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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 styles of question – coursework assignments, tasting questions and theory questions from the Unit 3 paper. In each instance, the scripts have been selected to illustrate good coverage of either the topic as a whole, or a specific 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 very 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 2004-05 examination cycle and as such are anonymous and are reproduced as submitted to the examiner.

It is suggested that candidates revising and preparing for a particular type of question - tasting, paragraph, map question etc - read all comments on similar questions, as these often contain general advice, which is applicable across the board.

Janet Bangs
Director, WSET Awards
December 2005

DIPLOMA EXAMINATIONS 2004/05 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

| Paper | 2005 | | 2004 | Paper | 2003 | 2002 | 2001 | 2000 | 1999 |
|----------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Unit 1 | (1) | | | NO DIRECT EQUIVALENT PAPER | | | | | |
| Unit 2 | 79% | | 79% | Section I (A) | 48% | 62% | 53% | 56% | 50% |
| | | | | Section I (B) | 43% | 44% | 65% | 66% | 52% |
| Unit 3 tasting 1 & 2 | JUNE 62% | JAN 48% | JUNE 59% | Section IIA Tasting | 60% | 65% | 68% | 71% | 68% |
| | | | | Section IIB Tasting | 51% | 74% | 75% | 71% | 61% |
| Unit 3 theory | JUNE 41% | JAN 24% | JUNE 27% | Section IIA Theory | 50% | 52% | 52% | 56% | 53% |
| | | | | Section IIB Theory | 59% | 57% | 56% | 67% | 53% |
| Unit 4 tasting | 69% | | 76% | NO DIRECT EQUIVALENT PAPER | | | | | |
| Unit 5 tasting | 58% | | 70% | NO DIRECT EQUIVALENT PAPER | | | | | |
| Unit 6 tasting | 45% | | 65% | NO DIRECT EQUIVALENT PAPER | | | | | |
| NO DIRECT EQUIVALENT PAPER | | | | Section III (A) | 83% | 64% | 78% | 78% | 85% |
| NO DIRECT EQUIVALENT PAPER | | | | Section III (B) | 78% | 68% | 84% | 90% | 74% |

NOTES:

- (1) Direct pass rates for Unit 1 are not given as this Unit is awarded on completion of the coursework elements of Units 3, 4, 5 and 6.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Most of those reading this report will be studying for one of the six Units of the Diploma syllabus, either as a first or second year candidate or one of those qualifying as being in transition from the old syllabus to the new.

The coursework assignments that form the assessment methodology for Unit 1 (the Global Business of Alcoholic Beverages) are generating good results, but there have been some instances where the authenticity of work has come into question. Where candidates have clearly committed plagiarism, the Examination Panel has had no option but to impose a fail grade for the work concerned. Fortunately these have been few and far between and the standard of work submitted, on the whole, has been high. There are nevertheless grave concerns that some candidates are not actually retaining the knowledge they demonstrate in the coursework assignments, with some extremely poor work submitted for the closed book theory questions in units 3, 4, 5 and 6. This raises questions regarding the validity and appropriateness of assignments as a method of assessment, and these will continue to be evaluated as part of the annual process of review of all WSET qualifications.

The multiple choice examination format for Unit 2 (the Production of Wine) certainly seems to be the preferred method of assessment, particularly amongst candidates for whom English is not their mother tongue. Results for this unit have improved considerably worldwide since its introduction in August 2003 (see statistical analysis on page 2). However, in terms of content, this paper is just as challenging from an academic standpoint, as the former Section I essay style paper. The multiple choice format clearly allows candidates to demonstrate their factual knowledge without the restriction of having to express this in an essay – something which many overseas candidates find too challenging.

Unit 3 has seen mixed results. Pass rates for the tasting paper questions continue very much in line with pass rates in previous years. Tasting Paper 2 generated better results than Tasting Paper 1 in both January and June. This was due to the fact that Paper 1 is still being sat by a larger percentage of first year candidates whilst we continue to have candidates in transition from the former syllabus in the system. These first year candidates traditionally perform less well than second or third year candidates. This phenomenon was also very evident in the Unit 3 theory paper in January 2004, where candidates were either students in their first year of study or those re-sitting following a previous failed attempt. This demographic, coupled with low candidate numbers (only 67 in January compared to 323 in June), produced some very poor statistics that do not really convey the true story in terms of pass rates, as it can be seen that this almost doubled in June (from 24% to 41%). Low candidate numbers always bring the validity of statistics into question and we should certainly not place too much emphasis on this poor pass rate, as there were also some extremely good individual candidates amongst the very bad ones. Nevertheless, the pass rate for the Unit 3 theory paper continues to generate the poorest results (see statistical analysis). However, this is now closer to the levels generated under the old Section 2A and 2B theory (which had in any event been showing a clear downward trend since a highpoint in 2000). This seems to corroborate the notion that candidates appear in recent years to vastly underestimate the level of this qualification and the amount of revision work required to succeed in the closed book examinations. It cannot be stressed often enough – study of the course notes in isolation is not sufficient for a qualification of this level. The WSET and Approved Programme Providers must continue to ensure that candidates enrolling on the Diploma programme are fully aware of the standard required to succeed, and the level of commitment that they will have to demonstrate in terms of additional study and revision time. This is a professional qualification, which sits within the National Qualifications Framework at level 4 (just below Degree level) and requires sound background knowledge and the ability to analyse data rather than simply recall fact. Nevertheless, we have now seen a welcome increase in the pass rate for the Unit 3 theory paper in the June exam, and I suspect this

will continue to rise even further as candidates come to better appreciate the amount of preparation required.

As with Unit 3, Units 4, 5 and 6 generated mixed results. Candidates generally tend to apply the Systematic Approach to Tasting Technique (SAT) reasonably well when making their assessment. However, the level of factual knowledge displayed in the theory question is not encouraging – in some cases even below that required for Advanced Certificate. This is very unsatisfactory as these units are a test of all-round knowledge and the tasting and theory elements now carry equal weighting in the current 2005/06 academic year. This means that candidates cannot count on passing this paper purely on the strength of their tasting skills alone. We also saw a poor performance in the tasting assessment for Unit 6 (fortified wines). The emphasis on this paper was very much on the issue of quality comparison. This is a skill candidates appear to struggle to achieve (see the specific feedback for this paper and for the Unit 3 tasting paper on partly specified wines).

The number of candidates electing to progress to the Honours Diploma qualification remains considerably lower than those completing the Diploma. However, this is as it should be. The Honours Diploma requires a considerably deeper level of study and research and not all candidates are able to fulfil this criteria because of personal ability or work commitments. Results for this qualification are very encouraging. Where candidates have accurately followed the brief in the Candidate Assessment Guide and have ensured that their work contains a significant amount of original research and analysis, high grades have been achieved. Those who have merely stated facts have either achieved a borderline pass or, in a very limited number of instances, a fail grade. To date, there have been some highly original submissions and it has been encouraging to see the enthusiasm with which some candidates have approached this higher level qualification.

Now for some general comments on the issues and problems that come up year after year.

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. In addition, there is clear evidence that candidates are not reading the Candidate Assessment Guide. This has been specifically written to help them prepare for assessment, and gives very clear guidance on the approach to assignment writing and the candidates' obligations in this respect. Candidates who do not study this document, run the risk of gaining a fail grade for their work.

Commercial awareness

Unit 1, The Global Business of wines and other beverages specifically examines candidates' commercial awareness through the means of coursework assignments. 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 distinct commercial focus and a pass cannot be achieved simply by reiterating facts relating to production methods. Those interested in reading the titles for the 2005/06 coursework assignments will find these on the WSET website under www.wset.co.uk. Titles for the 2006/07 academic year will be published on 1 August 2006.

The regulars

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 finishing, I must convey my gratitude 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 team in the WSET School and other examination centres, the examination invigilators and tasting teams who work so hard behind the scenes on the big day, the Results Panel and the Appeals Panel – my thanks to all of you!

Janet Bangs

Director WSET Awards

COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

Unit I, The Global Business of Wines and other Beverages

Firstly some general comments about the grading of coursework assignments:

All assignments are graded out of 100 marks. 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 of 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 title.

In terms of presentation, marks will be lost where work is presented with spelling and grammatical errors. With good spell checkers on all PCs these days, there is really no excuse for sloppy work of this kind. Structure is also important, particularly if candidates do not follow the format dictated by the wording of the question, as it is easy to stray too far from the actual title of the assignment if a more "loose" structure is adopted. The bibliography is an essential part of the assignment and those submitted without one were penalised as a result. The bibliography needs to cover 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 *Harpers*, *Drinks Business*, or *Just Drinks*. These are vital for identifying trends and problems.

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 making 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. Over the course of the two years that assignment writing has formed part of the assessment strategy for the WSET Diploma, it has become evident that candidates from certain countries are relying too heavily on the inclusion of the SWOT analysis in their work.

Finally a general comment that applies to all assignment writing. Some pieces of work submitted showed signs of collaboration or "leading" by the Approved Programme Provider, or in the worst cases, plagiarism or simply copying another candidate's work. Candidates must remember that assignments are to be the work of one individual only and they should be in no doubt that it is always very obvious to the examiner when this is not the case. The penalties in such instances can be very severe indeed.

Assignment attached to Unit 3

Describe the various roles of consultants in wine production. Evaluate the benefits and disadvantages of using such expertise. What impact has this trend had on consumer choice?

Results for this question were disappointing considering the topical nature of the question. This was largely due to many candidates limiting their interpretation of "wine production" to viticulture and vinification only. When setting this question, the Examination Panel specifically chose to use the phrase "wine production" rather than "wine making" as they wanted

candidates to consider the whole process and thereby think beyond the vineyard and winery. The key roles we were looking for were those that encompassed issues such as:

- Financial expertise
- Architectural design – winery development, improvement, layout etc
- Legal expertise – from simple HR issues to human rights (eg South Africa)
- Viticulture – vineyard layout, soil analysis, site selection, trellising, etc.
- The environment – organic winemaking, bio-dynamic etc
- The wine making guru – the cult status “experts” both past and present
- Quality Assurance – ISO, HACCP, EU compliance
- Designer wine stylists – making wine to specification eg supermarket own label
- Marketing (label design, advertising, PR etc.)

Some candidates included inappropriate references in terms of their definition of “consultant”. These included people like Robert Parker (influential true, but not a consultant), or people who can advise on putting together a wine list (not actually involved in wine production). Many candidates limited their research to a small number of sources and simply loaded their assignment to fit what they had read. This was particularly true in the case of Nossiter’s film “Mondovino” which many referred to. Whilst this made some relevant points, those who focused almost exclusively on this, submitted assignments that really only addressed one small part of the many varied issues raised by this question. What they should have done, was use their own knowledge and understanding of the subject matter to define what was required in broad terms and then read around the subject to corroborate and supplement their facts. This is an error all too common in assignment writing. Candidates should first make some notes of key points, then check the syllabus to define the scope of the question, and only then start their research and reading around the subject.

When setting assignment titles, the Diploma Examination Panel takes steps to ensure that the wording of the assignment leads candidates clearly and unambiguously towards the required format that the work should take. In this instance, the question had four key elements:

1. Describe the roles of consultants
2. Evaluate the benefits
3. Evaluate the disadvantages
4. Discuss the impact on consumer choice

These sections provide the structure for the marking key that ensures that marks are allocated fairly, accurately and consistently to all candidates irrespective of the approach they choose to take for their answer. Marks are awarded depending on the scope, depth and relevance of the candidates’ response to these points.

Some candidates failed to cover all elements of the question or, did not do so in sufficient detail. In particular, many failed to make any significant differentiation between points 2, 3 and 4 where the vast majority cited an improvement in quality (positive) and homogenisation of wine styles (negative). Whilst these are valid points, they are not sufficient in isolation and have more to do with consumer choice than points 2 or 3. The sections on “benefits” and “disadvantages” should have been approached from the point of view of those **using** this expertise, ie the wine producer. This would have generated a very different response to the issue of the effect on consumer choice and was specifically what the Examination Panel were looking for.

The introduction is important in all assignment writing – it is your opportunity to grab the examiner’s attention. In this case, it should ideally have included a short definition of the term “consultant”. Many candidates did this.

The description of the roles of consultants should have covered the many aspects of wine production as already indicated above.

Those who limited their interpretation of consultants to viticulturists and oenologists limited their scope for discussion on the benefits and disadvantages, or thought only in terms of the

effect on the finished product. This meant they missed the real point of this section – that of evaluating the effect on the **producer** rather than the product. The kind of issues to consider here were, for example,

Benefits:

- economical – not paying full time wages, short term cost
- profitability – potential to sell wines at a higher price
- dispassionate opinion – getting the outside view
- specialist knowledge and expertise in possible areas of weakness
- better wines – less faults, potential to open up new markets, product relevant for target market
- in terms of QA, legal or environmental advice, this may fulfil a regulatory requirement in order to continue to trade
- potential time saving through improved performance

Disadvantages:

- costs – possible large initial outlay on consultant's fees, producer may need to spend large sums of money on recommendations, particularly if radical changes are required
- possible irrelevant or bad advice – consultant may not have specific knowledge of local conditions, historical or cultural background
- danger of losing local culture
- disruptive to permanent staff
- possible negative reaction to change
- if staff are unwilling to change the process can be a waste of money
- can price the product out of the existing market – loose customers
- homogenised style of wine – loss of unique identity - *terroir*

This was almost universally the worst section of this assignment, because most candidates failed to approach this from a commercial standpoint. Far too many went into great detail describing the different options available to consultant oenologists and the effect these have on the wine. This was not the focus of this section of the question.

The majority of candidates were able to comment sufficiently on the effect on consumer choice with the overriding opinion being that many wines are becoming homogenised in style. However, not many went on to explore how this in itself affected consumer choice, ie by leading to less choice on the shelf. Ideally, this section should also have been approached from a positive/negative standpoint. This would have led to issues such as improved quality of wines, wider consumer choice, particularly from “poorer” regions where use of consultants is often more widespread, to the less positive effects such as homogenised wine or possible higher prices to cover increased production costs.

It is important that candidates understand that assignments are not simply a test of their literary skills, or their ability to replicate facts assembled from a variety of textbooks and magazines. They are a test of their ability to research and present information within clearly defined parameters, which ensures that they give the examiner the information required for the question as set.

A good technique to adopt when writing assignments is the use of key headings. Many candidates did this to ensure that they covered all the relevant parts of the assignment. An example of this from one candidate was as follows:

Introduction, Wine Production Defined, Roles of Consultants in Wine Production, The Benefits of Using Consultants, The Disadvantages of Using Consultants, Impact on Consumer Choice, Conclusion.

This may seem very obvious, but far too many candidates do not follow this approach, or worse still, list the headings, but then ignore them when writing the assignment. What was so good about this candidate was that they took the time to define what “wine production” encompassed. This ensured what followed was relevant and to the point.

Assignment attached to Unit 4

Describe the global sales performance of Cognac since 1990, contrasting the results achieved in the principal export markets. What initiatives, in terms of production, marketing and service have taken place during this period? Which styles and countries offer growth potential?

This was actually a very straightforward question as most of the information required to answer it could be found on the BNIC website. Many candidates used this as their primary source of reference and there were a significant number of high grades as a result. However, there were also plenty of candidates “teetering” on the edge of plagiarism. This becomes very obvious when a large number of candidates use the same expressions in their work, and this was particularly evident in this assignment. The majority mentioned the “roller-coaster ride” of the Cognac industry, cited the emergence of a new breed of Cognac drinker, “young, black and upwardly mobile”, and in some cases, lifted word for word Pat Straker’s definition of the key consumer profile for those drinking Cognac. Plagiarism, however minor, is a form of cheating and carries penalties. The only way to avoid this, is to rephrase the original in your own words, or acknowledge it as attributable to the original author by means of a footnote.

Another disappointment with this assignment was the number of candidates who simply lifted tables and graphs from the BNIC website without bothering to amend these so that they reflected the scope of the assignment title. This meant that sales figures going back to 1984 were cited when the title clearly states “...since 1990”. Similarly, large numbers included reference to the French market despite the question specifying “export” markets only. These may be minor points, but they illustrate the fact that too many candidates do not read the question carefully enough.

Once again this assignment contained vital key words that determined the allocation of marks in the marking key:

- global sales performance
- initiatives in production, marketing and service
- styles and markets for growth

In terms of global sales performance, this was really defined by the three key continents (the Far East, Europe and the US) each with a very different story to tell. This was specifically why the question asked candidates to **contrast** the results achieved in each. Very few actually did this, with the majority simply verbally interpreting the sales graphs for individual countries. This made for very tedious reading, “sales in Hong Kong increased in then took a dip in” The key point to make here was that sales in the Far East were extremely high and buoyant 15 years ago. However, the boom came to an end with the collapse of the Japanese and Hong Kong markets which have still not recovered. By contrast, the European market remains fairly constant and stable with steady (but insignificant) growth (mainly in the low value 3* category), whilst the US market has really taken off, with a surge in sales (particularly at the top end of the scale), with the drive for this clearly coming from the rap music industry.

The majority of candidates made some good comments regarding recent initiatives in the Cognac market, but some failed to address all three sections. The key points were:

Production

- Grubbing up of vines or diverting grapes to still wine production
- Vintage cognacs now more easily produced due to a change in the rules – Hine and Delamain are examples
- Sweeter and darker styles being produced – popular in the Asian market

Marketing

- New product development - Meukow VS, vanilla flavoured Cognac, (mirrors the trend in Vodka products for the younger market)
- White cognac – Hennessy White and tonic, again popular with the younger market
- Alizé – Cognacs flavoured with fruit juice (peach, raspberry), again, targeting the youth market

Service

- Cognac and food matching – Remy tried unsuccessfully
- New ways of drinking Cognac - Hennessy and orange juice, Cognac and ice or as a long drink with tonic, "FC" – Cognac, Frapin and tonic

Finally, Russia and China were recognised by most as markets offering substantial potential. Other contenders included Central and Eastern Europe and the Hispanic market in the US (also linked to the music scene). The issue of which styles offer growth potential was not always addressed, with very few acknowledging the fact that there is a need to adapt to specific markets rather than just offering the standard VS, VSOP, XO styles.

As with all assignments, a good conclusion is essential – not just summarising the question, but something original, perhaps drawing together ideas, making some comment about possible future trends or personal opinion or recommendations. Far too many candidates either give no conclusion at all or simply repeat the question.

Assignment attached to Unit 5

There are serious challenges facing the Champagne industry, what are they and how should they be addressed?

This was a very topical question and clearly divided those candidates who had a real commercial awareness of the structure and workings of the Champagne industry from those who simply looked at it from a factual, winemaking point of view.

This assignment only really had two main sections – identifying the various challenges and then suggesting ways in which they could be addressed. On the whole, candidates were better at identifying the challenges than at proposing solutions, possibly because the latter sometimes required some original thought.

In terms of the challenges, some candidates failed to remember that this assignment is a means of assessing comprehension of the "Global Business" of wine. Therefore to cite the marginal climate of Champagne as a key challenge is not really appropriate, apart from perhaps in the context of the potential threat of global warming. This gives a good example of the difference between the candidate who took the factual route – "making Champagne is a challenge because the marginal climate means danger from frost or poor ripening" – and the one who applied the commercial slant – "the Champagne industry faces a challenge if global warming continues to affect the climate, as this will have a detrimental effect on the production of base wine." Both examples cite climate as a challenge, but only the latter is really appropriate in the context of this assignment.

The kind of challenges the examiners were looking for, included issues such as:

- Threats – other sparkling producers, quality and quantity at the lower end of the price scale
- Expansion – nowhere left to go

- Profitability – product generally under-priced, cost of grapes, stock holding - cash tied for at least 3-4 years, many companies “financed” by banks
- Fragmentation of vineyard ownership and production, making production unwieldy
- Variable demand – fashion, economy led, very volatile market eg impact of political unrest
- Weakness of the minor brands
- Potential problems with “premier prix” and “sur lattes” wines
- Huge costs involved in marketing
- Threats from deep discounting

In terms of solutions, this required some detailed knowledge of the legal restrictions within the region, eg potential problems or controversy in respect of expansion of the AOC, or limitations in terms of product diversification in an attempt to compete with other sparkling wines (single vineyard wines, single varietal wines etc). It also highlighted those who had a real understanding of the trade structure and the options available for dealing with some of the problems associated with the rules imposed through this (premier prix and sur lattes wines, grape prices etc.) Some candidates forgot to “think outside the box”, and so failed to comment on joint venture initiatives overseas as a means of competing with cheaper sparkling wines. Another solution could be to concentrate on the luxury market or introduce a “Cru” system for the wines, eg Grand Cru, Premier Cru.

Assignment attached to Unit 6

You have decided to launch a new brand of an existing style of liqueur wine. Describe the wine and the reasons for your selection. Write a brand plan for the product in the national market of your choice.?

The Examination Panel regarded this as a very straightforward question. It allowed the candidate a great deal of flexibility and it was interesting to see which styles of liqueur wine were chosen, and more importantly, why, as this was often determined by the demographics of the chosen market. The key to success in this question, was access to information on putting together a brand plan. Good candidates took the trouble to research this and many cited marketing resources in their bibliography. Those candidates who obtained low grades, did so because they failed to show sufficient commercial awareness in terms of the brand plan. This section of the assignment carried the bulk of the marks and needed to be detailed, feasible, and commercial. A number of candidates demonstrated great naivety in this respect.

The introduction to this assignment should have aimed to identify and describe the product selected and give some detail regarding the national market targeted with some background to this.

The reasoning behind the product choice is fairly important and could relate to sales performance of similar products, identification of a gap in the existing choice on the market, a desire for market penetration in a new category, or any other valid reason, of which there were many examples.

As already mentioned, the bulk of the marks were allocated to the brand plan itself. Unfortunately, some candidates spent far too much time describing their choice of product and discussing the current state of their market (not specifically asked for in the assignment title), and too little on the plan which was typically limited to where it would be advertised and sold. There were also a number of candidates who simply took the example of recent success stories such as Tio Pepe or Warre's Otima and rewrote these to fit their own Sherry or Port. This was disappointing and showed great lack of imagination. High marks were seldom awarded in such instances.

Any good brand plan needs to address issues such as the launch and marketing strategy, promotional objectives for the launch, eg advertising, sampling, press coverage, sponsorship etc, sales objectives for the first year, and, of course, the 4/5 P's of marketing: product, price, position, placement, packaging. Far too few candidates volunteered any kind of financial projection for their plan, with some being far too ambitious in terms of costs.

Despite these comments, there were some excellent and imaginative submissions for this assignment. The WSET website will give examples of full assignments for each of the 4 titles in due course so that candidates have a clear idea of where they should be setting their sights.

Unit 2, Wine Production

This report is not able to 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 under its new format compared to the former essay style questions. Whilst the questions are certainly not easy, candidates have little to fear providing they study the recommended reading thoroughly.

Unit 3, Wines of the World

Tasting Papers

Firstly, some general comments about good and bad tasting notes. One way to lose marks on this paper is through loose, unquantified or vague application of the Systematic Approach to Tasting Technique (SAT). Examples found on some scripts were “marked acidity” (this could imply medium or high and is not precise enough), “tannic” (this simply implies that tannin is present, candidates need to specify whether it is high, low, medium, soft, harsh etc). Such comments do not specifically tell the examiner what he needs to know about the wines and marks cannot be allocated. Examples of other terms to use with caution are “nice”, “good”, “some”, “fairly”, “reasonable”. In isolation, they convey nothing to the examiner, for example “nice tannins”, “good acidity”, “nice finish” – all far too vague to merit any marks. Many candidates use the term “balance” incorrectly. Consider the following comment “very balanced between alcohol, acidity and fruit/oak”. This tells the examiner nothing unless each of these attributes is defined in turn. They could all be “in balance” because they are all high or low or medium. On the other hand, the acidity could be high but the fruit intensity only medium yet still be “in balance”. This is precisely why such comments are not appropriate unless quantified using the parameters defined in the Systematic Approach.

Many candidates still do not appear to understand what is required in a professional, analytical tasting note. There is a general tendency amongst some to compare the three wines rather than describe them individually. This leads them 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. This means that the acidity, tannin, body, alcohol etc must be quantified. It would be acceptable to describe a wine as having “high alcohol, but slightly lower than wine no 1”, as the level has clearly been defined at the outset. By comparison, a comment of “alcohol lower than wine 1” is sloppy and imprecise as it could mean the alcohol is medium or low in the case of wine 1 having “high” alcohol.

Another common reason for failure or a poor performance in the tasting paper is not using the WSET Systematic Approach in full. Missing out key features such as sweetness, acidity, body, alcohol etc is simply throwing marks away. With three marks available for the appearance, the candidate needs to make three valid observations. By simply correctly identifying the colour of the wine, the intensity of the colour, and any variation between the rim and core, the three marks are assured. Other observations that could be made where appropriate include comments on signs of development, viscosity or bubbles. Vagueness or inaccuracy in terms of colour will not guarantee any marks, such as describing a wine as “straw gold” in colour – two very distinct ends of the spectrum, one very pale and the other usually deep. Even worse, are the candidates who simply use the term “yellow”. Candidates also lose marks by stating under the palate that the “fruit follows that of the nose”. This is not sufficient to gain any marks. Candidates must state what the flavour characteristics are, as in some cases they do **not** mirror those on the nose exactly, and at this level candidates should be able to distinguish between these subtle differences.

Many candidates give insufficient information when assessing the quality of the wine and there is still confusion over what is meant by “state of maturity”. This report covers this every year – maturity is **not** the same thing as age. Maturity refers to the development of the wine. Is it immature and therefore not ready to drink as in the case of a top quality Bordeaux that needs more time in bottle? Or is it fully mature and starting to decline as with many high volume, commercial wines, which are sold within a year of production, say a Vinho Verde or a Beaujolais Nouveau? Many candidates would incorrectly describe this latter wine as “young or youthful” rather than “mature”. Many give a vintage date under “state of maturity” – this is not the same thing and gets no marks.

Tasting Paper 1

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

The easiest way to lose marks in this paper 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 distracted and attempt to make the remaining descriptions fit the variety chosen rather than use the information they contain to arrive at the correct identity. A number of candidates give two varieties rather than one. This is “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.

January 2005: White wines from Pinot Grigio

Answers: 52

Passes: 23 (44%)

The number of candidates sitting the Unit 3 examination in January was quite low. This can have a very adverse effect on statistical data, which partly explains the low pass rate recorded. However, this is also influenced by the larger number of re-sit candidates opting for the January date.

The three wines were Banfi's 2003 Pinot Grigio from Tuscany, Domaines Schumberger's 1998 Grand Cru wine from the Kitterlé vineyard and Kendermann's 2003 wine from the Rheinhessen. As expected, good tasting notes were written for the Alsace wine. The maturity and intensity of this wine made it easier to describe. The other two wines were more of a challenge but allowed the examiners to differentiate between good and exceptional candidates.

There were a vast array of grape varieties named – Riesling, Chenin Blanc, Semillon, and naturally where candidates got this information wrong, they tended to lose additional marks in other sections of the concluding part of the tasting note.

On a general note, the examiner noted that some wrote “sloppy” notes for the appearance, failing to comment on aspects such as the rim (is it broad or narrow?) or the legs (heavy or light?). There were some poor perceptions in terms of acidity or sweetness and many candidates missed out on marks by not justifying their comments on quality.

The following candidate identified the variety as Semillon and also identified one of the wines as Côtes du Rhône. This is very foolish and completely illogical – this variety is not found in the Rhône. In addition, the tasting note was poor, and short.

“Appearance: clear, bright, deep golden yellow core fading to a broad rim.

Nose: clean, pronounced aroma of honey peach, pineapple, zest of orange.

Palate: sweet, medium acidity, medium bodied, medium intensity of honey, peach, pineapple. Medium alcohol, medium to short and simple length.

Country of origin: France

Region of origin: Côtes du Rhône

Assessment of quality: Good quality, but lack of length. It is simple”

This is a description for the Alsace Grand Cru, so although there are some valid comments in terms of fruit aromas (honey, peach, pineapple, orange), there are many incorrect comments and the assessment of quality is extremely poor – this is a very expensive wine. In addition, it is contradictory – “good quality but simple”, and really only repeats observations made under the palate. A good assessment of quality for this wine should have read:

“an excellent QWPSR wine with complexity and balance. Elegant, with clear varietal character balanced fruit to acidity and a long length. Definite notes of botrytis indicate a low yield, premium wine with great intensity and longevity.”

The difference here is that this note uses observations from the tasting note to “justify” the quality of this wine.

June 2005: Red wines from Pinot Noir

Answers: 377

Passes: 229 (61%)

The three wines in this instance were Louis Latour Marsanny 2000, Vosne-Romanée 2001, Sylvain Cathiard and Isabel Vineyards Marlborough Pinot Noir 2003. There was a clear distinction between the two Burgundies, one mid priced and just beginning to fade, the other premium priced and still very youthful. The New Zealand wine was selected to give a New World, jammy, oaky contrast.

Common errors in this question, apart from those already identified above, were inaccurate identification of colour of the wine and poor assessment of quality. Many candidates use the terms ruby and garnet indiscriminately – there is a very clear distinction between the two, which can give important clues, in many instances, to the identity or provenance of the wine. The difference between ruby and garnet is that the latter heads more towards brown rather than the blue/purple side of the spectrum, which applies more to ruby. In terms of the quality assessment, many made short, vague assessments such as “good quality” or “excellent wine of high quality”. With 4 marks available for this section of the tasting note, this is clearly insufficient. Candidates need to explain what is leading them to such a conclusion. What deductions in their tasting note support their claims? What is required here is an analysis of comments made in the tasting note (but not simply repetition of them, which many do). For example, wine no 2, the Vosne- Romanée 2001 from Sylvain Cathiard was clearly a top quality wine, but being very youthful, this was a little less obvious. A good assessment of quality here was:

“A very good quality AC wine, showing great balance and structure. Modern style Burgundy with plenty of elegant fruit. Long, complex and well integrated throughout but still very youthful and therefore not showing full potential on the palate which is dominated by structure rather than fruit.”

Compare this very extensive note with the following, which although on the right lines, is not as analytical.

“very good quality wine that has a ripeness and length that puts it in an upper category.”

The first example gained all four marks available, the second only two. Whilst the second candidate has clearly recognised that this is a premium wine, he/she has not indicated specifically **why** they believe this to be the case beyond implying that it has (long) length.

In a departure from the previous format of this paper, the nine marks available for identifying the grape variety were split to allow 5 for naming the variety and 4 for giving logical reasons for the choice. This change was introduced to provide candidates who give an incorrect grape variety with an opportunity to gain some marks for good logic. In this case, the pointers to Pinot Noir as the variety were the pale colour, crisp acidity and specific flavour characteristics such as strawberry, raspberry and other red fruits.

Question 2: Wines with a common theme

Despite being given information in the question regarding the common theme, an alarming number of candidates ignore this. For example, in January having being told the link was

geographical, one candidate decided all three wines were “Cabernet Sauvignon wines” – nothing to do with origin at all. This kind of error is careless and completely unnecessary, causing the loss of valuable marks. Information provided within the question is there to help you – make sure you use it.

January 2005: Red wines with a common link in respect of geographical origin

Answers: 52

Passes: 28 (54%)

The three wines in this instance were a generic Bordeaux Rouge priced at around £8.50, a mid-priced (£13.50) Château bottled wine, and a premium, 3rd growth Margaux priced at around £42.

With all three wines from the Médoc, the marking key allocated all 9 marks to those candidates who were able to pinpoint the common link in this much detail. Those who specified Bordeaux were penalised by one mark only, but those who took the “vague” option and cited “France” as the geographical origin only benefited from 2 marks. As with most tasting papers, the tasting notes themselves were tackled better than the assessment of quality, age, maturity or price. Guidance on how best to approach these can be found in the general notes on tasting papers on page 14 and in previous Examiners' Reports.

June 2005: White wines with a common link in respect of climate

Answers: 377

Passes: 218 (58%)

The three wines were a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, Chablis and a Riesling from the Mosel-Saar-Ruwer. Candidates were told that the common link was in respect of climate and not surprisingly, most were able to deduce that these were all cool climate white wines. The clues leading to this were crisp acidity, medium to light body, pureness of fruit and in the case of the Chablis and Riesling, elegance and a classic style. Unfortunately, some candidates did not read the paper carefully enough and described the common link as “unoaked whites” or “stainless steel fermentation”. More alarming were the errors that demonstrated the weaknesses in some candidates' factual knowledge – “Chablis made from Chenin Blanc”, “crisp acidity leads to warm climate”, “AOC Sancerre from Italy”. Candidates making errors of this severity should not be attempting this qualification.

Compare the following note for the Chablis which gained high marks in all sections with the second example, which is seriously inadequate for this level of qualification:

Example 1 – high scoring note

Appearance: Clear and bright, pale straw core with greenish hue, fading at rim. Legs long and pronounced.

Nose: Clean, subdued, creamy nose of light intensity. Perfumed fruit with some development. White stone fruit, citrus, mineral, hints of butterscotch, and vanilla oak.

Palate: dry, crisp but balanced acidity, medium body with moderate alcohol. Medium intensity of fruit with citrus, very slight honey and mineral notes, spicy oak, buttery mouthfeel and hints of liquorice. Finish is long with balance and structure.

Country and region of origin: France, Chablis

Assessment of quality: very good quality and well made. Good level of fruit balanced with structure of alcohol and acidity. Suggestion of subtle use of oak in fermentation and/or maturation. Quality winemaking with attention to detail. Expressive of terroir and fruit characteristics.

Grape variety: Chardonnay

State of maturity: Drinking now but could hold for 3-5 years with signs of further development.

Example 2 – poor note

Appearance: Clear, medium intense lemon-gold, high viscosity.
Nose: Clean, medium intense, developed, cinnamon, some oak, mineral
Palate: dry, crisp, full body, good fruit intensity, medium to high alcohol, medium aftertaste.
Country and region of origin: South Africa
Assessment of quality: medium quality, medium price.
Grape variety: Chardonnay
State of maturity: At peak, drink now or in 2 years.

Whilst there were some correct observations in this note, it is extremely short, in some cases vague or inaccurate, and describes very little in terms of fruit character.

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, this assessment is a powerful tool. Unfortunately many are confused or not precise enough when it comes to the quality assessment. Comments such as "average quality" will not gain marks unless some reference is made to the quality level the wine is pitched at. For example, is it "average" for a Grand Cru or for an entry level £3.99 wine? This section of the paper carries 7 marks and comments such as "good" or "AC level" are simply not detailed enough. 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.

This paper also requires the candidate to demonstrate an awareness of the commercial value of wines based on their quality. In some instances, this is woefully lacking, or candidates hedge their bets and give an answer that spans a wide range of prices. Whilst we do not expect candidates to pinpoint the price exactly to gain the 2 marks available, we do expect them to identify this as closely as possible. It is perfectly acceptable to price a £5.99 wine at, say, £5 - £6 or £6 - £7, but the candidate who prices it at £5 - £10 is not precise enough to gain the marks. Even worse examples of blatant optimism came to light in some papers submitted, such as the candidate in the US who estimated the price of one wine as between \$14 - \$40. This is clearly not acceptable.

January 2005: Red wines all made from the Sangiovese grape in Tuscany

Answers: 65

Passes: 30 (46%)

Another poor set of scripts, which clearly illustrates the difference a larger percentage of re-sit candidates can have on the overall pass rate. Compare this to the very good pass rate for the same format of question in the June exam below (46% versus 79%).

This tasting partnered a youthful, oaky, fruit driven, good quality Chianti Classico from Barone Ricasoli, with a fully mature and fairly simple generic Sangiovese and a top quality (£28) Brunello di Montalcino 1998 which was showing some development, but still had plenty of potential for further ageing.

The key to success with this question is being able to recognise the characteristics that point to quality in wine. Once the premium wine has been identified, the other two should fall into

place. Samples for this paper are also chosen to clearly reflect the three different quality levels.

June 2005: Red wines all made from the Pinotage grape in South Africa

Answers: 398

Passes: 314 (79%)

This was a very good result for a paper that tends to catch candidates out. Historically, candidates find it difficult to assess the quality of three similar wines, and it was therefore encouraging to see such a high pass rate in this instance, particularly as the wines may have been 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 truth, it appears that most candidates still picked up the bulk of their marks on the description of the wines rather than in the concluding sections, as for many, quality assessment is still an area of weakness.

The three wines in this tasting were L’Avenir Estate Stellenbosch Pinotage 2002 (£15.00), Graham Beck Coastal Region Pinotage 2003 (£7.00) and Ruitersvlei Paarl Pinotage 2004 (£6.00). The first wine had the complexity and concentration of fruit that put it above the other two. The Graham Beck was clearly well made, with good structure and balance, but was made in a soft, easy-drinking style, whilst the final wine was lacking in the mid palate and finished abruptly. It was quite obviously a commercial style – jammy and slightly unbalanced by high alcohol.

Question 4: Unspecified Wines

January 2005: White wines - German Mosel Riesling Spatlese QmP, Muscadet sur Lie AC, Australian Barossa Semillon

Answers: 65

Passes: 23 (35%)

Once again, a very poor performance for the assessment of three very classic, and very different wines. Many of the comments made in respect of preceding tasting questions apply equally well here, so I have chosen to reproduce below a good example of a script which scored high marks. Each heading has been addressed in full, assessments of quality are analytical and logical, and conclusions are correct.

Appearance: *Clear and bright. Pale straw core with greenish tinges fading to a broad watery rim. Marked CO₂ and slight legs*

Nose: *Clean. Medium intense nose showing some signs of development. Mineral, flinty, aromatic, floral, apple and apricot with a hint of honey. Notes of linoleum, petrol and kerosene.*

Palate: *Medium dry, with crisp, high acidity. Light bodied with medium plus fruit intensity. Mineral, flinty, floral, citrus. Kerosene development far less obvious on palate, but still detectable. Palate does not quite live up to nose and is more delicate. Low alcohol and a lingering, medium + finish.*

Assessment of quality: *A well made quality wine, showing distinct varietal character. A good balance of high acidity to fruit. Development and sweetness indicate Spatlese QmP quality. Crispness and lightness leads to Mosel-Saar-Ruwer rather than Rhein.*

State of maturity: Drinking now but still youthful will develop further over next 4-6 years.

Approximate age of wine: 3 - 4 years

Country of origin: Germany

Region of origin, if applicable: Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

Predominant grape variety / varieties: Riesling

WINE No. 11

Appearance: Clear and bright. Medium lemon core with golden lights fading to a broad watery rim. Medium legs and CO₂ obvious.

Nose: Clean, fresh, youthful, medium intensity, estery, green apple, pears, citrus, slightly herbaceous, straw notes. Slightly creamy and honeyed, almost confected.

Palate: Dry with high acidity (more than crisp) and slight CO₂ prickle on the tongue. Medium bodied, simple wine of medium intensity. Tart, green fruit, granny smith apples and citrus. Mineral, steely, grassy notes. Creamy on the mid palate. Medium alcohol. Medium length driven by acidity giving a mouth-watering finish. Palate dominated by structure rather than fruit character, which is fairly simple.

Assessment of quality: A well made quality wine. Creamy note on mid palate indicates possible lees ageing. Searing acidity makes the wine slightly unbalanced and masks the fruit character to some extent. A good rather than basic quality (if rather neutral) wine as indicated by length and structure.

State of maturity: A youthful wine drinking now and over the next year.

Approximate age of wine: 1-2 years

Country of origin: France

Region of origin, if applicable: Loire

Predominant grape variety / varieties: Muscadet

WINE No. 12

Appearance: Clear and bright. Medium lemon core with slight green lights fading to a narrow watery rim. Slightly oily appearance with obvious legs.

Nose: Clean, medium plus intensity, youthful aroma of oily, lanolin, waxy ripe fruit, honeydew melon, lemons and apples. Slightly herbal with oak, smokey, vanilla notes, but also confected, boiled sweets, pear-drops.

Palate: Dry but ripe fruit and noticeable alcohol gives slight impression of off dryness. Medium, almost crisp acidity and medium body. Medium fruit intensity of smokey, vanilla, green apples and citrus with some exotic fruit character. Strong oak giving a slightly bitter effect. Medium plus, warming alcohol and length. A simple, slightly hollow, one-dimensional wine.

Assessment of quality: A commercial quality wine with simple fruit character and a little bit unbalanced by the oak. Waxy oiliness indicates Semillon and ripeness of fruit with alcohol leads to a warm climate and the New World. Lacks elegance.

State of maturity: Drinking now and over the next couple of years.

Approximate age of wine: 3 years

Country of origin: Australia

Region of origin, if applicable: South Australia (Barossa Valley)

Predominant grape variety / varieties: Semillon

Compare this with the following assessment of quality for the last wine, which is vague, waffly and makes not attempt to "analyse" the wine at all:

"Perfectly acceptable high end version of an everyday drinker which doesn't ask for much, but gives plenty in return."

It is hard to see what, if anything, this is actually saying. Other poor observations found in tasting notes ranged from “full bodied” Riesling to “low acidity” Muscadet. A common misconception of candidates is the belief that if they identify the wines correctly, they should pass this paper. This is simply not the case. For each wine, 33 marks are available. Twenty of these are given to the description of the wine under appearance, nose and palate, with only 4 available for the identity of the wine and grape variety. It is perfectly feasible for a candidate to identify all three wines yet fail because their tasting notes are inaccurate and short, whilst another candidate can make errors in the concluding section, yet still pass – sometimes with a high grade. The purpose of professional wine tasting is not to be able to recognise the wine (anyone can do this if they taste a wine often enough), but to be able to strip the wine to its component parts and describe these and make judgements based on this information. This explains how one candidate gained a distinction yet identified the Muscadet as Sancerre (a high acid grape grown in a cool climate), and mistook the oiliness of the Australian Semillon for the petrol aromas in mature Riesling. In both cases, although the conclusion was incorrect, the tasting note itself was entirely accurate.

June 2005: White wines – Argentinian Torrontes, Tokaji Azu 5 Puttonyos, Retsina

Answers: 398

Passes: 215 (54%)

This was not a good result compared to the other tasting papers for the June exam, with few high grades in addition to the generally low pass rate. These were three very different styles of wine, each very distinctive in style. Even if candidates could not identify them, the styles should have made it easy to write good tasting notes and pick up the bulk of the marks in this section of the paper. However, it seems that a number of candidates fell prey to the common error of deciding what the wine was, and subsequently wrote a tasting note to match their (incorrect) conclusion. This is easy to do under examination conditions and very tempting when you are not confident you know what the wine is. However, it is always a bad move as the tasting note is invariably less accurate as the candidate tends to describe how they “expect” the wine to taste rather than how it actually does taste.

This is, of course, exactly the opposite of what they should be doing, which is writing a systematic tasting note and drawing conclusions from the information contained in it. Not surprisingly, most candidates gained high marks for their assessment of the Tokaji. This was the wine the examiners commonly refer to as “the banker” – the one that we expect all candidates to identify and describe with no difficulty at all. There is usually one wine that requires a little application of logic to get to the correct information. In this case, the Retsina. Those who had tasted this before, would have had no trouble placing it, but even those who had not, should have been able to associate the very obvious pine resin aromas with Retsina, as this is a very unique style of wine and described very well in many text books. However, many assumed the wine was out of condition and decided they were unable to write a tasting note in the circumstances. The Torrontes was chosen to provide a vehicle for the exceptional candidate to shine yet still allow other candidates to gain marks in the descriptive section of the tasting note. Once again, the application of a little logic and good, unbiased adherence to the Systematic Approach to Tasting Technique would have led to a viable conclusion. The first step was to identify the grape variety as one of the more aromatic ones. This coupled with other clues such as the high alcohol (warm climate, New World), simple style, short length (high volume, commercial style of wine), should have led candidates away from wines such as Alsace Gewurztraminer or German Riesling and to a New World aromatic. Unfortunately many candidates make assumptions rather than use analysis of their tasting note.

Theory Paper January 2005

Group A: Compulsory Question

*France is renowned for the variety of its terroir. Select **THREE** regions from the list below. Explain how terroir is believed to determine the style of **TWO** different wines from each of your chosen regions.*

- a) *Alsace*
- b) *Bordeaux*
- c) *Burgundy*
- d) *Loire*
- e) *Rhône*

Answers: 67

Passes: 36 (54%)

This was a compulsory question and clearly highlighted which candidates had not studied the whole Unit 3 syllabus. This is, of course, the purpose of the compulsory question – to differentiate those candidates who have good, all round knowledge from those who may know a great deal about a few areas only.

This was judged to be a fair choice for the compulsory question, covering the classic regions of France that every candidate should have studied, and even allowed them a choice within those listed.

The results for this question were fairly good, with a good distribution of marks between those passing and those gaining merit (equally split at 21% for each grade banding) and those gaining distinction (somewhat lower at 12%). This is a very good split of the grade bandings. However, there was still evidence of a number of candidates not being able to demonstrate a good understanding or knowledge of all three regions selected. As all three sections carried equal marks, this often led to problems, as the candidate who knew one very well, one only adequately and one extremely badly was unlikely to pass with a 55% pass mark.

There are a number of ways to trip up with this question. The most important rule in any exam is make sure you read the question carefully and fully understand what is required of you. One candidate fell at the first hurdle here by answering all five paragraphs rather than three. Inevitably, these were therefore rather superficial in content and with only the marks for the top three qualifying, this candidate could not generate enough marks to pass. Other candidates did poorly because they failed to select appropriate wines for each of the regions. Some selected wines not from the region in question, as in the case of the candidate selecting Sancerre and Pouilly Fuissé for the Loire. This was a bad choice for two reasons. Firstly, as any good Advanced Certificate candidate will tell you, Pouilly Fuissé comes from Burgundy not the Loire, and secondly, assuming the candidate meant Pouilly Fumé anyway, this was still a bad choice as the question asks for “two **different** wines”, and in this instance Sancerre and Pouilly Fumé are far too similar in style to qualify. Similarly, the candidate who selected Chablis and Mâcon Villages left themselves very little to say in terms of the difference *terroir* makes to these wines.

In order to answer this question well, the candidate needed to demonstrate a clear understanding of what *terroir* actually means. This is generally defined as all the natural elements creating the environment: soil (geologic origins and hydrology), topography (altitude, slope, aspect), regional climate (latitude, temperature, sunlight), mesoclimate (macro-) (lakes, rivers, mountains, hills). Whilst most candidates were able to discuss the influence of regional climate, far fewer were able to refine this down to local (meso) or micro climate. There was also some very poor knowledge when it came to soil. The following is an extract from one candidate's script:

"To answer this question, I will start to explain what the meaning of the word terroir is. This word exists only in the French language and it is not translatable in other languages. Literally, terroir means soil, but in viticultural terms it is a combination of factors which influence the vine, the rootstock, the vigour and so on and thus also the style of the wine.

These factors include:

- 1. soil*
- 2. climate*
 - i) the overall macro climate of a country or a region*
 - ii) the mesoclimate; climate of a group of vineyards or a single vineyard*
 - iii) the microclimate; climate of a plot of vines within a vineyard*
- 3. the influences on climate*
 - i) altitude; the higher it is, the cooler it becomes*
 - ii) latitude in the northern or the southern hemisphere*
 - iii) temperature and temperature variability*
- 4. the influence on soil*
 - i) drainage; eg waterholding soils*
 - ii) the inclination of the slope*
- 5. exposure to the sun, direct sunlight*
- 6. aspect; eg southern, western, eastern*
- 7. grape variety; directly followed out of the other features."*

This was a very good way to start, and apart from item 7, was all very relevant. This candidate then went on to examine each of these in relation to the three regions selected, and this approach, together with very appropriate choices in terms of wines (Bordeaux – Red Médoc AC and Sauternes AC, Loire – Muscadet AC and Vouvray AC, Rhône – Côte Rôtie AC and Châteauneuf du Pape AC), resulted in a high scoring distinction grade.

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

Compare and contrast the following pairs of wines:-

- a) Vouvray Sec AC and Coteaux du Layon AC***
- b) Frascati DOC and Vin Santo***

Answers: 37

Passes: 11 (30%)

Candidates rarely do well when asked to "compare and contrast" regions or wines as the statistics above testify. The key here is to identify what the similarities and differences are, ie compare the similarities and contrast the differences. Far too many candidates simply describe each of the wines in turn, which does not actually answer the question.

Looking at the first pair of wines, the comparison comes in the form of the location (both from the Loire Valley), grape variety (Chenin Blanc) and climate. In terms of contrast, candidates should have focused on specifics such as subregions, soil, microclimate, viticulture, vinification and style of wine. There are distinct differences in all of these subheadings that would have provided the information required to pass.

The same formula could then be applied to the second pair of wines as follows:

Compare – location (country) and grape varieties

Contrast – region, quality levels, viticulture, vinification, DOC regulations (Vin Santo not generally regulated), and style of wine.

Simply describing the wines does not generally draw out the same information and certainly does not tend to make any connection between the wines.

With reference to the Americas, write a paragraph of EACH of the following:-

- a) **Torrontes**
- b) **Central Valley, California**
- c) **Ice Wine**
- d) **Carmenère**
- e) **Yakima Valley**
- f) **Pierce's disease**

Answers: 46

Passes: 13 (28%)

Candidates rarely do well in paragraph questions and this was a dismal performance with only one candidate achieving distinction whilst 33 failed to gain more than 54%. Candidates should take note of the advice given in this document on how to approach this style of question, as it will continue to feature heavily in the closed book examination for Unit 3, Wines of the World and also in the theory section of Units 4, 5 and 6.

The essence of a good paragraph answer is plenty of relevant facts in clear, simple English, rather than opinion or argument. Leave these for the more discursive style essay questions. To do well in a paragraph question you need to get as many facts down as possible in a short space of time, making sure that you can provide sufficient facts for all sections of the question. You should aim for around 5 or 6 key points with explanatory detail for each paragraph. A paragraph should equate to roughly one third to half a page of average handwriting. Do not assume that you can gain enough marks by writing a great deal about a few subjects only. Each section of a paragraph question carries equal marks and by failing to answer one section only, you forfeit one sixth of the marks available in this instance. It is easy to see how missing out sections or providing weak answers will affect the candidate's overall chance of success. **It cannot be over emphasised – these questions do not offer the easy option!**

The sections on Ice Wine and the Central Valley caused the least problems, although several candidates confused the latter with the Central Coast. Most candidates did not know where the Yakima Valley was, commonly confusing it with Willamette. Three candidates even put it in Australia, New Zealand and Uruguay – the first two clearly not reading the question properly as this clearly states "with reference to the Americas". Knowledge on Pierce's disease was extremely poor with most gaining less than a third of the marks available. There was general confusion over whether it was a virus or a fungus (it is a bacterial disease for which there is no cure). A large number of candidates confused this with the effects of phylloxera resulting in lots of irrelevant information. Torrontes (a grape variety) was sometimes confused with Torres (a wine producer) and some thought it was a wine region. The following is an example of how **not** to succeed at paragraph style questions:

e) Yakima Valley

In Australia in Victoria region (south of New South Wales). In South East Australia, Yakima Valley by the Pyrenees region, is cool and has a sufficient amount of rain and has high altitudes for the growing of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for still and sparkling wines.

This candidate is seriously confused in terms of world geography. The only comment of any value here relates to the growing of Chardonnay. By comparison, the following candidate did not necessarily write much more, but what he/she did write, was far more relevant:

"Yakima Valley is a part of the larger Columbia region in inland Washington state. The entire region is sheltered from the cooling influence of the ocean by the Cascade Mountain range and the climate is hugely continental. As a result, summers are hot, arid and dry and winters are freezing cold. Riesling does well here as does Chardonnay. Some Sauvignon Blanc is also grown."

This candidate could have picked up more marks by commenting on the increasing use of red grapes (best known for Merlot), commenting on the style of wines produced and quality levels (mostly high quality varietal wines but some cheaper table wines also produced).

Once again, examples of a bad and good response in relation to Ice Wine:

"Ice Wine – Canada – Niagara Falls area is known for its quality ice wines made in the style of the famous German ice wines. This is a new development in North American wines."

This is seriously inadequate. This should have been a very easy paragraph to cover. This candidate gives no indication of how the wines are produced, which grape varieties are used or what the wines actually taste like, whereas the following one did exactly this.

"Ice Wine is made from freshly crushed frozen grapes. The grapes are left on the vine late into the autumn and winter where they freeze at temperatures around -8°C. The grapes are picked while still frozen and pressed. The sugars have been concentrated by the freeze and the resulting wines are sweet, rare and much sought after. Some regions are more reliable at producing ice wine than others, and prices reflect this. Notable producing countries include Canada (biggest producer), Germany (called Eiswein), Austria and Switzerland. The Swiss version is made from Réze grapes, stored in casks at high altitudes and refilled annually via a solera system. These wines are called Vin du Glacier and are a speciality of the Valais. Canada's climate in Ontario is particularly suitable and reliable making it the leading producer in the world."

There is one other reason for selecting this script as an example. Whilst the information on Canadian Ice Wine is detailed and relevant, this candidate also wasted time and effort including lots of irrelevant information that attracted no marks at all. As the question specifically says "with reference to the **Americas**", the three lines relating to production in Germany, Austria and particularly Switzerland are totally superfluous. It would have been far more useful to have included reference to grape varieties used (Riesling and Vidal), and the areas most successful at producing this style of wine (Niagara Peninsula and Okanagan Valley). It is very tempting to tell the examiner "everything you know", but if it has not been specifically asked for, it will not gain you any marks.

Explain why retail prices for New Zealand wines are high. Despite this, how has the New Zealand wine industry expanded its markets? (An essay format is required for this question.)

Answers: 44

Passes: 16 (36%)

Despite the warning that this question specifically required an essay format answer, some candidates still chose to ignore this instruction. They were penalised in the marking process as a result.

Many scripts were simply too short. In the time available for each question (1/2 hour), the examiner expects about two sides of A4 paper, yet many scripts were barely one side or even less, resulting in an inadequate answer.

Whilst the actual content between the introduction and conclusion forms almost all of the marks for this style of question, candidates should not underestimate the importance of the introductory and concluding sections when adopting an essay format. In some instances, the examiner is able to allocate bonus marks for style and clarity, particularly if the candidate is able to show that they have a good understanding of the focus of this question. In this case, it was important to establish some key points at the outset, such as that the current average price of New Zealand wine in the UK market is around £6 per bottle, (higher than for any other country), whilst the average retail price for **any** bottle of wine sold in the UK is only around £3.50. With New Zealand only accounting for around 0.3% of the world's wine production, and with only around 420 wineries in operation, how have they managed to achieve this impressive statistic in terms of bottle price?

Far too many candidates approached this question in very general terms. Viticulture and vinification were often dealt with in one sentence, without any detail of what is involved. Only one candidate seemed to understand the correlation between the high price of the wine and the small amounts often produced, and the amounts of money spent in terms of viti/vini. Some candidates concentrated too much on individual wines (and Cloudy Bay in particular) and only a couple appreciated the significance of the effect of pests and diseases to the equation. In addition, several had severe misconceptions about the climate, with one believing it to be *"the best in the world for wine making."* There was also a common misconception that all New Zealand had to do to solve its problems was to plant more vines and increase its output, without any thought for the consequences. The following candidate was the highest grade for this question, and even this had plenty of room for improvement.

"This small country, at least a three hour flight from its nearest neighbour, ranks very near the bottom (about no 15) in terms of volume of production as a country, yet it commands the highest average per bottle sale price and comes very near the top (around no 7) in terms of value of sales, certainly in the UK. Before the Kiwis really launched into international markets with great success, they ironed out many quality issues such as which grape variety to plant where and how to get the best from the vine. In the 1950's and 60's (and ever since the Dalmatians first emigrated to the "green and pleasant land") the vineyards were mainly full of the German, cool climate crossing Müller-Thurgau. This was because, given New Zealand's cool climate, wine producers looked to other cool climate countries for advice. Müller-Thurgau never produced exciting, long lasting wine in New Zealand, added to which, the rich soils of the country made the vine particularly vigorous and the taste of the wine even more neutral. During the 70's, other varieties were experimented with and canopy management expertise was very much developed and researched. Consequently the great marriage between New Zealand and Sauvignon Blanc was born, as it was discovered that vigorous pruning and the right exposure of the grapes to sunlight, (to lower yields and help physiological ripeness), produced an exciting, fresh, clean and pungent wine. Cloudy Bay was the first internationally successful brand. This same approach was applied to Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Riesling. The two highest selling varieties, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, show distinct varietal character but in a way that is fairly unique. The pungency of fresh, grassy and gooseberry Sauvignon and the rich concentration of Pinot, whilst still showing cool climate characteristics, have enabled producers to command high retail prices. In conjunction with this, New Zealand is only able to produce relatively small quantities of wine as a country, so the (approx.) 900,000 hl are much in demand each year. The simple reason for the high retail prices for New Zealand wine is that demand far exceeds supply. Wither Hills in Marlborough has run out of Sauvignon Blanc for the last two vintages and has had to release the new vintage in June following harvest. They are planting more Sauvignon Blanc in an effort to meet demand.

Producers in New Zealand are represented by a very efficient, pro-active and business like organisation; the New Zealand Wine Growers Guild. This trade body has helped increase the profile of New Zealand wines immensely. Further, the country as a whole has a very positive image across the world and this can only be a benefit when it comes to securing shelf space in a European supermarket. Tourists to the country will be welcomed at the cellar door of most wineries in New Zealand. Guided vineyard tours are available as well as the opportunity to taste and buy.

New Zealand has several large brands such as Montana and Villa Maria. Although they may buy many of their grapes in, they still have control in the vineyard to ensure continued quality. The boutique wines such as Neudorf of Nelson can ride on the back of the good image of larger brands whilst offering a "nice" alternative.

The sheer good quality of the wine that comes out of New Zealand means that, as a country, producers are able to successfully enter new markets and continue to expand and up-sell existing ones. As long as the focus stays on quality, even at high quantity, this success should continue."

This makes a number of valid points, but tends to be rather long winded and lacks the edge of a really outstanding answer. It could have focussed a little more on establishing why retail prices are so high. Although it makes the point that this is driven by supply and demand, it

does not really get to the bottom of why supply is limited (climate and weather, diseases, pests, low yields because of the effect of all of these). Other issues to be explored, relate to production costs and how these influence retail price such as manpower, which is expensive and in short supply, high costs of vinification (state of the art stainless steel and imported French oak barriques). In terms of examining how the New Zealand wine trade has managed to expand its markets, this essay again makes some important points – the quality of the wines, the reliability of the key brands, the focussed, united export strategy with government support, but some of these could have been expanded on. For example, the fact that they make very little in the way of “cheap, bulk wines”. In fact, the domestic market tends to drink Australian wine to fill this gap. Some statistics would have supported the argument relating to the success of the New Zealand Wine Growers Guild and other marketing strategies. For example, in the 10 years from 1992, production doubled and exports tripled, from 2001 to 2002 exports to Australia expanded by 50%. The innovation of the New Zealand market was also worthy of mention – they have raised the (quality) profile of stelvin closures in a way that no other country has managed to do. Finally, they seem to employ excellent and sensitive marketing strategies that encompass both the on and off trade – something many other wine countries find difficult to balance.

Write a paragraph on Pinot Noir from EACH of the following:-

- a) **The Loire Valley**
- b) **Germany**
- c) **Italy**
- d) **Romania**
- e) **South Africa**
- f) **Pommard**

Answers: 46

Passes: 16 (35%)

Despite the potential problems that can result from candidates displaying weakness in some sections of a paragraph question, this really should not have been an issue in this case as Pinot Noir is such an important grape variety. Whilst the examiner expected candidates to struggle more in sections c), d) and e), it was alarming to see how little candidates knew about one of the classic Pinot Noir wines of the world – Pommard. This was not expected to be a problem by the Examination Panel and raises a number of concerns about some of the candidates attempting this qualification.

Sadly, there were no outstanding answers to this question and some appalling demonstrations of ignorance about one of the undisputed classic wines of the world as the following quotations from some scripts illustrate:

“Pommard – Pinot Noir is the main grape variety in Champagne which is made in Pommard, Noir de Noirs Champagne.”

“The sunny climate encourages Pommard to produce Pinot Noir in the New World style, darkly coloured and intensely fruity to be drunk young.”

With this type of question, where the emphasis is very specifically on one thing – in this case, a grape variety, it is important to avoid generalisations that apply to the grape wherever it is grown, but rather to concentrate on aspects that particularly relate to the region in question. In terms of the Loire Valley, the key wine here was obviously red and rosé Sancerre. Far too many candidates wrote about Pinot Noir being used for sparkling wine. This was wrong for two reasons, firstly Unit 3 relates only to still wine production not sparkling which is covered under Unit 5, and secondly, because the principle grape variety for sparkling wine in the Loire is Chenin Blanc in any case. In the case of Germany, this should have looked at the regions where it is grown, an indication of how much is grown and the style of wine produced. For Italy, again regions are relevant and an indication of variations in style in some of these (the

effect of climate), and details of local synonyms for the grape. Unlike the other areas, the focus in the paragraph on Romania should have been on the general lack of quality of the wines and the effect this has on how they taste. Again, regions and any relevant information in terms of method of production should have been covered. In South Africa, the emphasis should have been on identifying areas with the right climate to suit this variety – in this case Overberg and specifically Walker Bay where Hamilton Russell are having success. In respect of Pinot Noir's use in Pommard, the examiners expected far more detailed knowledge than simply that this is in Burgundy (although far too many were totally ignorant of this basic fact anyway). In this case they were looking for an indication of exactly where in Burgundy it is located (Côte de Beaune), the names of some of the more famous vineyards, typical yields, thoughts on how these wines differ in style from those produced in other parts of Burgundy, and any specific practices in terms of vinification.

With reference to the maps attached, answer the following.

For EACH of the wines listed below, state the number which correctly locates the area of production, briefly describe the wine using the format of a tasting note, and comment briefly on the factors in the vineyard and in the winery that determine the style of the wine.

- a) ***Plovdiv Cabernet Sauvignon DGO***
- b) ***Egri Bikaver Minősegi Bor***
- c) ***Weinviertel Grüner Veltliner DAC***
- d) ***Rueda DO***
- e) ***Dão DOC***
- f) ***Ribera del Duero DO***

Answers: 30

Passes: 10 (33%)

Another outing for the former compulsory map question offered as an optional question in this instance. It was not surprising therefore to see that few candidates actually chose to do this question voluntarily. Unfortunately, as can be seen from the very poor pass rate, not always with great success.

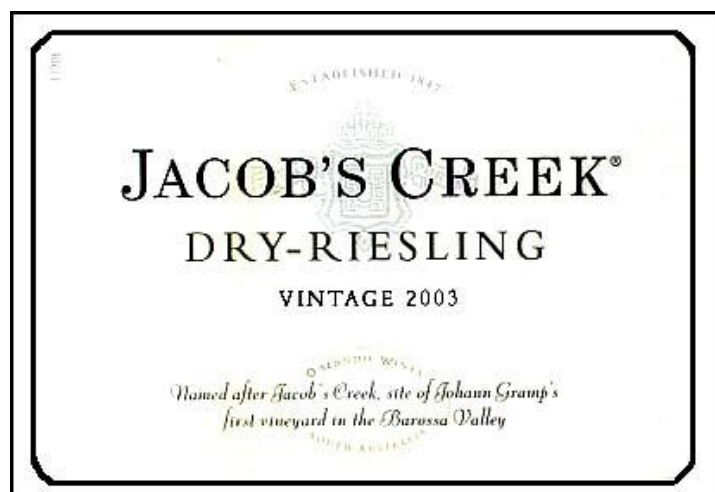
This poor performance calls for some general words of warning when answering this type of question. When asked to indicate the **number**, which locates the area of production, do not give a choice of numbers in the hope that one of them may be correct. When asked to **describe** the factors that determine the style of the wine, it is not sufficient to list the factors in broad terms such as "climate, yields, winemaking techniques, grapes used" etc. These must be elaborated on – what is the climate like? Are yields high or low? Name the grapes used. Specify winemaking techniques, ie use of oak, maceration carbonique, etc. The description of the wine should relate to the one specified in the question, not simply be a generic tasting note that could apply to any number of wines, and this should ideally follow the format dictated by the Systematic Approach.

Using your knowledge of the style of the TWO wines depicted, compare and contrast them based on the following:-

- a) ***Climate***
- b) ***Viticulture***
- c) ***Vinification***
- d) ***Resulting style of wine***
- e) ***Target market***

Answers: 63

Passes: 21 (33%)



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This was a new format of question for this examination and one that appears to have been popular with 63 of the 67 candidates sitting the Unit 3 exam opting for this question by choice. The purpose of this question is to test the candidates' commercial awareness of the wines depicted in addition to their factual knowledge regarding production. The two wines were selected to provide a clear contrast under all the headings. The Riesling Auslese - a classic cool climate wine, labour intensive in terms of viticulture and strictly regulated with regard to picking (timing and condition of grapes), with a very small target market, (lovers of fine German wines who understand and appreciate this expensive style of wine). In terms of the style of this wine, few noticed that this was already 16 years old. Those who did, wrote a

description to match, those who did not, scored less marks where their description failed to address the issue of maturity. In the case of the Jacob's Creek, this was clearly a very different wine – warmer climate, bordering on hot, with little in the way of vintage variation, large scale production (blending of grapes from different regions), highly mechanised with large yields, very high tech, modern vinification with a very different target market (wine purchased by brand name rather than grape variety). In terms of wine style, again very different to the German Riesling – commercial, dry, no distinct regional character, simple fresh citrus fruit for drinking young rather than long term ageing.

Unfortunately, although a large number of candidates felt this was a question they could answer, few of them did so in the level of detail required. Of the 21 candidates who achieved a pass grade, there were only six merits and one distinction grade. As with the first question in Section B, covered on page 23, very few candidates actually compared or contrasted the wines – simply describing each in turn. These two wines were selected because they had certain similarities, but within the scope of these, were very different indeed. Far too few grasped that this should have dictated the structure of their answer.

Finally, we had one candidate who, presumably knowing nothing about the wines depicted, decided to substitute their own choice of (red) wines instead. Not surprisingly, this candidate wasted their time (and the examiner's) and gained "null points".

Theory Paper June 2005

Group A: Compulsory Question

Describe the similarities and differences between Sauvignon Blanc wines from the Napa Valley, Marlborough, Pouilly-Fumé and Pessac-Léognan. (An essay format is NOT necessary for this question).

Answers: 323

Passes: 165 (51%)

This style of question is common in the Diploma examination and is rarely answered well by the majority of candidates. In this case, it is not sufficient to simply describe the four wines identified – there must be a clear attempt to identify where **similarities** and **differences** can be found.

The best way to approach this question is in two sections. The first should aim to establish any similarities between the wines and the second to discuss ways in which they differ. Whilst some candidates did point out the differences between the wines, hardly any addressed the issue of similarities. Since the question is asking about the wines themselves, the obvious similarities to note are that all four are dry and made either wholly or predominantly from Sauvignon Blanc. Far too many included reference to sweet wines in respect of Pessac-Léognan – these would not qualify for the Pessac-Léognan AC. Other key points that could have been established are the similarities in terms of fruit characteristics, such as the herbaceous, grassy elements that tend to be apparent on all Sauvignon Blanc wines, whilst subtle differences in climate will tend to influence other characteristics which should be discussed as relevant under the section on differences. Another general similarity is that all these wines can tend to lack complexity in the mid-palate (a characteristic of the grape variety), unless there is some blending or use of oak (again, a point to be elaborated under "differences"). They all have good acidity (but it should have been noted that this can still vary from medium to crisp dependant on regional climate). All are normally ready to drink when released, and although some examples of Pouilly Fumé or Pessac Léognan will age well, the wines from Marlborough often develop unpleasant tinned asparagus flavours if left too long in bottle. Finally some similarities could be drawn between some of the pairs of wines within the quartet as well. For example, the New World wines share similarities in terms of the overt nature of their fruit, whilst the Old World styles tend to be more restrained.

The Napa wines and Pessac Léognan both tend to use oak and blend the variety with Semillon

In terms of the differences, these are best handled by looking at each wine in turn. In terms of the Napa Valley wine, the key differences are the fact that it is made in a number of different styles (dry single varietal, oaked single varietal, oaked blended with Semillon, sometimes with a degree of residual sugar), the wines tend to reflect the warmer climate and volcanic soils, they tend to be deeper in colour (either due to oak ageing or the warmer climate), they rarely exhibit the overt herbaceous characteristics of the other wines, with more emphasis on fruit, they tend to be quite full and heavy with alcohol often around 13% giving the wine an oily texture (also a result of fermentation in oak).

For the New Zealand wine, the key differences relate to the purity of the style of wine which tends to reflect the very characteristics of the grape. This wine also tends to have the highest acidity of the four, due to the very extreme diurnal swings in the climate, but it also often has high alcohol. However, unlike the Napa wines, where this is due to the climate, here it is due to high levels of sunlight rather than heat. Unlike all the other wines, these are rarely (if ever) oaked and also rarely (if ever) blended.

With regard to Pouilly Fumé, the most obvious starting point is the smoky, gunflint nuance that characterises this wine along with the mineral notes that come from the *terroir*. The other differences all point to the coolness of the climate – the very pale colour, the light to medium body and the medium alcohol level. Finally, it would be wrong not to mention the classic, restrained style of this wine which makes it benchmark old world Sauvignon Blanc that many other wines aspire to. Finally, whilst the majority of the wines are fermented in stainless steel, some are aged in oak or barrel fermented, the most famous and sought after being the wines of Didier Dagenau.

Finally, Pessac-Léognan wines – they tend to be less aromatic, reflecting the milder climate, alluvial and gravel soils and blending with Semillon. Acidity also tends to be less aggressive (certainly less so than in New Zealand or Pouilly Fumé), and the blending and fermentation and/or ageing in oak gives a richness and lanolin texture to the wines. This region, more than the others, regularly produces wines of all quality levels, from simple, unoaked, (usually) varietal wines to premium priced and exceptionally long lived, Chateau bottled wines such as Haut-Brion and Domaine de Chevalier.

On a final note, there was the inevitable confusion between Pouilly-Fumé and Pouilly-Fuissé, with some candidates placing Pouilly-Fumé in Touraine, or more alarmingly, in the Rhône. This is basic wine knowledge taught at Intermediate and Advanced Certificate level and this kind of ignorance is not acceptable at this level.

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

With reference to both France and South America, write about each of the following grape varieties:

- a) Malbec**
- b) Syrah**
- c) Merlot**

Answers: 300

Passes: 190 (63%)

This was a good result for a question that was a popular choice, with 15% of candidates gaining a distinction grade. However, in amongst these very good scripts, were a much larger percentage of very poor ones. In general, Merlot and Syrah with reference to France were well answered overall, Malbec less so. Some candidates knew very little about South America, but those who did, were well informed on Malbec in particular. Some candidates

were selective in what they covered. Syrah in France often meant just the Northern Rhône, or occasionally Southern Rhône only. Merlot meant only Bordeaux. Malbec in France sometimes made no mention of Cahors at all. There were also some appalling “clangers”, - “Syrah is part of the famous Bordeaux blend”, “Malbec is an important grape in Châteauneuf du Pape”, “the Northern Rhône is part of the Côte d’Or”, “the wines of Cahors are known as Bull’s Blood”, “Malbec is the dominant red grape in Chinon”.

It did not really matter whether the answer here followed the same format as the question in this instance, provided all aspects were addressed. Some chose to approach the question as set out, taking each grape variety in turn and looking at the relevant countries. Others chose a different approach, firstly looking at South America in respect of each grape variety and then France. This was not necessarily a bad move, as it tended to make them consider the country(ies) as a whole rather than thinking in terms of a grape variety linked to one region only. For example limiting Malbec to Argentina only (the questions asks about South America as a whole), and Syrah only to the Rhone in France.

The key facts for each variety were as follows:

- a) Malbec - Most readily associated with Argentina and Cahors

France

Also known as Cot, Auxerrois, and other synonyms.

It is most important in Cahors, where it is usually blended with Merlot and Tannat, (Malbec must constitute 70% of the blend). The grape is thick skinned, so wines are full of colour, tannin and flavour (known as “black wine”) and are therefore aged in oak. It is sometimes used in Bordeaux blends with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc, where Malbec adds colour to the blend. However, plantings in Bordeaux have decreased as the grape has a tendency to coulure, frost damage, downy mildew and rot. The average Medoc vineyard contains only around 5% Malbec and Petit Verdot combined, whereas the average St Emilion vineyard contains a little more (around 10%) where Malbec is known locally as Pressac. It is also found in Bourg, Blaye and Entre-Deux-Mers and in the Gironde where it produces a watered down, rustic version of Merlot. In the Loire it is sometimes blended with Gamay and Cabernet Franc, and mainly found in the Cher Valley in Touraine. It can also be used in Rosé d’Anjou. Other places where it is grown include Bergerac, Buzet, Cotes de Duras, Cotes du Frontonnais, Cotes du Marmandais, Pecharmant and Coteaux du Brulhois.

South America

Most candidates limited their comments on Malbec to its use in Argentina, as for example the following candidate who did this in one sentence only.

“Malbec has seen success here too and has made Argentina its second home where it is the most widely planted variety producing muscular styles of red with high tannin and good acidity making it the perfect match for their much loved chargrilled steaks.”

Whilst it is certainly their signature variety, it is actually the **second** most widely planted with approx. 9,300 ha. Candidates really should have been able to name the most well-know region where it is found (Mendoza) and to give some reason for its success here (less fertile Andean foothills where irrigation is common). In terms of the style of wine, it is either found as a single varietal, (deeply coloured, robust, fruity, black fruit, good tannins, acidity and alcohol, benefiting from oak ageing), or as part of a Bordeaux blend (looser structure with Bordelaise flavour, ripe, lush, capable of extended ageing). Finally, since the question asks about South America, some comment on how Malbec is gaining ground in Chile, (4,000ha in the early 90's) should have been made. It is often blended with Merlot and Petit Verdot and the wines tend to have more tannin, structure and power than the other varietals commonly grown.

- b) Syrah - Also called Shiraz. One of the Noble varieties

France

A good starting point here is to state that although Syrah is very important from the point of view of some very high profile wines (specifically in the Rhône), it still plays a fairly minor role compared to other varieties in France. It would also be helpful to make some comments about the general characteristics of the grape, such as the fact that it is easy to grow but sometimes less easy to produce great wines, it responds well to gentle oak treatment, the grapes are thick skinned so wines have high tannin and colour. Obviously, the focus of this section is its use in the Rhône. Candidates should have discussed its use in the key wines in the north such as Côte Rôtie, Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage, Cornas and St Joseph and in the south (blended with Grenache and other varieties) in Châteauneuf du Pape and Côtes du Rhône. In addition, it is significant in Southern France, either on its own in Vin de Pays or in a blend with Grenache, Mourvedre and Cinsault in AC wines such as Fitou and Minervois, and is also important as a *cépage ameliorateur*.

South America

There was clearly less to say on its use in South America, but Chile and Argentina were both worthy of comment as both countries are showing some success with this variety, although quantities planted are still quite small. It appears to perform particularly well in Maipo and the Aconcagua Valley.

- c) Merlot - Official name Merlot Noir. Usually used as part of a blend as it can lack depth in the mid palate when used alone.

France

There was plenty to say in terms of the use of Merlot in France and the problem should have been in limiting this to make sure other sections were fully covered.

The key points are:

- Most widely planted variety in Bordeaux (approx. 32,000ha)
- Excels in St Emilion and Pomerol - top example is Ch. Petrus
- Average Medoc vineyard is 20% Merlot
- Average St Emilion vineyard is 60% Merlot
- Grows well on wet, clay soil found on the right bank
- It has a great affinity to oak
- Style of wine is soft plummy red fruit, medium acidity and tannin, velvety and smooth
- Also popular in Entre-Deux-Mers, Bourg, Blaye and Fronsac
- Often used in Southern France (on the increase in Languedoc-Roussillon) in Vin de Pays (often unoaked)
- Also found in Bergerac, Pécharmant, Cotes de Duras, Cotes de Buzet
- Blended with Malbec in Cahors

South America

Good candidates commented that too much heat in South America can lead to soupy wines. In Chile, it is found in the more Southerly regions such as the Central Valley, Maipo, Maule and Rapel where it is used in modern style blends and "Bordeaux style" blends. It is often confused with the spicier Carmenère, which ripens after Merlot, leading to wine known as 'Field Blends'. It is quite widely planted (approx. 8,400ha) whereas its use in Argentina is much less widespread (approx. 2ha) where it is grown in Rio Negro and often blended with Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon.

How important is regional identity in the Australian wine industry? (An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question).

Answers: 215

Passes: 123 (57%)

This question generated a wide spread in terms of the quality of essays submitted, with the vast majority (36%) sitting in the pass grade band. As a result, there were few exceptional answers.

As with all essay style questions, there is room for personal opinion in any answer, but it should be borne in mind that all Diploma examination questions are based on factual knowledge and this question also required hard facts to guarantee a pass grade. However, simply listing facts about the Australian wine industry is not sufficient. With any discursive question, the candidate must present an argument and use the facts to back this up. In addition, a good introduction is essential. This should convince the examiner that you understand the scope of the question and give a brief indication of your intended approach. Those who gained high marks for this question started their essay with a brief general discussion of the current state of the Australian market together with any logical conclusion that could be drawn from this. For many, this formed the basis of what was to follow. The key point to bring out here is the fact that Australia has enjoyed huge success in recent years and that this has been primarily brand-led. Regional identity has been rather sidelined to the extent that “brand Australia” is the most important geographical statement for the wines.

The following candidate submitted a near perfect essay. This is their introduction:

“To answer this question we need to look at where Australia is today in terms of production and the market place. Australia is the biggest player in the UK market today – the number 1 selling wine country, closely followed by France and the USA. For Australia, the UK is its biggest country for export in volume terms and the US is also important for them in terms of value. The domestic market is maturing. To date, Australia’s success in this market has been based upon well marketed wines – branded wines – that have become known as ‘sunshine in a bottle’. Jacob’s Creek, Hardy’s, Yellow Tail and Wolf Blass are all well known wine brands in the UK. Key to this success has been the easy to understand, approachable branded style of wines – Chardonnay and Shiraz leading the way.”

This candidate then went on to explain how Australia is facing competition from other markets and what it could do to counter this. This is where they presented the argument in favour of regional identity, but also recognising the need for a continuation of the big brands that were often the result of a non regional approach.

This style of question really requires the candidate to explore the issues from both sides – the arguments for regional identity and those against. Only in this way can it really be established whether the importance lies firmly in one camp or the other. It also shows the examiner that you have considered the counter-arguments, and fully understand the whole picture. More importantly, any marking key for this style of question will have an allocation of marks for both sides of the argument. If your essay is one sided, you forgo the opportunity to earn a portion of the marks available.

The majority of candidates listed examples of regionally expressive wines, and made the distinction between low-priced, high volume wines and the premium sector. They also addressed the power of “brands” and their success in the marketplace. However, many assumed that premium quality could **only** be achieved through regionality, ignoring the examples of Grange, Eileen Hardy etc, (or worse, quoting them as examples of regional wines.) Many were unaware how well established many classic Australian regions are – viewing regionality as a new “fledgling” development. They also failed to appreciate that many of the “big corporations” also own many local operations such as Coldstream Hills for example. However, the overriding problem was that very few candidates discussed both sides of the argument, or acknowledged examples to counter the argument they presented.

In essence, these were the key points to make:

ARGUMENTS AGAINST A REGIONAL APPROACH

- Allows for more flexibility in sourcing large volumes of wine (important for the major brands)
- Tradition of inter-regional blending already exists, even for finer wines like Grange
- Vintage and terroir variations can be overcome through inter-regional blending
- Allows for greater degree of experimentation which can be very good from a quality point of view

- South Eastern Australia provides a useful “screen” for the Riverland and Riverina areas
- Huge success already achieved without regionality, - but can this be sustained?

ARGUMENTS FOR A REGIONAL APPROACH

- The influence of terroir is gradually becoming better understood in Australia
- “Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon”, “Clare Valley Riesling” and “Hunter Valley Semillon” are big “regional brands” that can be exploited as such
- Regional identity allows the “little man” to flourish despite the power of the “big boys”
- Strong regional identities based on the concept of “premium” or “quality” wines are important for cool climate areas, such as the Mornington Peninsula, where production costs are inevitably high
- Traditional/conservative wine drinkers (typically higher spenders) are more influenced by region than grape variety
- Regionality implies “elitism” – the cachet of uniqueness
- Regionality appeals to the snob value of the concept of “terroir” amongst wine enthusiasts
- “Brand Australia” is facing strong competition from elsewhere – it needs to be able to compete in other, premium markets. This is important as the current trade has been built on the strength of brands, but the customer can (and does) tire of these.

Any essay style question needs a strong and clear conclusion to reinforce and summarise the key points made. In this case, this should have included observations such as recognising that the current tensions arising over regionality will remain as borders/boundaries are defined. South Eastern Australia will continue to offer the commercial flexibility needed by the big producers and this cannot be ignored. Niche players will increasingly benefit from regional identities, and most importantly, regional identity will be crucial if Australia is to establish its status as a producer of “terroir-driven” wines and not just be thought of as a factory that churns out commodity, varietal wines.

With reference to rosé wine, write a paragraph on EACH of the following:

- a) **California**
- b) **Tavel**
- c) **Navarra**
- d) **Anjou**
- e) **Portugal**

Answers: 288

Passes: 177(41%)

Many candidates come unstuck when answering this style of question as the statistics above illustrate all too plainly. They mistakenly think this is an easier option than, say, a question that requires a full essay-style answer such as the previous one. This is simply not the case. As all sections of this question carry equal weighting, it is important to be able to cover them all. It only needs one poor section to result in a mediocre pass grade. Two poor sections (unfortunately all too common) are likely to result in failure, as this leaves very little room for error in other sections of the question. Ideally, candidates should aim to make five or six relevant points for each paragraph, and write around a third to half a side of A4 for each (average size handwriting).

Some of the sections were handled better than others – with Portugal being particularly poor. This was surprising bearing in mind the importance of the two key rosé wines (Mateus and Lancers). However, although Mateus was mentioned by just about every candidate, many of them could not say very much beyond that fact that it was “very popular”. Take for example the following extract from one candidate’s paper:

“Portugal’s most famous rosé is Mateus Rosé which has enjoyed prominence in Britain. It is produced in Northern Portugal. Traditionally it appeared in oval shaped bottles. It is a light,

off dry and fragrant style of rosé. Rosé represents only a small proportion of the Portuguese production."

This may be correct, but it is very weak as an answer. This candidate should at least have alluded to the huge importance of this brand not only in the UK market, but also for the Portuguese wine economy. Launched in 1942, it is one of the world's most famous brands. It enjoyed huge commercial success in the 1950's and 60's, and by 1980 accounted for around 40% of Portuguese table wine exports. Originally produced near Vila Real, north of the Douro Valley, most is now made in Bairrada and is enjoying renewed success following a re-branding exercise. The other big brand that should have been mentioned is Lancers. Like Mateus, it is medium sweet and lightly sparkling. Created in 1944, it never became as successful as Mateus in the UK but is very important in the US market. It is produced by J.M. da Fonseca at Azeitão, near Setúbal. Finally, Those candidates with extensive knowledge commented that rosé wines are also produced in Palmela using the Periquita grape variety.

In terms of the other paragraphs, the key points to make were to describe the wines produced, commenting on the style of wine, grape varieties used, regions or "Villages" where appropriate and any significant facts relating to climate, viticulture or vinification. Commercial factors in some cases should also have been worthy of comment such as the marketing triumph of White Zinfandel wines. For example, in 1997, 28% of all exports from California were either rosé or blush wines. Sutter Home launched a White Zinfandel in 1972 and saw sales grow from 25,000 to 1.5 million cases in a 6 year period.

With reference to climate, grape variety(ies) and use of oak, describe the typical style of the following red wines: Rioja Reserva DOCa, Douro DOC and Chianti Classico DOCG.

Answers: 233

Passes: 124 (53%)

This was a very factual question and, with a clearly defined structure and three "classic" wines, should have been an easy option for most candidates who had studied the syllabus. The statistical analysis of this question seemed to suggest this was the case with a good smattering of merit and distinction grades. Unlike questions that ask the candidate to "compare and contrast" three wines, this simply required straightforward descriptions of the wines in question. **However**, these needed to be written in the context of specific reference to the ways in which this style is determined or influenced by the regional climate (and in some cases more specifically meso- or micro-climate), and use of grape varieties and oak.

Whilst most candidates were able to describe the style of the wines, they did not always link this sufficiently to the other sections of the question and lost marks as a result. For example, few were able to comment knowledgeably on the difference in climate in the three sub-zones in the Rioja region, and how these are reflected in the wines produced there. Similarly, although many could name the grape varieties used in these wines, detail regarding the characteristics they impart to the wines was often sorely lacking. For example, in the case of Chianti Classico DOCG, there is more to say than simply that Sangiovese is the main grape variety used. Examiners were hoping that the better candidates would comment on some of the following:

- The blend varies, with most based on at least 90% Sangiovese, (for riservas nearly 100%), with up to 10% from international varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah)
- Sangiovese ("blood of Jove") - can be of variable quality, with many clones. It is important to match the right clone to the right site. It is slow and late ripening, and wines can be rich and alcoholic in hot autumns (13-13.5%). It has very high acidity and high, powdery tannins in cooler years. Over-production accentuates the acidity.
- Canaiolo - softens and lightens the blend.
- Colorino – add colour.

- Mammolo – provides aroma, especially violets.
- Cabernet, etc – give longevity and fruit.

In terms of use of oak, the key points should have referred to type of oak, age and size of barrels (new or used), and length of time spent in oak.

Write a paragraph on FIVE of the following:-

- a) **Baden**
- b) **Primitivo**
- c) **Franschhoek**
- d) **Erstes Gewächs**
- e) **Santorini**
- f) **Irsai Oliver**

Answers: 67

Passes: 32 (48%)

Another poor result for a paragraph style question. However, there was a very clear distinction between those with very sound, all-round knowledge, and those who just about knew enough, with an equal number of distinction and pass grades. This is very unusual indeed. There were a number of reasons for failure here. In the first instance, candidates were asked to write about FIVE regions only, not all six. In cases where candidates did not follow instructions, the marks for the five highest scoring sections were taken when calculating a total mark. Secondly, too many candidates struggled to come up with relevant, hard facts for all five paragraphs. The sections on Baden, Primitivo and Erstes Gewächs were answered fairly well in the majority of scripts, as the following example for Erstes Gewächs shows:

“Erstes Gewächs is a German term for First Growth and can be used now in the Rheingau. As part of an effort towards classifying the top sites in the Rheingau, selected vineyards may produce wine that now qualifies for this designation. Included in the list of requirements to meet Erstes Gewächs criteria, the wine must be a dry style from Riesling, must be from a single vintage, must meet certain yield restrictions, and must be from a designated list of vineyards. In addition, the wine’s standing must be declared prior to release, and must be approved by a tasting panel.”

Other points that could have been made were that it was introduced in 1999 and approximately 1/3 of the Rheingau’s vineyards meet the criteria for classification. Spätburgunder vines may also be used and yields for both varieties (Spätburgunder and Riesling) are lower than for other wines and are hand harvested. Labels also show the Erstes Gewächs logo – a black strip depicting three double Romanesque arches surrounded by the words “Erstes Gewächs”.

Irsai Oliver was clearly a challenge for some. In this kind of situation, it is best to think in terms of obvious questions that someone might ask: What is it? Where is it found? What is it used for? What is it like? What are the key characteristics?

Finally, a quote from a candidate who couldn’t answer these questions – *“Irsai Oliver – nice guy, never met him though.”* This kind of comment makes us smile, but quite honestly, we’d rather have facts!

Describe THREE different methods for producing sweet or medium sweet wines.

Then, for each method, select a wine and comment on:

- a) **Country/region of production**

- b) Grape variety(ies)**
- c) Quality level**

Answers: 334

Passes: 58 (17%)

This question generated the poorest results in the entire paper and was compounded by the fact that a large number of candidates chose to answer it. They clearly thought this was one of the easier questions in the paper and the Diploma Moderation Panel, who signed off the paper, also regarded it as a very mainstream question with clear wording. In fact, the wording had actually been modified slightly by the panel prior to printing the examination paper to make it even more clear to candidates what they were required to do. This was achieved by putting a very distinct separation between the first and second half of the question. Despite this extra clarification, almost everyone attempted to turn this question around, and as a result did not actually provide the answer that was required and many lost a significant percentage of the marks available as a result.

There were two common pitfalls with this question:

- 1) Starting with the second part of the question rather than the first, and in severe cases, completely ignoring the first part completely.
- 2) As a result of the above, either describing the wines selected in general terms, rather than the method of production, or selecting two wines made by the same method and thereby restricting their allocation of marks to two methods only on the grounds of repetition.

It was ESSENTIAL that this question be approached exactly as set. Candidates should therefore have selected three different methods of producing sweet or medium sweet wines. Any of the following would have been valid choices:

- Use of botrytised grapes
- Use of semi dried/passito grapes
- Use of over-ripe, late harvest grapes
- Use of over-ripe, frozen grapes (Eiswein)
- Addition of Süßreserve

This was the real focus of this question and therefore carried the bulk of the marks. The clue here was the use of the words “describe” and “comment on” in the question stem. The majority of candidates who started their essay by describing the three methods generally selected three different and appropriate methods. However, in some cases, the detail expected at this level was seriously inadequate.

Unfortunately more than half the candidates failed to read the question carefully enough and launched straight into the second half of the question before describing the three methods. Some of them compounded this problem by selecting three wines, two of which were Sauternes and Tokaji (both produced from the use of botrytised grapes). This meant that they were not actually doing what they had been requested – describing three **different** methods of producing sweet wines. The other problem with this approach (selecting the wine rather than the method), was that candidates then tended to describe the method of producing this **particular** wine, rather than the more detailed information that would have come from a description of the technique in its general sense. The classic example here is in the case of botrytised wines. When describing the method in broad terms, this would include reference to all the grape varieties commonly affected by noble rot (including those such as Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Furmint, Chenin Blanc and Riesling), whereas the candidate describing the production of Sauternes, mentioned only Semillon. Another example would be in the case of frozen grapes. Ideally, a good description of this method would include reference to countries where this style is common (Germany, Austria and Canada principally), grape varieties used (most likely Riesling or Vidal but others are possible), a detailed description of the issues relating to climate, viticulture and vinification, including how these vary, for example mention of the difference between “natural” Eiswein or ice wine and those

made with the help of cryoextraction. Candidates who selected a Riesling Eiswein from the Mosel would not have made this distinction.

The other section of this question that was not answered well was the issue of “quality level”. In the majority of cases, candidates simply stated that the wine in question was AC level or QmP. This is really not sufficient. There is a clear difference between “commenting” and “stating”. The former requires some discussion or explanation, the latter is what most did. The examiner was looking for demonstration of an ability to link the production method to the quality of the wine produced. i.e. would this method be used to produce low priced, high volume commercial wine or do the production costs involved preclude this? How does quality affect the style of wine produced and who is the target market? In the case of a wine like Sauternes, this should encompass issues such as the very high production costs or that quantities produced are limited and yields very low. Quality assessment also encompasses aspects such as longevity and complexity – something these wines usually have in abundance, not to mention intensity, richness and lusciousness.

Unit 4, Spirits of the World

For comments on the Unit 4 coursework assignment, see Unit 1.

The combined tasting paper and theory paper for this unit generated good results in general (69% pass rate). However, a large percentage of candidates passed this paper purely on the strength of their tasting notes alone. This is particularly worrying and something that the Diploma Syllabus Review Panel has addressed by allocating equal weighting to the tasting and theory element of this paper as from August 2005.

There was clear evidence in the written theory question that candidates were not sufficiently prepared for this and had done very little in the way of revision to prepare themselves. Another common mistake was not reading the question carefully enough. If the theory question calls for a description of the **distillation** process, then information regarding the preparation of wine in the case of Cognac or molasses in the case of rum, is not relevant. Equally unnecessary is any discussion of the ageing requirements or bottling process. However, if you are asked to comment only on distillation, the level of detail expected by the examiner is considerably higher than it would be had you been asked to describe the whole production process. In the latter case, for say Whisky, then an account of all five key stages would be required: – conversion, mashing, fermentation, distillation and maturation.

Unit 5, Sparkling Wines

For comments on the Unit 5 coursework assignment, see Unit 1.

Observations made above under Unit 4 apply equally well here. Candidates need to read the question and provide the information asked for rather than writing everything they know in the hope of picking up extra marks.

As far as the tasting question was concerned, there were some very interesting results here with an overall pass rate of 58%. It was surprising how many candidates were unable to recognise top quality Champagnes when these were selected as samples by the Approved Programme Provider. This was particularly so in the case of vintage Champagnes, which were often described as “poor” or “out of condition” – it seemed that candidates struggled to distinguish between age/maturity and poor quality. Another common mistake was misinterpreting the wet wool, lanolin aromas of Chenin Blanc in Saumur as petrol aromas in sparkling Riesling. Where Programme Providers selected Cava as a sample, candidates usually made of good job of recognising the typical “rubber” characteristic of this wine. Perhaps these are just symptomatic of what people drink more frequently in their everyday lives. I don't imagine many of us can afford vintage Champagne on a regular basis whilst Cava is within the price range of all.

Unit 6, Fortified Liqueur Wines

For comments on the Unit 6 coursework assignment, see Unit 1.

For general comments on this Unit, see Units 4 and 5 above. On a more specific note, once again failure to read the theory question closely enough led to low marks for many. Questions will often require candidates to cover two separate issues, for example, the fortification of a particular style of wine and the effect this has on the wine itself. In such instances, many candidates did the former but not the latter. It does not matter how well a candidate addresses half a question, unless the whole thing is covered, a portion of the marks will go unallocated.

Results for the tasting paper for this unit were not as good as expected and had a detrimental effect on the pass rate, which was low at only 45%. This was probably due to the fact that the three samples selected were three different quality levels of the same wine. Candidates were clearly thrown by this and some specifically tried to place the wines in three different regions or countries. Assessments of quality were also poor in many instances and some candidates lost marks by failing to state the obvious – legs or viscosity for example on the appearance.

Honours Diploma, Individual Research Project

18 projects were submitted in the academic year 04/05 with an excellent 89% pass rate. Encouragingly 22% of candidates achieved Honours Diploma with Distinction.

This report will look at both proposals and projects, in order to assist all candidates undertaking the Honours Diploma qualification.

Proposals

The proposal gives the candidate the opportunity to present their project to the examiners'. This should be done clearly with an outline of the aims and objectives. The topic must allow for extensive research and critical analysis on a subject that does not overlap with previous Level 4 Diploma work. A list of intended sources must be given; this should demonstrate the extensive research the candidate plans to undertake. Many candidates often rely too heavily on out of date books. For more recent information, journals and the internet are useful sources. The proposal must be accompanied by a timetable detailing how the candidate plans to manage their time to achieve submission on the set date of their choice. It is advisable to factor in some extra time to cover any possible problems that may arise when sourcing data and writing up the project.

The candidate will receive a Proposal Feedback Form stating whether the proposal has been accepted or needs to be amended and resubmitted. The feedback includes advice and guidance from the examiners'. This is given to help candidates and should be referred to during the compilation of the project.

Once a proposal has been accepted candidates are not permitted to change the topic of their project. If a candidate wishes to do this, they must register again, resubmit a new proposal and inform WSET Awards in writing of their wish to cancel the original title. Submitting a project that differs from the accepted proposal will result in a FAIL grade.

Projects

In general a number of comments repeatedly appear in the "Areas for Improvement" section of the Project Report Forms, these are listed below:

- **Poor proof reading** – 5 out of 100 marks are given for presentation including spelling, grammar and legibility.
- **Needed structure** – projects should have an introduction, body and conclusion. One long rambling paragraph is very difficult for the examiner to read.
- **Candidate did not take the advice given in the proposal feedback form** – this advice is given by the examiner to assist in the writing of the project.
- **Very factual and simplistic** – this is a Level 5 qualification and requires in-depth study.
- **Required further research and statistics** – extensive research on the topic of choice is expected, with statistics where necessary.
- **Overlapped too much with Unit 3** – Honours Diploma goes beyond the Level 4 Diploma. Simply repeating facts previously learnt is not enough.
- **Source material out of date** – use of the internet can avoid this.
- **Lacking in depth of analysis and original thought** – this is the most common problem. **Projects need to display the candidate's ability to analyse the data and reach their own conclusion.** Poor analysis invariably leads to a poor conclusion, as there is usually insufficient depth to substantiate any findings.
- **Exceeded the word count** – this can lead to a fail grade.

The following are examples of projects submitted. They are not chosen exclusively as examples of good projects, but to illustrate where candidates need to focus their attention in their report to ensure that they fulfil the assessment criteria.

“What choices are available to those wanting to invest in wine? Can investment in wine consistently outperform traditional asset classes such as equities and bonds?”

This candidate was advised to set the focus of the project in terms of the markets and wines to be covered, with limited word count used on explaining other types of investment. The candidate followed the advice and carried out extensive research with clear analysis of the data. This ensured all learning outcomes were covered and solid conclusions could be made.

“Languedoc traditionally produces Vin de Pays [sic] wine. What is the recent significance in the region's potential? What are the comparisons to Australian wine? Devise a plan to promote sales of Languedoc wine in the UK taking into account consumer preferences.”

The candidate was encouraged to make the title clearer, include statistics and a Marketing and Sales Strategy. Unfortunately the title remained too long, the statistics were not substantial enough and there was no Marketing and Sales Strategy. This left the final project without the necessary data to allow for critical analysis or the formation of a conclusion. This was a very factual project and far too close to the syllabus for Unit 3 of the Diploma.

“The Challenges of Marketing Margaret River Wines”

The candidate was warned not to depend too heavily on journals, supplements or “hearsay”. Facts and figures are needed to support the analysis. Again further statistics would have helped support the assertions more and would have given the project greater depth.

“The wines of Tokaji in the UK market.”

The candidate was advised to limit trends in winemaking and focus on the UK marketplace and opportunities for the wines of Tokaji. Unfortunately the candidate covered the style of wines and production methods in too much detail, therefore overlapping with Unit 3 and wasting valuable words.

One of the learning outcomes of the Honours Diploma is to meet deadlines. Candidates set their own submission date and are therefore expected to meet this. To help them do this we ask that a timetable be submitted with the proposal. Candidates take responsibility for managing their own time and should therefore choose their deadline carefully. As one candidate has found out to their cost, failure to submit by the set date will result in a FAIL grade.

The Honours Diploma should be enjoyable, but candidates must remember it is an academic piece of work and as such requires clear analysis, critical evaluation and should not use journalistic jargon.

We hope that the candidates undertaking this work, find it rewarding and useful.