



WSET® Level 4 Diploma in Wines and Spirits

Examiners' Report for 2015-16

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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 2015-16 academic year. Where appropriate examiner observations on how well each question was answered are accompanied by excerpts from candidates' scripts. 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.

For detailed guidance on the type of questions set in the Diploma examinations and examination technique in general students should refer to the Candidate Assessment Guide.

Please note: Extracts from candidates' scripts in this report are anonymous and are reproduced here for information only, as submitted to the examiners. They have been included to illustrate the standard of answer required to pass or excel in the Diploma examinations. They may contain errors or omissions and should not be considered definitive answers to the question concerned. They may not be relied upon with reference to individual examination papers.

The information provided in this report relates to examinations held during the 2015-16 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 this year's 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 there is no excuse for mistakes of this kind. 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 is 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 text books, 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.

November 2015: Coursework Assignment

Pass rate: 85%

Assignment title: The renaissance of gin.

Gin is a spirit with a fascinating but chequered past. By the 1980s many in the drinks industry saw it as a dying category. It seemed to lack the pedigree of Cognac and Single Malt Whisky, whilst at the same time being devoid of the “coolness” of vodka and newly created drinks of the time like Baileys Irish Cream. Yet here we are, barely thirty years later, with gin seen as fashionable again with many new premium brands entering the market.

a) Presentation and structure: 20%

Assignments should include a declared word count and a bibliography correctly referenced throughout the body of the text.

b) Introduction and history: 20%

The candidate should outline the history of gin, starting with its origins in the Middle Ages and tracing its progress until 1985.

c) Production: 10%

The candidate should briefly describe the production of gin, focusing in particular on the ways in which variations in the process result in different flavours in the finished spirit.

d) Reviving the category: 40%

The candidate should describe the reasons why gin has become popular again over the past thirty years. Reasoned argument, evidence and well-chosen examples should be used to support any assertions made.

e) Conclusion and personal commentary: 10%

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

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. For example, the weighting allocation was key in this question. The bulk of the marks were in section d) “Reviving the category” with only 10% of the marks available for the description of production processes. Some candidates spent far too much time and effort on the latter and the problem was exacerbated even further where descriptions were generic rather than focusing specifically on the ways in which variations result in different flavours in the finished spirit.

Candidates who took the right approach here briefly summarised the following key points leaving enough of the word allowance for in-depth analysis and discussion in section d):

- Base spirit – how choice of raw materials (grain or molasses) affects purity.
- Botanicals – the difference between traditional versus innovative/original.
- Still – effect of size, shape, type (pot or Carter Head), heating method etc.
- Imparting flavour – effects of pre distillation steeping/macerating, "distilled gin"/vapour (botanicals basket), post distillation essences, cold compounding.

- Finishing - ageing (use of oak, e.g. US gin Roundhouse Imperial Barrel Aged), dilution (type of water), bottling strength etc.

It is not enough to simply describe how gin is produced – the focus should be on how differences in style are achieved and this needed to be succinct to reflect the 10% weighting of this section of the assignment.

Whilst there were some very good assignments submitted, many were simplistic in their execution with too much emphasis placed on the easier sections, b) and c) rather than the more important section d).

The following example script is well researched, referenced and presented. It is not overly long at 300 words below the maximum word-count but it is focused. For example, the history of Gin is comprehensive but compact. The section on production looks at different processes used but also the results they achieve and the conclusion is market led with some sound projections supported by statistical evidence. The key focus of this assignment is the revival of the category – just as it should have been.

Introduction & history.

The principles of distillation are discovered in the 9th century by Arabs, who create the first still to produce Acqua Vitae. A few centuries elapse before widespread use of the still reaches Europe. During the 13th century, juniper is believed to have medicinal properties and is mainly consumed with wine or distilled wine. The first juniper spirit made with alcohol from grain and juniper appears in the 16th century, thanks to technological progress allowing the distillation of grain and not just wine. It is referred to as Genever and is mainly produced in the Low Countries.

In Britain, "Genever" is contracted to become "gin" and spreads with the arrival of Dutch Protestants in Britain in the 1570s. British soldiers call the spirit "Dutch courage". In 1600, around 200 distilling houses are counted in London (Solmonson: 2012) and the first taxes are levied. The popularity of gin increased during the Thirty Years War and in 1688 thanks to the Dutch-born king William of Orange, who allowed unlicensed gin production¹ and raised taxes on foreign imported drinks. The production of gin becomes large scale.

The first half of the 18th century sees the first social drug addiction, dubbed the "Gin Craze", an epidemic affecting mainly the urban poor who drink cheap and low quality gin. This excessive consumption leads to social disorder and gin is blamed for the main woes of society as the drawing "Gin Lane" by William Hogarth illustrates. In response, several gin acts are adopted from 1729 to 1751 to increase taxes and reduce domestic consumption. However, higher taxes lead to the production of illegal gin of low quality which is sweetened to mask the poor taste of the spirit; this becomes a style called "Old Tom Gin". In 1751, the last gin act is brought in, followed by a drop in consumption and an improvement in quality due to more controls over production.

By the end of the 18th century, gin regains its popularity in the British navy as the spirit is added to medicinal treatments based on quinine to mask its unpleasant taste. The first Gin and Tonic is made in this period, in which gin is added to quinine, water and sugar, to fight malaria.

The industrial revolution sees the emergence of gin palaces and the production of higher quality gins thanks to the improvement of production methods and the use of the Coffey column in 1832. "Old Tom" – sweetened gin – grows in popularity, while "London Dry" – unsweetened gin – emerges and is favoured by the wealthy class.

In the mid 19th century, the UK's ban on gin exports is lifted and a new use for gin emerges with cocktails, while Old Tom is eclipsed by London Dry. In the US, gin² consumption is first linked to punch, then cocktails. However, all that changes during Prohibition as gin does not require ageing like whisky, and is relatively easy to produce, paving the way for growing homemade production referred to as "bathtub gin". During the same period, American mixologists leave for Europe where they spread the cocktail consumption of which gin is a key ingredient.

Gin consumption falls after World War II despite the popularity of the Gin Martini. This is mainly due to the rise of vodka with its neutral taste, which makes it a good companion for cocktails, and the desire of a new generation to reject "old fashioned gin". It is reinforced by popular film characters such as James Bond, who drinks "Vodka Martini",

¹ From 1684 to 1710, gin production increased by 400% (Solmonson: 2012)

² Most of the gin consumed in the US before the 1850s is actually Genever, as it is mainly imported from Holland.

putting the “Gin Martini” firmly out of fashion. Gin loses its popularity and in 1967, vodka outsells gin for the first time on the US market. The gin renaissance comes in 1987 with the launch of Bombay Sapphire.

Production.

Gin³ is produced from a highly rectified spirit of 96% made of grain or molasses, with a range of natural or non-natural flavourings. The taste of the juniper is the most important. Once diluted with water, it must contain a minimum of 37.5% ABV, according to EU regulations⁴. Beside the recipe (the choice of the base spirit and botanicals) different gins can be obtained based on the production method.

Distilled Gin is flavoured by redistilling a neutral spirit in a pot still with juniper and other botanicals. A few options are available: some distillers do a **pre-maceration** of the botanicals for 24 to 48 hours before re-distilling; some do not as they prefer a lower level of extraction and a lighter style. The longer the maceration, the more intense the flavours extracted.

In distilled gin production, the rules allow the addition of flavour components after re-distillation as some could suffer from the distillation process, such as rose petal or cucumber. However, to be labelled **London Gin**, the gin cannot be flavoured after distillation, but must undergo a “single distillation process during which all the ingredients are distilled together” (Du Bois and Boons: 2014) limiting the distiller’s ability to experiment with different production processes under this legal classification. The addition of “dry” to London Gin means it is not sweetened, and is therefore crispier and more subtle. **Old Tom Gin** is a sweetened gin, initially made to mask the unpleasant taste of low quality gin, which sweetening makes more palatable.

By using a **Carter Head still**, a distiller can flavour by infusion. A basket containing the botanicals is placed in the head of the pot allowing the vapour to pass through. Bombay Sapphire Gin uses this process to produce a drink with more delicate flavours. To gain in precision, a distiller might also reduce the temperature of the distillation during the flavour extraction.

Compound Gin is produced by the addition of artificial flavouring compounds (cold compounding) or essential oils (compound essence). No re-distillation is required. The style of these gins can be intense just after flavouring, but they can also taste artificial and fade rapidly.

Yellow gin is aged in barrels in order to develop aromas of whisky due to the contact with the barrels.

Reviving the category.

³ Despite its close relation to gin, Genever is a different spirit which is not mentioned in the title of the subject of this study, and therefore will not be part of our study.

⁴ We chose not to mention Plymouth Gin in this section as its process of production does not particularly influence its style, despite being classified by EU regulations.

Gin's decline during the 60s finds its origins in the fashion for Vodka and the bad image of the juniper spirit. Changing Gin's image was therefore crucial for producers if the drink was to regain its popularity. This started with marketing operations and new packaging. Often dated to 1987, the renaissance of Gin is linked to the launch of Bombay Sapphire and its innovative packaging, consisting of a square, blue bottle which stands out at bars and helped create a new image, which replaced the old one of the Gin Martini from the 50s. From this point, Gin enters a new era. A few years later, Tanqueray and Bulldog adopt original packaging and fuel the resurgent popularity of Gin, each with a highly recognisable design.



All these efforts to rejuvenate Gin's image are supported by a new communication strategy by the big brands, targeting the new generation, and emphasising the singularity of their brand. Different strategies are adopted, all aimed at giving the juniper spirit a new image. While Bombay Sapphire suggests a rarefied old style, Hendrick's is provocative by showing men and women with cucumbers in various situations (Solmonson: 2014) and their "promotional campaigns essentially were an invitation to break away from category taboos and preconceptions and playfully reinvent it. Both consumers and producers were happy to oblige" says Spiros Malandrakis, Senior Analyst⁵. But Tanqueray goes deeper into the marketing by associating itself with rapper Snoop Dogg and later, in the 2000s, by featuring a black man, to address to a larger audience, younger and cooler. Finally, in 1996, thanks to the new owners, Plymouth Gin is renamed, its packaging reviewed, and, helped by a new marketing strategy, sales skyrocket from 3,000 cases/year to 150,000 in 2003 (Williamson: 2014).

Marketing Gin differently also helped it regain its popularity, as it did not simply appear as a basic flavoured alcohol. The image change also came about by other flourishes: "persuading the on-trade to personalise a Hendrick's & tonic with a cucumber garnish gives an added touch of branding brilliance, and has almost catapulted it into the global gin top ten" according to just-drinks.com⁶. In other words, by reinventing gin consumption and putting it into a higher category, by bringing about the premiumisation of the spirit, its image moved towards: quality, thanks to the raw material (a flower for Hendricks, or rare Japanese Senchea tea for Beefeater 24), artisanal (Junipero) and unique (cold distillation for Oxley Gin). It also helped marketers raise Gin into a higher category, matching consumers' associations of higher price with higher quality. Gin adapted to the trends and grew in popularity among the new generation, becoming an upmarket drink.

The renaissance of Gin is also linked to new communication approaches via internet platforms and blogs, allowing the promotion of Gin via sites such as www.Theginisin.com and <http://www.ginfoundry.com/>, helping educate people about the drink. It is also due to guided tours and visits: Beefeater, Sipsmith and Jensen distilleries have opened their doors in London to host visitors for a visit and tasting, allowing the consumer to experiment with gins, similar to what is done in the wine industry.

⁵ <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2013/11/gins-growth-through-premiumisation-humble-origins-and-a-noble-future.html>

⁶ http://www.just-drinks.com/comment/comment-spirits-gins-long-quest-for-kwan_id113857.aspx

However, marketing and communication are not everything: tastes also matters. The Bombay Sapphire style was more oriented toward citrus, lighter, and more balanced than the classic heavy juniper Gin. It has paved the way for the first reinvention of the spirit and given mixologists new possibilities. Innovations reached a peak with the release of Tanqueray N°10 and its handpicked botanicals, grapefruits, lime and orange, all distilled separately, and rejecting the classic London Dry style. At the same time, Hendricks emerged from Scotland in 2000 with a gin made of cucumber and rose petals, opening the doors to any recipes by any artisan distillers. These innovations in Gin production with new botanicals and different methods of distillation created a revolution in the taste of Gin, which was more adapted to the preferences of the younger generation, used to drinking round and neutral vodka: "People are turning to gin, because gin has more taste. It's a lot easier to drink than whisky and gives you more flavor than vodka"⁷ reported the Wall-Street Journal.

Beside the recipes, the general improvement in the quality of Gin has also played a natural role in the drink regaining its popularity: "over the last twenty years many distillers have returned to an older, artisanal way of distilling, one which emphasizes quality over quantity" (Barnett: 2011). While Vodka was gaining market share, Gin producers like Gordon reduced their alcohol strength and did not reinvent themselves. When Bombay Sapphire appeared on the market, the product was new, but also of a better quality, gaining popularity partly for this reason. Using new methods of production such as the carter head still, or handpicked botanicals and roses petals, did not simply change the taste; it improved the quality.

With new gins entering the market and attracting the interest of mixologists, the Gin renaissance was also fuelled by the production of older Gin styles, allowing mixologists to reproduce old cocktail recipes. Key names here include Dick Bradsell and Dale DeGroff, who reinvented cocktails in the 70s and 80s and trained a generation of "Bartenders (...) elevated to 'mixologists'" (Williamson : 2014) who emerged in the 2000s. Their role in the renaissance of Gin is mainly due to their desire to create cocktails from old recipes requiring old styles of gin, such as Old Tom. According to the Spiegel Newspaper: "the fact is that gin is in fashion because classic bar culture is in fashion, with bartenders hunting down old recipes and bar patrons ordering old drinks. The renaissance fits in with a broader wave of retro fever sweeping through popular culture."⁸ This young generation has definitely influenced consumers' tastes and encouraged distillers to go beyond mainstream recipes and re-create old styles such as Old Tom gin as Jensen did.

The micro-distillery has also had a role in the growing popularity of Gin. Being easy to produce and allowing artisanal production, Gin is part of a "revolt against mass production" and satisfies people's concerns about production methods: "being labelled 'handmade' is the best label a product can bear" notes Spiegel⁹ and reflects consumers' desire for unique products rather than standardised spirits produced in large quantities by international brands.

The popularity of gin is also growing as production is more accessible than whisky, which requires massive investment in ageing, whereas Gin can be produced quickly and

⁷ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/why-gin-is-back-with-a-flourish-1440676386>

⁸ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/gin-enjoys-renaissance-and-rising-popularity-in-germany-a-872813.html>

⁹ *Idem*

from a wide range of flavouring compounds. The return on investment is quicker and is a key reason for the growth of popularity of Gin in comparison with other spirits.

This is also simply linked to the product itself, whose characteristics reflect modern people's culture and values. Offering a variety of tastes and styles, Gin really matches the new consumer trend of greater interest in food and original recipes (Du Bois and Boons: 2014). With more than 500 distilleries around the world¹⁰, Gin offers a wider range of styles than any other white spirit such as Vodka, and can easily capture people's interest. The fact that it can also be locally produced makes it closer to people.

Finally, Gin's renewed popularity also hinges on a general improvement of quality, and the development of new tonic waters going with gins, creating more mixing possibilities and new flavours.

Conclusion and personal commentary.

"Over the past few years there has been a renaissance in gin consumption. As gin continues to find itself in vogue, we are seeing the category and brands extend their popularity to more markets"¹¹ says Charlie Downing, Diageo Global Gin Marketing Director. As gin becomes markedly more popular, we can clearly identify that premium gin is leading the way: "UK sales of premium British gin have grown by 48.7% in the last two years, and research by the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) shows demand rising sharply."¹²

While spirit consumption overall is not growing, we can however foresee that the consumption of Gin in general will grow significantly in western countries and vodka will lose market share. Within the gin categories, basic standard Gin will certainly see its market shares keep on reducing on the domestic market. However, premium gin will grow, according to a report by IPSOS¹³, and, within this category, we would even argue that artisanal and small gin distilleries will see their importance growing to the benefit of small, local producers, while big international brands will certainly keep on growing their exports.

In the near future, export markets such as the Philippines, where 1.4 l of gin per inhabitant per year is consumed¹⁴, will be key markets for the European Gin industry, mainly for the big brands, as small distilleries might face difficulties in entering this market where massive marketing budgets are required, according to an Economist report.¹⁵ Other countries could also embrace the Gin renaissance once the economic downturn no longer affects their economies. The development of cocktail culture will also play a crucial role in promoting gin in these countries.

Exports markets are therefore essential; however, this does not guarantee the success of Gin everywhere. Cultural aspects and different levels of development, along with trends, might prevent the development of Gin in some countries which could favour more "classic" and "high-end" spirits such as Whisky or Cognac, like in China.

¹⁰ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/why-gin-is-back-with-a-flourish-1440676386>

¹¹ <http://www.wsta.co.uk/press/738-british-gin-renaissance-eyes-european-advance>

¹² <http://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2015/06/trade-moves-to-build-on-british-gin-success/>

¹³ <http://www.ipsos.com/sites/ipsos.com/files/Drinking-to-the-Future-Trends-in-the-Spirits-Industry.pdf>

¹⁴ http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2013/06/daily-chart-9?fsrc=scn%2Ftw_ec%2Fhigh_spirits

¹⁵ *Idem*

Moreover, Vodka is still the most consumed spirit in the world, and reaches approximately 14 litres per inhabitant per year in Russia. So we can assume that it will take time before Gin outsells Vodka there, but also in the rest of the world, as Vodka remains a popular spirit.

However, we are confident that Gin has all the characteristics: taste, variety of style, a plethora of uses in cocktails and marketing tools to become, again, the most popular white spirit in the world.

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November 2015: Case Study

Pass rate: 85%

The relationship between a multiple retailer and its suppliers.

Over the last fifteen months the drinks trade has been gripped by revelations about the demands being made on suppliers by multiple retailers. The reporting raises questions about the relationship between multiple retailers and suppliers in all markets, which will inevitably have implications for the consumer.

There will always be a degree of tension between retailers and suppliers; in fact it could be argued that such tension is a positive force, keeping both parties on their toes. This was the subject of a session entitled “Playing by Different Rules: the battle between buying and selling” at the 8th MW Symposium in Florence in May 2014. The panel included retail buyers from Sweden, the UK and the USA, and suppliers from Austria and South Africa. Although it is clear that each national (and sometimes regional) market is different, common themes emerged concerning how multiple retailers and suppliers could work together successfully.

Whilst the struggle between a multiple retailer and a large supplier could be said to be a fair contest (comparable to a boxing bout between two heavyweights), there is no such equality when it comes to small suppliers. It is difficult for a “flyweight” supplier (to continue the boxing analogy) to survive in the ring with a retail “heavyweight”. It is all too easy for the large multiple retailer to bully the small supplier, exerting financial pressure whilst overlooking the real value they can bring to the multiple retailer business.

A code of conduct and the adoption of best practice guidelines can help to create a more productive working relationship between multiple retailers and suppliers.

- a) Describe the principal ways in which relations between multiple retailers and suppliers can become dysfunctional. How could this affect the range of products available to the consumer? *(40% weighting)*
- b) What are the key points that should be addressed in a code of conduct used to govern the relationship between a multiple retailer and a key supplier? *(40% weighting)*
- c) How should the conduct of a multiple retailer differ in its relationship with a small supplier? *(20% weighting)*

The pass rate for this topic was good; however most of these fell within the pass grade band rather than in the higher grades. This was largely due to insufficient analysis and original thought leading to superficial, predictable or unexciting responses that failed to address the topic in full, largely just making statements of fact with little discussion.

The UK retailer Tesco featured heavily in answers, even those from non UK residents. This was as expected but some scripts limited their response only to this example and in a couple of instances they got so caught up in their account of this news story that they lost track of the specific content of the questions set.

The following script is a good attempt. Section b) is rather brief for the marks allocation and although it addresses a number of important points of a code of conduct it also omits others. It also finishes rather abruptly in section c) suggesting the candidate possibly ran out of time.

a) Recent revelations have revealed that suppliers have been treated unfairly or bullied by some multiple retailers. Supermarkets have a huge amount of buyer power and if this power is exploited the supplier suffers, as does the consumer. In the UK the big four supermarkets hold a 76% share of the food and drinks market, accessing 24 million households. They could have approximately 7,000 suppliers all 'fighting' for shelf space.

Evidence of relationships becoming dysfunctional include -

- listing fees, the supplier paying to be on a list of suppliers. Costing the supplier money.
- delisting or threat of delisting, this threat may cause the supplier stress and as a result will be unable to budget or innovate. Actual delisting will result in huge loss of volume of sales and revenue.
- slotting fees, suppliers paying for shelf space.
- late payments, this can affect a supplier's cash flow and business plan.
- unexpected payment demands, this has become evident, particularly in the exposure of the tesco's scandal.

(by BBC panorama)

Examples of this may be if the supplier's product sells better than expected, the multiple retailer demands more money.

Payments from Suppliers have also been demanded in relation to new stores opening, refurbishments or even linked with sales bonuses of buyers.

- Return of non sale items, if the product hasn't sold, it could be returned to the supplier. By which time it may be unsalable, for example if the product is agricultural and past its best.

~~The~~ Agricultural products are particularly open to such buyer abuse as they are perishable. The supplier only has a small amount of time to sell product, the multiple retailer knows this and exploits it. And the fact that such products are labour intensive.

The relationship could also become dysfunctional from the buyers perspective if the product quality is not good enough. Or if items are not delivered on time or at the agreed quantity.

The bigger the 'price squeeze' on the supplier, the more the consumer will suffer.

a) With suppliers cutting costs wherever possible the quality will fall.
With products being delisted the consumer will have less choice.
With unrealistic price promotions and selling wine as a loss leading the consumer will have an unrealistic view on value and price sustainability.
As well as being confused by 'was' 'now' price promotions.
Workers welfare may also suffer in such cases or may lead to job loss.

Its not only tesco's that have been accused of abusing power.
Scandals involving Sainsbury's potato farmers and back loader payments to Swedish monopoly buyers and retailers at Systembolaget have also been uncovered.

b) A code of conduct between a multiple retailer and supplier should be based on an honest and trustworthy relationship, that is mutually beneficial.

As the 8th MW Symposium in Florence highlighted there are common themes that can help to build such a relationship. Transparency and honesty, meaning the freedom and accessibility to share relevant information on both sides.

Accountability and traceability from the perspective of both the buyer and the consumer. Australia and New Zealand are thought to be leading the way in this particular approach, with good scientific data.

Recent revelations of the mis-treatment of suppliers has started to see such changes.

Consumer groups play a big part in helping to mitigate against such mistreatment.

As well as the introduction of the Groceries Code Adjudicator 2013 that governs such relationships.

There has been proposals to be able to fine multiple retailers 1% of their UK revenue, if they break such codes.

This proposed policy is backed by business Secretary Vince Cable, but as yet no laws have been passed.

Price promotions should fairly be agreed by both buyer and supplier in advance, with both sides sharing the risks, profits etc.

Price promotions should be strictly governed. Although the introduction of MUP pricing is hotly disputed, almost everyone agrees that selling wine (alc) as a loss leader below the cost price is not only irresponsible, but gives the consumer a distorted view on value and price sustainability.

c) Small suppliers are most at risk from these bullying tactics. Multiple retailers may account for a large percentage of their sales. unexpected costs may damage their business in many ways, including cash flow and lack of product innovation budget.

Small suppliers should be valued by the multiple retailer. Offer the consumer perhaps a more premium or local product. We have seen the demand for this in the craft beer and spirit industry.

Large companies have been put under pressure to review their code of practice with regards to supplier payments. Tesco have reformed such policies. Recently diageo have agreed to pay small suppliers within 60 days, as opposed to their proposal of 90 days.

The MW Symposium also argued strongly for space. Space for both entry level, commercial, branded

products, but also for smaller, more premium offerings. With the Australian speaker making a compelling argument.

It is argued that the relationship between large suppliers and multiple retailers is a 'fair fight'.

However the balance of the smaller supplier and multiple retailer, is something of a mismatch.

More should be done to protect smaller retailers from abuses.

With agreements being fair and legally binding.

Evidence of the use of a middle man can support both bigger and smaller suppliers.

IPL provide Asda with 40% of its wine and can save the supermarket agency fees and provide the consumer with a more interesting product.

March 2016: Case Study

Pass rate: 80%

Organic and biodynamic viticulture

Despite the perceived interest in organic and biodynamic viticulture amongst producers and consumers, there is confusion for the consumer about what these practices actually entail, how they differ and how “sustainable” or “ethical” they may be.

Organic agricultural methods are regulated and legally enforceable. Biodynamic viticulture is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner who set out the broad principles in 1924. These regulations and codes of practice set out the varied techniques commonly used in the vineyard and specify which operations used in conventional farming are not permitted.

Some consumers take organic principles seriously whilst others remain unconvinced. This may be because they do not buy into the ideology of biodynamic or organic production, or it may simply be an issue of cost. Whatever the reasons for the success, or otherwise, of wines produced using these methods, they certainly generate a lot of debate. There are plenty of high profile producers making wines using these techniques, such as Nicolas Joly in the Loire and Olivier Humbrecht in Alsace. They are committed to following the principles of these regimes, convinced of the financial as well as the ethical benefits for themselves and their customers whilst some other people are scathingly skeptical.

- a) Define organic and biodynamic viticulture and outline the regulatory requirements and certification process for each. (30% weighting)
- b) Explain how organic viticulture differs from conventional farming and how biodynamic differs from organic. Illustrate your answer with examples of wines from around the world produced using organic and biodynamic farming. (40% weighting)
- c) What is the appeal of organic and biodynamic wine to producers and consumers? Why do these wines also attract criticism? (30% weighting)

Many of those who passed this question did so with a basic pass rather than the higher merit and distinction grades with 60% of candidates gaining a mark of between 55% and 59%. With only a few exceptions, responses were basic and competent rather than engaging and imaginative.

As in past examinations, some candidates did not structure their response to reflect either the weighting of marks or the specific content of the questions set. This was a particular problem with sections a) and b) where many candidates repeated themselves. A short essay plan is a good idea for any closed-book examination and helps to eliminate the danger of straying off-topic or omitting important aspects. It also allows the candidate to collect their thoughts and organise these under the headings presented in the question.

One reason this topic was selected as a case study was the abundance of technical detail available in the qualification study notes and, having had a month for research, examiners were expecting good responses because it should have been possible to answer all three sections of the question with plenty of detail and explanation even without consulting other sources of information. However, many scripts were too broad and generic with insufficient depth or distinction between these two systems.

Candidates were also instructed in section b) to “illustrate your answer with examples of wines from around the world produced using organic and biodynamic farming”. Many simply gave a list of

producers in various locations with no discussion beyond stating where they are and whether they produce organic or biodynamic wines. This was not what was required. Examiners expect candidates to use examples of wines and producers to support the points made through discussion of these. For example, a really good candidate commented that Nicolas Joly of Clos de la Coulée de Serrant in the Loire has found that weeding on “fire and fruit days” leads to an increase in grape pip size, and therefore tannin in the final wine, which minimises the need for oak ageing. Another candidate wrote how Cassegrain, a biodynamic producer in New South Wales (an area known for summer rainfall) has planted Chambourcin vines because they are not susceptible to powdery mildew which is a particular problem in this area. This is what is meant by “illustrating” an answer with examples of producers and is the kind of approach that leads to high marks.

April 2016: Coursework Assignment

Pass rate: 89%

Assignment title: Wine branding.

Wine branding is important across the price spectrum from the likes of Blossom Hill to Château Lafite-Rothschild. Many in the industry strive to create and sustain wine brands, but do consumers benefit from them as much as those who own them?

a) Presentation and structure: 20%

Assignments should include a declared word count and a bibliography correctly referenced throughout the body of the text.

b) What a wine brand is: 30%

The candidate should give a definition of “brand” in the context of wine. Why is branding so important for producers and retailers?

c) Successful wine branding: 30%

The candidate should explain what successful wine brands have in common. What are the marketing tools available to ensure the continuing success of such brands?

d) Advantages and disadvantages: 20%

The candidate should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of wine brands for consumers.

The majority of candidates achieved a merit grade in this assignment. Those who failed often did so because they did not pay sufficient attention to the information made available to them in the assignment brief, such as the weighting attached to each section or the requirement to submit a minimum of 2500 words. There are always a number of candidates who ignore the various sections of the brief and write an essay that largely just expands on the “context” at the top of the brief. As a result, they invariably fail to address the specific points the examiner is looking for or only include material of limited relevance. In the case of this assignment, some candidates simply wrote about marketing in general terms rather than addressing the very specific questions set in the brief.

A significant number of candidates included sections headed “introduction” and “conclusion”. Not only was there no allocation of marks available for these, but they were also often unimaginative, simply stating in the introduction what was to follow and summarising in the conclusion what had been done. Sometimes the brief will include instructions for an introduction or conclusion, in which case the required content will be made clear. For example, candidates may be asked to express an

opinion in a conclusion or to speculate on future trends. In the case of this assignment brief, section b) served as the “introduction” to the topic, setting out what constitutes a wine brand, making any additional “introduction” redundant.

Another problem was one of “scope” of the topic. In this open book assessment examiners are looking for more than paraphrasing of facts from the sources of research. Candidates need to demonstrate ability to distil research facts down to those most relevant to the question as set, to analyse these and express opinions on them to show clear understanding of the topic.

The phrasing used in the “context” section of the candidate brief was purposely worded to encourage candidates to think beyond an interpretation of branding as only large volume, inexpensive wines. The two wines cited (Blossom Hill and Château Lafite) were there as a “prompt” that candidates should consider “brands” in a wider context. This should have led to an assignment that discussed brands from cheap to expensive and from “brand names” to grape varieties, regions, styles etc. Prosecco is a good example of a hugely successful “style” or “regional” brand - the consumer certainly sees it as a “brand”. The same can be said of “Pinot Grigio” irrespective of where it comes from, New Zealand, California, Italy – origin is almost irrelevant, it is the name “Pinot Grigio” that sells these wines. This is an example of a grape variety performing the role of a brand. This was the whole point of instructing candidates to give a definition of a wine brand in the introductory section of the assignment yet most definitions were generic and narrow having been “lifted” from a reference source. A text book definition was certainly the logical place to start, but examiners expected candidates go on to explore what defines a “wine brand” in their opinion. This would have led to a much broader discussion that better reflected the 30% weighting attached to this section of the assignment. Candidates who did this were more successful.

June 2016: Case Study

Pass rate: 80%

Social Media

For many people interaction via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter is a part of everyday life. In the past, the wine industry has been criticised for being slow to exploit social media as a marketing tool; nowadays nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, many would say that wine lends itself to this form of marketing.

Functionality across the different platforms varies, enabling users to post images or engage in discussion about wine. Different social media may reach different parts of the population, which may in turn affect the relevance of the content communicated. In the wine industry it is likely that certain products will be more relevant to certain age groups than others. Companies using social media will have to consider what is culturally and legally appropriate in each target market.

Social media are clearly here to stay and are already changing the way in which companies market wine. It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of social media compared with traditional methods of marketing; however most would agree that they should form part of an integrated approach to wine marketing.

- a) Which social media platforms might a wine company use? Briefly describe each one. (20% weighting)
- b) Discuss whether wine is particularly suited to communication via social media. (20%

weighting)

- c) How can social media be used as marketing tools by the wine industry? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each platform. (40% weighting)
- d) In your opinion, will social media make traditional methods of wine marketing obsolete? (20% weighting)

Most candidates had no problem covering enough of the valid points to ensure a pass grade generating a pass rate of 80%. This was clearly a topic very familiar to the majority of candidates. However, many answers were predictable and unimaginative with very few high grades. Section a) posed no real problems. Most fail grades were the result of simplicity, brevity and in many instances a failure to consider what the disadvantages of each platform are in section c).

Unit 2 – Wine Production

The multiple-choice questions used on the Unit 2 papers for 2015-16 are still 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 it comes to 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 2016.

General Comments

As usual, candidates who performed poorly on the **Unit 3 tasting papers** tended to be let down by a failure to follow the Level 4 Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine® (SAT) or an apparent lack of tasting experience which meant that they misread the structural components of the wines. Full guidance on how to use the SAT in Diploma tasting examinations appears in the Candidate Assessment Guide.

A consistent theme of examiner feedback is that candidates underestimate what is required to pass the **Level 3 theory examination**. Units 4, 5 and 6 are much narrower in scope and require less study and preparation time. Perhaps because of this, the examiners have the impression that candidates assume the Unit 3 theory paper to be less challenging than it is. Success in the Unit 3 theory examination requires commitment and application over an extended period, 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 seem not to plan their answers before they start to write meaning they 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 practise writing answers to exam-style questions in timed conditions. Students who participate in exam preparation/question-marking schemes tend to perform better in the examinations 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 detail or by omitting to revise the basic principles of viticulture and vinification studied for Unit 2 which are often the basis for 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 poor ones. Candidates must ensure that they have studied and revised all the relevant topics for the examination, as set out in the Specification.

- Diploma examination questions are carefully worded to encourage candidates to 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 and launch into writing all they know about a given topic without applying their knowledge to answer the question set. Marks are not available for irrelevant information, no matter how correct.

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. In the pressure of the exam situation, some candidates still seem to find a different grape for each wine or fail to identify the grape at all. Others seem to identify one wine as a 'banker' and then reverse-engineer their answers to the other two accordingly. It is important that candidates do not jump to conclusions but taste all three samples with an open mind before giving logical reasons for their conclusions by reference to each of the three wines.

January 2016: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1	
<i>Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety</i>	
Pass rate: 61%	
Wine 1	Country: Australia Region: Clare Valley Wine: Pauletts Polish Hill Riesling 2012
Wine 2	Country: Germany Region: Rheingau Wine: Leitz Rudesheimer Berg Roseneck Spätlese 2013
Wine 3	Country: France Region: Alsace Wine: Hugel Jubilee Riesling 2005
<p>Riesling was correctly identified by the majority of candidates but many were let down by poor explanations in the assessment of quality and readiness for drinking/potential for ageing sections. Guidance on how to answer these conclusion sections is available in the Candidate Assessment Guide.</p> <p>The Australian Riesling seemed to be the wine candidates were most comfortable with. Whilst many candidates identified the locations as Australia, Germany and Alsace, these were not always attributed to the correct wine. There was an impression that candidates arrived at Riesling on the basis of the aroma/flavour profile and selected these three locations as being the most likely options but were not logical in many instances when it came to matching the structure of the wines with the correct location. On the whole, the quality of these wines was often underestimated and evidence of development was often missed leading to lost marks for secondary and tertiary aromas/flavours.</p> <p>The following script correctly identifies two of the wines (although placing the German wine in the Mosel rather than the Rheingau). The descriptions are accurate and comprehensive and the conclusions on assessment of quality, readiness for drinking and choice of variety are all good, considered and logical.</p>	

Wines 1-3 are made from the same grape variety. Describe each wine under the headings below and identify the grape variety in the space provided, giving reasons for your choice.

(Marks available for appearance, nose and palate are as detailed in the Candidate Assessment Guide).

WINE 1

Appearance:

The wine is clean, bright and ~~clear~~^{pale} lemon-green

Nose:

The wine is clean, of medium (+) intensity, with aromas of citrus fruit (lemon zest) and green fruit (green apple) and stone fruit (peach, apricot), with mineral notes of flint, smoke and some tertiary petrol hints. It is developing.

Palate:

The wine is dry, with high acidity, medium alcohol, medium (+) body, medium (+) flavour intensity with flavours of citrus fruit, peach and mineral flavours of smoke and flint, with flavours of petrol. It has a medium (+) finish.

Country and region of origin: (3 marks)

AUSTRALIA, CLAIRE VALLEY

Assessment of quality: (6 marks)

The wine is very good, it has a very nice fruit concentration, good acidic backbone, very good balance between fruit and acid, moderate alcohol. It also has a very good varietal typicity with tertiary notes of minerals and petrol, typical for the variety. Lacks structure a bit to be outstanding.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (3 marks)

Ready to drink now but has potential for ageing ~~3~~ 3 to 5 years. When the fruit will further evolve and the tertiary notes will become more prominent.

WINE 2

Appearance:

The wine is clear, bright and medium lemon-green

Nose:

The wine is clean, of medium (+) intensity with aromas of citrus fruit (orange peel, tangerine), green fruit (pear, quince), stone fruit (peach) with mineral aromas (wet stones, smoke). It is youthful

Palate:

The wine is medium-sweet, with high acidity, ~~low~~ low alcohol, medium (+) body, ~~medium~~ medium (+) flavour intensity and has flavours of citrus fruit, peach, pear and quince with mineral flavours of wet stones and smoke. It has a ~~medium~~ long finish.

Country and region of origin: (3 marks)

GERMANY, MOSEL

Assessment of quality: (6 marks)

The wine is outstanding. It has a very good concentration of flavours, typical for the region where it comes from. The high acidity and sweetness are excellently balanced, the varietal typicity is very nice. It is very well made, without reason ~~to~~ not to fit into the outstanding category

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (3 marks)

Drink now, has potential for ageing up to 10 years. The fruit will further evolve into tertiary aromas and flavours.

WINE 3

Appearance:

The wine is clear, bright and medium lemon.

Nose:

The ~~wine~~ ^{wine} is clean, with medium intensity and aromas of citrus fruit (lemon zest) and stone fruit (peach) and hints of tertiary smoky, petrol-like aromas. It's youthful.

Palate:

The wine is dry, with medium (+) acidity, medium alcohol, medium body, medium flavour intensity with flavours of citrus fruit (lemon zest), peach and mineral flavours of smoke and petrol-like hints. It has a medium (+) finish.

Country and region of origin: (3 marks)

AUSTRIA, KREMSTAAL

Assessment of quality: (6 marks)

The wine is very good, has good structure with a nice acidic backbone, nice expression of fruit and a very good varietal typicity. It is well made, balanced but lacks a bit of finesse and fruit extraction to be outstanding.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (3 marks)

Drink now, not suitable for ageing or further ageing. It will most likely keep for 3-5 years but will not improve!

GRAPE VARIETY FOR WINES 1-3: (5 marks)

RIESLING

REASONS FOR YOUR CHOICE OF GRAPE VARIETY: (5 marks)

In all 3 wines there is quite a nice varietal typicity with the Riesling fruit-profile (citrus fruit, stone fruit) and minerality (smoke, wet stones). All wines also have the petrol-like flavours of Riesling. On the palate they have high acidity, no oak influence, low to moderate alcohol levels.

June 2016: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1***Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety*****Pass rate: 74%**

Wine 1	Country:	France
	Region:	Loire Valley, Central Vineyards
	Wine:	Domaine Thibault Pouilly Fumé 2014
Wine 2	Country:	Chile
	Region:	Leyda
	Wine:	Leyda Sauvignon Blanc Single Vineyard Garuma 2014
Wine 3	Country:	France
	Region:	Bordeaux
	Wine:	Château La Garde Pessac-Léognan 2012

A significant number of candidates identified the grape as Chardonnay on the basis of the oak character on wine 3 which was illogical given the overt Sauvignon Blanc character on the other two wines. Those who kept an open mind and based their conclusion on all three samples were more likely to end up with the right variety. Inevitably the Chilean wine was often assumed to be from New Zealand, the riper character was the clue here.

Marks were most often lost in the assessment of quality where answers continue to be unconvincing and too formulaic. Far too many candidates rely solely on the “B-L-I-C” principle (balance/length/intensity/complexity) applying it simplistically without explanation. For example, in the case of “complexity” it is much better to say “the wine has only a moderate level of complexity as demonstrated by a range of flavours, but all within one cluster grouping” rather than simply “the wine needs more complexity to be considered of higher quality”. This is a phrase that candidates write indiscriminately for any wine below “very good” or “outstanding” yet it lacks conviction because all wines would be considered of higher quality if they had “more” complexity.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 1, Question 2

Question 2 involves three wines linked by origin or which share another common feature. For 2015-16, the wines in the January flight were from South Africa and the wines in the June flight were from Germany. Despite it being explicit in the question that examiners were looking for one country in each instance, some candidates disregarded this and were consequently at a disadvantage.

The examiners would again stress the importance of reading the question carefully. 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.

January 2016: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 2***Wines from the same, unspecified country of origin*****Pass rate: 57%**

Wine 4	Country:	South Africa
	Region:	Swartland
	Wine:	The Raconteur Bush Vine Chenin Blanc

Wine 5	Country: Region: Wine:	South Africa Stellenbosch 7even Pinotage 2013
Wine 6	Country: Region: Wine:	South Africa Stellenbosch Demorgenzon Reserve Syrah 2012

A disappointing set of scripts with very few high grades. Many candidates made no attempt to complete the concluding section identifying the country of origin, losing 10% of the marks available. Some conclusions were incorrect but not illogical (many other new world countries for example), some were incorrect and totally illogical (the candidate who identified varieties as Chardonnay and Syrah and concluded that the origin was Bordeaux) and some were correct but far too simplistic when it came to supporting evidence.

As always with this question, success lies in identifying the grape varieties correctly. As Chenin Blanc, Pinotage and Shiraz, in this instance, the Pinotage was a clear marker for the location since it is a very distinctive variety rarely grown outside South Africa. Those who went for another new world country were often able to pick up some marks for the reasoning where this was logical.

June 2016: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 2
Wines from the same, unspecified country of origin
Pass rate: 55%

Wine 4	Country: Region: Wine:	Germany Mosel Dr Loosen Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Dry GG 2012
Wine 5	Country: Region: Wine:	Germany Ahr Meyer Näkel Spätburgunder 2014
Wine 6	Country: Region: Wine:	Germany Mosel Joh. Jos. Prüm Wehlener Sonnenuhr Auslese 2007

Another disappointing pass rate and a wide span of marks from 13 to 81 perhaps reflects candidates' difficulty when assessing good German wines. This was particularly true of the Grosses Gewächs dry wine where candidates missed the tertiary character and failed to spot the quality.

Some candidates struggled with this flight, not giving complete answers, missing elements of the SAT or giving poor reasons for their choice of country. The key pointers for Germany were the combination of the Riesling and Pinot Noir varieties, the evidence of cool climate (high acid, low alcohol, light tannins), the botrytis on wine 6, and the clear varietal character of the Riesling.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 2, Question 3

This question is designed to test candidates' ability to distinguish between three wines of differing quality levels from the same region. 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 why 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), the examiners are not only looking for a correct statement of the quality of the wine using SAT terminology but 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 here, and candidates should always aim to comment on the wine's balance, length, intensity and complexity. Many seem to be familiar with this framework but fail to apply it in a meaningful way to the wine in front of them. It is not sufficient to describe a wine as 'balanced' or 'complex' without explaining how or why. More guidance on writing assessment of quality answers in the exams appears in the Candidate Assessment Guide.

January 2016: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3

Part-specified wines

Pass rate: 43%

Wine 7	Country: France Region: Burgundy Wine: Moulin à Vent La Roche 2011
Wine 8	Country: France Region: Burgundy Wine: Fleurie Domaine André Colonge 2014
Wine 9	Country: France Region: Burgundy Wine: Beaujolais Cuvée des Vignerons NV

This question usually generates lower marks than the other tasting questions because of the large percentage of marks allocated to the assessment of quality, an area where candidates continue to lose marks due to lack of analysis. The pass rate in January was low with no distinction grades. The examiner commented that candidates struggled most with wine 9 (the simplest wine) rather than with differentiating between the 2 cru wines which would have been more understandable. Taking a cross section of 20 candidates, 3 of these assessed the wine as acceptable, 7 as good, 7 as very good and 3 as outstanding. Given that it was fairly basic and only acceptable, this wide variance is worrying. As in previous years it was in the assessment of quality where marks were lost because comments were not detailed enough for the 8 mark allocation.

June 2015: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3

Part-specified wines

Pass rate: 61%

Wine 7	Country: Australia Region: Barossa Wine: Yalumba The Octavius Barossa Old Vine Shiraz 2008
Wine 8	Country: Australia Region: South Australia Wine: Penfolds Bin 28 Kalimna Shiraz 2013
Wine 9	Country: Australia Region: McLaren Vale Wine: 16 Stops Shiraz 2013

This was answered better than the January paper, although most of these were passes rather than higher grades. Once again it was in the assessment of quality where marks were lost with many candidates only giving “keyword” answers such as “balanced”, “complex”, “simple”, “concentrated” etc. with no explanation. Many simply repeated their description under “palate” with no analysis of what “long length” means in terms of quality. As in previous years the simplest wine was often overestimated in terms of quality with structural components misjudged. Very few commented on the “simplicity” of this wine. Candidates were better at recognising primary aromas than secondary or tertiary ones which explains consequent weaknesses at judging the quality of the better wines since this was demonstrated by more developed aromas.

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 that relatively few marks are available for identifying the wines in this flight; as with the other tasting questions the emphasis is still on describing the wine comprehensively and accurately. It is possible to identify all three wines correctly but fail this question, just as it is possible to misidentify them having given otherwise sound tasting notes and pass. Candidates should focus therefore on writing full tasting notes in accordance with the SAT.

January 2016: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 4	
Unspecified wines	
Pass rate: 75%	
Wine 10	Country: Spain Region: Rioja Wine: Capellania Rioja Blanco 2010
Wine 11	Country: USA Region: California Wine: Barefoot White Zinfandel NV
Wine 12	Country: Italy Region: Piemonte Wine: Barolo Rocche di Castiglione 2011

This flight was well-answered in the main resulting in a good pass rate of 75%. Candidates seemed most confident with the Barolo and least confident with the Rioja which was often identified as white Burgundy or new world Chardonnay which was not illogical given the style of this wine. Provided the description was accurate, this resulted in only a few lost marks.

June 2016: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 4

Unspecified wines

Pass rate: 81%

Wine 10	Country:	France
	Region:	Provence
	Wine:	Grand Rosé Excellence 2014
Wine 11	Country:	Argentina
	Region:	Salta
	Wine:	Kaiken Terroir Series Salta Torrontés 2015
Wine 12	Country:	Spain
	Region:	Rioja
	Wine:	Cune Imperial Gran reserva 2008

This flight was well-answered in the main resulting in a very good pass rate. A high percentage of candidates identified the Rosé correctly as a Provence wine (the marker estimated probably over 80% of them) and with 5 marks available for country, region and grape variety this was enough for many rather basic descriptions to score relatively high marks for this wine.

Unit 3 Theory Papers

January 2016: Section A – Compulsory Question

Pass rate: 56%

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

Version 1: Rheingau Riesling Eiswein, Rioja Tinto Gran Reserva & Hunter Valley Semillon

Version 2: Mosel Riesling Kabinett, Niagara Peninsula Ice Wine & Pommard Premier Cru

Version 3: Hunter Valley Semillon, Amarone della Valpolicella & Mosel Riesling Kabinett

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The aim of this question is to test candidates' ability to differentiate between various production techniques to achieve different styles of wine, using red grapes, white grapes, passito grapes or frozen grapes.

Many candidates were unfamiliar with the style of Hunter Valley Semillon, resorting to (often inaccurate) guesswork. Only a few were able to cover all three wines equally well with responses on winemaking often the weak link. This is disappointing given the high pass rate for Unit 2. It is clear that many candidates fail to retain the knowledge they acquire for this unit beyond the multiple choice examination. In terms of the German wines, there is still evidence of widespread confusion regarding the difference between chaptalisation and use of Sureserve (i.e. what these are, which is permitted etc.)

January 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 60%

Is Grenache Noir (Garnacha Tinta) more successful as a blended or varietal wine? Illustrate your answer with examples from around the world.

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

The best answers contained sound personal commentary in a coherent essay format, linking facts to the question. Most candidates seemed aware of the need to present their answer as an essay but there were too many token introductions and conclusions, with the former simply re-stating the question without further enquiry and the latter offering little in the way of insight or analysis. Many failed to conclude at all.

Many answers were short and superficial accounts of Grenache as a grape without a convincing essay format or an understanding of what the question was asking. The majority of candidates simply summarised where Grenache is grown around the world. Few considered what was meant by "successful"; those who did tended to gain higher marks.

Many wrote about Grenache's positives and gave descriptions of different styles, regions and winemaking practices, but few linked this to the question and offered convincing arguments one way or the other. There was no right or wrong answer, much depended on how well candidates

explained themselves. The best answers always looked at both sides before offering a personal viewpoint; narrow answers which failed to give examples from around the world or which focused on blended or varietal wines in isolation struggled to pass.

Analysis of the reasons for blending was often simplistic and confused with many candidates citing high acidity in Grenache as a reason for blending, implying a worrying lack of basic wine knowledge. Many also described this grape as giving blackcurrant, black fruit or cassis characters - possible in some wines (such as Priorat) but highly unlikely for the majority of Grenache-based wines suggesting guesswork on the part of these candidates. Better candidates identified Grenache's weaknesses as reasons for blending historically. Many concluded that Grenache is better blended without looking at both sides of the argument or without explaining why in sufficient detail. It was not enough to say blending produces more balanced wines without explaining what other grape varieties contribute (or how Grenache complements other varieties).

Many candidates failed to comment on rosé wines and relied on general discussion of the Southern Rhône and Australian GSM blends without considering other examples, particularly of varietal wines. The best answers were comprehensive and gave sound examples of styles around the world, naming key producers.

January 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 51%

Account for the diversity of wines produced in the Loire Valley. (70% weighting)

What are the challenges of selling these wines outside France? (30% weighting)

This was one of the most popular questions on the paper, which was surprising since the Loire is a part of the syllabus that many overlook in favour of more mainstream French regions such as Bordeaux, Burgundy or the Rhône. The majority of candidates were able to describe the most common wine styles and this was probably what attracted them to this question but very few actually "accounted" for these styles by "applying" their knowledge of factors such as climate, geography, grape variety, soil, topography etc. Even where these factors were "identified" most candidates simply stated what the soil is rather than WHY, HOW or WHAT it contributes to diversity. As a result very few answers were analytical, with most simply giving descriptions of the four sub regions resulting in simplistic answers which was sometimes sufficient for a borderline pass grade but certainly no more than this. A surprising number of candidates confused key regions in the Loire, attributing the wrong grape varieties or wines to them or locating them incorrectly.

Some candidates failed to answer the second part of the question, possibly unable to do so since this required more than factual recall. Many answers were superficial, unimaginative and unrealistic showing limited original thought or commercial awareness. However, there were some very good responses from candidates able to "think on their feet" rather than rely on duplicating facts they have learnt by rote, but these were in the minority.

January 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 47%

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

- a) Casablanca
- b) San Antonio
- c) Leyda
- d) Irrigation
- e) Torrontés
- f) Maule
- g) Carmenère
- h) Uruguay

(Each section carries equal weighting)

With the exception of the small number of candidates achieving the higher grades, responses here were superficial and simplistic with very few candidates able to cover all sections of the question well. Scores ranged from a low of 14% to a high of 79% and with a pass rate of only 47% it was clear that this was answered by a large number of the weaker candidates in the hope of being able to scrape a pass on a couple of reasonable sections. This is very rarely achievable.

In many instances answers were too generic to convey the hard facts that are necessary for success in this type of question and there were the usual errors - confusing the Pacific with the Atlantic, the Humboldt current with the Benguela and a poor understanding of climates in general. Responses on Uruguay and Maule tended to be the most vague and the section on irrigation was often too generic rather than specific to South America.

January 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 53%

The quality of Spanish white wines has improved significantly. Discuss the progress made with reference to THREE Spanish white grape varieties.

This was the least popular question on the January theory paper and the pass rate of 53% was not particularly encouraging. There were some extremely poor scripts, the lowest mark being only 5% and with a high score of 76% there were no really outstanding responses. Many candidates lost marks in this question by selecting grape varieties that would not be regarded as "Spanish", such as Chardonnay and even Trebbiano. The most frequent choice of wines was Rias Baixas, Rueda and White Rioja. There was the inevitable confusion over the grape varieties used in these with many particularly unclear about Rueda. Grape names were often misspelt or were attributed to the wrong regions / wines. Many candidates failed because they simply described the production of three Spanish white wines rather than focusing on improvements that have been made, or in the worst cases, they just described the wines through the means of a tasting note. Where "improvements" were mentioned, this was often in very broad, simplistic terms – "improved winemaking", "temperature control" etc.

January 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 58%

Describe how Chardonnay produces different styles of wine around the world with reference to:

- a) **The vineyard**
- b) **Winemaking techniques**
- c) **Market trends**

(Each section carries equal weighting)

Along with the question on the Loire, this was the most popular question on the January paper – possibly weaker candidates hoped they would be able to scrape through with a few descriptions of Chardonnay wines as evidenced by the equal split between fail and fail(u) grades that together matched the number achieving a basic pass.

Poor responses were simplistic, with many just describing two or three different wines rather than the three specific sections of the question as set out and explaining why the wines differed. Where vineyard, winemaking and market trends were mentioned, there were other problems such as only writing about climate and soil in the vineyard with nothing about viticultural techniques/procedures. To do well in Section c) candidates needed to speculate as well as demonstrate sound commercial knowledge. Candidates who wrote about Champagne and other sparkling wines wasted their time. There were no marks available for this in the Unit 3 examination.

Many candidates missed out one section by not taking each in turn. There were some unsuccessful essay-style answers in which candidates seemed to lose track of the question and veer off into irrelevant topics. Where a question is broken down into sections as it was here there is no reason not to address each part separately.

January 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 37%

With reference to the wines of Germany, Austria or Hungary as appropriate write about FIVE of the following:

- a) **Silvaner**
- b) **Grosses Gewächs**
- c) **Burgenland OR Blaufränkisch OR Weinviertal**
- d) **Süßreserve**
- e) **Furmint**
- f) **Nahe OR Pfalz OR Rheingau**

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The topics for this question varied according to examination location.

Results were extremely poor with no distinction grades at all and a top mark of only 68%. There were some very short and superficial answers with many candidates struggling to fill one side of

paper when three to four sides is the norm for these short-form questions.

Many candidates were unable to give good answers in all five sections, either leaving some blank or relying to guesswork which was invariably incorrect or too vague. With all five sections on equal weighting, it is impossible to compensate for weak sections by writing more in others where the candidate knows 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 sections required. 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. Some candidates did not read the question carefully enough and wrote about countries beyond Germany, Austria and Hungary such as Alsace in the context of Silvaner and even Italy, the US and other parts of France got a mention from some candidates to no avail.

There were fundamental errors with candidates confusing Grosses Gewächs with Grosslage or Erstes Gewächs and even Grand Cru in Alsace. Responses were frequently muddled or imprecise. In one instance Grosses Gewächs was identified as a grape variety grown in Hungary. There was a similar level of confusion over Süßreserve with a significant number of candidates writing about chaptalisation instead. Even where it was correctly identified as a sweetening agent, there was still a lack of clarity about its use, with many stating it is only permitted in low quality wines such as Landwein and Liebfraumilch. The sections on grape varieties tended to be better but even here there were weaknesses such as writing too much about the production process for Tokaj wine rather than the characteristics of the Furmint grape variety. The sections on Silvaner and Blaufränkisch varied between those who were able to provide sound facts about these varieties such as where they excel, what their characteristics are etc. and those who were guessing resulting in generic responses about white or red grapes grown in cool climates. These were not convincing. Responses on the various wine regions also varied widely in terms of the quality of answers submitted.

June 2016: Section A – Compulsory Question

Pass rate: 65%

With reference to grape growing and winemaking, account for the differences in wine style, quality and price between the following appellations:

Version 1: Beaujolais-Villages, Chablis Grand Cru & Le Chambertin

Version 2: Beaujolais-Villages, Petit Chablis & Bâtard-Montrachet

Version 3: Beaujolais-Villages, Chablis Grand Cru & Nuits-Saint-Georges

(Each section carries equal weighting)

There were many short, simplistic and superficial answers to this question. Many weaker candidates treated this as a short-form question, which it was not; with 100 marks split across the three appellations comprehensive answers were required. By “Account for the differences” candidates were expected not simply to describe how the appellations differ but to explain these differences by reference to key grape growing and winemaking practices in each region. Some candidates failed to grasp this and simply wrote all they knew about the regions, without acknowledging the question at all. The best answers indicated the price points and quality levels of the wines concerned and explained why, linking these to commercial considerations in the vineyard and winery. Unfortunately, the majority gave bland descriptions of the climate and the winemaking

process – particularly (semi-)carbonic maceration – without connecting these inputs with the resulting style, quality and price of the wines. Many, for example, noted that the climate in Beaujolais is warmer and drier than more northern areas of Burgundy but failed to connect this to the fact that this results in reliable cropping levels which allow higher volume production which, in turn, manifests itself in lower prices. Likewise, very few candidates noted the cost implications of using new oak for Grand Cru Chablis and how this is passed on to the consumer, instead simply stating that these wines use new oak. Both of these are examples of the kind of analysis expected at Diploma level.

More than a few candidates thought Le Chambertin was a white wine and that Bâtard Montrachet was a red wine, mistakes which cost them 1/3 of the available marks and made a pass impossible for this question. Another candidate described Le Chambertin as an “*inexpensive Bourgogne Rouge*” and similarly missed out on a large portion of the marks available. There were also problems in respect of the section on Beaujolais-Villages where a large number of candidates wrote about all styles of Beaujolais from Nouveau through to the Beaujolais Crus, accounting for the differences between these rather than the differences between Beaujolais-Villages and the other two named wines. This was pointless and a waste of time as no marks were available for this information. There also seems to be a widespread misconception that carbonic maceration produces wines which are light in colour. The majority of descriptions of Nuits-Saint Georges were stereotypical characterisations of red Burgundy which overlooked the black fruit character, density and grip of these wines in favour of generic descriptions of this wine as red-fruited, elegant, etc. These were not convincing. Candidates need to be aware of communal differences of wine styles within the Burgundy appellation.

Overall, there was a disappointing lack of application and critical thinking in this question.

June 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 57%

Explain why Cabernet Sauvignon is blended with other grape varieties in many winemaking regions. Illustrate your answer with examples from around the world.

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

This was the most popular optional question answered by 93% of candidates sitting the examination. However, this was a disappointing set of responses, both in terms of content and format. Many failed to present their answers in the required essay format, or to give satisfactory introductions or conclusions. Most launched straight into descriptions of Cabernet Sauvignon characteristics with no attempt to link these to the question or indicate how they might go on to do so. Others started well but then tailed off. It would help many candidates to reiterate the question when they start writing to focus their minds on what it is they have been instructed to do.

There was the usual failure to answer the question directly – many candidates simply wrote “all they know” about the grape, name-checking regions where it is grown and blended with no explanation of why. This gained few marks. There were also many weak, unconvincing descriptions of how grapes are blended with Cabernet to add “complexity”, “finesse” or “elegance” – all largely subjective terms which do not demonstrate the level of understanding of wine structure that is expected at Diploma level. Likewise, references to “good” body, acidity and tannin are meaningless and undermine the examiner’s confidence in the ability of the candidate. In addition, some

candidates adopt a style of writing that is far too casual and “chatty” for an examination environment, giving lengthy descriptions of wines they have enjoyed. They should remember that their essay is being judged in an academic environment not on entertainment value.

The choice of examples used for illustrative purposes was often limited and unimaginative. Clearly Bordeaux should have been a key feature and this was the case, however there were some glaring omissions – notably the combination of Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz in Australia or with Rhône varietals in the Languedoc. Other key wines such as the “Super Tuscans” or Vega Sicilia’s Unico were also often overlooked. The best answers also demonstrated commercial awareness, noting the cachet that Cabernet Sauvignon can bring to blends in terms of consumer recognition and why this is a reason for blending.

The following script adopts a good essay style. It is discursive, using good examples to illustrate points made and demonstrates logical reasoning and commercial awareness.

"God made Cabernet Sauvignon, the devil made ~~from~~ Pinot Noir" So said the great Russian-born California winemaker Andre Tscheltcheff. It is adaptable, hardy and produces wines of high quality around the world. However, in many regions it is best blended with other varieties. The reasons for this we shall now examine.

In its homeland of Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon is synonymous with many of the greatest and ~~to~~ most expensive wines in the world. However, more merlot is planted and significant ~~the~~ Merlot is planted to other varieties such as Cabernet Franc, less so petit verdot.

Historically the reason for this was effectively spreading the risk of the harvest. In poor, cool years, the mid to late ripening Cabernet Sauvignon might struggle to reach full ripeness leaving its berries harsh and green, ~~the~~ its fruit muted and the mid-palate of vinified examples hollow. The ~~or~~ earlier ripening merlot with its juicy full mid-palate, juicy black fruit character and good yields can fill in the gaps and produce a more balanced wine. Similarly, Cabernet Franc, itself earlier

ripeness can add aromatic complexity
giving you youthful Cabernet Sauvignon,
Petit Verdot, although also late
ripeness may be added in small
quantities to add weight, spice and
opulence.

The best gives the greatest 1st Cru Classe
claret, however, certain other varieties
in their Grand Vin, in all vintages
suggests that in the Bordeaux climate
such additions are required for balance
and complexity.

In warmer climates however this
isn't necessarily the case. In Napa Valley
for example single varietals are produced
which are full bodied, opulent and
mouthfully. This is achieved by
extended hang times in Davis Zones II + III
allowing for berries to ripen fully and along
with fruit flavours. However, a common
critic of all these wines is that they
lack elegance, freshness and ageability
and often exhibit dead fruit character.

It is possible depending on one's point of
view therefore that Cabernet Sauvignon
with this level of ripeness is not a
balanced wine and in cool climate
one required with other varieties added
to the mix. Certainly in cooler American
regions such as Sonoma Coast AVA,
room is found for Cabernet's blending
partners and more elegant, complex
wines result. Ridge Monte Bello

is perhaps the prime example of this
In Australia, Cabernet's traditional
bedfellow was not merlot nor Cabernet
franc but Shiraz. Here is played a
similar role in "filling in the gaps"
but it was also a matter of economics.
It allowed for economically, multi regional
blends produced in huge volumes. It's
tempting to suggest however that this is
the only example of Cabernet-Shiraz. Very
high quality wines are produced this
way by Ben Crago in Barossa
(Arafanenna) and Penfold's (Bin 389).
These wines are balanced, powerful
ageworthy but accessible in youth
thanks to Shiraz's voluptuousness - something
which is very important in this ~~case~~
an age where people cannot wait
for anything!

There is also the factor of marketability
to consider. Bordeaux wines are seen
as the benchmark for quality red wines
around the world. This is admittedly
debatable but Cabernet Sauvignon is
as a result a household name from
Argentina to the outback. Having the
grape variety on the label is a key
selling point. Blending in other, more early
ripened varieties which perhaps yield

higher is a way of ensuring profit margins. Examples of this can be found around the world, but Central Valley is a typical area of their production.

In Argentina, Cabernet's role in blends is often secondary to that of its long old world subordinate Malbec. Here it is used to add finesse and tannic structure to premium or top premium red wines intended to be enjoyed young but also capable of considerable ageing potential when a varietal Malbec may struggle to achieve. An example of this is Cabera Zapata's Nicolas.

The law is also a factor. In Tuscany Cabernet Sauvignon can be added in quantities of up to 20% (for Classico). The reason for this was for quality purposes. It kept up Sangiovese and produced wines supposedly so superior that winemakers were prepared to flout the law to achieve it (previously it was not permitted but the wines produced were so successful it was allowed into the blend - perhaps for the authorities to save face).

Cabernet Sauvignon therefore is undoubtedly one of the great red wine grapes but I am it produces by and large its most balanced, age-worthy and complex wines with the assistance of others. It may play a dominant role which is

G Soave or complemented by others as
 it may add backbone to blends. It is
 well known and popular and hardy.
 One of the few grapes that is loved
 by wine growers, winemakers & general
 consumers and connoisseurs.

June 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 44%

Italy is known for its neutral white wines, especially those made from Pinot Grigio. Discuss THREE other Italian white grape varieties that in your opinion make characterful wines.

(each section carries equal weighting)

This was a very "open" question leaving the choice of grape variety to the candidate. This was the downfall of many who made poor choices. One candidate wrote about three black grapes rather than white, gaining no marks at all. Others covered a mix of black and white grapes, also with costly results. There was the inevitable inclusion of non-Italian grapes with one candidate writing about Torrontes in Argentina with nothing at all about Italy. Others wrote about the use of their (Italian) grape in other new world countries - also irrelevant in the context of a question on Italy. A number of candidates forfeited a third of the marks available (or more) because they wrote about sparkling wines rather than still wines. The most common inappropriate choices here being Muscat for Asti and Glera for Prosecco. Many ignored the reference to "characterful" wines and wrote about workhorse varieties most commonly used in bland, uncharacterful wines which failed to answer the question. Where appropriate grapes were selected, there was very little emphasis on how or why the resulting wines were more characterful.

There were a surprising number of errors, most notably regarding Soave which was often identified as a grape rather than the wine and in the worst instance was described as a "*grape grown in Piemonte*". There were a number of unexciting and repetitive scripts where candidates had selected three grapes from the same region (most often Sicily).

Most responses were superficial, often just naming grapes and DOC(G)s with a description of the resulting wine that was invariably the same for all three varieties selected irrespective of the grapes chosen. Very few discussed why the wines selected were more characterful. Far too many approached this question as if it read "Describe three white grape varieties" rather than "Discuss". This is not the same thing at all.

The following script was one of the better ones. The section on Arneis is the weakest, but the discussion of Garganega is good with a focus on explaining the differences between good Soave and mediocre Soave. The third grape variety is Vermentino and again, there is a good amount of detail with the emphasis on how differences in style and quality are achieved.

ARNEIS is a Piemonte indigenous variety that used to be part of the Barolo blend, in small amounts, to soften the harshness of the wine especially in less ripe vintages.

In the 80's when the demand for white wines domestically increased ARNEIS was rediscovered as a varietal wine.

Arneis is not easy to grow, is prone to rot and if picked too late can become heavy and flabby with high alcohol content.

Good examples however can show apple and stone fruit and a distinct floral character retaining fresh acidity.

The wines are usually unaged and there is only a small production of this wine that is however characterful and worth preserving. Good examples are made by Bruno Giacosa and Castello di Neive.

It has its own DOCG, is mainly grown in the Roero area (where it is still allowed as part of the blend for the Red Roero wines) but can also be produced and labelled as Langhe Bianco.

GARGANEGA is the main component of Soave - it can, like pinot grigio, produce neutral wines, but, if planted in the right area ~~can produce very poor wines~~ ^{can produce very good wines}.

Garganega is high yielding so canopy management and site selection are crucial.

It has good fruit character, showing peach, pear notes and can develop interesting almond notes. It has however medium acidity which, once again, can lead to flabby uninteresting wines if not handled carefully. It does well with less ageing and can take oak (some could argue that becomes too heavy).

Pieropan is the leading producer and has been experimenting with different vineyard sites through parcel bottling with good results. He produces a range of soave from the simple classico that comes at medium price point showing simple fruit and medium acidity, made for early drinking to the more sophisticated La Rocca with less sunning giving the wine extra texture and richness.

La Rocca shows bricco character along the fresh pear character, has interesting almond marzipan notes ~~and~~ that develop with some bottle ageing and can show complexity and freshness even after 5 yrs.

VERMENTINO is planted through Italy and produces very different wines depending on the soil composition and the climate.

It is generally unblended and the grape itself, early ripening like Mediterranean climate, is prone to rot, needs well aerated canopy and has medium to low acidity - ~~to taste~~

It is reflective of its terrain. Sardinian examples, from the DOCG Vermentino di Gallura, have a savoury, almost salty note. They are mineral and fresh showing some fruit green fruit and some citrus. They remain fresh and appealing for few years, thanks to the mineral core.

Vermentino examples from the Tenasser vineyard in Cune in Liguria are leaner in style, lighter and finer.

The fruit spectrum is greener and the underlying minerality remains even if on a lower tone. These are little known wines, production is tiny and almost exclusively absorbed by domestic market.

Other examples can be found in the Tuscan coast where the fruit is riper and some ~~example~~ producers experiment with barrel fermentation with various quality results.

June 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 56%

Explain how each of the following has shaped the Californian wine industry:

- a) American Viticultural Areas**
- b) Judgement of Paris 1976**
- c) Robert Mondavi**
- d) University of California at Davis**

(Each section carries equal weighting)

A significant proportion of the candidates who chose this question achieved low marks because they did not read the wording carefully enough. They simply treated this as a “paragraph” question rather than the discursive question it needed to be. Provided they linked information on what these are to how they shaped the Californian industry this was fine, but descriptions in isolation would not have generated a pass grade.

For example, in the case of American Viticultural Areas, whilst it was important to state what these are, when they were introduced, what they stipulate etc., the bulk of the marks were reserved for discussion of their significance in terms of defining viticulture in California. Candidates who addressed this well considered issues such as why they were introduced, what advantages or disadvantages they brought for both consumers and producers, whether they achieved their aim or not and similar issues.

Weaker answers just listed facts with little regard to the question as set. Many were weak in one or two sections, pulling marks down overall.

June 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 34%

Discuss the production of Pinot Gris, Riesling and Gewurztraminer in New Zealand. (60% weighting)

What are the commercial prospects for these wines? (40% weighting)

This was a very disappointing set of scripts with more fail (unclassified) grades than any other. There were many simplistic and overly generic answers about cool climate white wine production in very broad terms. Although this would have gone some way towards addressing the question, examiners were looking for solid facts about the specific regions where each of these varieties excels. Examiners expected candidates to go beyond identifying cool climate and stainless steel fermentation and to discuss the differences in climate between in the various regions of New Zealand where these varieties are grown and how this determines which is grown where and why. An understanding of cause and effect is what is required at Diploma level rather than simple recall of facts about regions and grape varieties.

The most basic answers only really focused on Marlborough, making the assumption that if it suits Sauvignon Blanc it will also suit these varieties. This was nowhere near as convincing as the scripts

that differentiated between Marlborough as a whole versus the cooler sub-region of Awatere and the warmer Wairau Valleys explaining how a range of wine styles can be produced depending on location and the variety most suited to this. Most candidates simply assumed all three varieties were grown all over New Zealand, whilst the best candidates were aware of regional differences such as the fact that Riesling is virtually non-existent on the North Island whilst Gisborne is the most important region for high quality Gewurztraminer. This was the kind of regional knowledge and detail examiners were looking for rather than generic comments about the varieties or New Zealand in general.

Some scripts digressed into irrelevant discussion of Sauvignon Blanc or long-winded descriptions of winemaking techniques or canopy management in general terms without linking these specifically to one or other of these varieties.

Responses on the second part of the question tended to be better with candidates showing a reasonable understanding of the commercial aspects of the wine trade in New Zealand. However, some responses here were far too brief. Candidates must heed the mark allocations when working out how much to write/how much time to devote to a particular section. This section carried 40% of the marks – a one or two sentence answer here made a pass highly unlikely.

June 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 43%

With reference to the wines of Spain or Portugal as appropriate write about FIVE of the following:

- a) Miguel Torres S.A.
- b) Baga
- c) Bairrada
- d) Costers del Segre
- e) Jumilla
- f) Somontano
- g) La Mancha
- h) Vinho Regional
- i) Vega Sicilia

(All sections carry equal weighting)

It was not anticipated that this would be a popular question or that it would generate a good pass rate and so it proved. The low pass rate suggests many candidates answered this in desperation or because they think the “paragraph” format makes it an easier question. This is not the case. The five-part format of this question requires in-depth knowledge of each topic. Leaving one or more sections blank or resorting to guesswork makes a pass highly unlikely. With all five sections equally weighted, it is impossible to compensate for weak sections by writing more in others.

Another common error is answering more than the five required sections or attempting too few sections. The latter will rarely be enough for a pass grade and the former is a waste of effort; not only do responses tend to be superficial as a result but examiners will only mark the first five responses anyway.

June 2016: Section B

Pass rate: 32%

With reference to the wines of South West France, write about FIVE of the following:

- a) Cahors
- b) Malbec
- c) Jurancon
- d) Monbazillac
- e) IGP/Vin de Pays
- f) Gaillac
- g) Madiran
- h) Tannat

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The topics for this question varied according to examination location.

This was very poorly answered with more fail (unclassified) grades than any other. Many scripts were incomplete suggesting candidates had selected this question as their least preferred option and answered it last.

A sound approach where short-form responses are required is to think in terms of key questions to help structure your answer. For example, in the case of Gaillac candidates could have considered:

- What is this?
- Where exactly in South West France is it?
- What style of wine is produced?
- Which grape varieties are used?
- What is the climate here?
- Are there any particular winemaking techniques specific to this region/style of wine?

This is not an exhaustive list but answering these questions correctly would have led to a fairly comprehensive answer of the standard required at Diploma level.

The following is an example of a good script which gives sound responses in all five sections. The length is good and there is some detail although still room for improvement in some sections and a certain amount of repetition in places.

a) Cahors.

Cahors is an Appellation Contrôlée located in the South West of France. The AC produces red wine from the MALBEC grape variety. Style wise, wines are full-bodied, with firm tannin, dark fruits especially blackcurrant aromas, and have potential for ageing as it has got good structure. When developing, more nutty and dried fruit aromas / flavours will appear.

As it has got firm tannin, oak ageing is necessary in order to be able to drink the wine shortly after release. Otherwise, bottle ageing is necessary.

Key producers here are ~~Château de Beaucastel~~ and ~~Château de Beaucastel~~ Domaine de la Beaucastel.

Malbec went through difficult times with bad reputation of "wine that stains your teeth" so producers had to create a big effort to produce softer style, and more approachable wines. Some winemakers have also started to put the MALBEC variety on the label. As the Argentine Malbec is such a success at the moment, it is a good marketing move for the export market especially.

As Malbec is a food-friendly wine that can be enjoyed with meat dishes and casserole type dishes.

b) Jurançon

Jurançon AOC is located in the South-West of France, by the Tarn river, at north-west of Toulouse. Semi-continental with maritime influence. It produces 2 main wines: Jurançon sec and Jurançon doux (Sweet).

Jurançon sec is made using the Gros Noir / of grape variety. It produces light to medium body wines, with citrus fruits, med to med @ acidity and med finish. They are relatively simple wines. There are also some fuller and more complex examples, like the Jurançon sec Cuvée Noire that offer more nutty and honeyed notes. Not for everyone's palate but has the quality to be food friendly.

Jurançon doux is made with the Petit Noir / of grape variety and the passerillage is used to make that lovely sweet wine: dried grapes (like raisins). Lots of honey, apricot notes and distinctive tropical fruits as well. A good example will be Jurançon Chateau Joly's Cuvée Jean. It pairs wonderfully well with tropical fruits based desserts like mango and pineapple that you can find in the wine itself. *

They are not wine that you will find in supermarkets but more in specialist wine merchants or restaurant wine lists.

c) IGP / Vin de Pays.

There are several Vin de Pays in the South West of France and the 3 main ones are: Vin de Pays des Coteaux du Toulousain,

Vin de Pays du Gers et Vin de Pays de Côte de Gascogne. They represent $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total production of the south-west. Most of it (about $3\frac{1}{2}$) are white wines.

The most significant is the Vin de Pays de Côte de Gascogne. It's been a massive success in France since the mid-2000s and crossed the Channel shortly after.

Wines are made from Ugni Blanc, Coloursard mainly, and give wine very similar in style to a simple saumur blanc: light, fresh with citrus fruit notes.

One of the big names is Trinquet which, as well as the dry version of the wine, also released a "moelleux" style, not fully sweet, but ~~it~~ with ~~of~~ lots of fruits and some sweetness at some extent: Trinquet "Le Givres". Commercially, it's been a really success alongside the overall Vin de Pays. Price range is inexpensive to mid-price and it enjoyed with food or just as an aperitif. It is the kind of wine that is very much stored in supermarkets as well as store specialists and great as an entry level, house-wine type on a pub / French bistro wine list.

↳ Gaillac

Gaillac is an Appellation Contrôlée of the

South West of France, which produces all 3 types of wine: White, red, and sweet.

The majority of the production is red, made mainly from the DURAS grape variety and sweet wine, made mainly from Vin-de-Idéal grape variety and Grolle.

Red Gaillac AOC are robust wine, with firm tannins, red and black fruits, good structure and the best examples are age-worthy. Aged in oak, they can develop lovely notes of cedar, nuts and dried fruits with age.

The sweet wine, ~~used~~ is made with ~~the~~ the passerillage technique, ~~like~~ like the raisin technique of drying the grape in order to concentrate the sugars into the grapes.

The result is a sweet wine, with good acidity, honey, spice notes.

Best example for both red and sweet is Domaine Rotier.

Commercially, as it is quite an obscure AOC even for wine aficionados, Gaillac will be mainly found in specialist wine retailers and on restaurant lists. Price at about 12-25.

Climatic is warm continental with still some maritime influence but at a lesser extent.

es Madiran

Madiran is an Appellation Contrôlée from the South-West of France which main grape variety is TANNAT black grape variety.

Tannat is ~~is~~ going through some kind of revival, especially with the increasing success of the Terroir Tannat example, so

Nadiran could also be the next big thing!
(Climate wise, it is still a bit maritime climate, although more inland (south of Armagnac) so with hotter summers which is essential in order to ripen full the grapes.

Tannat has naturally lots of harsh tannins involving either oak or bottle ageing. Producers and winemakers have recently adopted the micro-oxygenation technique that enables to soften quite dramatically to tannin levels, therefore the wine is softer and more approachable to drink just after release. People don't have the willingness or the patience to wait forever before opening a bottle of wine.

Nadiran, just like Cahors, went through difficult times and had reputation of a red wine that stains your teeth but winemaking improvement and positive marketing message could soon change this.

It's always been quite famous in the UK though and even popular amongst the older generation. As the younger "millennial" generation is the one to target, a softer and more approachable style is the way to go.

Price wise, Nadiran can be found for about £12 \$ per bottle and mainly in specialist wine retailers and on wine lists.

Best producers are: Château Montus and Château

Bauscasse which produce high quality, safe -
worthy example of modern AC -

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 ability. However, the short-form question format means that candidates who do well on two of the three theory sections having achieved good marks for their tasting may still pass the Unit as a whole despite one weak section.

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 with 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 required to pass.

Many candidates not only underestimate the amount of information required in their answers - writing just three or four sentences is highly unlikely to result in a pass grade – but also 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 2015, March 2016 and June 2016.

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

November 2015: Unit 4 TASTING	
Pass rate: 71%	
Wine 1	Country: Mexico Spirit: Herradura Plata Tequila
Wine 2	Country: Carribbean Spirit: Gosling's Black Seal Bermuda Black Rum
Wine 3	Country: Spain Spirit: Lepanto Brandy de Jerez Solera Gran Reserva
<p>As is often the case, the main reason for failing this paper was a failure to follow 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 low marks.</p> <p>In this paper candidates were required to identify the country of origin, raw material used, style within the category and to comment on any ageing for a total of 7 marks. Answers in this section were often too brief and sometimes did not provide the information requested. Compare the following two responses relating to sample 3, Lepanto Brandy de Jerez. Both are a similar length but only one actually answers the question as set.</p> <p>Poor script:</p> <p><i>"The quality is outstanding. The layers coat the palate on the front with sweet. Then the fruit gives fresh touch on the mid palate finishing is comforting from nose to palate. The origin is Bas Armagnac VSOP, price is premium"</i></p> <p>This candidate has stated what they think the spirit is and given an assessment of quality which is not required. This candidate gained none of the 7 marks available.</p> <p>Good script:</p> <p><i>"This is a grape brandy from Spain (Jerez) and is a Solera Gran Reserva aged at least three years in a criadera/solera barrel system. Given the complexity I would say this is probably older than 3 years. This is of Jolandes quality based on the richness of congeners, distilled to less than 70% and most likely pot-still only production."</i></p> <p>This candidate did not gain all 7 marks and included some irrelevant information relating to distillation and misspelt holandes as "Jolandes". They gained one mark for identifying the country of production as Spain, one for mentioning that it is a grape brandy (by default therefore distilled from grapes as the raw material, although it would have been better to have stated this implicitly). The "style within the category" is Brandy de Jerez so the candidate gains a mark for stating it is a "brandy from Jerez". There were three marks available for comments relating to ageing. They were</p>	

given credit for stating that it is aged *“in a criadera/solera barrel system”* and their reference to extended ageing *“given the complexity”* is also valid.

November 2015: Unit 4 THEORY

Pass rate: 59%

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

- a) Diageo**
- b) Marketing of premium vodka OR Plymouth Gin**
- c) Plymouth Gin OR Rhum Agricole**

Responses varied according to topic. Diageo was answered well by the majority of candidates, but this was to be expected given the importance of this global player. Candidates were able to comment on the size of this company, key markets and key brands. In contrast answers on premium vodka tended to be vague or strayed too far from the question into descriptions of production. The following sample script shows how this section should have been answered.

Marketing of Premium Vodka

As vodka is often not labelled with its raw material the marketing of the product is essential. ~~With~~ With the premiumisation of the spirits industry, premium vodkas can command large prices.

They cannot use maturation as a marketing tool so instead use bottle design and labelling - modern shapes like the tall, elegant Belvedere, with frosted glass or etching designs. Some bottles even glow in the dark to attract consumers in nightclubs and they are diamond encrusted to get the attention of those who want vodka as a status symbol.

Celebrity endorsements are a key way to market premium drinks, i.e. Ciroc and Diddy Combes, as are product placement and the appearance of Belvedere (V&M's luxury brand) in the latest James Bond movie, Spectre.

This all helps to push premium products as aspirational items. With a growing middle class in BRIC countries this can move consumers away from local brands.

~~The~~ Water plays a key role in vodka making up 40% of the product and water sources can be used to differentiate, i.e. Alaskan glacial water!

Again filtration can be used as a differentiation or USP - either the way it's filtered - through charcoal (Smirnoff), platinum (Russian Standard) or even gold (Cuvée!), and equally lack of filtration with Belvedere arguing their product is better because they don't filter.

The price and rarity factor a limited edition vodka can also sell the product to consumers wanting to show off. These are a particular feature of travel retail.

Some premium vodkas can command high prices. Flavoured vodkas are another way, i.e. Grey Goose Vx which contains some 100mg Cognac.

Production methods can also be a marketing tool i.e. Ketel 1 is made unusually with Pot stills. Vodka must be min 95 or 96% abv so this requires multiple distillations (there are another method i.e. Zubrowka is rye vodka ~~is~~ distilled 4 times).

The base material is another way, i.e. wheat grapes (gluten free) and potato based (Chase).

Chase can also use local provenance - raw material grown on Propeaty + distilled so single estate!

March 2016: Unit 4 TASTING

Pass rate: 82%

Wine 1	Country: Spirit:	Ireland Tullamore D.E.W. Irish Whiskey
Wine 2	Country: Spirit:	USA Jim Beam Bourbon
Wine 3	Country: Spirit:	Scotland Ardbeg 10 years old Islay Single Malt

In this paper candidates were expected to be able to differentiate between three different styles of whisk(e)y. They were asked to identify the origin of the three samples and to explain what evidence in their tasting note supported this. This was where marks were lost. Some gave generic quality assessment answers instead of giving reasons why the spirit was what they thought it to be. This seemed to be a matter of not reading the question carefully enough and is careless since it could

make the difference between a pass and fail grade.

When faced with this type of question, the logical place to start is establishing what evidence in the tasting note identifies the category of the spirit – i.e. is it a Gin, vodka, Tequila etc.? Taking the example of the Jim Beam, the first point to make therefore would have been that the colour and flavour profile point to a spirit from a whisky producing country. Then it is a case of narrowing this down to why this particular spirit is Bourbon rather than a Scotch or Irish Whiskey. This would lead to observations such as the following:

- Colour indicates wood ageing; a legal requirement for Bourbon.
- Absence of peat means that Scotland is less likely.
- Sweet corn character is a Bourbon characteristic.
- Coconut and vanilla characters and slight sweetness typical of new American oak, which must be used.

The same principles would then be applied in the case of the other two spirits – in the case of the Ardbeg, the peat is a key indicator whilst in the case of the Irish Whiskey it is the absence of peat and the soft texture that points to Ireland.

March 2016: Unit 4 THEORY

Pass rate: 56%

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

- a) Distillation of Armagnac OR Calvados**
- b) Maturation and finishing of rum OR Maturation and finishing of Tequila**
- c) Flavoured Vodka**

Short-form questions such as this can be problematic for candidates who have not prepared adequately. This question type 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.

Section b) was a straightforward question requiring a summary of the ageing regulations for rum or Tequila and the processes that take place between this and bottling. There was, however, some confusion about maturation times, barrel sizes, resulting styles etc. suggesting that candidates had not revised these sufficiently.

'Flavoured Vodka' was often simplistic – little more than a list of styles and flavourings in some cases with little else. Given the huge market for these, some discussion of their commercial significance was also required. Some candidates simply described the distillation process at length but this was not a question on the production of vodka. It required a targeted response on a very specific style of vodka and production was only relevant in terms of how this differs from "ordinary" vodka.

June 2016: Unit 4 TASTING**Pass rate: 58%**

Wine 1	Country: Spirit:	France ABK6 VSOP Single Estate Cognac
Wine 2	Country: Spirit:	France Courvoisier VS Cognac
Wine 3	Country Spirit:	Mexico Tequila Herradura Añejo

It was very important with this trio of spirits to read the question carefully. Candidates were told that two spirits were from the same country. Some candidates missed this information and decided that all three samples were different categories of spirit and some mistakenly took this to mean that all three were the same. It is understandable that exam nerves can lead to errors of this type but good discipline could so easily have eliminated these. One of the most important things in any exam is reading the question and making sure you know exactly what you are being asked to do.

The purpose of showing two Cognacs was to test candidates' ability to distinguish between two very different quality levels. Whilst on paper, the difference between the VSOP and the VS appears relatively small, in reality the fact that the first sample was a single estate Cognac elevated it to a level that put it on a par with many XO Cognacs and examiners were also prepared to accept this identity, which is what some candidates did.

In the case of the Tequila, candidates had to identify this as closely as possible in terms of origin, style and raw material used and explain what evidence in their tasting note led to these conclusions. A good proportion of candidates were able to identify this as Tequila but their justification was often weak with very little beyond reference to the agave character. It was not just a case of explaining why this was Tequila, justification for the style and the quality level was also required.

June 2016: Unit 4 THEORY**Pass rate: 65%**

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

- a) Malt whisky production prior to distillation**
- b) Parts of a pot still and their roles in the distillation process**
- c) Kirsch OR Fruit spirits not made from grapes or apples OR Absinthe**

Candidates too often failed to limit their answer to the question as set. For example, writing everything they knew about Malt whisky, rather than the processes implied in the question. Many candidates included irrelevant detail on distillation, maturation and labelling terminology when all that was required was an explanation of conversion, malting and fermentation. Examiners were looking for depth here rather than breadth. The parts of a pot still were identified reasonably well by most candidates but many failed to discuss the role they play in the distillation process, or their explanations were confused and unclear. Section c) was fairly straightforward and was answered well where candidates had learnt this section of the syllabus but clearly tripped up those who had "cherry picked" the topics to revise.

Unit 5 – Sparkling Wines of the World

Unit 5 examinations also took place in November 2015, March 2016 and June 2016.

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

November 2015: Unit 5 TASTING		
Pass rate: 73%		
Wine 1	Country:	Germany
	Region:	Pfalz
	Wine:	Von Buhl Riesling Brut 2013
Wine 2	Country:	France
	Region:	Champagne
	Wine:	Champagne Gratiot-Pillière Brut Rosé N/V
Wine 3	Country:	Australia
	Region:	South Australia
	Wine:	Bleasdale Sparkling Shiraz N/V

Some candidates scored low marks on this paper because they assumed all three wines were from the same provenance although there was nothing on the paper to indicate that this was the case. One candidate muddled the wines up and despite renumbering these (which is the right thing to do), they still missed out on marks because they forgot the conclusion differed in the case of wine 1 and this should also have been altered to fit their renumbering.

The sparkling Shiraz was mistaken for Lambrusco by a fairly large percentage of candidates. The flavor profile was not right for this. Others who had correctly identified it as Shiraz underestimated the quality assuming all sparkling Shiraz to be basic quality. This was actually a relatively classy wine.

November 2015: Unit 5 THEORY	
Pass rate: 59%	
In relation to sparkling wines, write about each of the following:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Pressing and first fermentation in champagne production b) Franciacorta OR New Zealand c) New Zealand OR styles of Cava 	
<p>Section a) was generally answered well with candidates showing good knowledge of the champagne production process and the role of pressing in particular. Those that did less well tended to misquote juice yields or were confused about the traditional method; more than one candidate thought that liqueur de tirage was required to induce the first fermentation. Some candidates failed to write about the first fermentation at all which meant they could not pass this section. Others described the first fermentation as “oxidative” which is inaccurate; it will take place at a</p>	

relatively warm temperature for a white wine but the juice will always be protectively handled, even if oak fermentation vessels are used. There was good coverage of pressing systems, juice yields and the distinction between *cuvée* and *taille* but few candidates explained why such care is taken or gave examples - those that did, scored good marks. Examiners will always reward application based answers higher than those that do not, such as those that not only state facts but explain why something is done or not done.

There were some good answers on Franciacorta. Those that had revised this part of the syllabus did well, recalling specific ageing requirements and tirage times in detail. Those who had not revised this topic struggled to make any valid points beyond the fact that it is an Italian sparkling wine.

Answers on New Zealand made logical deductions on the whole about climate and grape growing practices in New Zealand and gave examples of sparkling wines made. There was also some good commercial awareness of key brands and cuvées. Those who had not thought of New Zealand as an important producer of sparkling wine were in the minority, but some who had clearly not done so made specious arguments about Sauvignon Blanc being the lead grape variety for these wines, which is not the case.

There were some disappointing answers on Cava with very poor spelling of indigenous grape varieties used. The best candidates noted that Cava styles differ according to grape variety (and potentially colour), lees ageing/tirage times and final sweetness level/dosage, taking each in turn. Many candidates simply wrote everything they knew about Cava without thinking about what was actually required here. There was confusion between vintage and reserve wines and frequent misspelling of Spanish terms – “Riserva” appearing as often as the correct spelling “Reserva”. The majority of candidates who quoted the dosage levels for the different styles got them wrong suggesting guesswork was at play.

March 2016: Unit 5 TASTING

Pass rate: 89%

Wine 1	Country:	Australia
	Region:	South-Eastern Australia
	Wine:	Omni Australian Sparkling Wine
Wine 2	Country:	France
	Region:	Champagne
	Wine:	Champagne Charles Heidsieck Brut Réserve
Wine 3	Country:	Italy
	Region:	Piemonte
	Wine:	Martini Asti

This flight was well answered with a high pass rate. Weaker candidates failed to give comprehensive descriptions of aroma and flavour profiles, for example giving descriptors from one cluster in isolation – particularly noticeable in the case of sample 2 which had primary characteristics as well as secondary autolytic notes and tertiary notes from bottle age. Candidates need to think broadly when using descriptors to make sure they cover the full profile of the wine.

March 2016: Unit 5 THEORY**Pass rate: 56%**

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

- a) Pruning systems in Champagne
- b) Cava rosado OR Freixenet
- c) Clairette de Die OR Limoux

A disappointing set of scripts, largely due to many weak answers in section a). Far too many candidates simply wrote about guyot which is used but only in a limited capacity and is only permitted in lesser rated vineyards. What examiners were looking for here was information on the systems specific to the Champagne region, i.e. Taille Chablis, Cordon de Royat and Vallée de la Marne. Answers needed to describe these in detail, explain where each is used and for which variety and identify any advantages or disadvantages of each system. Answers would also have benefitted from some discussion of the objectives of pruning systems in the Champagne region (i.e. why are they used) and some indication of when pruning takes place for these systems.

Candidates who knew little about Cava rosado hoped to get by with a generic description of the traditional method rather than specifics about production of rosé. This would not have been sufficient for a pass grade in this section of the question.

Section c) highlighted those candidates who had limited their revision to the more mainstream topics. Given the very limited scope of the syllabus in Units 4, 5 and 6 candidates should expect these less well known wines to come up for assessment.

June 2016: Unit 5 TASTING**Pass rate: 74%**

Wine 1	Country:	Spain
	Region:	Catalonia
	Wine:	Mont Marçal Rosado Brut Cava NV
Wine 2	Country:	Italy
	Region:	Emilia-Romagna
	Wine:	Concerto Reggiano Lambrusco 2015
Wine 3	Country:	France
	Region:	Champagne
	Wine:	Champagne Lombard Brut Rosé Premier Cru NV

On the whole, this was a good set of scripts with a surprisingly large number of candidates identifying the Lambrusco. Those who didn't identify it correctly, went for Australian Shiraz and reverse engineered their assessment of the structure of the wine to fit this. Many features of this wine were "wrong" for an Australian Shiraz.

The assessment of quality was the downfall of many who failed. The Cava and Champagne were often "reversed" because candidates misjudged the quality.

Despite the relatively high pass rate, there were some totally illogical conclusions such as the Rosé Champagne identified as Asti, Sparkling Shiraz or as being from the Mosel. The Lambrusco was even identified as Asti by one candidate as well as Vouvray, Rioja and Beaujolais. All of these show a really weak understanding of sparkling wines.

June 2016: Unit 5 THEORY

Pass rate: 54%

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

- a) **Champagne village classification**
- b) **Sparkling wine production in South Africa OR Sparkling wine production in South America**
- c) **The use of aromatic grape varieties OR Crémant d'Alsace**

Some candidates failed to understand what was meant by Champagne village classification and included too much information of limited relevance. Answers on section b) tended to be rather vague and generic with a clear distinction between those guessing and hoping to get by on generalisations and those who were able to write knowledgeably about the specific regions of production, grapes used, styles produced, techniques used and market data. Muscat featured heavily in the section on the use of aromatic grapes and Riesling was mentioned by most but not all candidates. Other varieties were often overlooked such as Sauvignon Blanc and Glera. The key points to cover here were which grapes are used, why they are used and which methods are used.

Unit 6 – Fortified Wines of the World

Unit 6 examinations took place in November 2015, March 2016 and June 2016.

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

November 2015: Unit 6 TASTING	
Pass rate: 70%	
Wine 1	Country: Spain Region: Jerez Wine: La Gitana Manzanilla Sherry
Wine 2	Country: Spain Region: Jerez Wine: Croft Original Pale Cream Sherry
Wine 3	Country: France Region: Rhone Wine: Domaine de la Pigeade Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise
<p>Most candidates were able to give good accounts of the Fino and the VDN. However, responses on the Pale Cream Sherry were often weak. Many struggled to accurately assess the structural components and many overestimated the quality, in some cases considerably so.</p> <p>Many candidates failed to give enough reasoning in their assessment of quality answers. Candidates should note that of the five marks available for this section, only one was for identifying the correct SAT quality category. The remaining four were allocated to detailed explanation/justification of this quality level. <i>“Balanced”</i>, <i>“complex”</i> and <i>“typical”</i> are meaningless terms unless tasters can explain what is balanced with what, how a wine is complex and why and what it is typical of.</p>	

November 2015: Unit 6 THEORY
Pass rate: 52%
<p>In relation to fortified wines, write about each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Tinta Negra b) Douro planting systems c) Single Quinta Vintage Port OR White Port OR Late Bottled Vintage (LBV) Port
<p>In amongst some good scripts were some truly bad ones. Some candidates believed Tinta Negra is used in Sherry production, others that it is used for Port.</p> <p>A significant number of candidates misunderstood what was meant by “Douro planting systems”. Answers covered many things from vineyard classification, climate, trellising systems rather than</p>

the planting systems themselves – Socalcos, Patamares and Vinha ao Alto. When these were mentioned, they were often misspelt or confused with other systems.

March 2016: Unit 6 TASTING

Pass rate: 66%

Wine 1	Country:	Spain
	Region:	Jerez
	Wine:	Barbadillo Cuco Oloroso Seco
Wine 2	Country:	Portugal
	Region:	Madeira
	Wine:	Barbeito 10 Anos Malvasia Reserva Velha Madeira
Wine 3	Country:	Australia
	Region:	Rutherglen
	Wine:	Campbells Classic Rutherglen Muscat

The emphasis in this paper was on identifying the wine and assessing the level of quality. The usual problems came up, - not writing enough in the assessment of quality, not being analytical enough, being too generic in terms of identifying aromas and flavours, e.g. “spicy” and “citrus” without giving specific examples.

March 2016: Unit 6 THEORY

Pass rate: 59%

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

- a) Maturation of Port in bottle**
- b) Biological ageing of Sherry**
- c) Grenache OR Pedro Ximinez OR Touriga Nacional**

To answer section a) it was first necessary to identify which styles of Port benefit from maturation in bottle. A number of candidates were unable to distinguish between those that do and those that don't. It was also expected that candidates would address how these styles of Port differ in terms of acids, phenolics and flavour precursors at the point of bottling from those that undergo oxidative ageing in wood. Some discussion of how the structure of these Ports evolves in bottle would then follow, finishing with information on how bottling and ageing differs for the various styles that undergo bottle ageing. Many answers were too simplistic or just incorrect.

A good percentage of the answers on biological ageing of Sherry covered sufficient of the main points for a pass. Common errors included not explaining what flor is and not giving specific enough information on the criteria required for it to develop and persist. Candidates should remember that this is a test of detailed wine knowledge and the ability to communicate it. Vague assertions such as the need for “a certain level of acidity”, “good humidity”, “appropriate temperature” are not sufficient. The best answers showed sound deductive logic, explaining that not only does flor

consume glycerine but that this results in a lean body for biologically-aged wines. Likewise, good candidates described the effect on style and quality of the thicker flor in Sanlúcar i.e. wines with a paler colour and a lighter, fresher texture than Fino.

Answers on other sections were generally reasonably sound, though for all three varieties examiners were looking for discussion of grape characteristic as well as the fortified wines they produce. The best answers described not just “what” but also “how”, i.e. how these grapes lend themselves to the production of the fortified wines in question.

June 2016: Unit 6 TASTING

Pass rate: 74%

Wine 1	Country: Portugal Region: Douro Wine: Taylor's First Estate Port NV
Wine 2	Country: Portugal Region: Douro Wine: Niepoort Tawny Dee Port NV
Wine 3	Country: Portugal Region: Douro Wine: Ferreira Quinta da Leda Vintage Port 1999

A significant number of candidates misjudged the sweetness of these Ports and also either overstated or underestimated quality levels. Since candidates had been asked to identify the style of each Port, correctly assessing the structural components and the level of quality was key.

A number of candidates lost marks because they did not read the concluding part of the questions correctly, giving an assessment of quality which had not been asked for rather than justification for the style of the wine. Many candidates fail to understand what is required here. In the case of sample 2 (Niepoort Tawny Dee Port) the key points that led to origin were as follows:

- The combination of colour, level of alcohol and acidity point to Port
- The tawny colour indicates oxidative ageing
- The texture and flavor profile indicate ageing in wood
- Some evidence of primary red fruit indicates that ageing was not over an extended period
- It lacked the depth and complexity of a higher classified Tawny Port
- There was insufficient concentration to balance the high alcohol, leaving the wine a little spirity indicating that this was not a high quality aged Tawny
- Some herbaceous notes suggest use of less ripe fruit such as that used for more basic wines.

June 2015: Unit 6 THEORY

Pass rate: 53%

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

- a) Key Madeira shippers**
- b) Fortification of Sherry OR the fortification and maturation of vins doux naturels (VDNs) OR Sherry grape varieties**
- c) Rutherglen OR Pale Cream Sherry OR the fortification and maturation of vins doux naturels (VDNs)**

There was a wide variation in the marks achieved on this paper with a low of 3% and a high of 83%. There were a number of reasons for low marks. Many candidates only wrote about the Madeira Wine Company in section a), failing to include information about other key shippers as well. There was widespread confusion when it came to Pale Cream Sherry and worst of all, some candidates appear to not even know the basic facts concerning Sherry and Port with one writing *“Madeira is a Port made in Spain”*.

Appendix 1 – Pass Rates for the Level 4 Diploma in Wines and Spirits

Paper	2015/16			2014/15			2013/14			2012/13			2011/12			2010/11		
Unit 1 CWA	April 89%	Nov 85%		April 84%	Nov 82%		April 91%	Nov 90%		April 88%	Nov 91%		April 90%	Nov 91%		April 88%	Nov 91%	
Unit 1 Case Study	Nov 85%	Mar 80%	June 80%	Nov 58%	Mar 72%	June 79%	Nov 72%	Mar 73%	June 83%	Nov 77%	Mar 71%	June 85%	Nov 87%	Mar 68%	June 74%	Nov 83%	Mar 67%	June 84%
Unit 2	91%			92%			90%			91%			93%			90%		
Unit 3 Tasting	June 77%	Jan 65%		June 69%	Jan 59%		June 82%	Jan 64%		June 82%	Jan 64%		June 74%	Jan 66%		June 85%	Jan 72%	
Unit 3 Theory	June 45%	Jan 52%		June 32%	Jan 27%		June 40%	Jan 29%		June 40%	Jan 47%		June 43%	Jan 46%		June 54%	Jan 34%	
Unit 4	64%			52%			55%			57%			67%			63%		
Unit 5	59%			66%			71%			84%			75%			70%		
Unit 6	58%			53%			82%			61%			65%			60%		

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

GRADE BANDS FOR DIPLOMA COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS	
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.