

# DIPLOMA EXAMINER'S REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2013/2014

## INTRODUCTION

This report has been compiled with the primary aim of assisting those who are preparing to sit Diploma Examination Papers in the future. It will also be of benefit to lecturers, course co-ordinators, tutors and mentors. It aims to give brief comments on candidates' answers to each question, as well as highlighting common pitfalls and successes. It is designed to provoke constructive thought as much as to give all the answers. Comments on individual questions are preceded by some statistics and general comments. In some instances, guidance notes are supplemented by extracts from candidates' responses. Where appropriate, advice is given on where additional marks could have been gained. Whilst examples are not provided for every question set, there are examples of sections from each of the specific types of question – coursework assignments, tasting questions and theory questions from closed book papers. In each instance, the scripts have been selected to illustrate good coverage of either the topic as a whole, or a specific sub-section of it.

It should be borne in mind that these are not the definitive answer to any of the questions. Some may omit a number of facts, or in the case of the coursework assignments, may express a degree of personal opinion rather than fact. Nevertheless, they are reproduced here because they are a good representation of the standard required to pass or excel in the Diploma examination. In some instances, we have also included less than perfect answers. These illustrate the difference between a good script and one that requires more work to reach the standard to justify a pass, or in some instances to illustrate what is not acceptable in an examination of this level.

Candidates' responses published in this report were actual submissions in the 2013-14 examination cycle and as such are anonymous and are reproduced as submitted to the examiner. In some instances, they will contain information that is incorrect.

It is suggested that candidates revising and preparing for a particular type of question - tasting, paragraph, essay etc - read all comments on similar questions, as these often contain general advice, which is applicable across the board. For example, the candidate preparing for Unit 4, 5 or 6 may also find comments relating to both tasting and theory in Unit 3 helpful.

On a final note, as always, I would like to convey my thanks to all those who contribute their time and expertise to help the Awards team put the Diploma examination together and who contribute to the success of this qualification both in the UK and overseas.

To the internal and external members of the Examination Panel, the Moderating Panel, the examiners, the administration teams in the Diploma Approved Programme Providers, the examination invigilators and tasting teams who work so hard behind the scenes on the day of the exam, the Results Panel and the Appeals Panel – my thanks to all of you.

Janet Bangs  
Chief Examiner, WSET Awards  
**December 2014**

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

### Comparative Pass Rates by Paper

Paper	2014			2013			2012			2011			2010			2009		
Unit 1 CWA	April 91%	Nov 90%		April 88%	Nov 91%		April 90%	Nov 91%		April 88%	Nov 91%		April 75%	Nov 90%		April 99%	Nov 82%	
Unit 1 Case Study	Nov 72%	Mar 73%	June 83%	Nov 77%	Mar 71%	June 85%	Nov 87%	Mar 68%	June 74%	Nov 83%	Mar 67%	June 84%	Nov 76%	Mar 71%	June 68%	Nov 68%	Mar 77%	June 66%
Unit 2	90%			91%			93%			90%			88%			81%		
Unit 3 Tasting	June 82%	Jan 64%		June 82%	Jan 64%		June 74%	Jan 66%		June 85%	Jan 72%		June 62%	Jan 62%		June 78%	Jan 76%	
Unit 3 Theory	June 40%	Jan 29%		June 40%	Jan 47%		June 43%	Jan 46%		June 54%	Jan 34%		June 66%	Jan 49%		June 59%	Jan 53%	
Unit 4	55%			57%			67%			63%			61%			64%		
Unit 5	71%			84%			75%			70%			64%			74%		
Unit 6	82%			61%			65%			60%			66%			67%		

## **GUIDANCE ON EXAMINATION PREPARATION**

The Candidate Assessment Guide provides plenty of valuable guidance on how to approach the various assessments of the WSET Diploma qualification. This report contains additional information, not only here but also under the sections on individual question types.

This section of the report covers some general comments on the issues and problems that come up year after year and also gives guidance on pitching responses at the right level, plus an insight into examination grading criteria.

### ***Supplementary reading***

Candidates are reminded that the Study Guides issued by the WSET contain an overview of each section of the syllabus only and make frequent reference to additional sources of information. Candidates should be warned that the examination panel specifically refers to material listed as “required reading” when setting examination questions. Candidates who limit their study to the Diploma Study Guides in isolation run the risk of coming unstuck in the closed book examinations as a result. These additional sources of information should be just as much part of a study plan as the Study Guides themselves, and for candidates intent on achieving high grades; the importance of study beyond the “required reading” cannot be underestimated. In addition, there is clear evidence that candidates are not reading the Candidate Assessment Guide. This has been written specifically to help them prepare for assessment, and gives very clear guidance on exam technique. Candidates who do not read this document may not reach their full potential in the examination.

### ***Commercial awareness***

Unit 1, The Global Business of Wines and Other Beverages specifically examines candidates’ commercial awareness through the means of coursework assignments and the closed book case study. There is some evidence that candidates are ignoring the fundamental fact that wine and spirit production and trading are business enterprises, and therefore fail to bring a commercial approach to their answers where appropriate. All coursework assignments have a commercial focus and a pass cannot be achieved simply by reiterating facts relating to production methods. Titles for the 2014/15 coursework assignments are on the WSET website under [www.wsetglobal.com/qualifications/diploma](http://www.wsetglobal.com/qualifications/diploma). Titles for the 2015/16 academic year will be published at the end of May 2015.

### ***Examination Technique***

Taking note of these can make a big difference to your examination result.

- Answering the question as set.
- Writing legibly and presenting answers clearly.
- Avoiding careless errors such as mis-spelling a word contained in the question.
- Applying the Systematic Approach when answering tasting papers

In addition, we have noticed that candidates who take advantage of “examination preparation schemes” perform considerably better on the day than those who do not.

Many of the Diploma Programme Providers run such schemes for their candidates. Where these are not available, candidates can apply to join the Wine & Spirit Education Trust's Diploma Assessment Preparation scheme (DAPs) and should speak to the administrator at their Approved Programme Provider in the first instance.

### **Levels of Assessment Skills**

Having an idea of the kinds of skills that are being assessed will help candidates to direct their study effectively and write an answer that demonstrates they have these skills. Consider the following types of assessment, and how each successive one requires a deeper level of expertise:

- Factual Recall - (how things are)
- Explanation - (how things could be and why)
- Analysis - (how things might become and how they ought to be)

#### Factual Recall

Factual recall tests basic knowledge. This usually takes the form of an answer to a 'what', 'where' or 'who' question. This knowledge can be simply recalled, if known. This is the simplest form of assessment and success can be achieved through "learning by rote".

Sample question	What style of wine is Châteauneuf-du-Pape?
Answer	Full-bodied red wine with relatively soft tannins, lowish acidity and high alcohol.

#### Factual Recall + Application

Factual recall can be combined with application to assess to a greater depth. This is commonly achieved by putting the question into a relevant context, e.g.:

Sample question	A customer asks you to recommend a soft, full-bodied red wine. What would you recommend?
Answer	Châteauneuf-du-Pape. ( <i>This is obviously only one of several legitimate answers.</i> )

No matter how many facts the candidate has memorised, these do not constitute an **understanding** of a subject area. If the facts have been learnt by rote, the candidate either knows the answer or not. Using insight to work out what would be a

correct answer, when the answer is not known, only comes at the next level: explanation.

The lower level WSET qualifications mostly limit themselves to testing factual recall, assessed via multiple-choice format questions.

In the Diploma, the multiple choice Unit 2 examination, and the questions that require the candidate to write a paragraph about given topics which appear in units 3, 4, 5 and 6 are also mainly testing factual recall and recall + application. Factual recall will get candidates a reasonably long way in the WSET Diploma, but is not sufficient to guarantee success in Unit 1, and is unlikely to be adequate for the Unit 3 theory paper either.

### Explanation

Explanation goes beyond ‘what’, ‘where’, and ‘who’, and asks ‘why’. This type of question tests not just memorised knowledge of the subject, but understanding as well. This is because in order to explain something, the candidate needs to know not just ‘*what is the case*’ but ‘*what would be the case if things were different*’. This kind of ‘counterfactual’ understanding is achieved by spotting patterns in the basic facts, and deducing explanatory mechanisms behind them. Alternatively, a tutor could explain the mechanisms. However, if the candidate then finds that they have to memorise this information, it is a clear sign that they have not really understood it, and will not be able to apply the mechanism themselves in other scenarios, such as in the examination itself.

The human brain naturally tries to find patterns in data – though some people are able to do this more easily than others. These patterns mean that a lot of information can be deduced from a few simple principals. The skill of explanation is a higher order skill than recall, but the amount of data that needs to be memorised is less.

Sample question	Why is Châteauneuf-du-Pape a full-bodied, high-alcohol red wine with relatively soft tannins?
Alternatively	Account for the style of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, or explain the style of Châteauneuf-du-Pape.
Answer	The Grenache grape naturally gives wines that are high in alcohol, and full-bodied, but with soft tannins. The hot ripening conditions due to the location in sunny Southern France, aided by low-trained bunches benefitting from heat reflected from the ground also helps achieve fully ripe tannins and speeds sugar accumulation in the grapes.

A much more detailed explanation is also possible of course, and would be expected in the examination itself.

The basic facts (hot climate, Grenache-dominated blend) could be memorised and recalled, but what makes this a question about *understanding* rather than *factual recall* is the implication that if these causal factors were altered, then the style of Châteauneuf would change. For example, if the climate were cooler, then alcohol levels would be lower, and the tannins less ripe, or if more Carignan (or Cabernet) were used in the blend, then the wine would have firmer tannins, lower alcohol and less body.

### Explanation + Application

Just like factual recall, explanation can also be applied to a particular situation to assess explanation combined with application. This is where the counterfactual implications of the causal process are explicitly put to work. For example, if X were not the case, then B, rather than A would be the outcome.

Sample question	You are a producer of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and one of your important clients has requested a wine with lower alcohol. How can you meet this demand?
Answer	This would take the form of a list of things you could do to achieve this style, such as altering the blend to include less Grenache; sourcing grapes from cooler sites; increasing yields; using the vine canopy to shade the ripening fruit; retraining the vines to raise the fruiting zone; using open fermenters and low-conversion yeast strains, etc, etc.....

The WSET Diploma assessment, particularly the essay-format questions in Unit 3, aims to test *understanding* of the subject, rather than an ability to *recall facts*, but there is another level above this which should be considered during preparation for Unit 1. This is *analysis*.

### Analysis

Analysis requires you to draw conclusions from the facts and the causal mechanisms behind the facts. This might involve issues such as:

- Identifying and extrapolating trends to make predictions.
- Identifying which of a set of explanations is the most likely, or which of a set of causes is the most important.
- Identifying what the consequences of something are.

Sample question	Average alcohol levels in Châteauneuf-du-Pape have been rising over the last ten years. What are the main reasons for this and to what extent is the trend likely to continue?
Answer	An important point here is that in this context the inclusion of the word 'main' (as in 'main reasons') is not making life easy by limiting responses to <i>some</i> rather than <i>all</i> of the possible reasons. It is challenging the candidate to identify which, of all the possible reasons, are the most important ones. Once these have been identified, the candidate would have to argue to what extent they are likely to continue to have an effect.

### Analysis + application

In the same way that recall of knowledge and explanatory skills can be “applied”, so can analysis. This usually takes the form of making recommendations.

Sample question	What, if anything, should producers in Châteauneuf-du-Pape do in order to slow or reverse the trend towards increasing alcohol levels?
Answer	Note the subtle difference between 'what <b>can</b> they do' (a list of possible responses, as set out under 'explanation + application' above) and 'what <b>should</b> they do'. In order to establish what producers should do, it is necessary to consider the possibilities, and argue which of these are going to be the most prudent or effective and this forms the basis of the response to the question.

### **Summary**

As candidates progress through the various levels of WSET Qualifications, they move from learning 'what wines are like' to understanding 'why they are like that'. An understanding of the six factors taught at Level 3 will form an excellent foundation for Units 3, 4, 5 and 6, but Unit 1 offers the chance to go beyond 'what the world is like' and 'why it is like that' to examine 'what the world could be like', 'what it should be like' and 'what we should do about it'. These are far more interesting and challenging questions than mere factual recall. They should inspire candidates to explore the possibilities as they ponder them and hopefully find some convincing solutions.

## **Examination Grading Criteria**

Grade bandings for the Diploma examination are largely determined by the content of the submission judged against the “marking key” or “marks schedule” for each question. For example, the candidate covering 75% or more of the content defined in the marking key has a good chance of achieving a distinction grade. However, there are also other elements that come into play beyond pure factual content. The grade bandings are summarised below:

**Fail Unclassified**                      **<44%**

Seriously inadequate answer, through lack of information, or errors, demonstrating in general a very weak understanding of the subject. Insufficient evidence of understanding to award a pass, through brevity, lack of detail or inaccuracies.

**Fail**    **45 to 55%**

Borderline candidate, who whilst close to a pass does not give the examiner enough to award a Pass grade. Insufficient evidence of understanding to award a pass, through brevity, lack of detail or inaccuracies.

**Pass**    **55% to 64%**

The candidate demonstrates an adequate understanding of the topic, covering sufficient of the main points to be “more right than wrong.” A basic answer, with limited use of examples and depth of information, which may contain some errors.

**Pass with Merit**                              **65% to 74%**

There should be evidence of clear understanding here, with a greater factual coverage, and better depth and accuracy of information and examples. Very sound, but without the extra edge for a pass with distinction.

**Pass with Distinction**                      **>75%**

The candidate should demonstrate a thorough and accurate understanding of the subject in depth, and show some flair, creativity or originality in analysis, argument or choice of examples.

# COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

## Unit I, The Global Business of Wines and other Beverages

Before commenting on each specific assignment title, here are some general comments about the grading of coursework assignments:

All assignments are graded out of 100. Of this, 20 marks are available for the candidate's handling of the assignment. This includes the diversity of the bibliography, the presentation of the work in terms of spelling, grammar and legibility and the structure and style of the assignment. The latter incorporates issues such as coherence, flair, fluency, use of illustrative examples and the candidate's method of approach to the assignment.

The allocation of the balance of 80 marks varies according to the individual assignment and will be detailed as appropriate under each Assignment Brief.

In terms of presentation, marks will be lost where work is presented with spelling and/or grammatical errors. With spell checkers on all PCs, there is really no excuse for errors of this kind. Structure is also important, particularly if candidates do not follow the format dictated by the various sections of the Assignment Brief, as an automatic fail grade is awarded where any section is not addressed. The bibliography is an essential part of the assignment and those submitted without one are penalised as a result. Many candidates appear confused over the difference between a bibliography and "Reference Notes". The Candidate Assessment Guide explains this in more detail. The bibliography needs to draw on a variety of sources – books, magazines, internet, interviews – and certainly needs to have strong commercial evidence of the kind that can be obtained from trade journals such as *Drinks Business*, or *Just Drinks*. These are vital for identifying trends and topical issues. The internet features strongly in many candidates' bibliographies. This is fine, so long as there are other sources as well, such as text books, personal contact with subject experts and trade press. There is however a worrying dependence on sources such as Wikipedia and wine blogs. The bibliography should be correctly referenced throughout the body of the assignment – something very few candidates actually do. This is where the "reference notes" or footnotes come into play. Guidance on this is also given in the Candidate Assessment Guide. Failure to follow this will result in lower marks in this section of the Assignment Brief.

A number of examiners have commented on misuse of footnotes and appendices. Some assignments are submitted with footnotes accounting for up to half of each page of the assignment. This is an abuse of the restriction on the maximum permitted word count and in such cases the content of these footnotes is disregarded from the point of view of marking. In addition, some candidates submit excessive quantities of appendices. In many instances, these are not even referenced within the body of the assignment and their purpose is therefore questionable. There is a general feeling that these are often included to show how

much work had been done but they are often surplus to requirements and add nothing to the assignment itself.

Next, a few words on the use of the SWOT analysis in coursework. Whilst these do have their uses, some candidates include them indiscriminately without really reaching any conclusion regarding their findings. At worst they can be repetitive, of limited relevance, and eat into the word-count with little to show for it. At best they can highlight key points, generate imaginative thought and clear the mind. They should be used with caution and should never form the bulk of the work unless the assignment brief instructs you to do so. In fact, this is an instance where the appendix could usefully come into play. A SWOT analysis can be a valid addition as an appendix if it contributes relevant information to the topic, PROVIDED a summary of its findings is discussed within the body of the assignment itself.

Finally a couple of general comments that apply to all assignment writing. Candidates are reminded that work submitted for assessment purposes must include no personal identifier beyond the candidate number – names should not appear on work in any format beyond the signature on the front sheet. Some pieces of work submitted show signs of collaboration or “leading” by the Approved Programme Provider, or in the worst cases, plagiarism or simply copying another candidate’s work. There have been some appalling instances of candidates simply lifting huge sections of work from papers published on the internet. Where this has been detected, a fail grade has been awarded. Candidates must remember that assignments are to be the sole work of the individual submitting them and they should be in no doubt that it is always very obvious to the examiner where this is not the case. The penalties in such instances can be very severe indeed, and in repeated instances, will lead to the candidate being barred from completing this qualification.

## **Coursework Assignments**

### **November 2013**

**Supply and demand in the global wine market and the impact of the 2012 vintage in Europe.**

**Required content and suggested approach**

As soon as it became clear that the 2012 vintage in Europe would be small a commotion started in the global wine market. For the first time in a generation and more, it looked as if supply and demand might be reaching some sort of balance. There was even talk of a wine shortage. The spot price of key commodity bulk wines shot up. Wise heads had spotted that the gap between world wine production and consumption had been narrowing for a number of years but it has taken the shock of the 2012 harvest to realise that the years of oversupply may be over.

*Answers: 301*

*Passes: 271 (90%)*

The open book coursework assignments always generate high marks, and this was no exception. It is actually quite hard to get a fail grade in this open book assessment. Those who do, usually do not address all required sections of the question, submit an assignment that is below the permitted minimum word-count or plagiarise the work of others, simply lifting large chunks of work (most frequently from sources in the internet).

For this assessment, the candidate was asked to present a summary of the data that suggests a narrowing of the gap between supply and demand in the global wine market. The OIV bulletins from 2012 “*State of the Vitiviniculture World Market*” and “*State of Conditions Report*” gave the key numbers on this and were referenced by a good percentage of candidates.

Candidates were then asked to describe the reasons why world wine production has declined in recent years and to discuss the relative importance of the developments they described. Whilst many were good at identifying reasons for the decline, they were far less accomplished when it came to evaluating the importance of these. This is frequently the case with this type of assessment and clearly differentiates those candidates who simply reproduce information they have uncovered in their research from those who understand the significance of that information and can discuss it intelligently with personal input.

Candidates also needed to describe the reasons why world wine consumption seems to have edged upwards over the last few years and discuss the relative importance of these changes in consumption.

The next section of the assignment dealt with the 2012 vintage in Europe. However, far too many candidates leapt straight in and simply copied out vintage reports for the whole of Europe without reading the very important instruction in the candidate brief that informed them the report should concentrate on the key BULK wine producing countries and regions, and more significantly that it should “*focus on the issues that had a bearing on quantity rather than quality.*” Far too many candidates simply ignored this instruction, writing about premium wines like Barolo and Premier Cru Burgundy rather than key bulk wine regions such as Puglia, Castilla la Mancha and the Languedoc. Those who addressed this section of the assignment well explained why the 2012 harvest in Europe was small in terms of volume in the key bulk wine producing regions.

There were plenty of sources of information for this, including the Wine Spectator and Decanter websites as well as Jancis Robinson’s overview in the Financial Times in November 2012.

It was in the final section of the assignment that the better candidates shone. This was because they were required to speculate on how they saw the global wine market developing over the next five years based on the trends in supply and demand they had identified and discussed earlier. Those who answered this section well considered issues such as the following:

What is the effect on supply in years to come?  
What will be the effect on pricing?

What effect will there be on margins for producers?

What long term effects can be expected?

What are the likely economic effects on producers? Will some go out of business?

Could there be a shifting of emphasis of selling via supermarkets who drive prices so low? Are producers are likely to go elsewhere to protect their margins?

Conversely there has been a step change in the base price of wine which has now gone over the £5 mark, so this could be a lifeline for some producers whose margins have been under intense pressure in the past.

It is only by considering questions such as these that candidates can truly speculate on possible outcomes in the way the question demands.

The following script achieved sound marks. It is very focussed in terms of the assignment brief, answering the specific questions posed rather than just paraphrasing (or at worst, simply copying) statistics and vintage reports that have been lifted from research sources. Charts that are included are used well and referenced appropriately and there is evidence of original thought. Most importantly, section d) clearly focusses on bulk wine production, something that was very important and of which many candidates seemed to be oblivious.

## Supply and demand in the global wine market and the impact of the 2012

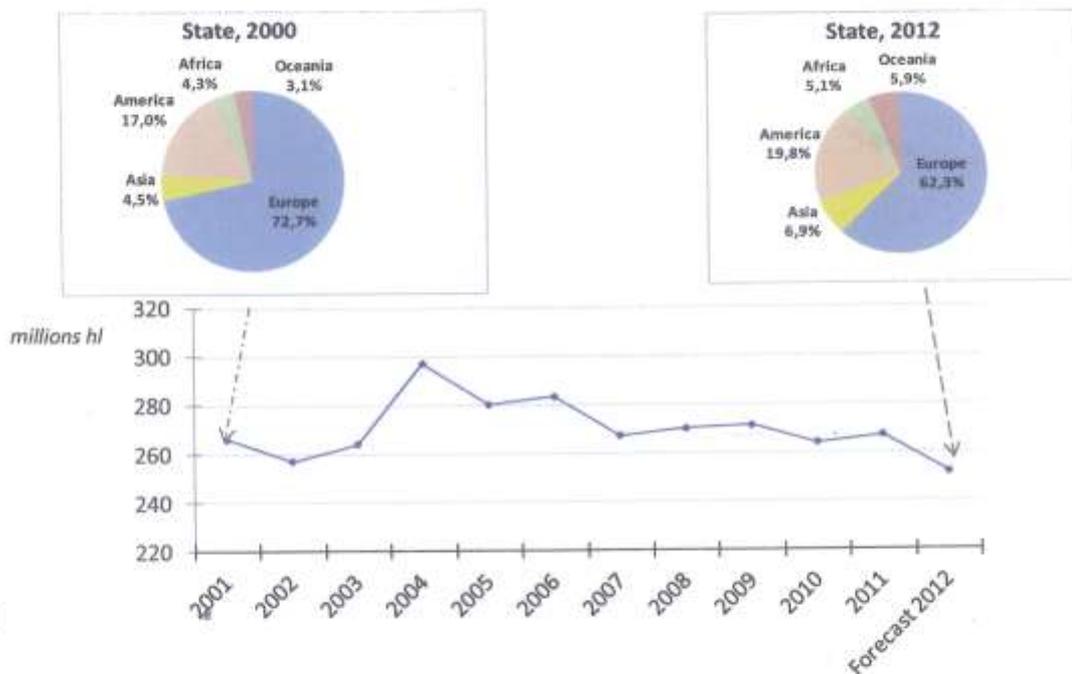
### vintage in Europe

It cannot be denied that wine has been consumed in human societies for thousands of years. Not only is wine the symbol of festivity, life style and culture, but it is also presents on the global market.

According to recent data provided by the International Organization of Vine and Wine, known as "OIV", the world trade of wine and must in 2012 increased in value up to 25.290 million Euros compared to 13.767 million Euros in 2000<sup>1</sup>.

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the supply and demand on the global wine market has been changed for various reasons.

During all these years, apart from the low production in 2002, which was estimated at 257 Mhl (Millions of hector liter), the production was approximately over 260 Mhl p.a. (see below)

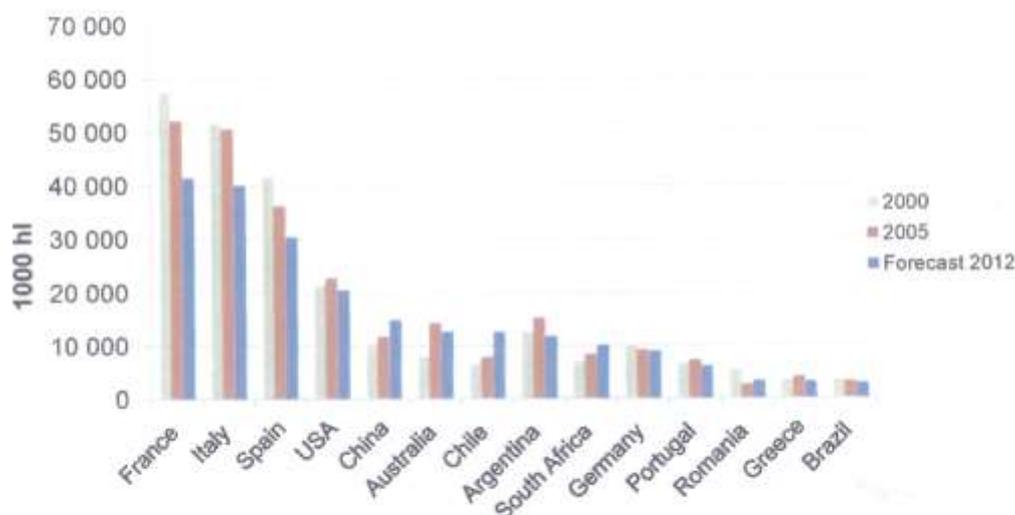


source: OIV

It was recorded to have reached an exceptional 296 Mhl in year 2004. However, the production of the vintage 2012 dropped to 251.7 Mhl, even lower than that of 2002, a point

<sup>1</sup> Castellucci: P. 25

which will be discussed in the other part on the reasons of the reduction. The first three wine producing countries faced the situation by decreasing their wine production. The examples are France, which has been slowing down its production by 28%, Italy by 22% and Spain by 27% from 2000 to 2012 in spite of the outstanding growth in production in Chile (88%), in Australia (57%) or in China (42%)<sup>2</sup>. (See below)



ml	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*	Change in % 2000-2012
France	57 541	53 389	50 353	46 360	57 386	52 105	52 127	45 672	42 654	46 269	44 322	50 757	41 422	-28%
Italy	51 620	49 865	42 507	41 807	49 935	50 566	52 036	45 981	46 970	47 314	48 525	42 772	40 060	-22%
Spain	41 692	30 500	33 478	41 843	42 988	36 158	38 273	36 408	35 913	36 093	35 353	33 397	30 392	-27%
USA	21 500	19 200	20 300	19 500	20 109	22 888	19 440	19 870	19 340	21 965	20 887	19 187	20 510	-5%
China	10 500	10 800	11 200	11 600	11 700	11 800	11 900	12 500	12 600	12 800	13 000	13 200	14 880	42%
Australia	8 064	10 731	12 168	10 835	14 679	14 301	14 263	9 620	12 448	11 784	11 420	11 180	12 660	57%
Chile	6 674	5 452	5 623	6 682	6 301	7 885	8 448	8 227	8 683	10 083	8 644	10 464	12 554	88%
Argentina	12 537	15 635	12 695	13 225	15 464	15 222	15 396	15 046	14 676	12 135	16 250	15 473	11 778	-6%
South Africa	6 949	6 471	7 189	8 853	9 279	8 406	9 398	9 783	10 165	9 966	9 327	9 324	10 037	44%
Germany	9 852	8 891	9 885	8 191	10 007	9 153	8 916	10 261	9 991	9 228	6 906	9 132	9 012	-9%
Portugal	8 710	7 789	8 677	7 340	7 481	7 266	7 542	6 074	5 689	5 668	7 133	5 610	6 141	-6%
Romania	5 456	5 090	5 461	5 555	6 186	2 802	5 014	5 289	5 159	6 703	3 287	4 058	3 311	-39%
Greece	3 558	3 477	3 085	3 799	4 248	4 027	3 936	3 511	3 869	3 366	2 950	2 750	3 150	-11%
Brazil	3 638	2 968	3 212	2 620	3 925	3 199	2 372	3 502	3 683	2 720	2 459	3 394	2 917	-20%
World Total	280	266	257	264	296	278	283	268	269	272	264	267	252	-10%

\* Forecast

Source: OIV 

<sup>2</sup> OIV: Statistical report on World Vitiviculture 2013, P. 16

Concerning to the demand of wine in global market, the results are shown on the opposite side of those of the production. Global wine consumption since 2000, which was estimated at about 226 Mhl, increased steadily and hit at record in 2007 with about 255 Mhl, before dropping gradually from 2008 to 2012. Despite the reduction in consumption since 2008, the global result is still higher than what it was at the beginning of the century. The world consumption of wine in year 2012 was estimated at about 243 Mhl<sup>3</sup>.

Year	Mhl
2012*	243
2011	244
2010	242
2009	243
2008	251
2007	255
2006	247
2005	239
2004	239
2003	237
2002	230
2001	228
2000	226

Source: OIV 

\* Forecast

#### **Factors that have contributed to a balancing of production and consumption in the wine sector**

This part will focus on the reasons of the decrease in global wine production and the increase in world wine consumption during the last few years.

The decline in world wine production is due to two major reasons, namely the reduction of European vineyards in the wake of the European wine reform program and climate changes.

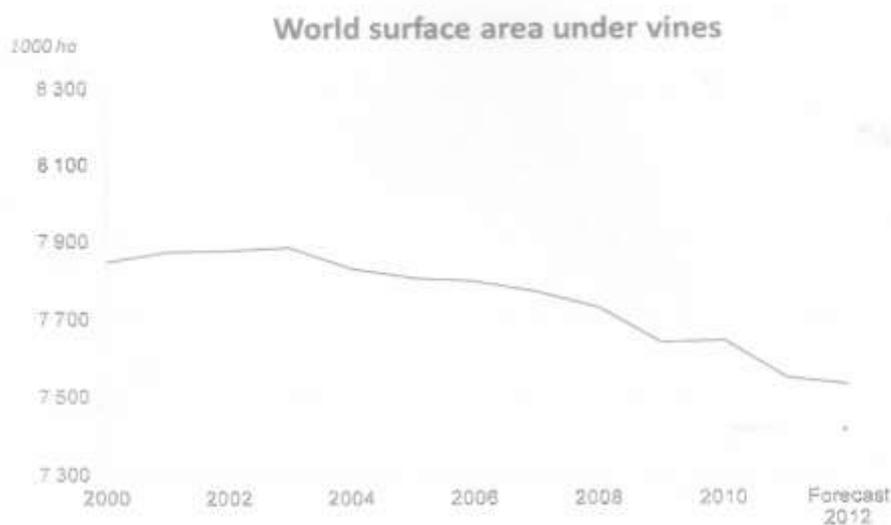
The European wine reform of the European Commission is a program that aims at contributing to a rapid restructuring of the wine sector in European Member States. Its objectives are to balance supply and demand on the global wine market as well as to reduce the production of uncompetitive wine and to improve the competitiveness of European wine producers against the new world wine producers. The reform is planned to be implemented over a 5-year period starting in 2008. The methods include the vine-pull scheme, by which vine growers receive financial aid to pull up their grape vines (called "arrachage" in French). The funds are distributed to each EU producer country and can be selected by each Member

<sup>3</sup> OIV : Statistical report on World Vitiviniculture 2013 P. 18

from different models including single payment scheme (a direct payment to producers), restructuring and conversion of vineyards. The budget fixed to support the vine-pull scheme started at €794 million in 2009 and reached €1.231 billion in 2013<sup>4</sup>. The total surface in Europe set for grubbing-up is at 175,000 hectares in order to eliminate the excess 18.5 Mhl and the budget to be spent over 3 years is €464 million, €334 million and €276 million Euros for the years 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 respectively<sup>5</sup>. The financial allocation for grubbing-up the vines are given in priority to the following:

- Producers who want to grub up their entire vineyard and abandon their viticulture activity
- Viticulture who are more than 55 years old<sup>6</sup>

As per the hereafter graphic for surface area of vineyards worldwide between 2000 and 2012<sup>7</sup>, the results show that world surface area still increased slowly from 7847 mha in 2000 to 7884 mha in 2003 and then started decreasing slowly in 2004 and sharply from 2008 to 2009 (from 7732 mha to 7639 mha) and from 2010 to 2011(7645 mha to 7547 mha) until last year 2012, the world surface area under vines was estimated at 7528 mha<sup>8</sup> (see below)



The drop of about 319 Mha from 2000 to 2012 in the world surface area under vines was due to the reduction of European vineyards during these years (from 62.5% to 56%). Although other continents continued to expand in surface (Asia from 19.40% to 22.7%, America from 12% to 13%, Africa 4.3% to 5.2% and Oceania from 2% to 2.7%)<sup>9</sup>, the decline in surface in

<sup>4</sup> CAP Reform: Final stage of EU wine reform to enter into force on 1 st August, P.2

<sup>5</sup> European Court of Auditor , Special Report No 7/ 2012, P. 12, P.20

<sup>6</sup> CAP Reform: Final stage of EU wine reform to enter into force on 1 st August, P.2

<sup>7</sup> Castellucci, P.4

<sup>8</sup> OIV : Statistical report on World Vitiviniculture 2013 P. 6

<sup>9</sup> Castellucci, P.4

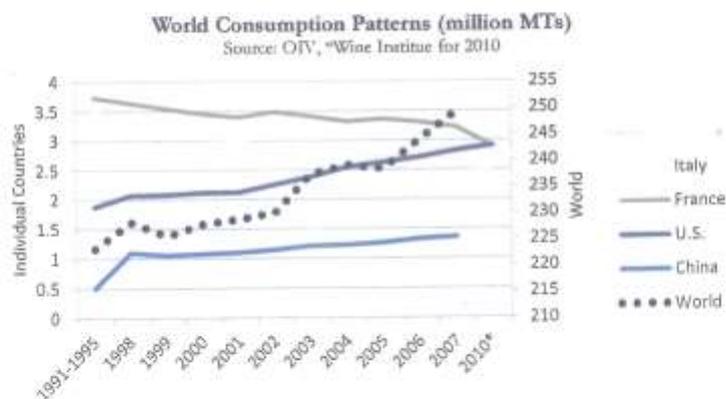
Europe has impacted the world wine area under vines and therefore the production, as surface in Europe represents more than a half of the total area.

Contrary to the drop in world wine production, the global consumption is rising by regular stages. In fact, wine consumption in Europe has reduced since 1980's due to following main reasons: 1) alternative preference beverages change in young generation to another beverages such as beer, soda or harder alcohols, 2) health concerns in older, working generation and 3) strict law against alcohol consumption especially during driving the car<sup>10</sup>. Though the consumption in Europe was still diminishing at the beginning of the century, the consumption in other continents rose progressively at the same time, especially in Russia and China, with a growth rate of 120% and 67% respectively. Apart from these two countries, over the last 10 years Australia and the U.S also had a growth rate of consumption of almost 40%<sup>11</sup>.

The press release of VINEXPO 2013 (Bordeaux 16-20 June)<sup>12</sup> reported that between 2007 and 2011, wine consumption on the German and British markets decreased by 2.73% and 4.07% respectively. At the same time, the France and Italian markets also experienced a reduction in consumption of 7.13% and 2.51% respectively. Consumption in Spain dropped about 19.67%. However, the progress in consumption in countries outside Europe is high enough to cover the loss of European consumption in the market.

In 2011, it was recorded that markets in China, the U.S, Russia and Australia consumed 129 million, 9-liter cases more than in 2007, which represented an increase of 1.55 billion bottles.

The chart below shows the consumption trend in main countries such as France, Italy, the U.S, China and the rest of the world during the past 20 years (from 1991-2010). The consumption in Italy and France had dropped sharply while it increased steadily year by year in the U.S, China and rest of the world<sup>13</sup>.



<sup>10</sup> Q.D Troung, P.4

<sup>11</sup> Castellucci, P, 22

<sup>12</sup> Presse Release Vinexpo ; The World Wine and Spirits Market with a Look Forward to 2016

<sup>13</sup> Q.D Troung, P.5

Especially in China, the fastest-growing country in wine consumption ahead of the US and Russia recorded a growth of 142.1% in consumption from 2007 to 2011 reaching 159.25 million cases or 1.911 billion bottles<sup>14</sup>. The Vinexpo/The IWSR forecasted that wine consumption in China would continue to grow by 39.62% which is equivalent to 71.53 million cases or 858 million bottles between 2012 and 2016. Although wine consumption per capita in China is much lower than that of France (1.4 liters compare to 53.2 liters in 2011), it was predicted that per capita consumption in China will be increased to 2.1 liters over the next three years<sup>15</sup>. The main reason for a jumping growth in consumption is due to the economic changes in China that brought the country to be world 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy, thus increasing its upper-business middle class, the main group of consumers.

According to the information from the wine market council, it has reported that in 2012 about 44% of adult populations in the US are wine drinkers, that is to say 100 million people out of 228 million in total. Between 2001 and 2012, the consumption of table wine in the US increased about 42.5% (from 207 to 295 million cases)<sup>16</sup>. The main consumers are the baby boomers and the generation Xers population, while the millennial generation will be the potential group influencing the market trends. There are some changes in market trend of consumption. Rosé wine gained more place in market. According to the Provence wine council, the import growth had increased by 41% in 2012. The sales of Sparkling wines made in Italy such as Prosecco, Moscato, Lambrusco or even high-end French sparkling like Champagne sky-rocketed. Lastly, young generation looks more and more for imported wine. Between 2007 and 2011, sales growth of Chilean wine in the US increased about 14.1%, Spanish wine by 16.3%, Portuguese wine by 35.5%, New Zealand wine by 44.3% and Argentinean wine by 106.6%<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, market trends will grow among women consumer. Female accounts for 51% of total core wine consumer categorized by gender in 2012<sup>18</sup>.

### **The 2012 Vintage in Europe**

This part will focus on the 2012 vintage report and especially on three main European wine-producing countries and on the key bulk wine market.

According to the OIV, bulk wine has defined as the wine shipped in containers to consumer with a quantity of two liters or more, and also includes the bag-in-box format. However, as the world market of bulk wine was estimated in 2011 at almost 38 Mhl which represents 38% of the total volume of exchange, Federico Catellucci, Director General of the OIV proposed to modify definition of bulk wine within the harmonized system in order to clarify the data gathering for the purpose of statistics analysis<sup>19</sup>. The important roles of wine imported in bulk are reduction in transportation cost, import duties, glass and bottling cost, foreign exchange cost exposure due to the cost of packaging being assumed in the destination

<sup>14</sup> Ye Jun, China will set pace for wine industry growth, [www.chinadaily.com.cn](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn)

<sup>15</sup> Burkitt & Chow, [www.wallstreetjournal.com](http://www.wallstreetjournal.com)

<sup>16</sup> [www.winemarketcouncil.com](http://www.winemarketcouncil.com)

<sup>17</sup> Ben O'Donnell, [www.winespectator.com](http://www.winespectator.com)

<sup>18</sup> Research, [www.winemarketcouncil.com](http://www.winemarketcouncil.com)

<sup>19</sup> OIV website

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market currency. Furthermore, bulk importation also help reducing CO2 emission during shipping up to 40% as well as enhancing shelf-life and lower risk of bottle damage. During first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the import of wine in bulk increased from 1/5 to almost ½ of all wine volumes traded<sup>20</sup>.

The harvest vintage 2012 hit the record of the lowest result since 1975, regarding to the OIV report, and total global yield in 2012 fell to 248.4mhl, compared to 264.2 Mhl in 2011. The main European wine- producing countries experienced a drop in harvest result. France's total output decreased by 19% and in region such as Burgundy and Champagne, the production fell by 40% and 25% respectively. Spain crops reduced by 6%, and the Rioja region output was down 30%. Italy faced a reduction of 4%<sup>21</sup>.

The decrease in output of European vintage 2012 is principally due to less than ideal weather conditions. Moreover, the EU pull out program also contributed to crop shortage. About 40.000 to 50.000 hectares of vines were lost due to this program during the last three years.

A cool spring and a very hot, dry summer in Spain resulted in 70% down in yield of Cabernet Sauvignon crop. Heat shock and drought in Ribera Del Duero caused a reduction in yield of about 15%<sup>22</sup>. The most suffer region due to the summer drought was the Valencia province with a reduction in 23% (from 2.34 Mhl to 1.81 Mhl) because of the lack of irrigation in vineyards. Castilla La Mancha, a well-known region for bulk wine had a drop of 7% in production from 1.845 Mhl in 2011 to 1.507 Mhl in 2012.<sup>23</sup>

France faced problems such as drought, cold winter, cold rainy spring during flowering season, hailstorms followed by a heat wave and dry summer. Nevertheless, there were mixed results depending on different regions. The Ministry of Agriculture reported the lowest result in 40 years and that the French crop was down 20% to 40.6 Mhl<sup>24</sup>.

According to the report of UbiFrance, it is estimated that in 2012 about 19.85% of exported French wine was in bulk which represents 2.97 Mhl or 293.3 million euros<sup>25</sup>. In term of bulk wine, the total volume of Languedoc region generic red and rosé reduced by 20% compared to 2011<sup>26</sup>. Chardonnay was the most affected grape variety since the yield reduced by 50% in Languedoc region as well as varietals for red blends like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot or for rosé blends like Syrah and Grenache<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Rabobank Industry Note #296

<sup>21</sup> Catchpole, The Drink Business

<sup>22</sup> The barrel Room blog : A 2012 EU Vintage Summary

<sup>23</sup> Ciatti Company, Global Market Update

<sup>24</sup> Ruitenberg, Bloomberg

<sup>25</sup> www.vitisphere.com

<sup>26</sup> Ciatti Company, Global Market Update

<sup>27</sup> Ciatti Company, Global Market Update

Crop size estimates in 2012 (see table below) compare to those of 2011 for Charentes, Val de Loire, Southwest were reduced 25%, 22% and 12% respectively which resulted in the drop in dry white wines, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay<sup>28</sup>.

2012 French Crop Size Estimates

	Moy (**)	2011	2012	2012/2011	2012/Moy
Champagne	2,886	3,036	1,817	-40%	-37%
Bourgogne - Beaujolais	2,467	2,591	1,817	-30%	-26%
Alsace	1,138	1,182	1,147	-3%	1%
Savoie	118	125	116	-8%	-2%
Jura	96	117	88	-25%	-6%
Val de Loire	2,908	3,035	2,367	-22%	-19%
Charentes	8,038	9,289	6,990	-25%	-13%
Sud-Ouest	3,433	4,036	3,534	-12%	3%
Bordeaux	5,814	6,188	5,547	-10%	-5%
Languedoc - Roussillon	13,289	14,726	11,700	-21%	-12%

Figures in 1000HL / moy (\*\*\*) = average production 2007-2011

Concerning Italy, the 2012 vintage was estimated at 40.8 Mhl; however, it was down 4.8% from 2011 which was estimated at 42 Mhl<sup>29</sup>. Drought and heat were the main causes of the decrease for this vintage. As shown in the table below, Apulia or Puglia, region known for bulk wine, recorded the reduction of 15%. Northeast regions like Friuli reduced the most with a record of - 21% due to the frost Easter period, followed by shortage of rainfall<sup>30</sup>.

Italian wine and must production (thousand hl)

	2011	2012*	Ch. %
Piedmont	2,683	2,470	-8
Valle d'Aosta	20	20	0
Lombardy	1,913	1,120	-15
Trentino Alto Adige	1,113	1,000	-10
Veneto	8,710	7,665	-12
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1,267	1,000	-21
Liguria	77	69	-10
Emilia Romagna	6,455	5,820	-10
Tuscany	2,495	2,250	-10
Umbria	660	690	-20
Marches	741	741	0
Lazio	1,305	1,180	-2
Abruzzo	2,383	2,283	0
Molise	255	235	-8
Campania	1,726	1,815	5
Apulia	5,777	4,900	-15
Basilicata	119	100	-11
Calabria	303	276	-9
Sicily	4,823	5,180	7
Sardinia	486	486	0
Italy	42,705	39,300	-8

Source: Istat. \* Estimate Iamea/UUV, September 10, 2012

<sup>28</sup> Ciatti Company, Global Market Update

<sup>29</sup> Ciatti Company, Global Market Update

<sup>30</sup> Unione Italiani Vini , <http://www.uiv.it/node/20329>

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The reduction of wine production in the three main wine-producing countries mentioned above led to a price increase in all categories of wine especially wine in bulk, as following examples.

Generic white and Red (VDF) of France was at between 0.60-0.65€ per liter in October 2012 but increased to 0.70-0.80€ and to 0.65-0.75€/ in November respectively. The price of Chardonnay (VDF) in October 2012 was stable at 0.60-0.75€/liter but increased sharply one month later after vintage 2012 finished at 0.85-1.00€/liter. Both VDF from Cabernet-Sauvignon and Merlot rose to 0.75-0.80€/liter in November 2012 compare to 0.65-0.70€/liter in October<sup>31</sup>.

Spain suffered from the price- rising situation along with France and Italy, and is thus not one of cheapest suppliers anymore. Many buyers move to Chile bulk especially for dry red and rosé. Bulk syrah and Tempranillo increased to 0.65-.0.70€/liter for the vintage2012<sup>32</sup>.

Generic white from Italy was at 0.52-0.57 €/liter for the 2011 vintage in August 2012 increased to 0.55-0.60€ in September and in October 2012 inflated to 0.58-0.65€/liter. Pinot Grigio increased to 1.30-1.45€/liter in October 2012 compared to the price in previous month at 1.20-1.30€/liter<sup>33</sup>. This variety accounts for 38% of the volume in the off-trade<sup>34</sup>.

As per record of OIV, the 2012 world trade from the 5 main EU producers declined in volume from 64.5% in 2011 to 62.3%. From a total world export at about 101.4 Mhl, Italy was the largest world exporter with 21.5 Mhl followed by Spain and France with 19.1and 15 Mhl respectively<sup>35</sup>. However, the variation between 2011 and 2012 is about -8.8%, 5.6%, -13.6% for Italy, France and Spain respectively. OIV registered record sales variation of -6.2% in 2012 among top five EU countries, while New world producers (Australia, Chile, US, New Zealand, Argentina and South Africa) increased their sales by 6.4%<sup>36</sup>.

### **In conclusion**

In 2012, OIV estimated the global consumption between 235.7 and 249.4 Mhl<sup>37</sup>. While Castellucci said "We're dipping into the reserves for supply, there's a lack of product in bulk. Merchants worldwide are starting to turn to the small countries for bulk wine"<sup>38</sup>, the Dutch bank Rabobank reported that the reduction in production for vintage 2012, the increase in consumption especially in the U.S, China, Brazil and emerging markets as well as the price increase means the demand and supply of the global market comes closer to "balance"<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Ciatti Company, Global Market Update

<sup>32</sup> Ciatti Company, Global Market Update

<sup>33</sup> Ruitenberg, Bloomberg

<sup>34</sup> Kriebichl, Harpers.co.uk

<sup>35</sup> L'italo-Americano

<sup>36</sup> OIV: XXXVIth World Congress of Vine and Wine (Bucarest, 3rd June 2013)

<sup>37</sup> MercoPress

<sup>38</sup> Adam Lechmere, www.decanter.com

<sup>39</sup> Matt Walls, www.decanter.com

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Despite the increase in volume of imports in North America (16.7%) and Asia (7.8%), the EU is still the largest wine and must buyer (55.8%). The UK and Germany are the main EU importing countries and the US is the biggest importing country for North America, followed by China and Japan for Asia.

As mentioned previously, the decrease in production in EU producer countries in 2012 resulted in increasing prices, which forced some importer countries to look more for alternative choices from New World producers. In 2011, Spain accounted for 45.44% of the total share by volume of bulk wine imported in China, while Chile, the 2<sup>nd</sup> country, had 21.60%. However, in 2012, Spanish bulk did not completely dominate the market as it had in the previous year. It accounted for 36.37% and Chilean bulk progressed to 33.03% of the total share by volume<sup>40</sup>. All these volumes for the Chinese market represented approximately 12 million liters less for Spanish bulk and 25 million liters more for Chilean bulk. It is the same case as the Russian market which starts seeking new producer to fill the gap pricing to replace Spanish bulk. In 2011 Russia imported over 166 million liters of mostly bulk Spanish; however, it reduced by 67%, equivalent about 110 million liters in 2012<sup>41</sup>. Germany is one of sensitive markets, with the increasing in price of bulk wine; it resulted in the reduction in the order of wine in bottle (-7.9%) instead<sup>42</sup>.

Despite the decline in export for about 6.2% compared to 2011, the old world wine producing countries still dominate with the total of 63 Mhl in 2012 while new world producing countries gained 6.4% or equivalent 28Mhl in export market<sup>43</sup>.

For Asian markets like China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, it is expected to grow by 150% in the next five years<sup>44</sup>.

The European distillers sector also felt the effect from a significant decrease in bulk since the distillers always use the lowest priced wine for brandy or cognac production. It is reported that the cost of alcohol distilled from grapes increased by almost 400% during the last 4 years<sup>45</sup>. For this reason, many brandy producers began to use alcohol from sugar instead of alcohol distilled from grape and positioned their products as liqueurs. The taste was nonetheless still the same and they had no bad feedback from the consumers.

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<sup>40</sup> Jim Boyce, [www.grapewallofchina.com](http://www.grapewallofchina.com)

<sup>41</sup> Rabobank Wine Quarterly

<sup>42</sup> Rabobank Wine Quarterly

<sup>43</sup> Karlsson, BK Wine Magazine

<sup>44</sup> Shanken News Daily Blog

<sup>45</sup> Rannekleiv, Soccio, Mutis, P. 2

April 2014

**The past, present and future of the trade in Bordeaux fine wine**

**Required content and suggested approach**

The Bordeaux wine region has a reputation for quality built on a long history of producing and trading wine. Of the vast quantity of wine produced in the Bordeaux region, only a small percentage of this is attributable to the Cru Classé Châteaux. A unique trade structure has evolved over the years for the buying and selling of these premium wines on the global market.

Answers: 397

Passes: 360 (91%)

Many candidates ignored or misread the detail in the candidate brief and as a result included too much generic information on Bordeaux as a whole rather than specifically focussing on Cru Classé wines. Another problem was a tendency to place too much emphasis on the sale of en primeur wines to the detriment of everything else. Far too many just launched straight into an extensive explanation and critique of the en primeur system. Those who explained the development of en primeur from the negociant's now defunct role of *elevage* for Cru Classé wines – via the practices of buying by *abonnement* and *sur souche* gained more marks, but this was definitely not a question exclusively on *en primeur* and candidates who wrote solely about this had a slim chance of success.

Most answered the section on the history well, but this was largely a case of paraphrasing what they had read. Responses were also fairly sound when it came to describing the various commercial links in the supply chain that bring the fine wines of Bordeaux from the Château to the marketplace although many forgot the role that growers and contract growers play in supplying grapes to many Chateaux. Once again, this was largely a case of documenting fact so it was easy to do well in this section. However, when it came to the part of the brief that required candidates to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the current Bordeaux trade structure for Cru Classé wine, responses were considerably weaker and very few provided much insight into whether they thought the current system was sustainable in the long term. Far too many candidates simply wrote about the pros and cons of trading in wine en primeur, but this section required a much broader approach than this.

Candidates who made a good attempt at speculating about the long term viability of the current system of trading fine wine considered issues such as the following:

- The threat of “lookalikes” - wines of comparable quality and style from other regions (primarily in the New World) that may be more consistent and better value for money.
- “Emperor’s new clothes” – are the wines really worth what they cost? Who is going to be buying them in the longer term?
- There are now some signs that the “fad” for top end Bordeaux is fading (particularly Ch Lafite).

- Questions exist over the current boom in BRIC markets which are not necessarily stable in the long term.
- Changes to the classification system destabilise the “heritage” advantage of these wines.
- Economic challenges exist in many world markets.
- Equity prices are rising so there is now less demand for alternative forms of investment such as in wine
- Climate change raises many questions.

This is clearly not the definitive answer to this section of the question, just examples of some of the more obvious issues that good candidates discussed.

### **Closed Book Case Study**

In comparison to other closed book theory papers, the pass rate for the case study in Unit 1 is high and reflects the fact that candidates go into the examination having already carried out the research required to answer the question. This means when they get to the examination hall and open the paper, they simply need to collect their thoughts and structure their response to address the sub-sections of the question on the examination paper. This is very similar to what is required for the open book coursework assignments, but with the added constraint of working in a timed environment and without access to research sources.

Those who fail, generally do so because they do not address the question as set or are too brief in their response.

### **November 2013**

<b>Lower alcohol wines</b>	
<b>Candidate Case Study Brief:</b>	
<p>After a lengthy period of rising alcohol levels in wine, attributed variously to climate change, viticultural techniques, vinification practices or journalistic preferences, there are signs of a move towards wines with lower alcohol levels. There are suggestions that this trend may be largely consumer-led. Certainly, several large drinks companies have recently launched wines with lower levels of alcohol in response to perceived pressure from consumers, the medical profession and government.</p> <p>Some wines have historically always had lower levels of alcohol but many of these are not benefiting from this current development in the market. These wines are often regarded as unfashionable; it seems to be innovative new wines that are driving this market trend.</p> <p>There are several ways of producing lower alcohol wines with varying impacts on the style, quality and price of the finished product.</p>	
<i>Answers: 358</i>	<i>Passes: 261 (73%)</i>

**Examination question (all sections compulsory)**

- a) What is prompting the market interest in wines with lower alcohol levels? (40% weighting)
- b) Which wines are leading the way in this trend and which are falling behind? Why is this the case? (25% weighting)
- c) Describe the various methods of producing lower alcohol wines. What is the impact of each of these on the finished product in terms of style, quality and price? (35% weighting)

The examiner for this question commented that responses were largely rather dull and predictable. Few voiced their own opinions, but those who did tended to gain higher marks. Most did enough to obtain a pass grade but research tended to be rather limited in terms of scope and breadth. Many candidates also overestimated the size of the lower alcohol wine category which actually accounts for less than 1% of the market. On the whole, methods for producing lower alcohol wines were discussed well with most candidates identifying and describing the most obvious methods reasonably accurately.

However, candidates were less good at identifying wines that are falling behind in this category, with many of them just citing Riesling as an example and coming up with very few reasons to support this. To answer this section of the case study well, candidates needed to give a snapshot of the state of the market for these wines with lower alcohol levels. Good candidates cited the new Moscatos from the USA and Australia which are proving popular. They also wrote about existing brands who are launching new wines in this category such as Brown brothers, J Lohr, Deakin Estate or Jacob's Creek's with their 'Cool Harvest' wine. Good candidates explained that these are the kind of producers who have sufficient market traction to reach new consumers. When it came to those traditionally lower alcohol wines that are not performing well, the best candidates went beyond German Riesling and extended the scope of their discussion to other wines that fit the lower alcohol profile such as Vinho Verde, Hunter Valley Semillon and Asti which, surprisingly, does not seem to be able to jump on the "Moscato" bandwagon.

**March 2014**

**Understanding your local market for sparkling wine**

Recent events suggest tough times continue to lie ahead for those involved in various sections of the wine trade in many markets, from production through to retail. In difficult or challenging times, having the right product is crucial to success. It is therefore the ideal time to review existing strategies, brands and product lines.

The sparkling wine market is perhaps more volatile than other sectors. It has enjoyed periods of phenomenal growth, but is nevertheless a sector where fierce price cutting within the retail sector often attracts criticism as damaging to the “elitism” of the sparkling wine category. On the other hand, this volatility does show how resilient the sparkling wine market is, and with the diversity of products available to the consumer it should be possible for the right product to succeed almost irrespective of the state of the market. A key question, of course, is “what is the right product”? How do you go about identifying the gap in the market and bringing the product to fruition?

Clearly, if one is to succeed with any new sparkling wine product launch, it is crucial to have a detailed understanding of the local market for sparkling wine. This not only means knowing about volume sales by style and price point, but also studying significant trends, for example over the last 10 years. Without this full understanding of the market in which you operate, any new product development is likely to be flawed.

*Answers: 241*

*Passes: 176 (73%)*

**Examination question (all sections compulsory)**

- a) Give a detailed description and breakdown of your local market for sparkling wine commenting on the most significant trends over the last 10 years. (50% weighting)
- b) Evaluate where opportunities exist within this market. In your opinion, which combination of style and price point offers the greatest scope for success and why? (30% weighting)
- c) Consider which regions can produce wines to address the gap you have identified in your market. Explain which one of these regions you would select to produce the wine that you are going to launch. (20% weighting)

Results for this question were surprisingly poor. This was because many candidates did not think clearly enough about what they were being asked to do in the various sections of the question.

Almost all of them were able to give a description and breakdown of their local market for sparkling wine although many just quoted statistics and listed styles, offering very little comment on the most significant trends over the last 10 years. Responses varied depending on the market being described, but ideally should have included statistical evidence to show the current status of the market and should have offered some explanation of how the market has grown, at which price points, in which categories etc. However, it was in the remaining two sections of the question that many candidates came unstuck. Far too many of them showed a lack of imagination in their choice and style of wine for a new product launch on their market. For example, having identified that products such as Prosecco and Cava were doing well in the local market (and it was almost impossible to find a market where this was not the case), they simply stated that they believed the greatest potential lay in yet another Prosecco or Cava. Most of them offered no convincing justification for another such wine on an already saturated market in most cases.

There was no right or wrong answer here, BUT there needed to be evidence of reasoned thought and logic behind any proposal and in many instances this was simply not there. Inevitably, where candidates went for the Prosecco/Cava option, responses in both sections b) and c) were weak, largely because responses simply boiled down to the following:

*“I will launch a new Prosecco because it sells well in my market and I will source this from the Veneto in Italy because this is the only place it can be produced.”*

This clearly does not answer the question in either section b) or c). In a market already awash with Prosecco, another is hardly “filling a gap in the market”. Similarly, since there is only one place to source Prosecco, there is no option for the candidate to “consider which regions (in the plural) can produce wines to address the gap” before finally refining this down to the most suitable option as the question had asked them to do. The whole point here was for the candidates to consider various options, weigh up the pros and cons of each and evaluate which region offered the best potential, and most importantly, justify this choice to the examiner. Very few candidates actually did this convincingly.

## June 2014

<b>The relationship between consumer, wine media and the industry</b>	
<p>“Wine writing” is by no means a modern phenomenon – Cato was one of the earliest wine writers (234 – 149 BC) and Pliny (AD 23-79) wrote prolifically on wine and wine-making.</p> <p>In more recent times, large numbers of books and magazine articles have been written, TV programmes broadcast and wine blogs created. Wine writing is now more frequently associated with the process of drinking wine rather than producing it, with many column inches in newspapers and magazines given over to guidance for the wine enthusiast on what they should be drinking to impress their friends or what offers particularly good value for money at any given time.</p> <p>All of this is thought to have had an influence on consumption and probably also production, but this is hard to quantify. It has certainly generated “superstars” who wield enormous power and can make or break a wine through the use of their pen. Robert Parker Jr. is perhaps the most famous example of such an individual.</p> <p>However, recent technologies and changes in how consumers exchange information have led to a blurring of the lines between professional wine critics, unbiased reviewers and knowledgeable amateurs.</p>	
<i>Answers: 208</i>	<i>Passes: 172 (83%)</i>
<b>Examination question (all sections compulsory)</b>	
<p>a) Discuss the influence of the wine media on consumers and producers. (40% weighting)</p>	

- b) Robert Parker Jr. is often said to have been the most powerful wine critic. Evaluate his influence on wine drinkers and producers throughout the world. (30% weighting)
- c) How has “wine journalism” changed in recent years and how, in your opinion, will it continue to change? (30% weighting)

In spite of the high pass rate for this question, the majority of responses were rather unexceptional with almost half of those candidates sitting this paper achieving a mark somewhere in the range of 55% - 59%. The majority of those who achieved a pass grade did so therefore with a low level pass and there were relatively few really outstanding scripts. Candidates certainly had a lot to say about Robert Parker and not surprisingly, opinions differed greatly. As has been seen with other examination questions, candidates performed well when reporting fact (such as when documenting Robert Parker’s achievements) but there was a disappointing lack of imagination when predicting the future of wine media with few venturing past the predictable references to blogs and tweets. The best candidates not only cited these as the future, but explained WHY they have taken off in such a spectacular way.

The following script is a good example of a high scoring response. It is well written and well argued, making plenty of valid points. It is also a good length with no unnecessary padding.

The Influence of the Wine media on Consumers and producers is both complex and varied. It is dependant on the Market, Size of producer, Geography and Brand Positioning of the Wine. It is also important ~~to~~ to note that Consumer is mentioned and not customer, where they may be one and the same at the cellar door, depending on the Market and Route to Market the consumers may differ. e.g. a wholesaler or agent

The influence of the wine media certainly varies depending if the Market is Mature or not and the style of the market. In Norway where the wine industry is State run Advertising is Banned so Wine Journalists and recommendations carry a lot of influence. Also in Emerging Markets and quite young markets such as China and USA, consumers are looking to the media ~~for~~ to offer confidence in a product, which can be taken as endorsement. In more mature markets such as UK, Spain and France, the influence is not as high. This is down to greater consumer confidence and a larger presence of the health lobby which can be argued is Anti Alcohol.

Focusing on the UK the main types of media are Print i.e. Newspapers, online and social with the development of social media and

online Broadcasts. It can be argued that Traditional Wine Journalists Power is in decline. For example A national press article may see sales in Asda increase 4-5%, however just a single mention on a popular TV program such as Saturday Kitchen can increase sales over 200% as what happened with Majestic's Vinoban mader, leading to no stock being available in UK. Companies invest heavily in samples, trips ~~for~~ Wine Journalists, but it can be argued that many reviews end up in trade press, so fail to inspire new buyers where print journalism has most influence is in the fine wine sector, publications such as Decanter can influence a group of wine savvy customers on wines they will know. Where as it is argued TV has greatest influence on everyday wines. Waitrose have started using Philip Schofield for their wine recommendations, not because he is an expert, but because more people can relate to him as a celebrity.

Social media can be a useful influence, but I feel not enough wineries have built up a significant following - Montes with 1500 likes on Facebook vs Coles 83 Million, ~~and~~ Producers will need to harness this as part of a larger tool kit going forward to get better influence. It seems the trade is talking but not many are listening. Social media's greatest influence is its immediateness, people can tweet about a subject and it can be read instantly by millions around the world. Where this is a drawback for wine media is lack of control. Producers can get into arguments



When evaluating Robert Parker Jr's influence it is important to highlight that he has been a dynamic force in the industry.

He initially set up the wine advocate in 1979 as a hobby. It would be argued that his prediction for the 1982 vintage, is what has made him a major force.

The first to implement a scoring system Parker simplified the world of wine for many. It is said that a 95+ score will be worth 7-8 million Euros to the winery. This has led to many wineries attempting to make wine to suit his pallet. This 'Parkerisation' has seen wineries abandon tradition for short term financial gain. The risk with this is, Parker enjoys wines heavy in alcohol, fruity and distinct, this is one pallet in a world of millions. By making wine for Parker you risk alienating your existing customers.

There is ~~no~~ no doubt his influence is high, but in a niche sector of the market.

Whilst the finewine sector is growing in the UK, the average consumer still buys between £5-10. Ask them who Robert Parker is and they do not know.

However for the keen wine collectors especially in Bordeaux, enprimeur campaigns centre on his scores, often boosting demand and price when ratings are high. This can be

Frustrating, even for Parker, who for the 2013 Campaign refused to release his scores until all the chateaux had priced. Prices were less inflated owing to a poorer vintage, but chateaux could not rely on a great score to keep prices high. In conclusion it can be argued that his influence has been great in certain sectors especially fine wine, Producers have benefitted, whilst others have had disastrous results from a lower score following a much good marks. Parker likes to boast his nose is insured for 6 Million dollars as a bad day can bankrupt a winery. I do not think his influence is that great. Peoples palates are evolving and the style of wine he likes are alienating many drinkers.

For some he will always dictate their preferences and purchases, for many he will be an unknown quantity as they purchase their f6 wine from the shop.

A powerful wine critic, yes, but to the tiny percent educated in fine and rare wine.

Wine Journalism has experienced vast change since the first writings of Cato & Pliny. In recent years we have seen a move from Books to print news, evolving to tv and social media with the rise of the Cookery program.

Previously Books such as World atlas of wine, Super planck or Hugh Johnson's pocket book, were very much people's bible, but as wine drinkers evolved so has their habits, and these books <sup>have</sup> become stocking fillers & coffee table books. A main reason for this is shelf life, wines evolve vintages change and the knowledge hungry consumer needs to have upto date info meaning after a few months the book is out of touch. This is where the Weekly Column was born. A bite sized amount of information on a current vintage works very well. This has evolved to twitter for the journalists where daily recommendations are tweeted out to followers.

A Major change has been the rise in cooking programs. The Naked chef, Masterchef, Saturday Kitchen. Suddenly cooking is cool and the chef's super stars, enter the TV wine critic, Gilly Smith, or Clarke are great personalities and inspire people to match the food + wine.

These days everyone has the chance to be

a critic. With the internet it is easy to post a blog or tweet a picture of your favorite wine. A huge development has been the selling of Alcohol by Amazon. This now means everyday consumers can review wines online. This sort of system is also on the Majestic website. This is consumer confidence in huge growth. It is risky many don't have the flowery language or nuance to politely say they didn't like the wine, which can lead to some poorly worded reviews.

I feel we are in a revolution of change for wine journalism. We will continue to see books published out of tradition, but a definite move towards social and online media will occur as soon as the industry harnesses the issues of online media. TV will continue as a major force, the return of Food + Drink highlights the public's love for wine, it can't be long before a magazine style show on wine is produced.

The greatest developments are happening online with Amazon and to some extent Google Glass making everything instant. The ability to read reviews as you shop will hugely influence consumers.

The wine journalists will have to change. As confidence grows amongst consumers and with the ability to review wines themselves, people such as Jane McQuitty will need a point of difference in the future. As customer spending habits on food + drink move from the Big Weekly Shop to little and often, so must the journalists adapt also. Tough but exciting times ahead.

## Unit 2, Wine Production

This report does not give examples of questions used on the Unit 2 paper as these are live questions and not in the public domain.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that statistics continue to show a very good pass rate for this paper. Whilst the questions are certainly not easy, candidates have little to fear providing they study the Diploma Course Notes thoroughly and read around the subject. Visits to wine growing regions and winery tours are also invaluable in understanding the “theory” of this unit.

However, what has become increasingly apparent in recent years is that many candidates appear to leave the study of viticulture and vinification behind once they have passed the examination for this unit. By the time they come to sit the Unit 3 examination, many of them have not looked at their study notes for Unit 2 for many months, or even longer than a year in some cases. This is evidenced by some very clear cases of confusion when it comes to questions on the Unit 3 theory paper that rely on sound knowledge of the winemaking process, or the work that is carried out in the vineyard. One of the most valuable things a candidate can do when revising for the Unit 3 theory paper, is to review the course notes for this unit as well, but far too few seem to think this is necessary and perform poorly in the Unit 3 paper as a result.

## Unit 3, Wines of the World

### Tasting Papers

It is clear from analysis of candidate performance that some struggle to get to grips with the Systematic Approach to Tasting (SAT) and how exactly this should be used.

In preparation for changes that came into effect in the academic year starting August 2014 the WSET issued a fully revised edition of the Candidate Assessment Guide with a long and detailed section on the SAT and its use in terms of “aroma and flavour clusters”. It is imperative that all candidates read this document which can be found on the Diploma student section of the WSET website. Rather than repeat its full content here, this report will simply highlight general guidance on how to use the SAT along with some common errors that examiners frequently encounter.

### Important General Guidance

#### Hyphens and Commas

It would be helpful to read the following guidance with a copy of the Systematic Approach to Tasting to hand. It will then be seen that the SAT is formatted to include two different lines of text, one where entries are separated by hyphens and one where they are prefixed with the words “e.g.” and separated by commas.

Where terms in the right hand column of the SAT are separated by **hyphens** (for example lemon-green – lemon – gold – amber – brown), candidates should select only ONE of the terms to describe the wine. It is important to be specific, even if, for example, the wine appears to be on the border between ruby and garnet. Candidates need to be decisive, rather than use a range such as “ruby-garnet” or “ruby to garnet”. If both ruby and garnet are valid descriptions, then this will be noted in the marking key and examiners will be instructed to award marks for either colour. If candidates use a range statement such as “ruby to garnet”, “low to medium (-)” etc., then examiners will NOT award the mark even where the marking key notates a range of options. This is because candidates would not be using the SAT correctly. In addition, where candidates use alternative words such as “straw”, “cherry” etc. for colours, or “crisp” for acidity without qualifying a level, they will also NOT be awarded marks. Candidates and/or educators may know personally (or within their community) what they mean by these and other additional terms. However, for the examination to be valid and reliable, the use of terminology between examiners and candidates needs to be consistent. Achieving consistency with a wider vocabulary than that available through the SAT would be considerably harder, and is in any event unnecessary because the terms provided in the SAT are sufficient to describe any wine with accuracy for the purposes of the WSET Diploma qualification.

Where terms in the right hand column are preceded by the words “e.g.” and the items are separated by a **comma**, the candidate is not restricted to the terms in the SAT in isolation. In the case of the lines relating to aroma characteristics, flavour characteristics and “palate: other observations” candidates are strongly encouraged to use the lexicon on the reverse of the SAT. This lexicon is used in the production

of the marking keys, and candidates will be able to gain full marks where relevant using just these terms. However, should candidates wish to use other words or descriptors to supplement their tasting note, the examiner will award marks where these are judged to be appropriate. This means any additional terms used by candidates should be capable of being understood by the examiner, as well as being valid descriptions of the wine.

### **Three Point and Five Point Scales**

In most instances where hyphens are used, candidates are required to place the level of the various components on a scale ranging from low (or pale, light, dry, short) to high (or deep, full, luscious, long). These should be treated as three-point scales (as with the WSET Level 3 qualification) that are further subdivided. Medium (+) is therefore not a point that is equidistant between medium and high, but is a subdivision of the “medium” level descriptor. It can be thought of as being “medium that is towards the upper end of the medium band”. “Medium” is sub-divided in this way because the majority of observations for the majority of wines lie within the “medium” band, and subdividing it in this way makes it possible for candidates to differentiate between this large number of wines. For most components of the SAT, it is only “medium” that is subdivided in this way, but sweetness is the exception. In this instance, each point on the three point scale is further divided into two. “Dry” is subdivided into “dry” and “off-dry”, “medium” into “medium-dry” and “medium-sweet” and “sweet” is subdivided into “sweet” and “luscious”. This reflects the fact that most wines are dry or off-dry and takes into account the huge differences in sugar levels between sweet wines.

It can be tempting for candidates to over-use the term “medium” (including + and -), but the danger is that their tasting notes will fail to sufficiently capture the differences between the wines they are assessing. Some candidates have found it useful to make their initial assessment of the wine using a non-subdivided three point scale. The restricted range of terms encourages them to be bolder in their use of the full range of the scale. Having done this, they can then return to the components they have described as “medium” and decide whether these need any further refinement using the (+) or (-) notation. Another way to help avoid over-use of the term “medium” is to think of this (including medium + and medium -) as meaning the same as “unremarkable”. For many components of many wines, the level is indeed unremarkable, and in these cases it is appropriate to use medium (including + and -). However, many of the wines presented to candidates in Diploma examinations will have at least some components that are markedly high or low.

Candidates should remember to use the terminology as it appears in the SAT when using the scales. This may appear to be very stark language but these terms facilitate fairness and consistency in the examination process.

### **Assessment of Quality**

Many candidates give insufficient information when assessing the quality of the wine or simply repeat the observations made under the nose and palate without explaining how they relate to quality. The assessment of quality should seek to place the wine in an appropriate quality category, and, **most importantly**, explain why it belongs in that category. It is not sufficient to simply state what the wine is. Ask yourself how you would describe it to a customer. Is it a large volume wine that

is correctly made but lacking in complexity? Is it a top quality, premium wine, and if so, what leads you to this conclusion? The components that contribute towards quality are intensity, structure, balance, complexity, typicity and length. However, it is not enough to simply state that the wine is balanced, candidates need to explain in what way it is balanced.

It is important to remember that quality judgements in the Diploma examination should be absolute – i.e. not taking price or origin into account. However, if candidates are sure of the origin, they may find it helpful to use established quality scales (such as regional, commune, premier cru, grand cru in Burgundy) to convey more precisely how good they think the wine is. This is optional and should be used if it adds clarity.

### **Country of Origin**

In most instances, one mark is allocated for correctly identifying the country of origin and two for the region. This is to allow those candidates with superior tasting skills to demonstrate these by identifying the origin of the wine as precisely as possible. However, the increased “homogenisation” of some wines makes it increasingly difficult to identify regional typicity in all cases and sometimes it is genuinely felt that some wines could be from a number of countries and/or regions. In these cases, we sometimes reverse the emphasis of the marks, giving two marks for country and only one for region, or markers may be instructed to allocate marks for more than one country or region. This is particularly true in the case of some New World wines and a case in point was a California Chardonnay where marks were also awarded for identifying this as Australian. However, candidates should not list more than one place of origin in their answer, particularly where multiple origins cover different styles of wine or simply appear opportunistic such as the following candidate:

*“This wine is from Italy, although it could also be from California or Australia.”*

### **Common Errors that lead to the loss of marks**

#### **Comment on every line of the SAT**

One way to lose marks on this paper is through poor application of the Systematic Approach to Tasting (SAT). Missing out key features such as sweetness, acidity, body, alcohol etc. is simply throwing marks away.

#### **Judge each wine individually**

Many candidates still do not appear to understand what is required in a professional, analytical tasting note. There is a tendency for some to compare the three wines rather than describe them individually. This leads candidates to write imprecise comments such as “deeper than wine no 1”, “more intense than wines 1 and 3”, “higher acidity than wine 2”. This is not correct application of the Systematic Approach. Each wine must be assessed on its own merits with all attributes analysed according to the terminology defined in the SAT.

#### **Do not jump to conclusions**

The most common problem is that of smelling and tasting the wine and deciding what it is before writing the tasting note. This inevitably means the candidate writes the tasting note “to fit” their (often incorrect) conclusion rather than concentrating on

what is in the glass and then drawing conclusions based on this information. It is vital to keep an open mind when writing tasting notes.

### Order of tasting

Do not assume the order in which the wines are presented is the best order in which to taste them. In any tasting examination, whether Unit 3, 4, 5 or 6, the first step should always be a quick nose of all three samples to determine in which order they should be sampled. This usually results in assessing the least intense wine first and working up to the most intense or complex. This ensures that your palate does not get overwhelmed by a heavily oaked Chardonnay which then makes it impossible for you to detect the delicate, yeasty aromas of a simple Muscadet for example.

## Tasting Paper 1

### Question 1: Wines from a single grape variety (not given)

It is clear that candidates find the format of the questions in Paper 1 more challenging than those in Paper 2. The easiest way to lose marks in this question is by failing to identify the grape variety. A number of candidates insist on giving a different variety for each wine despite being told in advance that one variety applies to all three wines. Another classic mistake is assuming the identity of the grape variety on the basis of the first wine tasted. It is easy to become biased in favour of this assumption and attempt to make the remaining descriptions fit the variety chosen rather than using the information in all three tasting notes to arrive at the correct variety. A number of candidates give two varieties rather than one. This is known as “hedging your bets” and earns no marks at all even if one of the varieties is correct. If asked to give one variety, that is what you must do. In addition, the candidate must give evidence of the logic behind their choice of variety. It is not sufficient to simply recognise what the grape variety is, you must be able to demonstrate how you arrived at this conclusion. This section of the question carries five marks, and you should therefore aim to give at least five valid reasons for your choice.

January 2014: Red wines exclusively or predominantly from Syrah	
Answers: 124	Passes: 73 (59%)

Wine no 1	Country: Region Wine:	France Rhone Valley Crozes Hermitage Domaine Combiere 2011
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Wine no 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Chile Limari Maycas del Limari Reserva Syrah 2009
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Wine no 3	Country: Region: Wine:	South Africa Stellenbosch Lourensford Winemakers Selection Syrah 2009
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This was a rather disappointing pass rate with only one candidate achieving a distinction grade. .

On the whole, the structural elements of the wines were assessed reasonably well by those candidates achieving a pass grade. However, it was the more subjective elements, such as the concluding sectors on assessment of quality, readiness for drinking etc. that were less convincing. Candidates often contradicted comments they had made previously in the tasting notes, rather than basing the conclusion on the information contained within the tasting note, for example describing a wine as “failing to achieve a higher quality rating due to it lacking length”, yet assessing the length within the tasting note as “medium+” or “long”. The examiner also commented that there was a general tendency to assume that assertive characteristics such as ripe fruit or obvious oak always equate to high quality. There is also a reluctance on the part of many candidates to point out negative attributes in any wine, such as “hot” alcohol or imbalance. Negative comments are often a vital part of any assessment of quality and should be raised where appropriate. If not, the assessment of quality can often lack credibility because the candidate “sits on the fence” rather than committing themselves. Finally, many candidates make the incorrect assumption that there will always be three difference quality levels in any flight of wines. This is not always the case. In some instances, the wines may all be of a similar quality level, there may be two wines that are of outstanding quality rather than just one. There is little point in trying to “out-think” the flight in this way – each wine needs to be judged on its own merits.

The following candidate has identified the grape variety correctly and has given some valid reasons for this choice. The description of wine 3 duplicated below is largely accurate and the candidate has grouped aromas and flavours into similar profiles, such as “black fruit”, “maturity” etc. This is good practice for the introduction of “cluster” marking which comes into effect with the November 2014 exams. The candidate also makes a good attempt at the assessment of quality, despite this being rather brief. They have not only identified what is good about the wine, but also pointed out some of its shortcomings. This is not an exceptional or outstanding script by any means, but is a sound, logical response.

### WINE No. 3

#### Appearance:

clear and bright, deep ruby with legs

#### Nose:

clean. medium intensity of black fruit such as blackberry, blueberry  
sweet spice such as clove, cinnamon, liquorice; oak such as charred  
wood. maturity such as savoury, gamey, leather.  
developing

#### Palate:

dry. medium(-) acidity, high alcohol, medium(+/-) tannin which is ripe and  
fine-grained, ~~med~~ <sup>medium(+)</sup> body, medium intensity of black fruit such as  
blackberry, blueberry, sweet spice such as clove, liquorice, oak such as  
charred wood, maturity such as gamey, leather, umami.  
medium(-) finish.

#### Country and region of origin: (2 marks)

American, California.

#### Assessment of quality: (5 marks)

good quality. The wine has good complexity, good intensity but lack  
of finish. The leather, umami flavour seems unpleasant. not so  
balance as the alcohol is a bit harsh.

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

drink now, no potential for further ageing for it already toward end  
of its life and the short finish, but can keep 2-3 years due to  
acidity and intensity.

#### GRAPE VARIETY: (4 marks)

Syrah.

#### REASONS FOR THIS CHOICE: (5 marks)

high level of acidity and alcohol. sweetness on palate, firm tannin  
in three wines. typical flavour of pepper, blackfruit, ability to  
age. general high level of quality: ranges of styles. deep colour.

June 2014: Red wines from Pinot Noir	
Answers: 448	Passes: 303 (68%)

Wine no 1	Country: Region: Wine:	France Burgundy Gevrey-Chambertin Vieilles Vignes 2008
Wine no 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Germany Baden Weiler Schlipf Spatburgunder 2011
Wine no 3	Country: Region: Wine:	New Zealand Central Otago Quartz Reef Pinot Noir 2012

This was a better pass rate for what should have been an easy variety to spot.

Issues highlighted by the examiner were that many students struggled with the German Pinot Noir, both in terms of identifying it and in judging the quality. This was a wine where it would have been appropriate to highlight some of the weaknesses in terms of the quality assessment since the wine was simple with the primary fruit rather dominated by a distinct “baked” coffee aroma and the palate was quite green and hard. However, as already noted in the previous question, candidates are often reluctant to comment on negative elements in wine and far too often take the easy route of describing all wines as “having perfect balance”. When used so freely and indiscriminately, such comments are very unconvincing.

As always, weaker candidates continue to lose marks under the “assessment of quality” with many of them simply describing the wine, repeating observations they have already made under the “nose” and “palate”.

### **Question 2: Wines with a common theme**

Despite being given information in the question regarding the common theme, a number of candidates continue to ignore this and lose marks as a result. The importance of reading the question carefully cannot be stressed enough. There is often information in the question stem that is there to help and guide you in your assessment of the wine – ignoring this is careless and simply throws marks away unnecessarily.

January 2014: Wines with a common link in respect of origin	
Answers: 123	Passes: 51(41%)

Wine no 4	Country: Region: Wine:	Italy Piemonte Barolo Essenze 2008
Wine no 5	Country: Region: Wine:	Italy Piemonte Masseria dei Carmelitani Gavi 2012
Wine no 6	Country: Region: Wine:	Italy Piemonte Ascheri Dolcetto d'Alba, Vigna Nirane 2012

With questions 1 and 2, it is important to use the information within the tasting notes themselves to arrive at the conclusion that will provide the answer to the final part of the question. In this instance, identifying the grape varieties correctly would help to place the wines in the correct country. The key here was clearly the Barolo, a grape that is not really grown elsewhere in any significant volume. The relatively high levels of acidity in the two red wines should also have added weight to the likelihood of these wines being from northern Italy, and specifically from Piemonte.

However, the low pass rate showed that many candidates failed to make this connection.

June 2014: Wines with a common link in respect of origin	
Answers: 448	<i>Passes: 349 (78%)</i>

Wine no 4	Country: Region: Wine:	France Loire Chateau Fontaine-Audon Sancerre 2012
Wine no 5	Country: Region: Wine:	France Loire Domaine du Clos Naudin Vouvray Sec 2011
Wine no 6	Country: Region: Wine:	France Loire Chinon Les Gravières 2012

In the June exam, the common link was once again “country of origin” – in this case the Loire Valley and, like the January examination, the wines included both red and white samples.

This was a sound result with a good distribution of marks within the pass, merit and distinction grade bands. In fact, there were more merit grades than any other, so clearly the majority of candidates found this trio of wines relatively easy. Once again, identifying the grape varieties helps to put candidates on route to the right region, and Sauvignon Blanc is certainly one of the easier varieties to identify. Wines 5 and 6 posed more of a problem for the weaker candidates, with some mistaking the classic Chenin Blanc aromas on wine 5 as being “out of condition”.

Inevitably, some candidates failed to read the question carefully enough. It advised that all three wines shared a link in respect of “region of origin”, yet some of them gave the link as a country rather than the more precise “region”.

This examiner commented that candidates frequently gave more descriptors under “palate” than they did under “nose” when in fact far more marks are available for these under the “nose”. There was also a tendency to list generic fruits such as “stone fruit” rather than the more precise “peach” or “apricot”. At this level, examiners expect candidates to be far more accurate in their tasting notes.

## *Tasting Paper 2*

### *Question 3: Partly-Specified Wines*

As the focus of this question is to test the candidates’ ability to differentiate between the quality levels of the three wines, it is vital that the candidate fully understands how to demonstrate this skill. Unfortunately many are confused or not precise enough when it comes to the quality assessment. Comments such as “average quality” will not gain marks. This section of the paper carries a large number of marks and comments such as “good” or “AC level” are simply not sufficient. What the examiners are looking for here is a statement of the quality of the wine that is supported by well argued reasoning and analysis that demonstrates an understanding of the elements of a wine that contribute to its quality. The key to success with this part of the question is being able to recognise these characteristics. Once the premium wine has been identified, the other two should fall into place.

The format of this question also allows the Examination Panel to sometimes select wines, which, in a blind tasting, could be considered too much of a challenge. In some cases, we might consider a grape variety that may be less familiar to some candidates. Removing the pressure of needing to “identify” the wine, means that candidates can concentrate on writing accurate tasting notes describing the wine and focus on relating the evidence they extract in this process to an evaluation of the possible quality level. In reality, for many, quality assessment is a significant area of weakness so this paper is not as easy as it appears.

January 2014: Australian Chardonnay

Answers: 170

Passes: 109 (64%)

Wine no 7	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia South Australia Grant Burge Benchmark Chardonnay 2012
Wine no 8	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia South Eastern Australia Lindeman's Bin 65 Chardonnay 2012
Wine no 9	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia Piccadilly Valley Petaluma Chardonnay 2009

Once again, the pass rate in January was fairly unimpressive, with no distinction grades at all. This is not surprising since the assessment of quality is a key feature of this question and accounts for almost a third of the marks available. Since this is the part of the tasting note that generates the weakest responses in all tasting papers, it is inevitable that it will have an impact on the pass rate for this question.

Far too many candidates insist on identifying the grape variety and country of origin instead of concentrating on evaluating the structural components of the wine that contribute to quality (or lack of it). A worrying number of candidates completely misjudged the quality of the £5 bottle of wine, describing it as "very good" and some even felt it was "outstanding". Some candidates also failed to notice the oak on wine 8, which would be a costly omission if repeated in future exams where the introduction of aroma and flavour clusters would result in loss of marks if this was not spotted.

The following candidate provided sound assessments of quality for all three wines, showing good reasoning.

Wine 7

Detailed assessment of quality: (10 marks) Good quality wine with reasonable intensity, some limited complexity and a good overall balance between acidity and fruit. Decently typical of grape variety (Chardonnay) but lacking complexity, intensity, elegance and a longer finish for a better grade.

## Wine 8

Detailed assessment of quality: (10 marks) *Acceptable wine*  
Lacking complexity and definition of fruits, acceptable concentration of flavours if unobtrusive on the nose. Decent structure if somewhat flabby on the palate. Overall, lacking any varietal, regional characteristics. A very simple, uninspiring wine if correctly made.

## Wine 9

Detailed assessment of quality: (10 marks) *Very good wine showing*  
good complexity from various fruits, floral, development notes and winemaking (oak, etc), good concentration and structure supported by acidity and oak-given backbone. The length is good. Alcohol could be better integrated and overall elegance higher. Showing good typicity of an oaked Chardonnay.

These responses did not score full marks, but were very logical and are good examples of the approach that should be adopted.

<b>June 2014: Red Bordeaux</b>	
Answers: 450	Passes: 338 (75%)

Wine no 7	Country: Region: Wine:	France Bordeaux Cheateau Lamothe-Cissac 2008
Wine no 8	Country: Region: Wine:	France Bordeaux Chateau du Bois 2012
Wine no 9	Country: Region: Wine:	France Bordeaux Chateau Cos Labory 2010

This was a good pass rate. However, as with other tasting questions, it is in the final sections of the paper where the most marks are lost. Many candidates seem to have got to grips with the fact that the elements that contribute to quality are complexity, balance, intensity, length etc, but these are often just referred to without any analysis to back them up. Similarly, when it comes to assessing the readiness for drinking and ageing potential of wines, many candidates simply indicate whether the wine is ready to drink and give a number to indicate the number of years that it can be kept, rather than considering whether it will hold, improve over time or develop further to display a completely different taste/aroma profile.

The marker felt that candidates coped better with the high quality Chateau Cos Labory as opposed to the simple basic claret, the Chateau du Bois, with many of them scoring much better marks on the former than the latter. A number of candidates assessed the basic claret at a much higher level of quality than it merited with some even describing it as “outstanding”. This is a frequent error on the part of the weakest tasters that is documented time and again in these reports.

#### ***Question 4: Unspecified Wines***

It is a common misconception amongst candidates that if they identify the wines correctly, they will pass this paper. This is simply not the case. If you total up the marks available for the conclusion compared to marks awarded for the sections on the appearance, nose and palate of each wine, you will see that the tasting note itself generates the bulk of the marks, with very few marks for identifying the provenance of the wine and the grape variety. This means it is quite feasible for someone to write accurate tasting notes, yet not identify the wines and still pass (sometimes even with a high grade), whilst another candidate can identify the provenance all three wines yet be graded “fail” because their tasting notes are inaccurate and/or brief. It is not enough to simply recognise what the wines are (anyone can do this if they taste a wine often enough). The candidate needs to be able to strip the wine down to its component parts, describe these accurately and make judgements based on this information. This is what professional tasting is all about. Without an extensive and accurate tasting note, the examiner has no way of knowing whether the correct identification was anything more than a lucky guess or the result of tasting something familiar – no tasting skills have actually been demonstrated. The answer lies in the accuracy of the tasting notes themselves and in the assessment of quality.

Candidates often fall prey to the common error of deciding what the wine is having smelt or tasted it. They then write a tasting note to match their conclusion, which in some instances may be incorrect. This is easy to do under examination conditions and is very tempting when you think you know what the wine is. However, it is always a bad move as the tasting note is invariably less accurate because the candidate tends to describe how they “expect” the wine to taste rather than how it actually does taste. It is vital to keep an open mind until the tasting note has been completed and reviewed, and only then to reach a conclusion as to what the wine might be.

**January 2014: Red and White wines**

Answers: 123

*Passes: 77 (63%)*

Wine no 10	Country: Region: Wine:	Spain Rias Baixas Fillaboa Albarino 2012
Wine no 11	Country: Region: Wine:	France Burgundy Morey-St-Denis 2009
Wine no 12	Country: Region: Wine:	France Loire Valley, Coteaux du Layon Chateau Pierre-Bise, Clos de La Soucherie 2001

Like all the January tasting papers, this was disappointing, with only 2 candidates achieving a distinction grade. The Coteaux du Layon was a challenge for most candidates with only two of them identifying this correctly. This did not necessarily matter since the examination panel had taken the view that they would also accept this as being identified as Tokaji Azu. This was because the amber colour and the obvious age on the wine made this a strong contender in terms of identification. However, this only helped a relatively small number of candidates since by far the most popular choice was Sauternes. Even less logical was the candidate who identified it as a Rutherglen Muscat, which of course is not on the syllabus for Unit 3. There were other worrying errors such as the candidate who identified it as Monbazillac made from Ugni Blanc.

The Rias Baixas was often confused with Torrontes and Viognier. It certainly had an aromatic quality to it, but this was not pronounced enough to realistically lead candidates to either of these varieties.

**June 2014: White wines**

Answers: 448

*Passes: 354 (79%)*

Wine no 10	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia Clare Valley Pauletts Polish Hill River Aged Release Riesling 2007
Wine no 11	Country: Region: Wine:	USA California Ferrari-Carano Chardonnay 2011

Wine no 12

Country:

Hungary

Region:

Tokaj

Wine:

Crown Estates Tokaji Aszu 5 Puttonyos 2007

Whilst a good proportion of candidates were able to identify these wines reasonably accurately there were a few instances where the candidate had written a sound tasting note but then settled on a country/region that was at odds with their observations, such as noting high alcohol on wine one and then identifying it as a Mosel Riesling. The conclusion should always support and corroborate the observations that have been made within the tasting note itself.

Once again, it was the assessment of quality that let many candidates down. Far too many of them simply list the elements that contribute to quality (e.g. balance, length, intensity, complexity etc) without explaining HOW they contribute to quality.

## *Theory Paper*

There is definitely a technique to answering questions in the Unit 3 theory paper and a few simple, common sense rules can help to maximise marks.

1. With a requirement to answer five questions in total in three hours, some candidates clearly do not pace themselves appropriately, producing three answers of reasonable length, then two that are skimpy or rushed, or in some cases only one more question is attempted. More practice at answering questions under “exam condition” is valuable practice. In the exam itself, candidates should allow themselves a maximum of 30 minutes to answer each question. This will leave them half an hour to spare. The best way to use this time is to read through the examination paper and decide which questions to attempt, spend around five minutes on an essay plan for each question, and use any time remaining to read through responses before submitting them for marking.
2. There is often very little evidence of candidates planning their responses. It is always a good idea to make a quick essay plan before starting to write. This ensures that the key points are covered in a logical way. Those who do not follow this advice often fail to address specifically the key words in the question. The five minutes spent jotting down key facts is never time wasted. This is often the best way of determining which questions are the best ones to attempt. A question that seems easy initially may be one that is difficult to come up with hard facts for. An essay plan is the best way to determine if this is the case.
3. When drafting questions for the Diploma examination, the Examination Panel takes great pains to ensure that the wording they choose leads candidates to the answer they require. This means that questions contain vital, key words that form the basis of the question and therefore, by default, the answer. It is a really good idea to underline these key words and use them as the basis for

the essay plan. This ensures that all aspects of the question are covered and the writer does not stray “off topic”.

4. Some candidates do not appear to read the question carefully enough. This is often a problem with “multi part” questions where the candidate may be asked to write about four or five topics from a list of six for example. Candidates who mistakenly answer all six sections are creating unnecessary work for themselves as the examiner will only mark the number of sections requested in the question and ignore any surplus.
5. A number of candidates simply write generally “around” the question, without actually answering it as set. Remember, questions are set with a purpose – none of them are phrased “write all you know about.....” Examiners work from a marking key or marks schedule that details the scope and detail required in an answer. They will not allocate marks for information that is not relevant to the question as set.

## January 2014

### Group A: Compulsory Question

<i>Describe the regions of Chablis and Baden under the following headings:</i>	
<i>a) Classification system</i>	
<i>b) Grape variety(ies) and styles of wine</i>	
<i>c) Climate, soil and topography</i>	
<i>Answers: 206</i>	<i>Passes: 116 (56%)</i>

There were three different variations on this question with candidates sitting in Europe writing about Chablis and Baden, those sitting in Asia writing about Chablis and Rheingau and those in the Americas writing about Alsace and Rheingau.

Responses on Baden tended to be weak, with many candidates simply resorting to generic facts about German wine production rather than focussing on those specific to this region which is actually very different to those further north. Whilst responses on the Rheingau tended to be better when writing about the fundamentals of soil, grape variety, topography etc, very few candidates remembered, or were even aware, that VDP wines needed to form part of any discussion of the classification system. In a similar vein, Petit Chablis was also largely ignored when discussing the classification system in Chablis.

### Group B: 4 questions to be answered from a choice of 6

*Discuss the various factors that account for the differences in quality, style and price of the red wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. (An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)*

Answers: 140

Passes: 59 (42%)

Every Unit 3 theory paper contains one question that must be answered in an essay format. These questions are usually more topical and discursive in nature and are therefore more suited to this form of response. They are also some of the more challenging questions, and therefore often generate poorer results, and this was no exception.

One of the reasons for the low pass rate was because too many candidates simply described the wines and the region without actually answering the question that had been set. Very few candidates actually discussed HOW and WHY various factors account for differences in the wines. It is not enough to simply state what the climate is, what type of soil is found, which grapes are grown etc. Candidates needed to discuss how the climate defines the style of wine, why wines produced from grapes grown on “galets” differ from those produced from grapes grown on other soil types.

Whilst the obvious factors such as climate, soil, topography and grape variety featured in most candidates’ responses, only good candidates took this question to encompass other aspects of production such as commercial factors like packaging, marketing strategies, type of producer etc. These were the candidates who covered the whole spectrum of the question, considering issues relating to quality and price rather than just wine style.

*Western Australia often boasts that it only makes 3% of the country’s wine but wins 30% of the awards. What are the reasons behind this success (40% weighting). Describe the leading styles of premium wine that have made Western Australia famous (60% weighting).*

Answers: 135

Passes: 37 (27%)

Despite being a popular question, this was extremely poorly answered with only 27% of candidates achieving a pass grade. There were certainly a number of candidates who addressed this question well, but they were clearly in the minority with only 2 being graded as distinction and only 9 as merit.

The very large failure rate, which was split equally between the fail and lower fail (unclassified) grade, was generally due to basic ignorance of the region. There were a worrying number of candidates who were under the impression that key regions such as Hunter Valley, Barossa Valley, Eden Valley, McLaren Vale and Coonawarra

are in Western Australia. Far too many were unaware of the climate in this region or were able to debate what role it plays in contributing to wine quality, with most of them simply describing it incorrectly as "Mediterranean". Responses were also simplistic when it came to describing the leading styles of premium wine, with very few thinking beyond generic Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.

The following script achieved a merit grade. It writes extensively on the various styles of wine produced but is less good at explaining why these wines have achieved such a good reputation.

<u>Introduction</u>
Western Australia is famed for producing a tiny percentage (3%) of Australia's wines, yet collects a stunningly disproportionate percentage of awards in Australia (and elsewhere). The reasons for this relate to the location of the best sites, their climate, the grapes grown, the effort in the vineyard and the winery, the high quality of the styles produced and the leading wineries in that region. Let me discuss each of these in turn.
<u>Location and climate</u>
Western Australia is a vast area of land, but all of the high quality vineyards in it are south of Perth, principally in the Margaret River and Great Southern regions. The vineyards are close to the coast (the Indian Ocean) and the climate is distinctly Mediterranean, which means rainfall in winter as well as obvious maritime influence which makes up for the low latitudes (~35°S) of these regions. This enables high quality grapes to be grown almost year-in, year-out with little concern with disease and rot issues due to the Mediterranean climate (e.g. the Margaret River avoided the issues associated with high rainfall in the 2011 vintage in "south eastern" Australia).
It thus has a climate conducive to the growing of high quality grapes
<u>Grapes grown</u>
The Margaret River region, which is the largest in Western Australia, has an affinity with the cabernet sauvignon and chardonnay grapes. Its best summation statistics are remarkably similar to the maritime climes of Bordeaux, and it is able to produce excellent styles of chardonnay that

nonetheless have grace and power. Its capacity to be able to grow high quality international variety grapes such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay in particular, in a climate suited to those grapes has given it a natural advantage over many other regions with those grapes such as the Barossa Valley/Mclaren Vale (too hot for both varieties) and southern Victoria (more climatically variable and generally too cold for Cabernet Sauvignon with grand exceptions eg hot years in the Yarra Valley), and certainly over the Riverland/Riverina regions which produce statistically the large bulk of Australian wine.

Vineyards and winery / table wines

serious  
Western Australia (or more specifically the Margaret River) largely came into the existence in the 1970s through pioneers such as Moss Wood, Cullen and Vasse Felix. The best sites were able to be identified using the latest analysis and not insubstantial amounts of money were invested to produce benchmark ~~by~~ premium wines to rival the greatest of Bordeaux, Napa and Coonawarra. Then considerable care in the vineyard and ~~off~~ modern clean winemaking has led to success. More recently, avant-garde producers such as Cullen have moved to biodynamic viticulture, with positive results for the super premium wine, such as the Cullen Diana Madeline.

Leading styles of premium wine

The principal styles of premium wine that have enabled Western Australia to distinguish itself are made from Bordeaux varieties (although principally 100% Cabernet Sauvignon wines are the "premium" label cl. blends), Chardonnay, and more recently Riesling and even Pinot Noir further south towards Albany/Kamberton. Let me discuss each of these.

The first style to achieve fame is for Cabernet Sauvignon

based wines. The style of wine is typically a deep intensity ruby in colour moving to garnet with age, with medium intensity aromatics of blackcurrant, dark cherry, cedar and sometimes bay leaf. The palate exhibits long length, a full body, high alcohol and flavours of blackcurrant and cedar.

~~Best~~ Leading producers of the super premium price point include Moss Wood (who now have various high quality single vineyard bottlings eg. Ribonvale), Cullen (the Diana Madalaine being their super premium label and is biodynamically grown), the Vasse Felix "Heyterbury", Cape Mentelle (owned by LVMH) and Woodlands, among others.

The style rivals the grandest wines of left bank Bordeaux, the Napa Valley and Coonawarra, often year-in, year-out, at least judging by the run of stellar vintages there since 2007.

The second style to achieve great fame is chardonnay. The style here is typically medium intensity aromatics of lemon, ripe nectarine and ripe peach. The palate has long length and depth, with similar flavours, medium(+) acid and sometimes a saline/mineral character. Although frequently 14½ abv bottlings, wines from ultra premium chardonnay producers such as Leeuwin Estate ("Art Series" being the grand vin) and Piero from the Margaret River are routinely superlative.

Other premium styles (non premium styles are produced by Houghton (Accolade ex Constellation) in hot Perth) are from the cooler Great Southern GI where experiments with riesling (typically high acid, dry and lean) and pinot noir (sometimes resembling savoury/plush Martinborough styles) from producers such as Picardy (ex Moss Wood).

Now that, it is quite possible WA will retain its premium status for some time yet. Its greatest risk is overplanting and overcropping its producers attempt to "cash in" on the region's reputation, such as occurred to Coonawarra's detriment. There appears little evidence however that this is affecting the leading styles of premium wine described above.

*Describe the differences in wine production between Oregon and Washington with reference to the following factors:*

- a) Geography and climate (40% weighting)*
- b) Soils (10% weighting)*
- c) Grape varieties (30% weighting)*
- d) Industry structure (20% weighting)*

*Answers: 133*

*Passes: 75 (56%)*

This was a popular question, answered by 65% of candidates. The quality of results ranged from very good (quite possibly candidates sitting their examination in North America) to extremely poor with the lowest mark only being only 5%.

The section on soils appeared to be the result of largely guesswork for many candidates and many struggled to write anything meaningful under the heading “industry structure”, simply naming key AVAs. This was not what was required here. The examination panel had selected this particular topic to evaluate whether or not candidates were commercially aware of the differences between these two regions with one managing to maintain a “farmhouse”, estate grown, artisanal and almost “blue collar” feel whilst the other appears more “agro-industrial” with over three times the vineyard acreage.

*Describe light wine production in:*

- a) Douro*
- b) Vinho Verde*
- c) Alentejo*

*Answers: 107*

*Passes: 52 (48%)*

Like many of the questions on the January exam, this also generated poor results with marks varying wildly from a low of 2% to a high of 81%.

This was actually a very straight forward question, provided the candidate had enough sound knowledge of all three regions. Responses were generally reasonably good on the Douro and Vinho Verde but very few knew much about Alentejo, which was omitted entirely by some with many others clearly resorting to guesswork.

Writing knowledgeably about the basics of climate, soil, topography, viticulture and vinification would have been enough to secure a pass grade here. Candidates who also brought a commercial slant to their response tended to achieve higher marks.

The following candidate achieved a high grade with very sound answers in all three sections.

<sup>Portuguese</sup>  
a) Douro is the region which runs along the river of the same name, ~~to~~ from Oporto to the Spanish border <sup>in</sup> the East. The DOC is the same as for Port, ~~for~~ Port-like wine production, and it sits ~~with~~ <sup>within</sup> the Vinho Regional Dourense PDO. Traditionally, ~~and~~ <sup>light</sup> wines of the Douro were dependent and subsidiary to the needs of the Port industry - <sup>light</sup> wines were made from grapes surplus to the Beneficio and little attention was given to them in their own right. Grapes were (and still are) largely the same as for Port: Touriga Nacional is the highest quality (although only accounting for around 2% of national plantings). Tinta Roriz (Tempranillo) is around 10% and Tinta Amarela about the same. These grapes are all thick-skinned and produce deep coloured wines with ~~more~~ high acid (particularly Touriga Nacional) <sup>even in hot conditions</sup>. The climate is hot and dry - more so as you move from Pinhão in the West up to the ~~to~~ Douro Superior near the border, where rainfall drops from 1,200mm near the coast to just 400mm. ~~This provides~~ <sup>There is</sup> ample sun and heat to ripen black grapes, and tannins are consequently ripe and soft, although lesser wines may suffer from lack of balancing acid. ~~Soils are~~ Soils are schistous over granite bedrock, and ~~and~~ <sup>light</sup> wines may still be made from lesser ~~and~~ sites further back from the valley in the D, E or F categories.

Vinification is moving away from the highly extractive techniques used in the past, and is more likely to be temperature controlled, stainless steel, with fewer pumpovers and less ~~and~~ <sup>reduction</sup> maceration time.

## Port

Many producers, including Quinta do Costa, are now prioritising their light wine production, but Douro wines will always be deep coloured, high tannin, full-bodied blackbusters - the better wines with enough acid to age well.

## DOC

- b) Vinho Verde is in the far north of Portugal in the Minho region. It has the same geographical boundaries as Vinho Regional Minho. ~~There is~~ The climate here is strongly maritime, with annual rainfall of 2,500mm. Consequently, rot is a huge problem, so vineyards were traditionally trained high to allow air circulation (and also allow additional crops to be planted underneath). Loureiro is the main grape, and it has thick skins, which helps protect against fungal disease in this wet, humid climate. Alvarinho is only permitted in the Monção sub-zone but also has thick skins (and is used for this reason). Soils are granite. Yields can be too high for quality wine production - as much as 100hl/ha<sup>or more</sup> - which can give the wines a dilute, ~~and~~ blond character, but the best are high acid, low alcohol and extremely refreshing. In fact, Vinho Verde is one of a few regions with a maximum alcohol level (11.5%), although ~~Monção~~ Monção is allowed to exceed this. The grapes are not naturally high acid - they are harvested early so may also have a slightly "green", under-ripe quality. The wines are vinified to minimise oxidation in stainless steel at low temperatures, protected by blankets of CO<sub>2</sub> (dry ice). <sup>Malic acid fermentation is blocked.</sup> They are bottled early - originally this left some pétillance from dissolved CO<sub>2</sub> left over from fermentation but nowadays this is likely to be

(cont) .. added. The 'Verde' was sometimes thought to refer to the wines' green tint, but actually means "young" - these wines are not for ageing.

Producers tend to have very small holdings here, so it is difficult to invest in technology to improve quality <sup>CO-ops are therefore more important.</sup>

c) Alentejo is the large region to the south and east of Portugal, largely one great plain. Climate is hot and dry and irrigation is essential. Soils are granite in the north and schist in the south. Traditionally this was bulk wine production territory, and the area is still dominated by Portugal's number one white variety: Fernão Pires (also known here as "Maria Gomes"). This holds acid even in hot ~~the~~ conditions but ~~does~~ does not produce high quality wines. Fernão Pires is produced in all styles - from sparkling to late harvest sweet wines. Tempranillo is called "Aragonez" here and is the key red variety, as well as Castellão (Tinta <sup>Amarela</sup> ~~Amarela~~), but Boga ~~Amarela~~ is Portugal's ~~no~~ number one red grape and produces high tannin, high alcohol, full bodied wines, which can have an <sup>unpleasant</sup> astringent quality, especially if harvested <sup>too</sup> early.

Alentejo is also ~~home~~ <sup>home</sup> to an increasing quantity of international varieties - Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Chardonnay. Producers tend to be much more large-scale here, holdings ~~are~~ are much bigger than further north, and so producers can invest in modern equipment and can afford to replant with more fashionable varieties. However, while the north has the climate without the consolidated industry ~~is~~ with the resources to make

the most of it, the south ~~has~~ simply does not have the natural conditions to produce high ~~or~~ quality wines.

*Discuss the diversity of still wines produced in Anjou Saumur with reference to:*

- a) Grape varieties (30% weighting)*
- b) Vineyard factors (40% weighting)*
- c) Winemaking (30% weighting)*

*Answers: 138*

*Passes: 27 (20%)*

This was a reasonably popular question chosen by 67% of candidates and therefore answered by a larger percentage of weaker candidates with dramatic results in terms of the pass rate. Only one candidate achieved a distinction grade and only four were graded as merit. There were more fail (unclassified) level scripts than any other grade so clearly a large number of those attempting this question, did so out of desperation rather than choice.

Many of them lost marks because they confused the areas of Anjou-Saumur and Touraine and wrote about the wrong wines as a result. Many also paid no attention to the question weighting, for example, simply listing grape varieties with no further discussion despite the 30% weighting of this section. There were some appalling inaccuracies in terms of grape varieties with these listed on occasion as “Anjou Blanc”, Cinsault, Malbec, Ugni Blanc, Marsanne, Riesling and Viognier. Inevitably, some candidates wrote about sparkling wines and gained no credit for this information since these are not on the syllabus for Unit 3. Others failed to discuss all the relevant (still) wine styles with a significant number writing nothing on sweet wines or rosé.

The following script was submitted by one of the few candidates achieving high marks. The response is extensive and includes some good detail.

Anjou Saumur produces range of different wines throughout its area thanks climate, geology, varieties, viticulture and unification.

- a) The main grape of this area is Chenin blanc, also known as Pineau de la Loire. This is France's answer to Riesling. The variety ripens late and ripens unevenly. Because of this, many sweet wines are made as well as sparkling in cooler years. The grape is high in acid and will retain this acid even when over ripe. The grape is prone to coulure and chlorosis, so choosing the right rootstock is crucial. This is a highly underrated grape and is capable of great ageing potential. The main red grape is the underrated Cabernet Franc. This grape has medium acid and tannins and produces supple wines that are medium alcohol, floral and fresh. Canopy management and de-budding/de-stemming are crucial to ensure ripeness. Even at full ripeness there is a green smell that is very pleasant, however, if under ripe, this can be appealing. Other grapes used for red are Cabernet Sauvignon, Gamay and Grolleau. Grolleau is probably the most planted variety and is slowly being replaced by Cabernet Franc. Cab Franc ripens early, so autumn rains are not an issue.

- b/c) On the north bank of the Loire we have the Savennières AOC. This produces bone dry, mineral driven complex wines from Chenin only. The climate in Anjou is maritime, with mild winters and a warm growing season. As this is inland, there is less rainfall. *over*

## Question 6

than Muscadet. Soils in Anjou are rich in ~~potash~~ Tuffeau, a clay limestone mixture that produces wine of finesse and minerality. In Savennières, there is a bluish tinted soil of limestone and sandstone that produces powerful wines. The vines are grown on steep slopes of the Loire, facing south. They get ripe from the soil and the Loire reflecting heat. Cool nights ensure good acid. Everything here is done by hand and the soils are not very fertile. With good exposure and air circulation, botrytis rarely occurs here. Wines from here reach alcohols of 14-15%, are bone dry and have great minerality and complexity. Top producers will oak age their wines and they develop into smoke, toast and honey with age. Two separate AOCs exist within Savennières: Cotee de Serrant (Nicolas Joly) and Roche aux Moines. Joly is big into bio-dynamics and has influenced many. Hand harvesting is normal.

Moving down the tributaries, (south) of the Loire, we have Coteau du Layon, which is responsible for sweet wine production. Just like Sauternes, bodies of water collide, creating mist, humidity and noble rot. Grapes from here can be harvested all the way into November, making them prey for hail and autumn rains. The next famous area is Quarts de Chaume, grown in an amphitheatre on tuffeau soils. Most every year there is noble rot and grapes are hand harvested in multiple passes of the vineyard as botrytis will spread unevenly. Despite sugar levels, the wines have high acid, complex marmalade flavours and will age for many years. Production is small and prices are high. Bonnezeaux is another area famous for sweet Chenin. The soils are less compact and the area is more exposed so it has not much enjoyed the same fame as Quarts de Chaume. However, botrytis or rot, late harvest Chenin is still delicious.

In and around Saumur, dry crisp good value wines from Chenin blanc are made. Nowhere near as ripe or complex as Sauternes, the wines are still delicious. Ripe fruits, high acid, limited oak usage makes great wines. They are also a good value. This is also where a lot of Chenin is used for Saumur Mousseux. The lands are flat, mechanization is used, soils are alluvial.

Around the beautiful town of Champigny is where Cabernet Franc is king. The soils here are high in limestone and infected much chenin, paving the way for this red grape. The best vineyards are less fertile tuffeau on south facing slopes outside of the town. It is here where Thierry Germain and Clos Rougeard make textbook examples of how incredible fully ripe Cabernet Franc can be. The wines are floral, ~~fragrant~~ fragrant, juicy ripe fruit with medium acid/tannin. Hand harvesting is the norm on the slopes and oak (used) is employed for top cuvées. Thierry does a Franc de Pied (pre-phylloxera) from 0.2 ha and it is sublime. Top bottlings of Clos Rougeard take years to mature. Even the top bottlings pale in comparison (for Chenin too) to top producers from Burgundy and Bordeaux. The flatter lands have more alluvial soil and mechanization is used to produce wines that are supple and good value.

Rose is produced throughout the area. It is broken down into 3 different types of rose.

→ over

Question 6

Cabernet d'Anjou - made from Cabernet and Cabernet Franc and is medium sweet with high acids. Can take many years in the bottle to mature. This is the best rose

Rose d'Anjou - must contain 30% Cabernet, <sup>asymmetrical</sup> ~~asymmetrical~~ by Cab Franc and Gamay and Grolleau. Less sweet than Cabernet d'Anjou and is a step down in quality.

Rose de Loire - made from within Saumur and Touraine. Uses mostly Gamay mixed with Grolleau, Basic wines, but tasty and good value.

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

- a) Aglianico b) Albarino c) Assyrtiko d) Blaufrankisch e) Dolcetto  
f) Dornfelder g) Gruner Veltliner h) Harslevelu i) Mencia j) Scheurebe k) Verdejo

Answers: 145

Passes: 59 (41%)

These “paragraph style” questions are always popular and this was no exception, answered by 70% of candidates. Like other questions on the January paper, marks ranged widely from 15% to 78% with only a couple of distinction grades.

There was no indication on the examination paper that these were all grape varieties and it was clear that a number of candidates knew nothing about some of the sections they answered. As a result, there were a number of notable errors such as describing Mencia as a wine region and Verdejo as an “age classification”. Many candidates also wrote too much about the method of production for Tokaji Aszu rather than concentrating on the characteristics of the Harslevelu grape itself.

June 2013

**Group A: Compulsory Question**

*Explain how grape growing and winemaking determine the style of the following wines:*

*Version 1: Beaujolais Nouveau / Old Vine Barossa Valley Shiraz*

*Version 2: Beaujolais Nouveau / Barolo DOCG*

*Version 3: Inexpensive red Côtes du Rhône / Barolo DOCG*

*Answers: 496*

*Passes: 260 (52%)*

Once again, there were three different variations of this question, with each pair of wines featuring a light red made by semi or full carbonic maceration and a robust red that will have spent time in oak. This allowed for a complete contrast in terms of production both from a viticultural and vinification point of view.

In most instances, it was the robust red wine that generated the best responses. Candidates were able to describe traditional vinification methods and explain what these would contribute to the finished wine. However, descriptions of the mechanics of semi or full carbonic maceration were extremely poor in a surprisingly large number of instances. Even where descriptions of the process were better, there was little in the way of discussion of how this determines wine style. In the case of the Côtes du Rhône, a considerable number of candidates failed to appreciate the significance of the words “inexpensive”. This led them to describe the production of a “traditional” style Côtes du Rhône with maceration and oak ageing rather than one that was likely to have been produced in stainless steel or by semi carbonic maceration.

As with previous compulsory questions where the focus is on grape growing and winemaking, scripts showed a worrying lack of basic knowledge on these subjects. This may in part be due to the fact that most candidates sit the examination for Unit 2 (wine production) long before the Unit 3 examination. However, they need to remember that grape growing and wine making are also fundamental elements of the syllabus for Unit 3, and in this instance, knowledge needs to be region specific rather than generic as in Unit 2. Results for this and many other questions on the Unit 3 theory paper show that candidates would do well to build some form of revision for Unit 2 into their study plan for this examination.

**Group B: 4 questions to be answered from a choice of 6**

*Discuss the renaissance of quality red wine production in Tuscany over the last 60 years. (An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)*

*Answers: 374*

*Passes: 220 (59%)*

This was a good pass rate for the compulsory essay question, but the majority of those passing did so with a mark in the 55% - 59% range rather than with a higher grade.

Most candidates submitted their response in the form of continuous text rather than bullet point or short note form, but very few put any real thought into the introduction or conclusion and many simply omitted them.

Those who failed usually ignored the detail in the question, just writing in general terms about Tuscany rather than charting the renaissance in this region over the last 60 years. The Examination Panel has specified this particular time-frame for a purpose, yet far too many candidates simply ignored this. The most logical approach would have been a chronological one – to start discussions at the beginning of the 60 year time span and identify key developments up to the present day. Good candidates took their starting point as the “post war period”, largely the 1950’s and 1960’s and outlined the status quo at this time that would then set the scene for the renaissance that followed. The next key timeline was the start of the revival which really kick started in the 1960’s and 1970’s with the emergence of the Super Tuscans. It seemed that the majority of candidates covered this movement to some extent, but some simply mentioned it, giving no examples of actual wines and no indication of exactly when these wine appeared on the scene. At the other end of the scale were the candidates who wrote almost solely about these wines to the exclusion of everything else that was relevant in terms of answering this question. Neither approach was ideal. The success of these Super Tuscan wines in the 1970’s was in turn followed by the rise of Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, leading finally to more recent developments in the 1980’s onwards, largely within the Chianti DOC and all of these needed to be discussed to answer this question well.

Far too many essays contained very broad statements about “modern winemaking techniques” without any discussion of what these actually entail. As a result, many essays lacked depth, detail and discussion and fell short of the level required for a pass grade.

*Describe the AOC system of the vineyards of the Cote d'Or (70% weighting). Outline the advantages and disadvantages of this system for the consumer (30% weighting).*

*Answers: 434*

*Passes: 248 (57%)*

This was a rather disappointing result for such a mainstream question. There were two key problems that led to low marks:

- Very few candidates extended the scope of their description of the AC system beyond Village wines, Premier Cru and Grand Cru. These are certainly the key wines of the Côte d'Or, but the regional wines should also have formed part of any discussion of the AC system of this area.
- A number of candidates wrote in very general terms about advantages and disadvantages of Côte d'Or wines rather than advantages / disadvantages of the AOC system itself.

*Discuss the water shortages in South East Australia, Spain and Argentina (40% weighting). How are wine producers dealing with the challenges created? (60% weighting)*

*Answers: 227*

*Passes: 97 (43%)*

In the majority of cases this question was answered badly. Very few candidates actually differentiated at all between the two specific parts of the question, simply writing in general terms about measures to combat water shortage in each region. In many instances, this resulted in little more than a description of the climate and accounts of different methods of irrigation. There was certainly more to this question than simply the issue of irrigation.

The best candidates understood that the purpose of the first part of the question was to establish what the status quo is in each region, i.e. Why do they have a water shortage? How has this manifested itself in recent years? What natural features exacerbate the problem, e.g. soil, temperatures, vine density etc?

This then set the scene for the second part of the question where they explained what these three regions are doing to address the problem. Whilst there are plenty of general tactics employed in all three regions such as use of irrigation, drought resistant rootstocks, low density planting, removal of cover crops which compete for water, use of mulch to conserve moisture, canopy and yield management, use of regulated deficit irrigation (RDI) and partial root zone drying (PRD), there was also plenty to say about each region in isolation. For example, examiners were certainly expecting candidates to discuss the issue the control and monitoring of water use in Australia through the issue of WULs (water use licence) and "Water Share" which is

allocated and monitored by regional authorities through an “allocation bank account” which produces an “annual use limit”.

The examiner commented that many candidates seemed to be unaware of the fact that irrigation is now permitted in Spain, but even those who did mention irrigation often said little more than that drip irrigation was the preferred method. Better candidates gave specific examples of what some producers are doing such as Raimat with their automatic drip irrigation system that starts automatically when temperatures exceed 35°C or they wrote about the huge underground aquifers to be found in La Mancha for irrigation purposes.

In the case of Argentina, responses tended to be very basic, largely just referring to flood and drip irrigation. The best candidates discussed the pros and cons of these, such as the impact they can have on nematode populations and they also discussed the issue of water rights and the need for new vineyards to build water reservoirs to store water.

On the whole, responses were largely just too simplistic for this level of qualification.

<i>Give an overview of the evolution of red wine production in New Zealand over the last fifty years (30% weighting). Describe today's red wine sector in New Zealand, with particular reference to the preferred grape varieties and the regions where they are grown (70% weighting)</i>	
<i>Answers: 393</i>	<i>Passes: 146 (37%)</i>

This was an extremely popular question answered by 70% of candidates, but as the low pass rate shows, very few of them dealt with the topic well.

In most instances where a fail grade was awarded, it was the first part of the question that was to blame with very few candidates answering this correctly. Most wrote in generic terms about the evolution of wine production in NZ rather than focussing on red wine. Comments were therefore too broad, such as reference to use of stainless steel, canopy management, increased marketing etc. Very few took much (if any) notice of the fifty year time span indicated in the question, making no attempt to date any of the developments they did mention.

The second part of the question was better on the whole, but still often weak in terms of specific details on the various regions. The majority of candidates referred to Central Otago Pinot Noir and Hawkes Bay Bordeaux blends but the detail relating to soil, producers, styles etc was often missing or inaccurate and there was very little discussion of other regions or grape varieties.

With reference to Alsace, write about FIVE of the following:

- a) Alsace Grand Cru b) Climate c) Gewurztraminer d) Hugel e) Muscat f) Pinot Gris  
g) Pinot Noir h) Rhine Rift Valley i) Selection de Grains Nobles j) soils  
k) Trimbach l) Vendange Tardive

(Each section carries equal weighting)

Answers: 406

Passes: 79 (19%)

Once again, it would appear that this question was answered by the weakest candidates sitting the examination in June. Of those attempting this question, 40% of them were awarded a fail (unclassified) grade.

Reasons for failure were due to brevity, vagueness, and in far too many cases, straight-forward inaccuracy. There was a surprisingly high incidence of confusion between SGN and VT although these two topics never appeared together on the same paper since the various sub-sections of this question varied depending on the location of the examination. The sections on producers (Hugel and Trimbach) were inevitably vague and superficial, with Hugel described by one candidate as a “*grape variety*” and by another as an abbreviation of the word “*Hugelland*” which they described as an area near Neusiedlersee where Alsace bulk wine is produced.

In spite of the large number of truly atrocious scripts, there were also some very good ones such as the following which gives an excellent “textbook” response on Hugel and is very sound elsewhere as well.

a) Unlike Burgundy, Alsace does not have a long history of classified vineyard sites and its wines have always been variably labelled (unusually for France). The AOC system was introduced in Alsace in 1962 and then in 1983 a Grand Cru appellation was introduced for the best sites in the region. The Alsace region has a rich mosaic of soil types, slopes & aspects and these were used to determine which sites were awarded Grand Cru status.

There are currently 51 Grand Cru vineyards in the region. They each have a council which sets the rules for the vineyard. (Most vineyards are subdivided into multiple climats.) Grand Cru vineyards can only grow one of the four "noble" varieties - Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris and Muscat. Each vineyard will have to grow a single, specified variety and there are also controls on yields that are much lower than for AOC vineyards.

Some Grand Cru vineyards have negotiated exceptions to some of the rules - Zotzenberg can grow Sylvaner and Altenberg is permitted blends (thanks to the producer, Deiss).

Some producers are opposed to the system which they argue is not a guarantee of quality. Trimbach, for example, releases their famous Clos St Hune ~~as~~ Riesling which is part of the Rosacker Grand Cru, without using the Grand Cru labelling. Others opt out of the system to grow different varieties or higher yields.

b) Hugel is a famous wine producer and negociant in Alsace based in Riquewihr.

The family firm was established in 1639 and is still run by family today - Etienne is marketing & Marc, the winemaker.

They have 26ha of vineyards around Riquewihr, ~~and~~ including some Grand Cru vineyards, which they use for their Tradition and Jubilee ranges, the latter being all Grand Cru and very highly regarded.

Hugel also buys in grapes from local producers for their entry level, Classic, range.

The firm has campaigned against the Grand Cru system as they argue it does not guarantee quality. They were very active in reestablishing the tradition of vendange tardive and selection de grains nobles wines and helped write the regulations.

Hugel exports 90% of its wines to over 100 countries. They are very active with social media and even use QR codes on their bottles.

c) Muscat is one of the four noble grape varieties in Alsace, so can be used for Grand Cru wines and also for vendange tardive and selection de grains nobles wines.

There are only very small plantings in Alsace - around 3% - because it is an unreliable variety, prone to coulure + low yielding. Muscat blanc à petits grains is planted, as is the slightly more reliable, but less highly regarded, Muscat Ottonel.

Alsace wines made from Muscat have the typical grapey aroma and are very rich, full bodied and high alcohol. Because plantings are so small, they are rarely found as vendange tardive (late harvest, equivalent to Auslese) and selection de grains nobles (botrytis)

wines.

Blended wines in Alsace, called Edelweiser or Gentil, will sometimes include a small percentage of Muscat in the blend for aroma.

- e) Alsace is within the Rhine Rift Valley. The Vosges mountains to the west and the Black Forest Mountains in Germany to the east were once a single mountain range. Over time, the Rhine river carved a way through the mountains and the land on each side of the river collapsed <sup>forming</sup> the valley.

The geology of the Rhine Rift Valley is fundamental to the existence of the Alsace region. The rift created different slopes and aspects (E + SE facing) perfect for grape growing. And the collapse of the land to each side of the river created a mosaic of different soil types. In Alsace you will find granite, schist, volcanic, limestone, sandstone, marl & clay!

Over time the vinegrowers of the region have come to learn that different grape varieties grow best on different soil types. Riesling is good on granite (giving it a mineral flavour). Pinot Gris grows well on volcanic soils (giving it a smoky aroma). Gewurztraminer is better suited to the cool damp clays. And Muscat prefers sand and sandstone.

So it can be seen that the Rhine Rift Valley is a key factor in the styles of vinified wine produced in Alsace.

## ("SGN")

f) Selection de Grains Nobles is a botrytis wine from the Alsace region, the equivalent to a German Trockenbeerenauslese. It is a rich, full bodied, sweet wine with characteristic botrytis flavors of honey + marmalade.

Only four 'noble' varieties can be used to make SGN wines - Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris and Muscat. It can be made from both AOC and Grand Cru vineyards.

There are minimum must weight and potential alcohol requirements for the grapes (16.4% for Riesling and Gewurztraminer; 18.3% for Pinot Gris + Muscat). A producer wishing to make an SGN will notify his local viticole council who will set the picking date and assess the must weight of the grapes.

SGN relies on noble rot - this is a rot which attacks ripe grapes, causing them to dehydrate + raisin. This concentrates the grape sugars, flavors + acids + adds a characteristic flavor to the wine. SGN wines are always sweet.

The long autumns of Alsace are ideal for late harvested grapes, but noble rot does not occur every year so SGN wines are not made every year.

The creation of the SGN appellation was championed by the Hugel family, who helped draft the rules and also regularly produce SGN wines.

SGN wines are expensive to produce and expensive to buy but in high demand both within France + in the export markets, particularly China.

*With reference to the wines shown below (Mosel Riesling Eiswein / Smaragd Grüner Veltliner), write about the following:*

- a) Climate*
- b) Soil and topography*
- c) Grape variety*
- d) Harvesting*
- e) Winemaking*

*(Each section carries equal weighting)*

*Answers: 404*

*Passes: 172 (43%)*

Results for this question were also very poor with no distinction grades at all.

The two wines were a Mosel Riesling Eiswein and a Smaragd Gruner Veltliner. Not surprisingly, it was this latter wine that generated the weaker responses, with many candidates clearly having no idea what a Smaragd wine is. In most instances, no reference was made to this at all whilst the best candidates not only explained what it is but also explained how it determines winemaking decisions etc. At the other end of the scale, some candidates described it incorrectly as a region, a red wine or, most frequently, a botrytised sweet wine. This inevitably meant that other sections of the question relating to this wine were also largely incorrect.

Although responses on the Eiswein tended to be better, even here there was plenty of scope for improvement in the vast majority of candidate scripts. Responses were often superficial with insufficient detail to differentiate between the two wines, for example writing the same response for both in terms of soil and winemaking despite clear differences actually being the case.

## Unit 4, Spirits of the World

The examination for Units 4, 5 and 6 requires good all round knowledge on the part of the candidate for them to do really well, as the tasting and theory paper carries equal weighting. However, the paragraph format of the theory question still allows those who give good responses in two sections (but may be weak in a third) to pass the paper as a whole, providing their tasting paper achieves high marks.

The approach to this question is no different to that for paragraph questions in the Unit 3 examination, you should aim to get as many facts down as possible. Nevertheless, it is still important to make sure that what is written relates specifically to the question as set. For example, if asked about the production of a particular style of spirit, there is no point describing at length the basic principles of distillation that apply to any style of spirit. This is something examiners comment on time and again.

In terms of the tasting question, there is evidence to suggest that some candidates do not add water to their samples when assessing them. This is foolish, as they inevitably “blast” their taste buds to the point that they are unable to assess the samples properly.

The questions and individual pass rates for each of the three examination dates were as follows:

### November 2013

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 391</i>	<i>Passes: 254 (65%)</i>

Spirit no 1	Country:	France
	Spirit:	Poire Williams
	Producer:	G Miclo
Spirit no 2	Country:	Scotland
	Spirit:	Cutty Sark Blended Scotch Whiskey
	Producer:	Cutty Sark
Spirit no 3	Country:	France
	Spirit:	Castarede VSOP Bas Armagnac
	Producer:	Castarede

This trio of spirits generated a sound set of results, with a good distribution of marks across the pass and merit grades but a relatively small number of distinctions.

The Poire Williams was least well answered with many candidates failing to detect the orchard fruit, instead assuming it to be a Tequila. There were also the usual problems that led to low marks such as:

- Not using the correct terminology as defined in the Spirits SAT
- Not commenting on all aspects in the SAT
- Vagueness with comments such as “good finish”, “heady alcohol”, excellent length”

Some candidates were thrown by the concluding section of each tasting note which asked candidates to describe how the raw material is processed prior to distillation. Some candidates completely ignored the wording on the paper and simply identified the spirit, giving an indication of the retail price or assessing it from a quality perspective. This was a waste of their time and earned them no marks. Among those who did understand what was required here, some of them “over engineered” their response for a section worth 5 marks - one candidate even writing over 100 words. An example of the kind of response that would have earned all 5 marks in the case of sample 3 would have been as follows:

*“The grapes, mainly Ugni Blanc, Baco 22A, Colombard and Folle Blanche, are harvested in October and immediately pressed in basket or pneumatic presses. Chaptalisation and addition of sulphur are not permitted but yeast may be added. The juice is fermented under controlled temperature for ten to fifteen days resulting in an acidic, low alcohol wine.”*

Question 2 – In relation to spirits, write about each of the following:	
a) Bitters b) Production of London Dry Gin OR Maturation of Whisk(e)y c) Brandy de Jerez OR Maturation of Whisk(e)y	
Answers: 388	Passes: 155 (40%)

This was an extremely poor pass rate, although there were clearly a number of candidates with very good knowledge of all three subjects.

The question topics differed in various examination locations, but all candidates were required to answer the section on “Bitters”. This was left completely blank by a number of candidates who clearly had not revised this part of the syllabus and was clearly the reason for the low pass rate. The marker also commented that too many candidates fail to grasp the basic concepts of distillation – something that is fundamental to success in this unit of the WSET Diploma.

The following candidate gave good responses in all three sections that they answered and gained high marks as a result:

## a) Bitters.

There are three main categories of bitters. All are made with highly rectified spirit with the main botanical ingredients macerated, percolated or distilled with or through the HCS. The three categories are: aperitifs, digestifs and essences.

Among aperitif bitters, the most famous are probably the Italian pair of Campari and Aperol. In Campari, the main bittering agents are bitter orange, rhubarb and quinine. Aperol is a slightly less complex and more herbal ~~than~~ version of Campari. Both Campari & Aperol are drunk ~~to~~ long before a meal as a palate sharpener. Aperol's bright red colour has made it a favourite of bar-tenders. The French equivalent is ~~the~~ Suze, whose main bittering ingredient is gelsenium root.

Digestif bitters are intended to be drunk in small quantities after a meal as an aid to digestion. Two of the most popular & common are Fernet-Branca, from Italy, and Jägermeister, from Germany. Fernet-Branca has a burgundy colour and is strongly bark flavoured. Jägermeister is finally escaping its past as a shooter, or is being repositioned by its owners & consumers as a serious digestif. Its botanical recipe - of roots and herbs and spices - is kept secret. It is among the top ten spirit brands in the world in 2012.

Finally, bitter essences are useful flavoring elements for bartenders. Here, tiny quantities of the spirit are necessary for a strongly flavored cocktail. The most well known brand is Angostura, named after its founder, who developed it in 1824 in Venezuela.

## b) London Dry Gin

London Dry Gin differs from distilled gin by prohibiting the addition of flavors post-distillation. Once the gin has been distilled, no flavors may be added to it.

LDG uses a highly rectified spirit, usually wheat based (unless the product is more mass market). The botanical ingredients, particularly juniper, coriander seed, angelica and/or roots and citrus peels, are added to the HRS and may be allowed to macerate for a short period (24 hours). The HRS is reduced in strength and distilled in copper pot stills, to produce a distillate of 79-80% alc.

This is a common way of making the gin, but two alternatives exist: not to allow maceration of the botanicals and simply to distill the botanicals in the reduced strength HRS immediately; or alternatively to put the botanicals in a basket in the top of the still to create a more lightly flavored gin. This type of arrangement is called a Carterhead still.

The crucial things for the distiller are threefold: first, to have a consistent recipe of botanicals in order to ensure minimal batch variation; second, to ~~trouse~~ use the same still height & shape, replacing an old still with an identical new one; and finally, to establish what the cut points desired are: cut more quickly to tails for a lighter spirit, and wait longer for a more fully flavoured spirit.

### c) Brandy de Jerez

This is made from, principally, distilled wine from Airen grapes, largely grown in inland Spain, in La Mancha. These grapes are crushed & pressed & a wine fermented at 7-10°C. Brandy de Jerez may be made using either pot stills or column stills. whichever is used, three types of spirit are produced: holandas, a spirit full of flavour at less than 70% abv; aguardentes, a spirit between 70-86% abv; and destilados, a spirit above 86% abv. At least 50% of Brandy de Jerez must be made from spirit of less than 86%, ensuring it is always a highly flavoured brandy. Only pot stills are used for holandas, and some of the best expressions of Brandy de Jerez use 100% holandas.

Another unique aspect to this brandy is its ageing,

which must take place in Jerez de la Frontera. Old sherry barrels are used, which can affect the flavor - not through their oak flavors (usually American oak, incidentally) but through their previous contents. If the previous contents were a Fino sherry you can expect a gilled nuts taste; if Pedro Ximénez a fruit cake/raisin flavor.

These barrels store the brandy in a system of fraccion blending known as a solera system. This system blends old & young spirit to ensure a completely homogenised product. Each set of barrels contains product of a certain ~~age~~ average age, from youngest to oldest. Each of these is a criadera. The final criadera is the solera, from which the finished spirit is drawn off. Every time spirit is drawn off here, it is replaced with spirit from a slightly younger average age barrel. There are limits on how much spirit can be withdrawn at any one time, ensuring that the character of the final spirit never changes. The new spirit takes on the character of the existing spirit.

Solera Brandy is aged for a minimum of 6 months. Solera Reserva for 12 months and Gran Reserva for 3 years. The best expressions show a richly flavoured intense spirit which can compare - albeit in a different style - in quality to some of the best French brandies. Key brands include Gonzalez Byass, who have a range of brandies. Brandy is made elsewhere in Spain but is not entitled to the name Brandy de Jerez.

## March 2014

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 256</i>	<i>Passes: 182 (71%)</i>

Spirit no 1	Country:	Chile
	Spirit:	ABA Pisco
	Producer:	ABA Distil SpA
Spirit no 2	Country:	Jamaica
	Spirit:	Appleton Estate VX Rum
	Producer:	J Wray & Nephew Ltd
Spirit no 3	Country:	Scotland
	Spirit:	Ardbeg 10 Years Old
	Producer:	Ardbeg Distillery Ltd

As the high pass rate shows, there were no real problems with this trio of spirits.

However, there were the inevitable problems caused by those who did not follow the Systematic Approach for Spirits. This differs considerably from that used for assessing wine, and this is an easy way to lose unnecessary marks. Some candidates also pay no attention at all to the wording of the question, and just work their way through the various headings at the end of the Systematic Approach, including quality assessment, readiness for drinking, identification, estimated retail price etc. This is pointless in an instance such as here, where the final question asked candidates to identify the spirit as closely as possible in terms of country / region of origin, raw material and category / style, including any ageing.

Taking sample three as an example, this should have resulted in the following response:

Country / region of origin for 2 marks: Scotland, Islay (Scotland would only have generated one mark)

Raw Material for 2 marks: Malted barley (“grain” in isolation would only have generated one mark)

Category / style, including any ageing for 2 marks: 10 year old Malt Whisky (no marks awarded for “Whisky” in isolation).

Question 2 – In relation to spirits, write about each of the following:	
a) Cachaça b) Conversion OR Districts of Cognac c) Districts of Cognac OR Vodka Styles	
<i>Answers: 254</i>	<i>Passes: 185 (73%)</i>

Responses on Cachaça tended to be the most sound in this trio of topics although the weaker candidates tended to write generically about rum rather than specifically this style of rum. When writing about conversion, many candidates failed to expand their response beyond whisk(e)y production and therefore only wrote about the conversion of barley. Examiners were also looking for information on the conversion of other raw materials such as those used in Vodka production or agave for Tequila. When it came to the districts of Cognac, there was a clear divide between those candidates who had studied this part of the syllabus and those who had not. The latter had to resort to writing in general terms about Cognac, such as the ageing requirements, production processes (distillation, ageing etc). This is course earned them no marks.

## June 2014

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 291</i>	<i>Passes: 208 (71%)</i>

Spirit no 1	Country: Spirit: Producer:	Switzerland Dettling Reserve Kirsch Arnold Dettling AG
Spirit no 2	Country: Spirit: Producer:	United Kingdom Tanqueray Export Strength London Dry Gin Charles Tanqueray & Co
Spirit no 3	Country: Spirit: Producer:	USA Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon Buffalo Trace Distillery

This combination of sprits generated a wide spectrum of marks from 7% to 85%, although by far the largest percentage achieved a mark between 55% and 64%. Notes on the Gin and Bourbon were the strongest with many failing to pick up the cherry character on the Kirsch.

Once again, many candidates missed out on marks in the concluding section because they did not provide the information they had been asked for – namely to identify the style of spirit within its category and explain what evidence in their tasting note supported this conclusion. Taking the Kirsch as an example, the examiner would have been looking for comments along the following lines:

- The absence of colour rules out many spirits
- The intensity of aromas and flavours is higher than what would be found on Vodka which eliminates this spirit
- There are no juniper aromas, eliminating Gin
- It lacks the harshness and stalkiness of Grappa
- The smooth texture and length indicate that this is a spirit of good quality

- The purity of fruit and cherry notes along with almond and marzipan from cherry stones point to Kirsch.

Question 2 – In relation to spirits, write about each of the following:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Pisco</li> <li>b) White Rum OR Production of Tequila</li> <li>c) Age rules for Cognac and Armagnac OR Production of Tequila</li> </ul>	
<i>Answers: 289</i>	<i>Passes: 138 (48%)</i>

Results were very poor for the theory question in the June examination with marks ranging from a low of 4% to a high of 87%, but the largest percentage of candidates fell within the fail (unclassified) grade band. With no optional questions, the theory questions in Units 4, 5 and 6 often create difficulties for candidates who do not study the full breadth of the syllabus and this question was no exception.

## Unit 5, Sparkling Wines

The examination for Unit 5 was run on three separate occasions in the academic year 2013/14, in November, March and June. The questions and individual pass rates for each of the three examination dates were as follows:

### November 2013

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 239</i>	<i>Passes: 222 (93%)</i>

Wine no 1	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	Spain Penedes Vilarnau Brut Rose NV Cavas Vilarnau
Wine no 2	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	France Loire Valley Vouvray Reserve, Aubert NV Jean Claude & Didier Aubert SARL
Wine no 3	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	France Champagne Legras & Haas Grand Cru 2005 Mason Legras & Haas

Of the three smaller units, it is the sparkling wine unit that tends to generate the best results, and this was no exception with the bonus of a fairly even split between those achieving pass, merit or distinction. Clearly candidates found this a relatively easy trio of wines to describe.

However, there was a tendency towards rather generic tasting notes for all three wines, focussing only on autolytic character without really differentiating between the three different styles. In fact, only the Champagne showed any real significant autolytic note but a significant number of candidates detected it on the Cava Rosado despite this being dominated by fairly simple, confected red fruit character. This sparkling wine was quite simple in style with very little autolytic character. Another area of general weakness was in assessing the sweetness on the Vouvray – it was certainly not dry, but was no sweeter than “medium-dry” at most.

The following candidate gave good responses on all three wines:

**WINE No 1**

**Appearance:**  
Wine is clear and bright with pink color of medium intensity.  
~~The wine showed bubbles during pouring~~ side of bubbles is medium, persistence is medium although after 10 min in glass ~~more~~ <sup>less</sup> bubbles.

**Nose:**  
Nose is clean, ~~developing~~ <sup>youthful</sup>, of a medium-minus intensity showing aromas of red fruit as raspberry, strawberry, cranberry and some spicy, bramble.

**Palate:**  
~~Deep med~~ The wine has a medium acidity, it is a dry wine. No tannin. The wine has a medium level of alcohol and a medium body. The wine has a soft and delicate nose, the flavour intensity is of medium minus level, with characteristics of red fruit, strawberry, mineral, raspberry. The length is medium ~~minus~~.

**Readiness for drinking / potential for ageing: (2 marks)**  
The wine is ready to drink, will not improve.  
Drink within 1 or 2 years.

**Assessment of quality: (3 marks)**  
It is a ~~good~~ <sup>acceptable</sup> wine, well made, with a balance between the fresh acidity and the sweetness of the wine - dry. The length is not long, medium ~~minus~~, and doesn't evolve. It is a simple sparkling wine without any complexity of intensity but showing clean and fresh fruit, and a pleasant nose.  
Since it is well made, it is a good wine  
→ remains the fresh fruit

## WINE No 2

### Appearance:

wine is clear and bright with medium intensity and lemon color. The wine has small sized bubbles, after 10 min in glass and the persistence is long.

### Nose:

The nose is clean with a medium<sup>+</sup> intensity, developing showing citrus, apple, mineral, peach and some yeast, bit floral

### Palate:

The wine is dry with a medium level of alcohol. No tannins, and a medium body. The acidity level is medium<sup>+</sup> plus.

creamy mousse is detected in the wine. The flavour ~~max~~ intensity is medium with flavour of ~~citrus~~ (orange peel), bit apple and some ~~herbal~~ fresh pineapple. length is ~~medium~~  
<sup>yellow</sup>

### Readiness for drinking / potential for ageing: (2 marks)

The wine is ready to drink,

### Assessment of quality: (3 marks)

The wine is of good quality. It has balance between the sweetness of the wine and the refreshing acidity. The mousse is creamy on the palate. The wine shows ~~max~~ intensity of medium level with fresh fruit but also some ripe notes. Thus it is showing some complexity and  
On the length the wine becomes a bit bitter in the aftertaste. ~~Because~~ the alcohol is a bit on the warming side, ~~and it has~~ <sup>not only</sup> fresh fruit  
~~a sweetest linger in the after~~

### WINE No 3

#### Appearance:

The wine is clear and bright with lemon color of medium intensity. The wine has small bubbles with a low persistence.

#### Nose:

The nose is clean with a high intensity, and is developing. The nose is showing aromas of toast, brioche, some ripe apple, some floral notes - ~~wine~~ and autolytic.

#### Palate:

The wine is dry, has a medium<sup>+</sup> plus acidity level. No tannins detected. The alcohol level is medium with a medium body which is round. The Flavour intensity is of medium plus level with ~~air~~ flavours of ripe yellow apple, orange peel, brioche, almonds, peach. The length is long.

The mousse is very smooth, elegant.

#### Readiness for drinking / potential for ageing: (2 marks)

Wine is ready to drink but has potential for ageing for ± 5 years.

#### Assessment of quality: (3 marks)

It is a outstanding wine, showing intensity and complexity, clear notes of autolytic in the nose and on the palate.

The acidity is of medium<sup>+</sup> plus level and pleasant.

The mousse is very smooth and elegant. The wine shows fruit but also notes of brioche, heard thus making it complex. The length is long. The flavours become lively and acidity mellows. ~~The~~ Ripeness, concentration and intensity are found in this wine - champagne

Question 2 – In relation to sparkling wine, write about each of the following:

- Conegliano-Valdobbiadene
- Vallée de la Marne OR Montagne de Reims OR Côte des Blancs
- Automated riddling

Answers: 238

Passes: 192 (81%)

As with the results for the tasting question, this was also an excellent pass rate. However, there were relatively fewer distinction grades and a fairly significant number of very low scores, with a minimum of 7%.

Responses on automated riddling tended to be strongest of the three topics, although some simply wrote about riddling in general, including hand riddling rather than limiting their comments to AUTOMATED riddling. The superfluous information earned them no marks and presumably ate into the time available to answer other sections. In a similar vein, a number of candidates wrote in general terms about Prosecco rather than focussing specifically on Conegliano-Valdobbiadene and how this differs from generic Prosecco. A number of candidates also confused this with Asti or other Italian sparkling wines such as Franciacorta.

### March 2014

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 234</i>	<i>Passes: 210 (86%)</i>

Wine no 1	Country: Region: Wne:  Producer:	Italy Veneto Collalto Prosecco di Conegliano e Valdobbiadene Extra Dry Azienda Agricola Conte Collalto
Wine no 2	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	Spain Penedés Codorníu Brut Cava NV Codorníu SA
Wine no 3	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	USA California Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs 2010 Schramsberg Vineyards

Once again, the Unit 5 tasting question generated a high pass rate with a good percentage of merit and distinction grades.

However, as with most tasting questions, it was in the assessment of quality that candidates lost marks, and since in this instance this accounted for 5 marks on each wine it could have a significant effect on the final grade if candidates answered this poorly. In this paper, candidates had not actually been asked to identify the wines, yet many insisted on providing this information, along with an indication of the wine's age and potential for ageing rather than providing a reasoned analysis of the quality level of each wine.

Question 2 – In relation to sparkling wine, write about each of the following:

- a) CM (Coopérative-manipulant) OR Pol Roger OR CIVC
- b) Saumur
- c) Black Grapes

Answers: 234

Passes: 187 (77%)

The following candidate gave an excellent response on section a), gaining a very high mark for this.

CM (Coopérative-Manipulant) is a defined labelling term in Champagne, France. 'CM' refers to the fact that the wine will have been produced by a cooperative under its own label, for example, Nicolas Feuillatte (the name of the co-op in this case is Centre-Vinicole-Nicolas Feuillatte).

There are many ( $\geq 100$ ) co-ops in Champagne, and they deal with the vast majority of <sup>15000</sup> growers in the region. A great majority of the growers (many of whom own and work less than 2 ha of vineyard property) will grow grapes, and either bring them personally to their local co-op for delivery to a larger centre, or will ship the grapes to the co-ops.

The CM wine will have seen the co-operative responsible for (in many cases) the entire production from pressing grapes, to first fermentation, tirage, maturation and 2nd fermentation, Remuage, dosage, and bottling and final maturation before release.

However, CM ultimately means that the co-operative is responsible for the product under its own label.

CM producers, such as Nicolas Feuillatte and Jacquart, as well as Mailly Grand Cru in the Montagne de Reims, usually produce a full-line of Champagnes, including non-vintage, vintage, and speciality products and

luxury (prestige) cuvées. For example Nicolas Feuillatte draws from fruit from 100+ Grand Cru villages to produce its prestige cuvée Palmes d'Or.

## June 2014

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 239</i>	<i>Passes: 202 (85%)</i>

Wine no 1	Country:	Italy
	Region:	Veneto
	Wine:	Passaparola Prosecco Brut NV
	Producer:	Azienda Agricola Pradio
Wine no 2	Country:	Italy
	Region:	Lombardy
	Wine:	Cavalleri Franciacorta Blanc de Blancs NV
	Producer:	Azienda Agricola Gian Paolo e Giovanni Cavalleri
Wine no 3	Country:	Italy
	Region:	Piemonte
	Wine:	Cantine San Silvestro Asti NV
	Producer:	Cantine San Silvestro

Although all three of these wines were Italian, candidates were not required to identify the origin. Instead, the focus was on quality levels and method of production along with grape variety. With two clearly aromatic grape varieties (Glera and Moscato), it was obvious that the first and last wine were tank method, and specifically the Asti method in the case of wine 3. The very obvious autolytic nature of the second wine indicated that this had been bottle fermented.

Where marks were lost was inevitably in the assessment of quality for these wines. Many candidates still do not seem to understand what is required here, simply repeating their observations from the tasting note, with no indication of why these have any significance in terms of defining quality. Others just described the ageing potential of the wines and whether they were “ready to drink”, or in some cases, just explained what the wine is and how it is produced.

Question 2 – In relation to sparkling wine, write about each of the following:	
a) Blending b) Catalunya c) Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin OR Mœt & Chandon OR Krug	
<i>Answers: 238</i>	<i>Passes: 126 (53%)</i>

Responses were rather weak for this set of theory questions. Each topic brought its own set of problems. When writing about blending, most candidates limited their response to Champagne simply writing about the three key varieties and their characteristics. There was significantly more to this question than this. Good candidates wrote about when it is done, how it is done, why it is done, what is used etc. They extended the scope beyond Champagne, for example writing about inter-regional blending in places like Australia, or blending base wine from different countries even, such as with cheaper Sekt. When it came to the reasons for blending, they wrote about more than simply maintaining a house style or evening out vintage variation, covering issues such as volume production as in the case of large volume inexpensive sparkling wines etc. Many candidates forgot that even Vintage Champagne is a blended wine.

As with past examinations, the section on key producers produced the weakest responses.

## Unit 6, Fortified Liqueur Wines

The examination for Unit 6 was run on three separate occasions in the academic year 2013/14, in November, March and June. The questions and individual pass rates for each of the three examination dates were as follows:

### November 2013

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 297</i>	<i>Passes: 234 (79%)</i>

Wine no 1	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	Portugal Madeira Blandy's Duke of Clarence Rich Madeira The Madeira Wine Company SA
Wine no 2	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	Spain Jerez Manzanilla La Gitana Bodegas Hidalgo – La Gitana SA
Wine no 3	Country: Region: Wine: Producer:	Spain Jerez Williams & Humbert Dry Sack 15yo Oloroso Bodegas Williams & Humbert

There was no particular theme to this tasting, just three different styles of fortified wine. The Manzanilla was obviously easy to identify and candidates had no trouble spotting this or describing it well. However, the Madeira was often mistaken for Cream Sherry because of the richness and the sweetness. Candidates who made this error failed to take note of the relatively high acidity on this wine.

There was the inevitable “scattergun” approach from some candidates when it came to the assessment of quality for these wines. For too many candidates include irrelevant information relating to the price or the readiness for drinking rather than focussing on identifying an accurate level of quality and giving justifications for this.

<b>Question 2 – In relation to fortified wine, write about each of the following:</b>	
a) Harvey's b) Douro Valley districts OR Madeira wine styles c) Madeira wine styles OR Beauges-de-Venise	
<i>Answers: 296</i>	<i>Passes: 171 (58%)</i>

On this paper, it was inevitably in the section on Harvey's where most marks were lost. This is a recurring weakness and shows that while many candidates are happy to learn facts by rote, they are less willing, or able, to absorb commercial information relating to the wine and spirit industry. This is costing many of them a pass grade in this qualification.

When faced with a question on a producer, it is a good idea to think in terms of trigger words or questions. For example, who, what, where, when, why, how? All of these would have generated relevant information in response to this section of the question, for example by considering the following:

- Who are they?
- What do they produce?
- Where are they based?
- When were they established?
- Why are they significant or important?
- How is their business run?

This is not going to provide all the information examiners are looking for in relation to Harvey's, but will certainly go a long way towards achieving this. Far too many candidates simply wrote about Harvey's Bristol Cream (the product) rather than Harvey's (the producer).

## March 2014

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 249</i>	<i>Passes: 169 (68%)</i>

Wine no 1                      Country:                      Australia  
Region:                      Rutherglen  
Wine:                          Stanton & Kileen Classic Rutherglen Muscat  
Producer:                      Stanton & Kileen

Wine no 2                      Country:                      Portugal  
Region:                      Douro  
Wine:                          Noval 20 year old Port  
Producer:                      Quinta do Noval Vinhos SA

Wine no 3                      Country:                      Spain  
Region:                      Jerez  
Wine:                          Amontillado Principe de Barbadillo  
Producer:                      Bodegas Barbadillo

There was no particular theme to this tasting with samples from three different countries. Whilst notes for the appearance and nose were generally good, they tended to be less accurate when it came to assessing the structural elements of the three samples and the assessment of quality was also weak in many instances.

In general, it was the acidity that caused problems with this being poorly assessed in the Rutherglen Muscat and the Sherry. There was also a tendency to use generic descriptors such as “dried fruit”, “nuts”, “oak”, “citrus” etc. At this level, examiners expect candidates to be far more precise. There is a difference in the aroma and flavour profile of a wine with almond character and one with walnut character, yet both are “nutty”.

The assessment of quality was often too formulaic and vague, with references to “good structure” or “lovely balance”, in some instances this also contradicted previous observations within the tasting note itself, showing a lack of logic or the kind of analysis that candidates need to bring to their answers in order to succeed in this qualification.

Question 2 – In relation to fortified wine, write about each of the following:

- a) Grenache
- b) Palo Cortado OR Viticulture in Madeira
- c) Viticulture in Madeira OR Maturation and finishing of Ruby style Ports

<i>Answers: 248</i>	<i>Passes: 151 (61%)</i>
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This was a rather low pass rate, with a very wide span of marks from 1% to 81%. The 21% of candidates graded as fail (unclassified) showed that there were a number of candidates who are a long way short of the standard required for a pass grade in this qualification.

#### **June 2014**

Question 1 – Tasting	
<i>Answers: 293</i>	<i>Passes: 241 (82%)</i>

Wine no 1	Country:	France
	Region:	Roussillon
	Wine:	Els Pyreneus Maury 2011
	Producer:	Maison Lafage SCEA
Wine no 2	Country:	Spain
	Region:	Jerez
	Wine:	Solera 1847 Cream
	Producer:	Gonzalez Byass SA
Wine no 3	Country:	Portugal
	Region:	Douro
	Wine:	Taylor's 10 Year Old Tawny
	Producer:	Taylor Fladgate & Yeatman

This was a very good result with a fairly equal split between pass and merit grades and a good number of distinctions.

The Maury was often mistaken for Ruby Port, although the alcohol was too low for this to be a valid option. The Cream Sherry was also often mistaken for Malmsey Madeira even though the acidity was too low for this. Marks were also lost because some candidates failed to commit to one definitive answer when assessing the structural elements of the wines, instead giving a range statement such as describing the length as “medium to long”. Examiners give no marks in such instances, even if one of these options should be correct.

Question 2 – In relation to fortified wine, write about each of the following:

- a) Beneficio
- b) Muscat OR Viticulture in Jerez OR Estufa and Canteiro
- c) Estufa and Canteiro OR Muscat OR Viticulture in Jerez

*Answers: 291*

*Passes: 231 (79%)*

This was a good pass rate despite the fact that the section on the Beneficio was answered poorly by a very large percentage of candidates, with many of them clearly confused about what this actually is and mixing it up with Cadastro. Far too many candidates thought the Beneficio was the A to F rating system of the vineyards rather than this being one of the criteria that determines the annual authorisation of Port production each year that is the Beneficio. However, poor responses in this section were offset by some good answers in respect of Muscat. In spite of the good pass rate, very few candidates provided good responses in all three sections.