a strong commercial focus. Publications such as The Drinks Business or Just Drinks are useful for identifying current trends and topical issues; Wikipedia and amateur wine blogs should generally be avoided as these are less reliable. Candidates should refer to the Coursework Assignment Guidelines in the Candidate Assessment Guide for further guidance on how to present and reference bibliographies in their assignments and the correct use of footnotes and appendices.

- Candidates are reminded that work submitted for assessment purposes **must not include any means by which they may be identified other than their candidate number**. Candidate names should not appear on the assignment in any form except the signature on the cover sheet.

- Candidates' attention is drawn to the **Collusion and Plagiarism** section of the Coursework Assignment Guidelines in the Candidate Assessment Guide. It is obvious to the examiners when sections of work have been copied from papers on the internet or when the assignment is otherwise not the sole work of the candidate. This is a serious disciplinary matter and such candidates receive an automatic fail grade. They may also be barred from completing the qualification.

Case studies

The importance of using a diverse selection of credible research sources was also highlighted by the examiners of this year's case studies.

Comments on specific coursework assignment and case study questions follow.

Assignment title: The short and long-term implications of the 2017 vintage

The small size of the 2012 vintage in the Northern Hemisphere brought home to many the narrowing of the gap between supply and demand in the global wine market. Ever since then the wine industry has been watching the progress of each harvest with heightened concern. The big shortfall in the 2017 crop in many parts of the world saw the fear of a supply crunch realised. Industry participants and commentators are still working through the commercial implications of this acute drop in production.

Required sections:

1. **Introduction (*10 marks*)**

   The candidate should present a summary of the data that illustrates the gap between supply and demand in the global wine market over the last ten years.

2. **The 2017 vintage (*30 marks*)**

   A vintage report should be written that explains why the 2017 harvest in parts of Europe and the New World was small in terms of volume. The report should focus on the issues that have influenced quantity rather than quality.

3. **The supply crunch (*20 marks*)**

   The candidate should describe the implications of the acute drop in global production in 2017.

4. **Personal commentary (*20 marks)***

   The candidate should discuss how they see the global wine industry evolving in the light of the narrow gap between supply and demand that now seems to be a permanent feature of the market.

The remaining 20 marks are allocated to bibliography, presentation and structure.

As in past years, the pass rate for the coursework assignments was high in both November and April. Failure is usually the result of the candidate not adhering to the assignment brief and as a result not answering the questions as set. Some candidates insist on changing the title of their assignment, perhaps in an attempt to make the assignment sound more interesting or to give it a "journalistic" feel. This is seldom a good idea as they often lose focus and deviate too far from the required content as set out in the brief. Not paying sufficient attention to the weighting attached to each section of the brief also leads to low marks.

Section 1 was handled reasonably well on the whole, since this was simply a case of presenting the facts which were easy to research. The OIV bulletin "2017 Global Economic Vitiviniculture Data"

was a good starting point for this. Weaknesses in section 2 were usually the result of not paying sufficient attention to the instructions in the Brief, i.e. vintage reports that failed to address both Europe and the New World, or not focusing on issues that had an impact on <u>quantity</u> rather than quality. For example, whilst the fires in California were dramatic, they were limited to Napa and Sonoma and therefore impacted the premium sector rather than volume production.

Sections 3 and 4 required a certain degree of personal input and this was certainly where better candidates shone. When considering the implications of the supply crunch caused by the shortfall in the 2017 vintage, good candidates addressed the following topics:

- A severe upward pressure on price, particularly in the case of fashionable wines such as Prosecco and Argentinean Malbec.

- A serious shortage of basic commodity grapes for use not just in wine production but also in the brandy and food industries.

- A need to "search" the world for key varietal bulk wines which, in turn, creates supply problems in countries not originally directly involved in any crop shortfalls.

- Huge problems for retailers in terms of range pricing, the promotional calendar and departmental profitability. Parallel issues are also found in the on-trade / HORECA.

- However, the one positive outcome is that the perennial battle between producers and retailers seems to have shifted in favour of the former for the time being.

- Possible implications of the 2018 vintage – did it help or hinder?

November 2018: Case Study

Sustainable Wine Tourism

Wine tourism can be defined as visiting vineyards, wineries and wine festivals in order to taste wines or experience a wine region.

For many regions, vineyards and wineries, tourism is an increasingly important part of their marketing strategy. It is now taken for granted that major wineries will be open to the public for guided tours and cellar door sales. This was not always the case. Famously, Alexis Lichine was criticised by his fellow château owners for opening his cru classé property to the public.

One of the key motivators for wine tourists is experiencing the natural environment in which the grapes are grown. However, a sudden increase in the number of visitors can have a negative impact on that environment if not carefully managed.

Wine regions and individual wineries are having to look at ways of minimising the damage done by an increase in the number of visitors. Those which are looking to develop or significantly increase wine tourism can incorporate sustainability into their strategy from the outset. Others may be constrained by the infrastructure and practices already in place.

a) Explain what wine tourism encompasses. (*20% weighting*)

b) Why do many regions and wineries engage with wine tourism? (*40% weighting*)

c) Describe the environmental impact of wine tourism and explain how the industry is moving towards sustainability. (*40% weighting*)

The pass rate for this question was very good at 91%, but with relatively few distinction grades. This was largely due to the fact that many candidates appeared to use the same (narrow) range of sources when reading around the topic. Those who researched more widely and used examples throughout their text to support the points made, tended to be rewarded with higher marks.

Responses in section a) were often very brief, sometimes just a list. However, most candidates did well enough elsewhere to secure a pass grade.

Section c) was answered particularly well on the whole showing that this is a topic that many have strong opinions on.

March 2019: Case Study

The ups and downs of the Sherry market

Sherry's fortunes have varied over the years. In the days before the light wine boom, Sherry was a big seller in markets such as the UK. However, in the last three decades there has been a marked reduction in both production and global sales. Despite this downward trend, the quality of the wines has improved significantly.

Sherry is widely acknowledged as being one of the great wines of the world for its complexity and diversity. There are now signs of this being recognised by a wider audience. An increased engagement with consumers has resulted in a growing interest in some Sherry styles such as *en rama* and *VOS*. The reasons for the increase in popularity of some styles of Sherry are numerous and proof that negative trends can be reversed with innovation and hard work.

The impact of this changing market for Sherry has been wide ranging. There have been developments in the vineyard, bodega, boardroom and marketing department. The Sherry industry has made many changes over the last thirty years and is now in a very different shape as a result.

a) Account for the global decline in Sherry sales over the last 30 years. (*40% weighting*)

b) Despite this decline, why have some styles of Sherry increased in popularity in recent years? (*40% weighting*)

c) What impact has the changing market for Sherry had on the industry? (*20% weighting*)

The pass rate for this paper was quite high, just short of 90%, which is in line with most Case Study papers. However, there were not as many merit and distinction grades as expected with nearly half of the papers scoring between 55% and 59%.

Many candidates scored quite poorly in the first section. This was worth a possible 40% of the marks but many answers were too brief and narrow in scope. There are various factors that could have been considered but many candidates only covered one or two points. A number of candidates appeared to use the same one or two websites for research which resulted in very similar answers that lacked imagination and originality.

The second section was more successful. The increasing popularity of dry styles, the rise of Spanish cuisine and the introduction of en rama, VOS and VORS were all covered well. Many also commented on topics such as cocktails, food and wine pairing, the availability of premium Sherry in smaller formats, the work carried out by the trade body and the 'discovery' of Sherry by younger consumers.

In the third section a significant number of candidates did not address the question, looking at the impact on retailers rather than on the Sherry industry. This meant they did not comment on the reduction of vineyard area, issues relating to forward planning in the management of soleras, and consolidation within the industry and it was topics such as these that were the key focus of this section of the case study.

April 2019: Coursework Assignment

Assignment title: The rum revival

After the gin renaissance of recent years could we be witnessing the start of a rum revival? Articles in *The Times* and on www.cbsnews.com, as well as in the trade press, suggest that innovation and premiumisation are flourishing in the rum sector. Rum is a lightly regulated category compared to some other spirits. From the building of new artisanal distilleries around the world, through the repositioning of classic brands, to the opening of rum-focused bars, the drink is reaching out to a new customer base.

Required sections:

1. **Introduction and statistics (*20 marks*)**

    The candidate should present statistics outlining the global market for rum. The candidate should also present more detailed figures for a national market of their choice. The candidate is encouraged to highlight any trends at both global and national levels.

2. **Innovation, premiumisation and range extension (*40 marks*)**

    The candidate should discuss how new ideas in the production and marketing of rum have breathed life into what was often seen as a static, rather conservative product.

3. **The bar scene (*10 marks*)**

   The candidate should describe how the bar scene has helped to drive the rum revival.

4. **Personal commentary (*10 marks)***

   Drawing on their findings, the candidate should speculate on how they see the rum category and market developing over the next ten years.

The remaining 20 marks are allocated to bibliography, presentation and structure.

Where candidates achieved low marks in this assessment it was invariably down to poor exam technique.

Many saw the word "introduction" in Section 1 and launched into a lengthy and superfluous history of rum (i.e. its naval connection) or detailed the method of production. None of this was relevant in the context of the specific wording in Section 1 and simply wasted word-count that could have been put to better use elsewhere. Many also failed to read the instruction carefully enough and did not address the issue of trends at national levels.

On the other hand, section 2 was handled well, largely due to the proliferation of examples available on the internet and in trade journals to those who did thorough research.

As with past assignments, when asked to speculate and provide a personal opinion on how things might develop in the future, many candidates failed to perform well.

June 2019: Case Study

The lower alcohol wines and spirits category

There is an ever-increasing portfolio of alcohol-free and reduced alcohol products available in the marketplace. Whilst a focus on issues such as public health and social responsibility might have kick-started this trend, a vibrant new category has emerged as a result of engagement by both consumers and producers.

There are a number of different options to reduce or virtually eliminate alcohol from wines. There are even brands of non-alcoholic distilled drinks. Ever-more-sophisticated techniques have been developed in the interests of efficiency and authenticity, but feedback from consumers suggests that they remain qualitatively inferior to their more alcoholic counterparts.

There is a tension between *aficionados* who argue that such products necessarily mean a compromise on quality and realists who acknowledge there is a demand for them. There are also those who simply like to drink them.

a) Examine the reasons for the growth of the lower-alcohol drinks category. (*40% weighting*)

b) Outline the different methods that producers can use to create alcohol-free/lower-alcohol/reduced alcohol wines and spirits. Examine the impact of these methods on the style and quality of the resulting products. (*40% weighting*)

c) In your opinion, what does the future hold for this category? (*20% weighting*)

This question generated a reasonably good pass rate, but answers were often uninspiring and very predictable.

There was a tendency in section a) to take a narrow approach with far too many candidates writing only about the influence of social media on consumer behaviour and the growth of the "wellness" industry and the impact this has had on peoples' relationship with alcohol. There was a general reluctance to step away from this and consider "reasons" in the wider sense – some of them very obvious such as the need to curtail drinking for health reasons, pregnancy, religion etc. There was also an absence of commercial awareness of the implications of the topic such as the possibility of producers actively wanting to tap into the lower-alcohol category through brand extensions etc.

Section b) was fact-based and candidates tended to do better here, although there was the inevitable confusion when describing the processes involved in producing low- and no-alcohol drinks. Some candidates placed too much emphasis on descriptions of ways to "reduce" alcohol through practices in the vineyard without really considering the wider issue of REMOVING alcohol in the winery / distillery which is where the real focus should have been.

There were very few good submissions in section c) with far too many candidates simply writing about the current situation rather than speculating on what might still be to come further down the line. This lack of commitment in speculative sections of case studies and assignments is a recurring theme and is the most obvious indicator of the difference between a good and a mediocre candidate.

Unit 2 – Wine Production

The multiple-choice questions used on the Unit 2 papers for 2018-19 are live and so are not reproduced here.

The pass rate for this paper is high and candidates should feel confident of success provided they have studied the Unit 2 course materials in depth. **As in previous reports, the examiners would remind candidates that viticulture and vinification are pervasive topics which are relevant for all Units of the Diploma examination**. Many seem to forget to revise viticulture and vinification when studying for subsequent Units, particularly the Unit 3 theory examination where questions often require candidates to apply their knowledge of these topics to specific wine regions.

Unit 3 – Light Wines of the World

Unit 3 tasting and theory examinations were held in January and June 2019.

General Comments

As usual, poor performances in the **Unit 3 tasting papers** were either the result of failure to follow the Level 4 Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine® (SAT) or a lack of tasting experience which led them to misread the structural components of the wines. Full guidance on how to use the SAT in Diploma tasting examinations is given in the Candidate Assessment Guide.

A frequent comment in examiner feedback is that candidates underestimate what is required to pass the **Unit 3 theory examination**. Units 4, 5 and 6 are narrower in scope and require less study and preparation time. Perhaps because of this, candidates assume the Unit 3 theory paper to be less challenging than it actually is. Success in the Unit 3 theory examination requires commitment and application over an extended period of study time, together with a clear understanding of examination technique.

The examiners noted broadly the same issues with the Unit 3 theory scripts as in previous years:

1. **Time management**. Many candidates appear to not plan their answers before writing them, with the result that they often veer off-topic and/or run out of time. Candidates should read the Candidate Assessment Guide which contains essential guidance on how to approach the different types of question in the examination. They should also practice writing answers to exam-style questions under timed conditions. Students who participate in exam preparation/question-marking schemes tend to perform better in the examination than those who do not. Many Diploma Programme Providers run marking schemes for their students or candidates can apply to join the WSET Diploma Assessment Preparation scheme ('DAPs').

2. **Answering the question set.** There are two interrelated issues here, one concerning examination preparation and the other concerning examination technique:

    * There is evidence that candidates are not preparing sufficiently, either by failing to cover the Unit 3 syllabus in the necessary depth or by omitting to revise the basic principles of viticulture and vinification studied for Unit 2 which are often the basis of questions in this examination.

      All Unit 3 theory questions carry an equal weighting of marks such that two or three good or very good answers are unlikely to compensate for one or two very poor ones. Candidates must ensure that they have studied and revised all the relevant topics for the examination, as set out in the Specification, otherwise they risk facing topics they have not prepared for.

    * Diploma examination questions are carefully worded to help candidates engage with the topic in the right way. More often than not, this means a candidate going beyond simple description in their answers to explain not just 'what' something is but 'how' and 'why'. Too many candidates fail to read the question carefully enough and launch into writing all they know about a given topic without applying their knowledge to answer the question as set. There are no marks available for information that has no relevance in the context of the question as set, no matter how factually correct it may be.

Unit 3 Tasting Papers

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 1, Question 1

The first three wines are always from the same (or predominantly the same) grape variety, as indicated on the question paper. Under the pressure of the exam situation, some candidates name a different grape for each wine or fail to identify the grape at all. Others often incorrectly identify one wine which they think is a 'banker' for the variety and then reverse-engineer their answers for the other two wines accordingly. It is important not to jump to conclusions, but rather to taste all three samples with an open mind before deciding on the likely variety, giving logical reasons for this choice through reference to each of the three wines.

January 2019: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1		
Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety – Pinot Noir		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Chile Leyda Valley Kalfu Kuda Pinot Noir 2017
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	France Burgundy Gevrey-Chambertin "La Justice" 2016
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	New Zealand Central Otago Valli Bannockburn Vineyard Pinot Noir 2016

The pass rate for this set of wines was a little low compared to some previous examinations although quite a lot of those who failed did so by a fairly small margin. Most candidates followed the SAT reasonably well, with occasional omissions, but there were quite a few who forgot to comment on the nature of the tannins or did not identify aroma and flavour characteristics in all of the relevant clusters, where applicable. This is an easy way to lose marks.

The first wine was the least expensive of the three by a considerable margin and there were marks allocated to comments that made reference to its simplicity. This aspect of a wine is commonly overlooked in descriptions for lower quality wines.

A significant percentage of candidates did not identify the country of origin for wine number 3. Even though Central Otago is, of course, in New Zealand it is best to state both the country and the region, because if the wine comes from elsewhere in the country it is still possible to earn at least one mark for identifying New Zealand as the country.

Most candidates correctly identified the grape variety but many did not give sufficient justification for their conclusion and quite a few did not answer this section of the paper at all which meant they forfeited ten potential marks which can made a big impact on the final mark achieved.

June 2019: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1

Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety – Syrah/Shiraz

Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	France Rhône Valley Crozes-Hermitage 'Beaumont'
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	USA California Cambria Tepusquet Vineyard Syrah
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia Barossa valley Torbreck 'The Struie' Barossa Shiraz

One comment from the examiner was that there were some papers where the handwriting was almost impossible to decipher. Candidates should be aware that there is a real risk of some marks being missed due to illegibility.

As for the tasting notes themselves, some candidates are still losing marks due to an insufficient number of descriptors for the nose where 5 marks are available and because they forget to comment on one (or more) elements of the wine's structure on the palate. The assessments of quality for higher-quality wines were generally more comprehensive than those for more modest wines; the same number of marks are allocated to each, so a similar amount of detail and explanation needs to be provided.

Wines 1 and 3 were generally identified accurately but few candidates correctly identified wine 2, which may reflect a lack of familiarity with quality Californian wines. Many thought it came from Australia which made identification of wine 3 problematic.

A frequent concluding question asks candidates to comment on readiness for drinking / potential for ageing. It is not enough to simply state <u>how</u> you predict the wine will evolve, an explanation of <u>why</u> is required in order to gain the maximum marks available here.

Few candidates gained full marks for the final section - identification of the grape variety with relevant reasons. Many candidates did not give enough reasons and some did not even realise that all 3 wines were from the same variety despite this being stated on the exam paper.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 1, Question 2

Question 2 involves three wines linked by origin or some other common feature. For 2018-19, the wines in both January and the June flight were from a wider country designation (in this instance, Australia and Argentina). This highlights the importance of reading the question to make sure the information you provide corresponds to that being requested. In some instances, candidates will be instructed to identify a specific region rather than a country. Despite it being explicit in the question that examiners were looking for a country in both instances, some candidates disregarded this, naming a different region / country for each wine and were consequently at a disadvantage when it came to the marks allocation in the concluding section.

Knowing that three wines are from the same origin is a key advantage in a blind tasting scenario as it allows the taster to think laterally and logically about likely grape varieties which in turn will help them to identify the origin of the wines.

January 2019: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 2 *Wines from the same, unspecified country of origin – Australia*		
Wine 4	Region: Wine:	Yarra Valley Journey Wines Yarra Valley Chardonnay 2015
Wine 5	Region: Wine:	Eden Valley Freya Eden Valley Riesling 2016
Wine 6	Region: Wine:	Coonawarra Majella Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

This question generated a reasonably good pass rate of just under 70%, with some candidates scoring extremely well. With this question, success lies in identifying the grape varieties correctly and / or in spotting a distinctive style of wine that is a "banker" for the region or the country. In this trio there were two very distinctive wines - the Riesling and the Cabernet Sauvignon, which should have helped to make the task of identifying Australia as the country of origin a little easier.

In isolation the Chardonnay could have been more difficult to pin-down as it represented a style of wine produced in many countries. However, when considered in combination with the other two wines it resulted in a significant number of candidates identifying the country correctly.

Surprisingly some candidates incorrectly identified the oak aged Chardonnay as a Muscadet which led to attempts to shoehorn the other two wines into France. This inevitably led to inaccurate tasting notes for these wines in addition to the loss of marks in the concluding section of the question.

| **Wine 4** | Region: | Cafayate |
| | Wine: | Kaiken Terroir Series Torrontés |

| **Wine 5** | Region: | Patagonia |
| | Wine: | Saurus Barrel Fermented Malbec |

| **Wine 6** | Region: | Mendoza |
| | Wine: | Chakana Estate Selection Cabernet Sauvignon |

This paper generated a disappointing pass rate of just over 42% but despite this there were still a significant number of distinction and merit grade papers. This flight of wines included a very distinctive white wine - the Torrontés. This was the "banker" as this is unique to Argentina and therefore the clue to the origin of these wines. The Cabernet Sauvignon showed clear varietal character which left the Malbec as perhaps the more challenging wine to identify in terms of grape variety and origin. However, given the commercial importance of this wine style, it should have been reasonably familiar to those working in the trade and many candidates identified it correctly as a result.

A common reason for lost marks is not adhering correctly to the SAT structure and terminology. Frequent omissions included the nature of the tannins in the red wines and the length of the wines. Some candidates identified very few aroma and flavour descriptors which was disappointing given how distinctive these wines were.

Answers in the concluding sections were generally poor. A frequently occurring question is to ask candidates to identify the grape variety and to give reasons for their choice. With 4 marks allocated to this question, examiners are looking for more than one justification for the grape. For example, it was not sufficient to simply state 'black fruit' in the case of Cabernet Sauvignon. This would only secure 1 of the 4 possible marks. The final section was also poorly answered with many comments too vague. Examples of relevant indicators for Argentina being the origin of these wines could have included the presence of Torrontés, which is unique to the country, or the evidence of a range of climatic conditions (in this case due to altitude). Comments relating to depth of colour, purity of fruit, levels of alcohol and ripeness of tannins were also rewarded as being indicative of wines produced in this part of the world.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 2, Question 3

The purpose of this question is to test candidates' ability to distinguish between three wines from the same country or region which are of differing quality levels. Candidates are not asked to identify the wines but to give detailed quality assessments instead.

As with other "quality assessment" questions, candidates often fail to maximise marks by not explaining in detail <u>why</u> a wine is "acceptable", "good", "very good" or "outstanding", as the case may be. With up to 10 marks available for a detailed assessment of quality (depending on the wines shown) examiners are not only looking for a correct statement of the quality of the wine using SAT terminology but also well-argued reasoning and analysis that demonstrates an understanding of the elements of the wine that contribute to that quality level.

The B-L-I-C acronym is a helpful starting point but no more than this. Most candidates seem to be familiar with the B-L-I-C framework but fail to apply it in a meaningful way to the wine in front of them and whilst candidates should always aim to comment on the wine's balance, length, intensity and complexity, to get the marks available they need to go beyond the simple "statements" that this approach tends to generate. It is not enough to describe a wine as "balanced" or "complex" unless this is quantified by explanation of the form that balance or complexity takes and the reasons behind this. More guidance on writing assessment of quality answers appears in the Candidate Assessment Guide.

January 2019: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3 *Part-specified wines – Soave, Veneto, Italy*	
Wine 7	Alpha Zeta Soave 2017
Wine 8	Pieropan La Rocca Soave Classico 2016
Wine 9	Inama "Campo dei Tovi" Soave Classico 2017

Many candidates misread the quality level in wine 7, in several cases describing it as "outstanding" when it was actually just "acceptable". Wine 8 appeared to be the one that was assessed most accurately with many students recognizing this as high quality and being able to justify this in their "assessment of quality". Unfortunately, as already stated, this could not be said for the "lowest quality" wine where candidates often lacked the confidence to assert that this was a simple wine. Very often, despite having commented on one dimensional fruit characters in terms of aroma and flavour descriptors, many candidates overstated the quality level in their assessment of quality. It is important to trust what the tasting note reveals and apply logic. If the candidate describes a simple wine with one dimensional fruit, this most likely points to a wine of only "acceptable" or "good" quality rather than anything better.

With 11 marks available for a *"detailed assessment of quality"* candidates need to provide a thorough and detailed analysis of the wine, looking not only at the aroma and flavour profile, but also the structural elements that are so often the key to identifying the relevant quality level.

June 2019: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3
Part-specified wines – Burgundy, France

Wine 7	Chassagne Montrachet 1er Crus Les Macherelles 2016
Wine 8	Macon Villages Chardonnay, Cave de Lugny 2017
Wine 9	Pouilly-Fuissé Les Courtelongs 2016

With 11 marks allocated for the "assessment of quality" and 4 marks for "readiness for drinking / potential for ageing", it is not enough to rely on keywords such as "balance", "concentration", "complexity" etc. without supporting these through further evidence and explanation. Better candidates always quantify statements relating to balance, complexity etc. by explaining what is providing the balance or, in the case of some wines, what upsets the balance. Candidates should be asking themselves where the complexity comes from. Is it through the use of oak, or the presence of multiple clusters in aromas and flavours?

There were mixed results in this question across the 3 wines. Wine 8 was poorly answered with candidates often failing to explain why they thought it was the lesser wine and, as in the January examination, either failing completely to identify the simplicity of this wine or to link this to the likely quality level in their conclusion. Wine 9 generated the best answers, while many candidates failed to understand what gives wine 7 ageing potential – in this case it was the concentration and structure of the wine (acidity and fruit). Many candidates referred to a lack of tertiary characters or complexity as being a limitation to ageing which was not the case.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 2, Question 4

This is the "mixed bag" question where candidates are typically asked to identify the grape variety / (ies) and origin of three unspecified wines.

Candidates are reminded however that relatively few marks are available for identifying the wines in this flight; as with the other tasting questions the emphasis still lies on describing the wine comprehensively and accurately. It is possible to identify all three wines correctly but gain a fail grade in this question, just as it is possible to misidentify the wines having given otherwise sound tasting notes and achieve a pass grade. Candidates should focus on writing full tasting notes in accordance with the SAT rather than trying to "recognise" what the wines are and run the risk of writing a tasting note to fit their (potentially incorrect) conclusion.

January 2019: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 4 *Unspecified wines*		
Wine 10	Country: Region: Wine:	France Languedoc Domaine Gaujal Picpoul de Pinet 2017
Wine 11	Country: Region: Wine:	Spain Rioja La Rioja Alta 904 Gran Reserva 2009
Wine 12	Country: Region: Wine:	France Bordeaux Château Cos Labory 2010

This question was relatively well answered with a high pass rate of 83% and many students gained a merit grade. Wine 10 was understandably the most challenging wine and many candidates overestimated the acidity on this wine, possibly because they tried to make it fit an incorrect assumption that it was a Muscadet, or some similar "cool climate" white wine. There was also often inconsistency with candidates tending to mention the fact it was simple in the assessment of quality but not backing this up when assessing the nose or palate. Most rated the quality of this wine as better than it actually was.

On the other hand, wine 12 often generated the best answer with many candidates identifying it correctly as a Bordeaux Cru Classé.

Reasons for lost marks were often down to inadequate evidence to support age worthiness. Elements of the wine such as structure and concentration need to be considered, but statements such as "tannins will soften with time" are not analytical enough.

The examiner also noted that some students are using "lyrical" or "creative" terminology in their tasting notes when they would be better off just sticking to the facts which is why the WSET Systematic Approach to Tasting was introduced.

Wine 10	Country: Region: Wine:	South Africa Stellenbosch Zevenwacht '7even' Pinotage 2016
Wine 11	Country: Region: Wine:	Germany Mosel Dr. Loosen Erdener Treppchen Auslese 2015
Wine 12	Country: Region: Wine:	Austria Kamptal Weszeli Grüner Veltliner Langenlois 2017

Wine 11 was clearly the easiest to identify in this flight, both in terms of the grape variety and the origin of the wine, resulting in some good marks. Wines 10 and 12 were both trickier and many candidates struggled with these wines and appeared to lose confidence as a result. It is easy under examination conditions to get too focused on the importance of "identifying" the wine when, in reality, it is the description itself that generates the bulk of the marks. Some candidates clearly spent too long worrying about what these wines were and as a result ran out of time before they were able to complete all the sections of the paper. It is important to remember that a pass grade can still be achieved even if the origin and grape variety are incorrect or unknown, providing the tasting notes themselves are accurate. This is particularly important in the case of less mainstream wines such as wine 12. The number of marks available for identifying this as Grüner Veltliner from Austria were minimal in comparison to those available for correctly identifying the levels of acidity, sweetness, body, aromas etc.

Unit 3 Theory Papers

January 2019: Section A – Compulsory Question

With reference to grape growing and winemaking, describe the production and resulting style of wine for each of the following:

Version 1: Pomerol AC, Inexpensive California Chardonnay, Coteaux du Layon AC
Version 2: Pomerol AC, Inexpensive California Chardonnay, Recioto della Valpolicella DOCG
Version 3: Pomerol AC, Inexpensive California Chardonnay, Rheingau Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese QmP

(*Each section carries equal weighting*)

Although there were quite a few merit grade papers there was a significant number of very poor answers to what should have been a fairly straight-forward question. Some were due to poor exam technique, some were possibly mistakes brought on by exam nerves, but others were down to a general lack of knowledge.

The weighting is given to show how much emphasis should be given to each part of the question. In this case all three named wines were weighted equally and this should have been reflected in the answers submitted, but this was often not the case. Too many candidates did not comment the third wine in the question at all. Even if their answers for the other two wines were reasonably good, this invariably resulted in a fail grade because zero marks or very low marks in one section requires the equivalent of strong "merit" or "distinction" levels answers in the remaining sections to compensate for the loss of up to a third of the marks available.

Candidates' knowledge of Pomerol was generally good although a surprising number of candidates discussed Pinot Noir and Burgundy, presumably confusing it with Pommard. Answers relating to the inexpensive Chardonnay were mostly just adequate and references to issues such as clonal selection, irrigation, must adjustment and blending were frequently overlooked. There were some very disappointing answers on the third wine with some deciding that Coteaux du Layon was a red wine from the south of France and a lot of confusion between Recioto and Ripasso wines. Answers relating to Trockenbeerenauslese tended to be better.

January 2019: Section B

Discuss how factors in the vineyard contribute to the style and quality of the wines of Mendoza.

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

This was a disappointing set of scripts, both in terms of content and presentation. Many failed to adopt the required essay format, simply presenting information in a series of bullet points. Others adopted an essay format in a very static fashion with sections headed "introduction", "main body" and "conclusion" with the former and the latter contributing very little in terms of substance or style. Many "introductions" did no more than repeat the question or tell the examiner what the

candidate was going to do. Conclusions often just listed key points made in the body of the essay offering nothing in the way of further insight or analysis. Many failed to present any conclusion at all.

In addition to poor structure and style, the key reasons for low marks were as follows:

- There was the usual failure to answer the question directly – many candidates simply wrote "all they know" about wine production in Mendoza, listing grape varieties, describing the area, name-checking producers and giving lengthy descriptions of wines they knew.
- A number of candidates substituted the question with their own essay "title" and usually therefore took a different path to the question that had been set. One presented a comparison of conventional versus biodynamic viticulture, another wrote a discourse on "whether Mendoza has its own style of wine" and a significant number wrote only about the popularity of Argentinean Malbec. All of these failed to address the topic in the broader sense in which it had been set.
- Many included irrelevant information about winemaking when the question was clearly limited to "factors in the vineyard". Others wrote about other regions in Argentina rather than limiting their essay to Mendoza.
- The significance of Torrontes was very frequently overestimated with only a handful of candidates seemingly aware that is plays a minor role in Mendoza as the wines are often overly-alcoholic, flabby, hollow or bitter in comparison to those produced in other parts of Argentina where this variety flourishes.
- Many scripts were far too brief – barely more than a single side of text and frequently even less than this. This was often exacerbated by vague and superficial statements about growing conditions such as "enough rain", "sufficient sunshine".
- There was inevitable confusion of facts relating to Chile and Argentina with a significant number of candidates writing about areas in Chile or giving long explanations about the mislabelling of Carmenère as Merlot. None of this was relevant in an essay on Mendoza.

January 2019: Section B

With reference to grape growing and winemaking, explain how and why the following wines differ in style and price.

    a)   Chablis Premier Cru AC
    b)   Le Montrachet Grand Cru AC
    c)   Mâcon Blanc AC

(Each section carries equal weighting)

This was a very poor set of scripts for a question which the Examination Panel felt was straightforward and mainstream. Many answers were factually incorrect, such as identifying Le Montrachet as a red wine made from Pinot Noir or describing Mâcon Blanc as a blend of several different varieties. This was, in effect, a question testing candidates' understanding of the different options available for the production of Chardonnay wines of different price points, but this was often not understood by those who attempted this question.

In this question, the most important words are also the smallest - HOW and WHY. The WSET Diploma is a qualification that goes beyond factual recall. It requires the candidate to demonstrate clear understanding of the significance of "facts" through application of knowledge and analysis of those facts.   It was not enough in this question to simply describe grape growing and winemaking for each wine. Statements needed to be linked to wine style and/or price. It was also important to focus on the **differences** between these three wines. That is specifically why the examiners selected this particular trio of wines.

In the case of grape growing, the kind of information required was roughly as follows:

- specifically where the grapes are grown and <u>why</u> this results in differences in style,
- the climate in each area and <u>how</u> this impacts on wine style – for example Chablis being the most northerly of the regions has the coolest continental climate and this comes through in the wines which tend to be lighter and have higher acidity, whereas Mâcon lies the furthest south and has a warm continental climate which results in wines that are less austere than those of Chablis,
- any defining topography of the vineyards and <u>how</u> this affects wine style and/or price,
- relevant soils and the <u>effect</u> these have,
- issues relating to planting such as aspect, training methods, vine density, pruning, canopy management, yields, etc and <u>how</u> these affect the wines
- specific vineyard hazards and <u>how and why</u> these can affect wine style and/or price
- characteristics of the grape and <u>how and why</u> these differ in the three areas
- any relevant information relating to harvesting and the <u>effect</u> on wine style and/or price.

All of these topics needed to be discussed in the context of how they result in differences in style and price in the wines of the three named ACs.

A similar process was required in terms of explaining how the winemaking in each AC defines the wine style and price and accounts for differences between the three wines. Points for discussion were, for example:

- identifying whether grape selection was important or not and the <u>result</u> of this,
- whether batches of grapes are vinified separately or not,
- identifying any pre-fermentation processes such as pressing options, cold settling of must etc and <u>how and why</u> these result in differences,
- use of fermentation vessels, duration of fermentation, temperature of fermentation, MLF, lees-stirring where relevant etc and <u>how</u> these affect style and/or quality,
- post fermentation adjustments where relevant
- ageing where relevant (i.e. in what, for how long etc)
- blending where relevant (how, when, why etc)
- finishing options – stabilisation, fining, filtering etc, various options for these and <u>reasons</u> for choices in the context of wine style and/or price

Too many candidates simply made basic statements about winemaking for each wine, without discussing these in the context of how or what they contribute to differences in wine style or price.

Why has Syrah / Shiraz become such a popular grape variety in the vineyard, winery and marketplace?

(Each section carries equal weighting)

As Diploma questions go, this should have been relatively straightforward, but unfortunately many candidates struggled to answer this question as set. Many simply wrote about Syrah/Shiraz from around the world. This was not what the question was asking. The key words to pick out in the question were '**why**' and '**popular**'. Too many candidates just described Syrah/shiraz without linking what they were describing back to the reasons why this variety is popular.

Many candidates wrote a lot about the vineyard and winery but neglected the third requirement in the question - the marketplace. A key part of good exam technique is ensuring enough time is spent addressing each part of the question. All 3 parts of this question had equal weighting, so if one part was weak, or in some cases not addressed at all, this seriously restricted chances of achieving a pass grade.

In a question such as this, candidates need to justify why this variety is popular. At diploma level questions will often be set to test higher skills such as evaluation and analysis, and simply describing the Syrah grape variety will not suffice in this instance.

With regard to the wines of Rías Baixas, describe the following:

a) Climate   (15% weighting)
b) vineyard location   (15% weighting)
c) grape growing   (30% weighting)
d) winemaking   (25% weighting)
e) commercial appeal   (15% weighting)

It is important with all examination questions to plan your answer and adopt a logical structure. In this case it made sense to address each section in turn, starting with climate, moving through the list to commercial appeal. Some candidates presented their answer as one long "essay", but this was not the best approach as they often lost sight of the weighting attached to each of the sections, either writing too much or too little accordingly. The weighting is there specifically to help candidates plan their answer and provide the level of detail expected. In this instance, it was clear that candidates should have been writing around twice as much on grape growing as they did on climate, vineyard location or commercial appeal, but often this was not put into practice.

This question generated a very poor set of answers with many lacking the necessary detail or being factually incorrect.

Discuss wine production in Canada with regard to regions, climates, grape varieties and resulting styles of wine.

(Weighting will vary between the sections)

This question was answered very poorly resulting in a pass rate of only 35%.

It was apparent that the majority of candidates simply did not possess a sufficient understanding of wine production in Canada or had ignored this section of the syllabus in their revision. This was demonstrated most noticeably in the length of answers submitted, with most only between 1–1.5 pages and many less than a single side of text. With the average pass grade script being at least 2 sides of text, such brevity is not going to contain enough facts and discussion to demonstrate the level of skill and knowledge required for a pass grade.

Another major pitfall was that answers were too generic and often superficial. Although a good number of candidates were able to highlight the two main provinces in Ontario and British Colombia, most of these were unable to drill down further into the regions and discuss the various DVAs within these provinces. It was a similar story in terms of the climate with too many answers offering broad generalisations, rather than identifying regional differences. For example, very few candidates highlighted that British Columbia experiences both a cool maritime climate on the coast in places such as Vancouver Island and Frazer Valley, as well as a hot continental climate with desert-like conditions inland in appellations such as Okanagan Valley. It was the lack of detail such as this that ultimately led to the low pass rate for this question.

The one aspect of wine production that was answered reasonably well was Icewine and the role it plays in defining a "style" that is uniquely Canadian. Unfortunately, for a large number of candidates, this was all they knew about wine production in this country and it clearly was not enough to do this question justice.

With reference to the wines of Europe, write about FIVE of the following:

    a)   Assyrtiko
    b)   Blaufränkisch / Kékfrankos
    c)   Dornfelder
    d)   Furmint
    e)   Grüner Veltliner
    f)   Silvaner / Sylvaner
    g)   Xinomavro

(Each section carries equal weighting)

Overall, this question was answered reasonably well although there was an extremely wide spread of marks from very low to very high. This suggested candidates either attempted this question in desperation or because they had a solid understanding of these lesser-known varietals.   For those in the later camp, this presented an opportunity to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their knowledge and resulted in some very high marks. For those in the other category, it was a case of trying to "mop up" a few extra marks at the end of the exam and the relatively high number of Fail (unclassified) grades was indicative of this group.

Many of the low scoring papers were far too brief and generic and a number of papers did not address the full five sections specified in the question.   The key to success with this type of question lies in getting down as many facts as possible in the time available. It is also important to remember that each of the five sections carries the same weighting. Examiners will often see one or two very extensive answers accompanied by three or four extremely brief ones, which inevitably pull the aggregate mark down considerably. This format of question is not the "easy option" it often appears to be. If the appropriate level of factual knowledge is not demonstrated, then marks will not be awarded.

June 2019: Section A – Compulsory Question

Describe the characteristics of the Viognier grape variety. *(30% weighting)* Comment on the use of this variety in each of the following: *(70% weighting)*

Version 1: Condrieu AC, Chile
Version 2: Condrieu AC, Languedoc-Roussillon
Version 3: Condrieu AC, California

This question produced a mediocre set of scripts with an average pass rate of 53%. Candidates generally made good comments on the characteristics of the Viognier grape, although not highlighting the low acidity of the grape was a common theme. Similarly, candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of Condrieu and many were able to confidently discuss the use of Viognier in this appellation. However, it was a general lack of knowledge on the use of this grape in the other location that caused most of the issues for candidates in this instance, with many answers being far too brief and superficial. While most candidates mentioned the climate in Chile, Languedoc-Roussillon or California this was largely all they covered, making very general comments about how climate might affect the production of Viognier in the relevant location.   The examiner commented that a lot of this felt like guesswork.

Moreover, the examiner was expecting more candidates to make reference to some of the key producers and pioneers of Viognier in these parts of the world. It was important, for example, to highlight the roles that Yalumba in Australia and the Rhône Rangers in California played in expanding the profile and popularity of Viognier in these regions. Very few candidates however, made this point.

Other notable pitfalls were the usual ones:

- Not writing enough – too many scripts of 1.5 sides or less. This is unlikely to contain enough information, especially with a question like this that essentially consisted of three parts.
- Not answering the question that had been set – a lot of answers contained information relating to the Northern Rhône as a whole, rather than just Condrieu, or they failed to link factors relating to the growing environment in Condrieu to the production of Viognier – i.e. there was no discussion of "cause and effect".

Issues such as these come up repeatedly in Examiner Reports and individual Feedback Reports, and are often a result of poor exam technique rather than lacking the necessary level of knowledge. Candidates must remember to read the question properly, focus specifically on what it is asking and then link their answer back to the question as appropriate. Only in this way, will they succeed in writing the kind of detailed and focused answer that is essential for success.

June 2019: Section B

Account for the variations in style, quality and price of Tuscan DOC and DOCG wines made wholly or predominantly from Sangiovese.

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

This question generated a wide spread of marks ranging from disastrous to outstanding, but was poorly answered on the whole.

One of the most important aspects of any examination is the approach taken in answering the question, i.e. "examination technique". All questions contain key words that will dictate what should be included in the answer.   Another important point to consider is any instruction in the question relating to what must be done with relevant information, i.e. in the case of this question, to ACCOUNT FOR VARIATIONS. It is not enough therefore to simply identify the variations in style quality and price which is what far too many candidates did in this instance. Instead, they needed to explain WHY variations in style, qualility and price exist, HOW they are achieved etc.   Without this explanation, the question is not answered and candidates will not provide the information the examiner is looking for.

Another contributing factor to poor marks with this style of question is the structure of the answer itself. The examination paper stipulated that an essay format was compulsory for this question. This means answers must contain a meaningful introduction and conclusion in addition to the main body of the essay which should discuss the topic in a knowledgeable and engaging manner.

The content of any introduction is likely to vary from candidate to candidate but should aim to set the scene for what is to follow, for example by setting out some key facts about the region and its wines, which could include:

- A brief description of the range of wine styles and qualities made
- Some examples of wines/DOC(G)s
- An observation that prices vary from entry-level to super-premium
- An overview of the key factors to be addressed in the main text of the essay.

A number of different approaches could be taken in terms of the body of the essay. However, the most important point is that it should <u>account</u> for variations in style, quality and price of the wines. The most obvious approach would be to consider in turn the following factors that are known to influence wine style, quality and price; grape growing, choice of grape variety, winemaking. These topics provided plenty of scope for discussion and inclusion of examples of wines to illustrate the points being made.

June 2019: Section B

Describe grape growing and winemaking in each of the following:

   a) Riverland
   b) Clare Valley
   c) Coonawarra

(Each section carries equal weighting)

This was a very straight-forward question that simply required the candidate to present the facts in a logical and cohesive manner. However, the pass rate was extremely disappointing at only 35% implying that many candidates simply did not know the facts or where unable to provide the level of detail that differentiates the WSET Level 4 Diploma from the L3 Certificate in Wine.

Failure was generally due to one or more of the following:

- Factual inaccuracy
- Not answering the question in full – i.e. omitting one or more sections, failing to address both grape growing and winemaking in each area
- Omission of fundamental key facts – i.e. the use of Riesling in Clare Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon in Coonawarra
- Poor understanding of geography resulting in regions being incorrectly located and often therefore with incorrect knowledge of local climate etc.
- Poor use of producer examples such as identifying Henschke's Hill of Grace as a wine from Clare Valley.

With this question, it was important to include enough facts, and with sufficient detail, to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the DIFFERENCES between these three regions. They were chosen specifically because they differ so much and candidates who failed to convey this in their answers would not have convinced the examiner that they genuinely knew about wine production in these regions.

Identify and discuss the factors in the vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pape AC that are responsible for creating this famous wine.

(Weighting will vary for each factor)

Like the previous question, this also generated a very poor pass rate, which was surprising given the subject matter. This was largely because too many candidates simply identified and <u>described</u> factors, rather than discussed them in any detail. For example, most candidates were aware that Châteauneuf-du-Pape is primarily a blend of many different varieties, but very few were able to supplement this fact with much detail or discussion beyond listing key varieties. This in itself generated its own problems with the inclusion of many incorrect varieties such as Viognier, Carignan and Marsanne.   A number of candidates also completely ignored the existence of white Châteauneuf-du-Pape and whilst it plays a minor role, it was worthy of some comment.

Not reading the question carefully enough was also a contributor to poor marks where candidates wasted time writing about winemaking when the question specifically directed them to discuss factors in the **vineyards**.

The logical starting point with this question lay in identifying what those factors were, i.e. climate and weather, soil, aspect, choice of grape variety, vine age, pruning and training.   Climate and weather was particularly poorly handled with the majority of candidates simply identifying the climate as hot and dry with no discussion of the finer detail linked to weather. At best, this was addressed through some mention of the Mistral but discussion of the weather in a broader sense was absent from the majority of answers. There was also the inevitable confusion between the Northern and Southern Rhône, as in listing Viognier as a permitted grape but also in describing vines planted on single stakes on steep valley sides to protect against the Mistral, when in reality the vineyards of the Southern Rhône are relatively flat.

Give an overview of wine production in Switzerland, with particular reference to the main wine producing regions and the key grape varieties grown. *(70% weighting)*

What are the challenges in exporting Swiss wines? *(30% weighting)*

In terms of the specific wording of the question, in the first part candidates were instructed to make particular reference to the main wine producing regions and the key grape varieties grown. However, these were not the only aspects of production that should have been addressed. The important phrase here is "**particular** reference".   This certainly implies that these two topics should have formed the bulk of any discussion, but they should by no means have been the only topics for discussion. Scripts that limited the scope of their content in this way were considerably weaker than those which took a more comprehensive approach and also addressed other aspects of production such as climate and weather, soils and topography etc.

The first part of this question was purely fact-based and those who therefore did not know the facts gained low marks. In contrast, the second part was more open so candidates should have been able to generate good responses based largely on common sense. Answers in this section were often unimaginative and superficial, often just pointing out that Swiss wine is expensive. Whilst this is certainly true and one of the key reasons why Swiss wine is a challenge in export markets, there was plenty of scope for further discussion of this topic. For example, production is very fragmented and many producers are so small that any effort at export is almost impossible. The grape varieties planted also create challenges. Chasselas is widely planted but is not considered a "noble" variety. It is associated with mediocre wines in Alsace and the Loire and is not a variety consumers are likely to seek out – particularly not at the relatively high prices of Swiss wines produced from this variety. For the adventurous red wine consumer in search of novelty, some of the indigenous varieties such as Cornalin and Bondola might be of interest but they need to be "hand sold" as they are not well known outside of Switzerland. This is true of all the indigenous varieties such as Rèze, Arvine, Humagne Blanche, Armigne and the local crosses Camaret, Garanoir, Diolinoir. These varieties were not only omitted by the majority of candidates in the first part of the question but were also not considered as contributing to the poor performance of these wines on export markets.

June 2019: Section B

Discuss how grape growing and winemaking differ in Beaujolais Nouveau AC, Beaujolais Villages AC and Moulin-à-Vent AC *(75% weighting)*

What are the strengths and weaknesses of Beaujolais in the marketplace? *(25% weighting).*

This was a question that had essentially four parts with each needing about a quarter of the time available to answer them as shown by the weighting above. Planning was therefore key to ensure all parts were given the focus they required. It is always advisable to spend a couple of minutes planning any answer before starting to write and as part of this process, candidates should think about the time available to them and how they will allocate this to each section. It is then important to stick to this plan.

For the first part, the question asked for the **differences** in grape growing and winemaking. Therefore, any discussion relating to similarities between the wines would not be answering the question. Far too many students wasted time repeatedly writing about the use of Gamay for each wine, for example. This was not relevant in the context of this question as it was not a point of difference. In general, the sections on Beaujolais Nouveau AC and Moulin-à-Vent AC were better than that on Beaujolais Villages AC where candidates largely failed to differentiate this wine sufficiently from the others.

One common mistake was in stating that harvesting machines would be used in the production of Beaujolais Nouveau, but then going on to describe how fermentation was carried out using whole bunches and Carbonic Maceration. Good candidates were aware that "whole bunch" fermentation requires hand harvesting and that whilst other procedures in the vineyard can be mechanised and despite machine harvesting being permitted, it cannot be used if whole bunches are required for Carbonic or semi-carbonic maceration.

Another concerning error was the number of candidates who were clearly confused about the difference between the Beaujolais 'Crus' with the 'Villages' as well as the relevant numbers of each - the number of villages quoted ranged from 7 to 98. Candidates should avoid making factual statements if they are unsure of the accuracy of what they write.

This question was about the differences in **grape growing** and **winemaking** and not about the difference in how the wines taste. Too many candidates wasted time writing detailed tasting notes for each of the wines which failed to answer the question that had been set. Had they linked their tasting notes back to the vineyard or winery, then it would have served some purpose in illustrating the result of factors in the vineyard and winery, but this was very seldom the case.

In a few instances, candidates had clearly prepared well, understood this topic and presented their answer in a relevant manner that addressed the question. These candidates achieved high marks but were in the minority.

June 2019: Section B

With reference to wine production in South Africa, write about FIVE of the following:

      a)   climate
      b)   KWV
      c)   Pinotage
      d)   Stellenbosch
      e)   virus diseases
      f)   Walker Bay
      g)   Wine of Origin (WO)

(*Each section carries equal weighting*)

As with all short format questions like this, results vary depending on how well candidates have covered the syllabus. There were some very short and superficial answers with some candidates struggling to fill one side of paper when three to four sides is the norm for these multi-section format questions.

Many candidates were unable to give good answers in all five sections, either leaving some blank or relying on guesswork which was invariably incorrect or too vague. With all five sections carrying equal weighting, it is impossible to compensate for weak sections by writing more in others where the candidate thinks they know more. The mark will always be capped at the maximum available for each section – in this case 20 marks. Another common error is answering more than the five required sections. Not only do responses tend to be superficial as a result of the additional time constraint this imposes but examiners will only mark the first five sections, ignoring any additional ones.

Candidates who excelled in this question clearly knew South Africa well and could write with authority and conviction. Those who did not know the facts struggled and answers tended to be vague, generic and unconvincing.

Pinotage was generally answered well and the two regions (Stellenbosch and Walker Bay) also generated good responses from candidates who had revised the topic well but many answers were simply too vague and clearly guesswork. The KWV needed sound factual knowledge and those who tried to bluff their way through this topic were very obvious.   Comments relating to climate were often far too general, with little more than level 3 knowledge in many cases.   The section on virus diseases was particularly poor with many candidates unaware of the difference between viruses and other types of diseases.   Leafroll should have been the key focus of this section – what it is, what the symptoms are, how material is infected, how it is treated etc.

Unit 4, 5 and 6 Examinations - Overview

The tasting and theory questions for these examinations carry an equal weighting of marks. This means that to excel candidates must demonstrate good all-round knowledge of key theory topics as well as sound tasting skills. However, the short-form question format means that candidates who do well on two of the three theory sections, and having achieved good marks for their tasting, may still pass the Unit as a whole despite one weak section since the outcome is based on an aggregate mark from both disciplines.

Tasting questions

The main issue, as in previous years, is with candidates failing to follow the SAT to the letter. By failing to comment on every aspect of the wine using the SAT accurately, candidates often miss out on marks needlessly. While there is some flexibility in how marks are awarded for descriptors, candidates must identify the structural components of the wine using SAT terminology to be given credit. "*Good finish*", "*heady alcohol*" and "*excellent length*" are all examples of candidates disadvantaging themselves by not using SAT terms.

Candidates are also reminded of the need to look for primary, secondary and tertiary characteristics in wines where appropriate, using specific descriptors for what they find.

Theory questions

Lack of detail continues to be an issue for the Unit 4, 5 and 6 theory questions. Short-form questions allow the examiner to test the breadth of the candidate's knowledge across core topics with a focus on factual recall but also demonstration of understanding of the principles involved. If candidates do not have a firm grasp of examinable material, they will not be able to demonstrate the level of understanding required to pass.

Many candidates not only underestimate the amount of information required in their answers - writing just three or four sentences will not result in a pass grade – but also often stray off-topic. Candidates are reminded that no marks are available for irrelevant detail, even if it is correct. This means paying close attention to the wording of the question. For example, 'Cava styles' is more specific than 'Cava' in isolation; candidates would need to structure their answers accordingly. Many weaker candidates still pick up on a key word and write everything they know about that topic. As already noted in the Unit 3 theory feedback, this is an unsafe strategy.

Unit 4 – Spirits of the World

The Unit 4 examinations took place in November 2018, March 2019 and June 2019.

NB: Where theory question topics are separated by the word 'OR', different versions of the question were in circulation.

November 2018: Unit 4 TASTING	
Spirit 1	Ciroc Vodka
Spirit 2	Tanqueray No. Ten Gin
Spirit 3	Herradura Reposado Tequila

Candidates were not required to state the provenance of these three spirits but, instead, to identify them as closely as possible within their category and to explain the reasoning behind this. It is not enough to simply be able to "recognize" the spirit – candidates need to demonstrate how they use the information in their tasting note to reach a logical conclusion.

When the question instructs candidates to "identify the spirit <u>as closely as possible</u>" it is obvious that simply naming the category (i.e. Vodka, Gin, Tequila) will not suffice. In the case of these three spirits, examiners were looking for as much precision as possible – "<u>neutral</u> Vodka" rather than "flavoured", "<u>Distilled</u> Gin" (or London Dry) as opposed to the generic term Gin which would also include cold compound Gins, and "<u>Reposado</u> Tequila" rather than any other style or the more generic term "aged" Tequila. In terms of identifying likely reasons for these conclusions, some of these are very obvious and simple, such as the absence of colour in the case of spirits 1 and 2, whilst others require a little more thought and application such as the lack of intense smokiness in spirit 3 that would have been more indicative of a Mezcal Tequila rather than Reposado. When reaching their conclusions, candidates should aim initially to identify the characteristics that place the spirit in a certain category, and then to look deeper for the clues that point to a specific style within the category. For example, the integration, texture and length of spirit 2 were indicative of the quality associated with a "distilled" Gin rather than a cold compound one

November 2018: Unit 4 THEORY

In relation to spirits, write about each of the following:
 	
    a) **Distillation of Scotch Malt Whisky**
    b) **The production of rum prior to distillation**
    c) **Grappa OR Pisco OR Brandy de Jerez**

Marks were often lost in this paper because candidates did not answer the question specifically as set. For example, there is no point writing at length about the malting of barley in a question that

asks specifically about the distillation of Scotch Malt Whisky. On the other hand, any comments relating to distillation in section b) would be irrelevant because examiners were only interested in information that relates to the processes that take place prior to distillation. Poor examination technique means many candidates only see certain words in a question and "zoom in" on these without taking note of other important words or phrases that actually dictate what the question is about.

Answers in section c) tended to vary considerably. As the information required here was largely fact driven it was an instance where candidates simply needed to write everything they knew about the given style of brandy. There were some very good responses on Grappa. The sections on Pisco and Brandy de Jerez tended to divide candidates into those who were very good and those who were very poor, suggesting that many candidates had possibly neglected certain areas of the syllabus in their revision plans.

March 2019: Unit 4 TASTING	
Spirit 1	The Glenrothes 12 years old Single Malt Whisky
Spirit 2	Courvoisier VSOP Cognac
Spirit 3	Ricard 45 Pastis de Marseille

On the whole these papers were well-written, and the pass rate was quite high. As is often the case, the main reason for failing was not following the Spirits SAT or only doing so haphazardly. Some candidates continue to default to the Wine SAT in their answers which is substantively different to the Spirits SAT; needless to say, this results in lost marks. Many candidates who made this error forgot to mention the state of maturity on the nose or the nature of the finish on the palate since these are very specific to the Spirits SAT.

Loss of marks in other sections of the paper was often down to the following:

- Not identifying enough aroma characteristics for the marks available.
- Using a "range statement" to describe levels of the structural components of the spirits rather than just one level. Examiners are instructed not to award marks in such cases.
- Using terms that are too generic or vague for this level of assessment such as "citrus", "oak" or "spice". Similarly, some comments relating to maturation are too vague such as "aged" with no indication of whether this relates to a short period of ageing or a long one as in the case of a spirit that is fully matured.
- Not answering the question as set in the concluding sections. A significant number of candidates insist on writing an "assessment of quality" where this has not been asked for. On this paper, a quality assessment was required for two of the spirits but not for the Ricard Pastis.
- Making factual errors in the concluding section.

In relation to spirits, write about each of the following:

a) **Distillation of Armagnac**
b) **The use of botanicals in gin production**
c) **Legal requirements for Bourbon production OR Tennessee Whiskey OR Irish Whiskey**

Short-form questions such as this can be problematic for candidates if they have not prepared adequately or leave gaps in their revision. This three-part question format is designed to test the breadth of a candidate's knowledge across the Unit, so a very poor mark in one section can make a pass difficult to achieve.

There were two main areas of weakness in this exam. Firstly, for the Distillation of Armagnac question, a large number of candidates seemed unaware that Armagnac is typically made in a different way to Cognac, not knowing that distillation is done through a single column still – the 'alambic Armagnacais' – and run continuously. Unfortunately, there were too many descriptions of double pot distillation (as used for Cognac), therefore missing the key point of this question – i.e. the difference between Armagnac and Cognac. Candidates who went down this route therefore scored very low marks (if any) for this section.

The second problem was in the gin question, where many candidates simply thought they were being asked to list the range of botanicals used to make gin. This list was often lengthy and certainly demonstrated knowledge of the main ingredients. However, what examiners really wanted to know, was **how** these botanicals are used. For example, stronger answers noted factors such as when the botanicals were added to the spirit, whether they are distilled immediately or macerated first, the use of Carterhead stills, cut points for different flavoured botanicals, and the use of gin concentrates. Candidates who discussed points such as these generally scored well.

June 2019: Unit 4 TASTING	
Spirit 1	Tanqueray No Ten Gin
Spirit 2	Calvados de Christian Drouin Sélection
Spirit 3	Lepanto Solera Gran Reserva Brandy de Jerez

It is important that candidates familiarize themselves with the SAT for spirits because it differs from that used for wine in several key areas. Another common error was failing to answer the question as set in the concluding sections. For this paper, candidates were instructed to identify the style within the category and to account for the dominant aroma/flavour character of the spirit. This meant there were no marks allocated for quality assessments but a number of candidates chose to ignore this requirement and wrote an assessment of quality regardless, which gained them no marks.

The Gin was generally described well and correctly identified so this was a high scoring section. At the other end of the scale, many struggled with the Calvados, both in terms of the tasting note itself and with the identification of this spirit. The Spanish Brandy was also a challenge for many and Rum was the most common incorrect identification, which was not totally illogical given the "sweet" nature of this spirit.

June 2019: Unit 4 THEORY

In relation to spirits, write about each of the following:

a) **Distillation of Vodka**
b) **Scotch whisky production prior to fermentation**
c) **Mezcal OR Pastis OR Pisco**

This question was answered fairly well, achieving a respectable pass rate of 57%. The majority of candidates were able to write on all three subjects and nearly 20% of all students gained a Merit grade or above. For those who struggled with this question, there were three key pitfalls:

- Candidates not writing enough. This is a common theme but one that is extremely important. In this paper, students have around 10-12 minutes per section, which should be enough time to write close to a full side of A4 paper PROVIDED robust revision has been undertaken.
- Many unsuccessful candidates only addressed two of the three sections (or less in some instances). Such omissions may be due to an oversight, a shortage of time, or lack of knowledge on certain topics, but they nearly always result in failure because the candidate needs to submit two near faultless responses to be sure of a pass grade.
- For section a) a large number of candidates wrote about the production of Vodka in its entirety, rather than just the distillation process in isolation. As a result, their answers were broad but very superficial rather than narrow/focused but very detailed. Examiners were looking for depth here rather than a broad-brush account of the whole process from selection of raw material through to bottling. It is vital that candidates read the question properly before writing their answer. In a question which states "Distillation of Vodka", including information on anything that takes place prior to, or after, distillation is a waste of time and energy, which will only be detrimental in terms of the grade achieved.

Unit 5 – Sparkling Wines of the World

Unit 5 examinations also took place in November 2018, March 2019 and June 2019.

NB: Where theory question topics are separated by the word 'OR', different versions of the question were in circulation.

November 2018: Unit 5 TASTING		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Italy Veneto Frassinelli Prosecco Superiore Extra Dry
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia N/R Black Queen Sparkling Shiraz
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	USA California Roederer Quartet

For this paper candidates were not required to identify the wines but to focus on their quality and the grape varieties used in the case of wines 1 and 3. To answer these sections well, candidates needed to draw on the observations made about the wines under the headings "appearance", "nose" and "palate". Inevitably, the more extensive and accurate the description, the more meaningful and accurate the conclusion.

These three wines were very different in style and the examiner was looking for evidence of these differences in the tasting notes, not only in terms of the descriptions themselves but also in the quality assessment. Wine 1 was modestly priced. It was correct and clean but simple in nature and somewhat lacking in balance due to the rather low acidity. The quality of wine 2 was arguably the most difficult to assess accurately as there was a tendency for candidates to make the assumption that this was also an inexpensive wine, either because they incorrectly assumed it to be a Lambrusco or because they only associate Sparkling Shiraz with tank-fermented sparkling wine. This was certainly not the case here. This was a very good to outstanding example of this particular style of wine. The evidence of this was the complexity on both the nose and palate where there was great concentration of primary fruit but also clear signs of the use of oak and plenty of tertiary development providing depth and character. Wine 3 was the easiest for candidates to assess, both in terms of the description and the assessment of quality due to the clear notes of autolysis that singled this out as a traditional method sparkling wine.

In relation to sparkling wines, write about each of the following:

    a) **Transfer method**
    b) **Climate and weather in Champagne**
    c) **Crémant d'Alsace OR Limoux OR Clairette de Die**

In this paper, the section on the transfer method varied considerably in terms of accuracy and completeness. Many answers were confused or superficial. Some candidates mistakenly wrote about the tank method – an error they should not be making at this level. Similarly, far too many candidates confused the use of the terms "*liqueur d'exposition*" and *"dosage"* with a significant number stating incorrectly how dosage is added to start the second fermentation. Another common error was reference to "secondary fermentation" rather than the more correct "second fermentation".

Answers on section b) were often unfocussed with a number of candidates simply describing the Champagne region in broad terms, including unnecessary information on soils, grapes and sub-regions. This is a common error in all theory questions, and an easy way to lose marks as examiners are looking for very specific detail and will disregard anything considered outside the scope of the question that has been set. Any reference to sub-regions, grapes etc needed to be linked very precisely to climate for them to have relevance, i.e. the fact that the Vallée de la Marne is more frost-prone and therefore more suited to the later budding Meunier which is less likely to be affected by spring frost - a common occurrence in this northern region.

The section on the named styles of sparkling wines generated some very weak responses that were too generic, confused or simply incorrect. Some candidates were clearly relying on guesswork here.

March 2019: Unit 5 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	France Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte Réserve Brut NV
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	France Champagne Champagne Castelnau Millésimé 2006
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	France Champagne Pol Roger Demi Sec Champagne NV

This paper was answered well with a 76% pass rate. The majority of candidates noted that all three wines were from the same region and in doing so, generally handled the concluding section on the quality assessment well, identifying the clear stop up in quality between these wines. This meant they invariably went on to achieve a pass grade on this paper.

Despite this however, there were a few common errors and weaknesses:

- The phrase "Style within the Category" generated a wide variance of answers, ranging from method of production (Tank, Traditional etc), to sweetness levels (dry, sweet etc), to types of sparkling wine (Cremant, Vouvray, Sekt, Champagne etc). All that was required here was NV Champagne, Vintage Champagne and Demi Sec Champagne.
- Many people assumed that the Demi Sec Champagne would not age. However, it is worth noting that many of the most age-worthy wines in the world are sweet wines and the same principles carried across here. This wine had concentration, acidity and freshness that would have supported ageing for a number of years.
- In correctly identifying all three wines as Champagne, a large number of candidates over-estimated the quality level of Wine 1. Very few actually noted that this was a fairly simple wine, and this "simplicity" actually had its own allocation of marks in terms of aroma and flavour clusters. There is a general tendency for candidates to assume that all wines with any indication of autolysis must by default with high quality wines with great ageing potential. This is not always the case as this wine clearly showed.

March 2019: Unit 5 THEORY

In relation to sparkling wines, write about each of the following:

a) **Second fermentation and lees ageing in the traditional method**
b) **The use of aromatic grapes in sparkling wine**
c) **Sparkling Shiraz OR Lambrusco OR Cava Rosado**

On the whole, this paper was answered well and gained a high pass rate of 66%. As the most main-stream of the three topics, section a) on the traditional method was handled successfully in the majority of cases with candidates describing second fermentation in bottle and the impact of yeast autolysis through lees ageing. Answers on Sparkling shiraz and Lambrusco were also answered reasonaly well, whilst those on Cava Rosado were less convincing. For instance, many candidates were unaware of the use of Trepat and Pinot Noir in Cava Rosado production and the fact that the colour of the wine must derive through the use of the "sangrado" (saignée) method.

In contrast, comments relating to the use of aromatic grapes in sparkling wine were often weak. In many instances, candidates failed to grasp what was required here. However, those who took a moment to think about the question and realised that the use of Muscat (for Asti) and Glera (for Prosecco) along with their production methods (Tank and Asti) and the reasons for these methods over others where key to answering this question, were well on their way to a pass grade. Many answers also mentioned the roles of Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc in producing sparkling wine from aromatic grapes, which consolidated their marks even further. However, for those who overlooked Asti and Prosecco it was almost impossible to secure enough marks for a pass grade.

Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia N/A Redbank "Emily" Brut Cuvée NV
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	France Champagne Charles Heidsieck Brut Millésimé2006
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Italy Piedmont Asti NV

Candidates were not required to identify the origin of sample 1. As a relatively simple wine with limited autolytic character, provenance could have been attributed to any number of countries so this was not felt to be a good test of candidates' tasting ability as it simply became a "guessing game" rather than relying on deduction based on observations from the tasting note. Instead, marks were allocated to the "assessment of quality" and "readiness for drinking". The aim here was to test the candidates' skill in recognizing a wine with no real complexity or concentration and therefore no ageing capacity. As is often the case, weaker candidates detect some autolysis (very limited in this instance) and immediately associate this only with high quality wines. This inevitably led them to write inaccurate assessments of quality.

In fact, many candidates overuse descriptors linked to autolysis when assessing sparkling wines, with some of them assuming these to be a characteristic of all sparkling wines. Clearly this is not the case and with a marking process that is dictated by the principles of aroma/flavour "clusters", marks will be restricted to those clusters that are relevant to each specific wine. In some instances, marks may even be capped where a candidate identifies autolytic character in a wine that clearly does not display this such as wine 3.

Wine 3 also led to weak comments from some candidates for other reasons. There is a general tendency to assume all Asti wines are inexpensive and only "acceptable" quality. This is often based on prejudice due to its sweet and perfumed style with no autolytic character. In the same way that some candidates always associate autolysis with high quality, they also associate absence of autolysis with lack of quality. This is short-sighted and not always the case.

In relation to sparkling wines, write about each of the following:

a) **The traditional method from riddling onwards**
b) **Viticulture in the production of Cava**
c) **Saumur OR Franciacorta OR Cap Classique**

A number of candidates scored low marks in section a) because they either mis-read or incorrectly interpreted the phase "from riddling onwards". This specific wording meant answers needed to address the process of riddling itself **as well as** all the stages that followed. Some took it to mean **only** the stages that follow riddling.

As such, they omitted a significant amount of relevant information such as what riddling is, when and how it takes place, why it is undertaken, what the outcome is. Some candidates also forgot to comment on bottle ageing after disgorgement. Good candidates were aware of the importance of this in terms of better integration.

Other sections posed fewer problems. Where low marks were achieved, it was usually down to insufficient detail and general lack of knowledge.

Unit 6 – Fortified Wines of the World

Unit 6 examinations took place in November 2018, March 2019 and June 2019.

NB: Where theory question topics are separated by the word 'OR', different versions of the question were in circulation.

November 2018: Unit 6 TASTING		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Spain Jerez Valdespino Tio Diego Dry Amontillado
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Madeira Henriques & Henriques 15 Year Old Boal
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia Victoria Campbells Classic Liqueur Muscat

This was a trio of unrelated fortified wines which candidates were required to identify and assess the quality of.

As in past papers, some candidates failed to go into sufficient detail in their assessment of quality or included irrelevant observations about the wine's readiness for drinking, possible food matches, price etc. The best answers gave sound reasoning to back up the points they made. Of the five marks available for this section, only one was for identifying the correct SAT quality category. The remainder were allocated for valid explanation/justification of this quality level. "*Balanced*", "*complex*" and "*typical*" are meaningless terms unless tasters can convincingly explain <u>where</u> the balance lies, in <u>what way</u> the wine is complex or <u>why</u> typicity is indicative of quality. Far too many candidates fail to take this further step.

It was particularly important to do this in the case of these wines as the quality did not vary significantly between them – they were all either "very good" or "outstanding". All three were complex because they had oxidative character from ageing but this "complexity" displayed itself differently in each wine. Wine 1 had tertiary character from oxidative character but also clear evidence of flor which gave a "lift" that counterbalanced this. Wine 2 also had complexity from oxidative notes but there was also a "balsamic" lift (down to the high acidity and the maderisation). The savoury character from oxidative ageing on wine 3 was complemented by the clear varietal character of the Muscat grape. A simple, generic comment that the wines were "complex due to ageing" would not convey these subtle differences between these wines.

In relation to fortified wines, write about each of the following:

  a) **Vinification and fortification of Port**
  b) **Soils in Jerez**
  c) **Grenache OR Beaumes de Venise OR Banyuls**

Scripts varied significantly in terms of factual accuracy with some candidates performing well whilst others clearly struggled. A common problem was candidates' handling of the various topics which was often too generic or superficial. For example, simply describing the whole production process for Port in broad terms rather than limiting this to vinification and fortification. There was no point in listing grape varieties, soils or explaining how ageing differs between the various styles of Port as there were no marks available for this information.

Most candidates were able to identify the three key soils in Jerez but the majority of the marks were awarded for the detail relating to these such as their characteristics, where specifically in the Jerez region each is found and their significance in Sherry production.   This detail was often lacking.

Lack of detail was also often the problem in section c) and suggested candidates had left certain sections of the syllabus out of their revision plan.

March 2019: Unit 6 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Douro Taylors First Estate NV
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Douro Quinta de Val da Figuera 10 years old
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Douro Sandemans Vintage Port 2011

The results for this paper were good with a pass rate of 78%.   These wines were identified accurately in most instances and candidates were largely systematic in their approach with their tasting notes. However, when it came to the assessment of quality, responses were often too superficial and simplistic leading the examiner to question whether these candidates really understood the wines.   An accurate assessment of the quality was particularly important in the case of the two Ruby Ports, where examiners were looking for evidence of clear understanding of the difference in quality between these two wines. This was not the place for generic / "stock"

phrases such as "the wine is balanced" or "lacks complexity and length for a higher grading". Candidates use these observations far too frequently without elaboration or explanation. In this instance, candidates needed to be able to differentiate between the elements of balance in wine 1 that pointed to a more modest quality level such as the "hot" alcohol, and the balance indicators in wine 3 that pointed to the other end of the quality spectrum – the alcohol being held in check by the sugar, acid, tannin and weight of the palate. Balance is, of course, only one element of a quality assessment but it is the one that is most frequently over-simplified by candidates in their assessment of quality.

With all three wines being Ports, they were clearly made from red varietals. This was patently clear in the case of wines 1 and 3 but was more of a challenge perhaps for weaker candidates when it came to wine 2. However, many candidates fail to apply logic in their tasting notes. For example, commenting on a "tawny" appearance (i.e. a term used to describe a colour that has a touch of red) and then concluding that the wine was a Sercial Madeira (i.e. one made from a white grape) does not follow through and shows poor theoretical knowledge.

A significant number of candidates misjudged the sweetness of these wines and marks were also lost where, instead of identifying flavours on the palate, candidates simply wrote "same as nose".

March 2019: Unit 6 THEORY

In relation to fortified wines, write about each of the following:

  a) **Maturation in Port Production**
  b) **Flor**
  c) **Madeira grape varieties OR age indications of Sherry OR age and quality levels in Madeira**

The theory element in the March examination generated a fairly low pass rate of 55%. The section on Flor was generally answered well, answers on the maturation of Port ranged from poor to good and section c) which varied according to APP location was, in the main, weak.

In section a) many candidates wrote about grape varieties, treading in lagares, fermentation, the different vineyard locations etc., which was not relevant in the context of a question on the **maturation** of Port. The logical approach with this question was to consider the various styles of Port and differentiate between the maturation of these. Styles fall into three camps; entry-level Port (Ruby, Tawny, White and Rosé) that have very little maturation, wood matured Ports and bottle matured Ports. Candidates who addressed the maturation of these categories accurately and with sufficient detail, generally did well.

In section c) the topic varied according to where the examination was being sat. The topics were all very specific and candidates needed to limit their answers to what was relevant rather than write about Madeira or Sherry in general terms. For example, when addressing either of the topics on Madeira, many candidates wrote extensive accounts of the processes of Estufa and Canteiro. This had no relevance at all in terms of "Madeira grape varieties" and only limited relevance in terms of "age of quality levels in Madeira". There was nothing to be gained from these descriptions **unless** they were mentioned specifically in the context of helping to define different quality levels of

Madeira. This lack of focus is a common error and a frequent reason for a fail or fail (unclassified) grade. Irrelevant information gains no marks and wastes time which is often in short supply in a timed examination. Spending a little time to plan each answer not only helps to focus the mind but gives candidates a firm basis on which to expand their answer, so that it addresses the specific information the examiner is looking for.

"Age indications of sherry" saw some students writing about the different styles of sherry (Fino, Amontillado etc) which was not what was required here. Better candidates were aware that this was a question about wines of a Certified Age (e.g. VOS and VORS), Wines with an Indication of Age (e.g. 12 or 15 years) and Vintage (Añada) Sherries.

June 2019: Unit 6 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	France Rhône Domaine de Durban Beaumes de Venise 2016
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Spain Jerez Williams & Humbert 12 years old Oloroso
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Spain Jerez La Gitana Manzanilla

This trio of wines generated a good pass rate of 87%. Few candidates thought much "outside the box" in respect of wine 1, failing to comment on the simplicity of this wine which was a requirement for full marks in terms of aroma and flavour descriptors. As the most complex of the trio, wine 2 was arguably the most difficult to assess accurately. This was reflected in many answers with a significant number of candidates confused about the levels of acidity and alcohol. Poor candidates also tended to detect flor related aromas that simply were not there. Wine 3 is a very distinctive style and caused few problems as a result, contributing significantly to the high pass rate and allowing many weaker candidates to scrape through with a low level pass grade.

June 2019: Unit 6 THEORY

In relation to fortified wines, write about each of the following:

   a) **Viticulture in Madeira**
   b) **Fermentation and fortification of Sherry**
   c) **Late Bottled Vintage (LBV) Port OR Vintage Port OR White Port**

Viticulture in Madeira was answered well in most instances with some candidates providing a good level of detail, but answers for the Sherry question were weaker. Descriptions of fortification were mostly good, but many did not address fermentation at all or gave only limited information with no real detail such as temperatures, duration, fermentation vessels etc.

Candidates' knowledge of LBV Port was generally good and those who remembered to differentiate between "Modern" and "Traditional" (unfiltered) LBV and were aware of "Envelhecido em Garafa" wines did well. Vintage Port also posed few problems with good candidates also commenting on the commercial factors that must be taken into account when deciding on the declaration of a vintage.   Answers on white Port were less impressive, with the exception of those candidates who were aware of changes in production and style and the fact that not all white Port is inexpensive and of a basic quality level.

Paper	2018/19			2017/18			2016/17			2015/16			2014/15			2013/14		
Unit 1 CWA	April 86%	Nov 90%		April 90%	Nov 94%		April 91%	Nov 91%		April 89%	Nov 85%		April 84%	Nov 82%		April 91%	Nov 90%	
Unit 1 Case Study	Nov 91%	Mar 90%	June 81%	Nov 83%	Mar 83%	June 90%	Nov 85%	Mar 82%	June 83%	Nov 85%	Mar 80%	June 80%	Nov 58%	Mar 72%	June 79%	Nov 72%	Mar 73%	June 83%
Unit 2	93%			94%			91%			91%			92%			90%		
Unit 3 Tasting	June 76%	Jan 78%		June 76%	Jan 74%		June 59%	Jan 71%		June 77%	Jan 65%		June 69%	Jan 59%		June 82%	Jan 64%	
Unit 3 Theory	June 34%	Jan 41%		June 40%	Jan 41%		June 45%	Jan 34%		June 45%	Jan 52%		June 32%	Jan 27%		June 40%	Jan 29%	
Unit 4	Nov 64%	Mar 69%	June 71%	Nov 59%	Mar 52%	June 58%	66%			64%			52%			55%		
Unit 5	Nov 76%	Mar 69%	June 74%	Nov 66%	Mar 79%	June 85%	76%			59%			66%			71%		
Unit 6	Nov 63%	Mar 72%	June 79%	Nov 53%	Mar 64%	June 69%	80%			58%			53%			82%		

Appendix 2 – Grade Bands for Diploma Closed-book Examinations

GRADE BANDS FOR DIPLOMA CLOSED-BOOK EXAMINATIONS
Fail Unclassified   <44% A seriously inadequate answer which, through lack of information or errors of fact, demonstrates a very weak understanding of the subject.   May be poorly expressed and/or confused. Very limited progression beyond WSET® Level 3 in content or analysis.
Fail   45% to 54% A borderline answer which may contain some correct detail and be close to a pass but which is too superficial in content or narrow in scope. May contain serious errors of fact/evidence of misunderstanding but for which the answer would be of pass-level standard.
Pass   55% to 64% A basic answer which demonstrates an adequate understanding of the topic. Any errors or omissions are minor. Covers sufficient of the main points to be 'more right than wrong' but with limited use of examples.
Pass with Merit   65% to 74% A good answer which demonstrates clear evidence of understanding and application of Diploma-level knowledge. Shows greater factual coverage and more accuracy with good use of examples. Very sound, but without the extra edge for a pass with distinction.
Pass with Distinction   >75% An excellent answer which demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the topic and shows flair, creativity or originality in analysis, argument or choice of examples.

Appendix 3 – Grade Bands for Diploma Coursework Assignments

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GRADE BANDS FOR DIPLOMA COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS
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Fail Unclassified   **<44%**

A seriously inadequate assignment which, through lack of information or errors of fact, demonstrates a very weak understanding of the subject. Very limited evidence of relevant research. Poorly expressed or confused with unsatisfactory presentation/referencing; lacks coherence and structure.
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Fail   **45% to 54%**

A borderline assignment which may contain some correct detail but fails to address the question in sufficient depth or is too narrow in focus. Little evidence of research beyond the recommended reading. Lacks original thought with poor or superficial analysis of source material. Rudimentary structure/presentation, possibly with inaccurate referencing.

This grade is also awarded for assignments which do not meet the minimum word count.
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Pass   **55% to 64%**

A satisfactory if basic assignment with sound explanation and some evidence of critical thinking/ personal commentary. Analysis of key concepts, terminology and use of examples is limited but clearly expressed. Adequate presentation as well as sound referencing and a competent bibliography.
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Pass with Merit   **65% to 74%**

A good assignment which demonstrates a clear understanding of the subject. Thorough analysis and critical use of a wide range of relevant source material, properly referenced in the bibliography. Clear evidence of original thought and engagement with the question combined with rigorous argument and mature expression. Evaluates more than one side of the argument with good use of examples. Correct presentation with mostly accurate referencing.
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Pass with Distinction   **>75%**

An excellent assignment which demonstrates mastery of the subject. Comprehensive analysis of key themes and sophisticated personal commentary with well-chosen examples. Extensive evidence of original research with judicious and critical use of source material. Evaluates more than one side of the argument, linking theory and practice as appropriate. Excellent presentation with coherence, clarity and flair. Relevant and accurate referencing.
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