



WSET® Level 4 Diploma in Wines and Spirits

Examiners' Report for 2016-17

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Introduction

This report is designed to assist students and those involved in the teaching of the Diploma by giving feedback on examination performance in the 2016-17 academic year. Where appropriate, examiner observations on how well each question was answered are accompanied by extracts from candidates' scripts. Statistical data on the pass rates for Diploma examinations for the past six years, together with general information on grade bands, appears in the Appendices.

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

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

The information provided in this report relates to examinations held during the 2016-17 academic year and reflects assessment procedures in force at that time. You are advised to read this report in conjunction with the latest editions of the Specification and Candidate Assessment Guide.

Unit 1 – The Global Business of Alcoholic Beverages

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

Coursework assignments

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

Key observations from coursework assignment examiners are as follows:

- Candidates must address **every section of the assignment brief**. Failure to do so results in an automatic fail grade.
- Marks will be withheld where work is presented with **spelling and/or grammatical errors**; with computer spellcheck functions such errors are unacceptable. Candidates are advised to check their work carefully.
- The **bibliography** is an essential part of the coursework assignment. It should list a variety of sources (books, trade journals, internet articles, interviews, etc.).

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

- Candidates are reminded that work submitted for assessment purposes **must not include any means by which they may be identified other than their candidate number**. Candidate names should not appear on the assignment in any form except the signature on the cover sheet.
- Candidates' attention is drawn to the **Collusion and Plagiarism** section of the Coursework Assignment Guidelines in the Candidate Assessment Guide. It is obvious to the examiners when sections of work have been copied from papers on the internet or when the assignment is otherwise not the sole work of the candidate. This is a serious disciplinary matter and such candidates receive an automatic fail grade. They may also be barred from completing the qualification.

Case studies

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

Comments on specific coursework assignment and case study questions follow.

November 2016: Coursework Assignment

Assignment title: The bulk shipping of wine versus bottling at source

At the 7th World Bulk Wine Exhibition, held in Amsterdam in November 2015, Jean-Claude Ruf from the OIV presented the following figures:

14% of world wine production is intended to be sold in bulk, which, in 2014, represented almost 38 million hectolitres (mhl), corresponding to around 38% of the total volume of world exports. With 12.4 mhl, Spain is the leading exporting country of bulk wine, followed by Italy (5.5 mhl) and Australia (4.0 mhl).

(Source: OIV)

Clearly bulk wine shipping and bottling in the country (or close to the country) where it will be consumed is an important and dynamic part of the global drinks industry.

Required sections:

1. Introduction and history (10 marks)

The candidate should present an historical overview of how wine has been exported over time.

2. Advantages of shipping wine in bulk (30 marks)

The candidate should discuss the advantages of shipping wine in bulk from its country of origin and subsequently bottling it in the country (or close to the country) where it will be consumed.

3. Advantages of bottling wine at source (30 marks)

The candidate should discuss the advantages of bottling wine at source and exporting it to the market where it will be consumed.

4. Conclusion and personal commentary (10 marks)

Drawing on their findings, the candidate should speculate on how the proportion of bulk wine shipping could evolve over the next five years in a country (or trading area) that they are familiar with.

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

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

each section of the brief also leads to low marks. In this instance, the historical overview of section 1 was too long in a number of assignments. This section accounted for only 10% of the marks and was therefore the least important section of the assignment yet in some instances it formed the bulk of the work – probably because it was the easiest topic to research and duplicate. The use of the word “overview” was a clue that this section should have been brief.

Section 3 was also weak in some cases with a number of candidates changing the emphasis in this section. Instead of identifying the advantages of bottling at source they wrote about the disadvantages of shipping wine in bulk. This was almost certainly the result of failing to check back on the candidate brief in the early stages of planning and writing their assignment. Having completed a section examining the advantages of shipping wine in bulk, they mistakenly assumed the next step would be to examine the disadvantages of this method. This was not the case.

The following example script is well researched, referenced and presented. It maps tightly to the candidate brief in terms of both content and weighting of the various sections and has a well thought out conclusion. There are no graphics, photos or charts that some candidates overuse and which often serve very little purpose. Instead it relies purely on factual content and clear discussion.

Assignment 1: November 2016 - The bulk shipping of wine versus bottling at source

Introduction and History

The United Kingdom consumes more wine than it produces; this means that the demand for wine far outweighs the supply. 98% of all wine consumed in the UK is imported¹ and the UK accounts for 13% of total global wine imports². Further to this, 62% of moving annual trade (MAT) volume sales in the Off Trade are from New World countries³: regions that, by necessity, require transportation by sea. It is therefore relevant to explore the various ways these wines travel to the UK and the forms in which they arrive.

The oldest storage vessel is the Kveri, used by the Georgians around 6,000 BC. After this came the Amphora ceramic containers used by the Egyptians and then oak barrels by the Romans. Wooden barrels provided a solution for transporting wine on land; they were lighter than clay but more robust and could be rolled on their sides. From the Middle Ages large "tuns" were used in France⁴. These vessels were difficult to transport on land, which led to the rise in importance of export markets situated near ports, such as Bordeaux. Railway construction in the 19th and 20th centuries opened up various global export markets such as Spain; large wooden containers full of wine would be integrated into the train to transport the wine.

Essentially, wine was transported in bulk long before it was bottled at source. Indeed, it was illegal to sell wine by the bottle in the UK from 1636 to 1860⁵. However, in the 17th century glass bottles began to be manufactured and in 1821 Ricketts of Bristol received a patent for a machine that could manufacture glass bottles in identical shapes and sizes⁶. The allure of long term storage and the ability to age the wines in bottle inspired buyers to purchase wine in glass bottles. There was also the notion of assured authenticity, which was the aim of Chateau Mouton Rothschild when they bottled at the estate for the first time in 1924⁷.

The problem with shipping wine in glass bottles was that it was expensive. This led to the invention of the Flexitank, a form of sea container providing a lighter alternative to the stainless steel ISO Tanks which had been available since the 1960s⁸. These Flexitanks are disposable bladders that can fit into a standard 20ft sea container and hold 24,000 litres of wine⁹. These bulk containers now account for 57% of all wine exported from Australia¹⁰, over 50% of wine exported from US and South Africa¹¹ and 50% of all wine sold in the UK¹².

¹ Baker 2006

² HM Treasury 2016

³ Nielsen 2016 cited by Cleghorn 2016

⁴ Malin 2014

⁵ Malin 2014

⁶ Malin 2014

⁷ Knock 2014

⁸ Huigen and Fossey

⁹ Waste & Resources Action Programme 2008

¹⁰ Mount 2016

¹¹ Fickling 2013

¹² Mount 2016

The Advantages of shipping wine in bulk

There are logistical, financial, environmental and qualitative reasons for shipping wine in bulk rather than bottling at source. These will now be explored individually.

Logistics and Cost Saving

As sea shipments tend to be calculated based on volume, there are clear advantages to shipping as much wine as possible and not wasting valuable space on glass bottles and packaging. In a standard shipment, a third of the volume is glass bottles and packaging¹³. A 20ft container holds 9,900 litres of wine if transported in glass bottles and 24,000 litres if transported in a bladder, showing the advantage in terms of volume that can be transported per shipment.

In addition, the cost of shipping a container carrying a bladder is only slightly higher than an ordinary container – around £400¹⁴. As such, by shipping in bulk you can increase volumes by 250% while your costs only increase by around 20%.

Having wine bottled in the country where it will retail is also an advantage in terms of flexibility as the supplier is in a better position to respond to promotions, seasonal sales increases and unplanned orders. As a supplier, not only can this help meet the expectations and orders of existing customers but can also offer an advantage over other suppliers when responding to new opportunities as start dates of supply may be sooner, lead times shorter and you may have the ability to “fill a gap” where another supplier has fallen short. This does, however, depend on the volume of buffer stock held in the UK, and holding a large amount of stock in tank in the UK to meet unexpected demands could cause the supplier an issue should they require the stock elsewhere.

Quality and Shelf Life

The shelf life for wines consumed when young is deemed to start from the time it is bottled¹⁵. As such, wines bottled in the UK have a longer remaining shelf life when they are delivered to the retailer. This is an advantage for the retailer as stock does not need to be rotated as regularly so they can hold more stock and place fewer, larger orders, which saves costs. The retailer is also less likely to be left with stock that has passed its sell-by date. Shipping wine in bulk also means that the risk of damaging the bottles and labels during transit is eliminated.

Studies have shown that a container carrying bottled wine from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere can experience temperatures as high as 60°C, whereas in bulk shipping the temperature does not fluctuate more than 15°C¹⁶. This is because larger volumes of liquid have “greater thermal inertia” than smaller volumes¹⁷. These temperature fluctuations and high heat can trigger chemical reactions that irrevocably change the wine and microbial spoilage can be accelerated by high temperatures. Therefore the relatively stable temperature afforded by shipping in bulk reduces the risk of damage by temperature during its journey at sea. Stephen Walder, Head of Technical at Conviviality plc, who has worked in bulk shipping for over 40 years, acknowledged that he has “never seen a [bulk-shipped] wine affected by temperature”¹⁸.

¹³ Tony Woodborne, manager of Flexibulk Logistics Pty, quoted in Fickling 2013

¹⁴ Fickling 2013

¹⁵ Waste and Resources Action Programme 2008

¹⁶ Knock 2014

¹⁷ Waste and Resources Action Programme 2008

¹⁸ Walder 2016

Bulk shipping requires the producer to make various commitments to guarantee the quality and stability of the wine. With regard to the process of importing wine in bulk to the UK, Walder stated: "Admittedly there are a lot more stages in the process but more care is given"¹⁹. This includes numerous tests before the wine leaves the winery and again when it arrives in the UK and completing a supplier checklist; these are but a few elements of the Supplier Code of Practice that all producers are required to sign before shipping in bulk to a UK wholesaler. Ultimately, there are risks the importer takes – and these are discussed in the next section – but by the time the wine reaches the end consumer there should be little concern over quality or stability following this robust process.

Sustainability and the environment

Importing wine in bottles also means importing a large amount of green glass. In 2000 the government set up the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to promote sustainable waste management. In 2006 WRAP released various reports focusing on recycling as a key sustainable way of minimising waste and GlassRite was established to explore the use of glass and how it enters the UK waste stream. This report showed that, looking at the UK market, imported green glass is recycled, some used to re-bottle wine and then the surplus is exported out again. Importing wine in bulk and bottling in the UK creates a greater demand for recycled green glass, which is a far more sustainable than importing glass and exporting it out again²⁰.

The research conducted by WRAP also showed "there is huge potential to reduce CO2 emissions through the bulk importation of wine" and "[o]n average, transporting wine to market contributes 35% of CO2 emissions generated by wine." According to WRAP, there are four areas that affect the carbon dioxide emissions associated with wine: the container (bulk or glass bottle), the weight of the bottle, the distance travelled and the method of transport. Therefore fewer and lighter shipments will emit less CO2. WRAP found that shipping wine from Australia in bulk reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 30-40%.

Advantages of Bottling at Source

It is important to acknowledge that some wines must be bottled at source in order to be labelled under the region's designation. For example, it is a legal requirement in Rioja to bottle the wine within Rioja DOCa (*Denominación de Origen Calificada*). There are also styles of wine that are unsuitable for bulk shipping; the traditional and transfer methods of producing sparkling wines rely on second fermentation in bottle (and maturation in bottle for Champagne), and sweet wines contain too much residual sugar that the risk of re-fermentation in tank is too great.

In order to ship in bulk, the wine needs to be available in sufficient volumes to fill the ISO tank or bladder; this automatically renders various artisan and small-scale producers unsuitable for bulk shipping. Furthermore, the retail price of the wine needs to be low enough to benefit from the cost savings achieved through shipping in bulk; this sits around £7 per bottle as wines that retail higher will only enjoy "marginal" savings²¹.

Having established that a wine can be shipped in bulk, the producer may then consider the advantages of bottling at source. These include the implications on stock control and cash flow, the risks of bulk shipping, the social impact of bulk shipping and the preconceptions regarding bulk wine.

¹⁹ Walder 2016

²⁰ Waste and Resources Action Programme 2008

²¹ Siddle 2016

Stock Control and Cash Flow

Shipping in bulk may require a producer to increase their stock levels in order to satisfy sales elsewhere while the bulk shipment is at sea. This could lead to a cash flow issue as the producer's cash is tied up in stock and there could be increased storage costs. As such, an advantage of bottling at source is that producers do not need to "put all their eggs in one basket" to the same extent and can base their production on shorter-term forecasts of smaller shipments.

Risks of Bulk Shipping

Unlike shipping in bottles, where one bottle could be faulty in isolation, any fault that affects the shipment will affect the entire volume being shipped. Similarly, bottles can be damaged in isolation whereas if a flexitank breaks the entire volume of wine will be lost. From a quality and technical perspective, the risks are: microbial spoilage from yeast and bacteria, contamination²², oxidation and re-fermentation²³.

Contamination of the wine can occur in various ways. While the wine will have been filtered through a 0.45mn filter before shipping to remove most bacteria and yeasts²⁴, the vessel itself – the ISO tank or bladder – may not be sterile. Whereas the bladders of Flexitanks will only be used once, ISO tanks are re-used. As such, there could be bacteria on the inside of the tank or the bulk head which could contaminate the load. By bottling at source, a producer can bottle the wine in sterile conditions and ensure the wine is free from bacteria during the shipment.

Oxidation due to defective seals on ISO tanks or permeable Flexitank materials has also been pinpointed as a problem; however, improvements in technology have reduced the likelihood of this occurring²⁵. There is also a risk of re-fermentation if there is residual sugar and yeast in the wine. Even if the wine is filtered through a 0.45mn filter prior to shipment, no remedial measures can be carried out during the transit and, in light of how long the journey make take, this does create a risk.

Social and Economic Impact

A key reason for bottling at source is to protect local employment. The emergence of bulk shipping has diminished the need for bottling plants in certain regions, which has led to thousands of job losses. This is a particular issue in South Africa, where "the unemployment rate has remained at 25 percent for years"²⁶. In a developing country such as this where there is an economic, political and social obligation to safeguard and create jobs to tackle such a high unemployment rate, the notion of removing all jobs related to bottling and packaging seems nonsensical. According to Reuters, by the end of 2011, 1,000 people lost their jobs due to the adoption of bulk shipping²⁷. This number only stands to grow as more producers begin to bulk in bulk.

Conversely, the increase in UK bottling facilities has also created more jobs in the UK. Accolade Park in Avonmouth, where iconic brands such as Hardy's, Echo Falls and Kumala are bottled, recently opened a sixth bottling line which in turn created 35 new jobs²⁸. This is clearly a

²² Walder 2016

²³ Waste and Resources Action Programme 2008

²⁴ Walder 2016

²⁵ Waste and Resources Action Programme 2008

²⁶ Sulaiman 2013

²⁷ Sulaiman 2013

²⁸ Flanagan 2016

positive resource for boosting investment and employment in the UK. However, the cost of labour can be cheaper at the country of source, such as Chile, thereby making it cheaper to ship in bottle rather than bulk²⁹.

The Story of the Wine

For many producers, the story of their wine forms an integral part of their marketing message and brand value. Many producers would not want their story to end with a shipment in a large plastic bladder to a bottling facility where it is bottled alongside other brands and styles of wine. As such, bottling at source allows the producer to rely on the romanticism of the wine as a key selling point. Furthermore, wine tourism can play an important part in building relationships with buyers, journalists and the public, and a winery full of stacked pallets of bottled wine and cool and damp cellars with dusty old bottles adds to the enjoyment – and ensuing memory – of the visit.

From a winemaker's perspective, relinquishing all responsibility of the wine before it is a finished product can also be a challenge. It is indeed a "rare winemaker who professes to relish time spent at the bottling line"³⁰ but having spent years growing the vines, picking the grapes, selecting their winemaking methods and blending to perfection, a winemaker will struggle to let go of their product. An apt analogy would be for a painter to ship a piece of art before the paint had dried, and trust that the finished piece will be of the standard and typicity expected when it ends its journey and is installed in the gallery or buyer's home.

This is, however, a question of trust and will come with time as more and more producers decide to ship in bulk and acknowledge that the finished product is no different to an estate-bottled version. The greater challenge is changing public perception of bulk wine. There is evidence that this change is underway, such as the recent "breakthrough moment"³¹ where a Chilean wine that had been shipped in bulk to the UK was awarded "Best Single Varietal for under £15" at the Decanter World Wine awards.

Conclusion and Personal Commentary

With bottling plants such as Accolade Park creating new bottling lines and Kingsland Drinks launching a carbonation line in 2016³², the likelihood is that an increasing number of wines will be bottled in the UK. This increase brings with it environmental, cost, logistical and technical advantages as discussed above, as well as social and economic advantages for the UK employment and investment sectors.

With the recent decision to leave the European Union ("Brexit"), bulk shipping stands to be more crucial to the UK than ever. It is impossible to know what the exit will mean for trade agreements³³ but, with the pound weaker than it has been in over twenty years³⁴, the need to establish cost savings and efficiencies has never been greater. Furthermore, while the pound has plummeted against the Euro, it remains relatively strong against New World currencies with the exception of the US Dollar. As such, shipping wine in bulk from countries such as South Africa and Australia affords UK importers more stability and security than imports from the EU

²⁹ According to Andrew Craig, Assistant Buyer at Conviviality plc, all of Bibendum's Chilean wines are shipped in bottle.

³⁰ Knock 2014

³¹ Siddle 2016

³² Mount 2016

³³ At the time of writing the UK government has yet to trigger Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty to begin the process to leave the EU

³⁴ Cunningham 2016

and US, alongside the cost and logistical efficiencies already discussed. This mirrors Tim Atkins' report for Harpers, where he wrote: "Unless the pound recovers, prices for European and American wines, purchased in euros and dollars, will increase. If we enter a recession, there will be less of a market for £7-£20 wines and an increase in demand for cheaper, bulk-shipped lines"³⁵. Should there be increased tariffs on UK imports then we will see the price of European wines increase, and this, in addition to the exchange rate, will mean that bulk-shipped wines will dominate the cheaper end of the market even more than they currently do.

Brexit also has implications for the UK's role in global wine distribution. The UK's bottling facilities have meant that we are a preferred location for bottling wine for onward distribution into the EU and "arguably the most important wine trading nation in the world"³⁶. Leaving the Single Market could mean "additional customs controls and trading barriers which could add additional costs to businesses operating here and make the UK a less attractive place to include in global supply chains"³⁷. The implications are that shipping wine in bulk will no longer allow the UK to be a gateway into other European markets.

To conclude, shipping in bulk allows UK importers to save costs, protect quality, promote sustainability and support local communities and economies, and none of this is likely to change in the short-term following Brexit. The main hurdle the UK faces is the public perception of bulk wine and tackling this will be the key to growing the bulk market. UK supermarkets were crucial in changing public perception of bottles closed under screw cap instead of cork and by adding a positive spin on UK bottled products they can effect change in public perception of bulk wine too. If supermarkets can allow UK bottled wines to be on an equal playing field to wines with "stories" that are bottled at source, then consumers will be left with a like-for-like choice where the question is solely what is in the bottle, and not how it got there, which must surely be the most important question of all.

³⁵ Atkin 2016

³⁶ Miles Beale, Chief Executive of Wine and Spirit Trade Association in HM Treasury 2016.

³⁷ HM Treasury 2016

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November 2016: Case Study

Family businesses in the wine industry

Family businesses are common in the wine industry. This is the result of a range of factors: historical, cultural and financial. Wine companies in family ownership vary in size, from vast multinationals to small-scale family domaines and négociants in classic wine regions. A family wine business's company culture and financing arrangements often differ from other forms of ownership structure, such as publicly listed companies.

The challenges faced by family wine businesses vary according to their size, objectives and market focus but are more acute for smaller companies looking to compete on export markets around the world. Increasing costs, regulation and a crowded global marketplace pose particular problems for such companies.

- a) Why are family businesses common in the wine industry? Examine the advantages of this form of ownership structure. (40% weighting)
- b) What are the disadvantages of family-owned wine businesses in terms of financing and company culture? (40% weighting)
- c) What challenges do smaller family-owned wine businesses face in today's global marketplace? (20% weighting)

The pass rate for this topic was good at 80%, however most of these fell within the pass grade band with only a low percentage of merits and distinctions. This was largely due to lack of analysis and original thought leading to some superficial, predictable or unexciting responses that failed to bring the topic to life. Examples of family business used throughout the work would have helped in this respect but these were often lacking. Where examples were given, Antinori was the most commonly cited. A large number of candidates failed to address issues linked to succession and inheritance tax which was surprising given the significance of these for family businesses.

March 2017: Case Study

Alcohol and social responsibility

It is accepted that the excessive consumption of alcohol is damaging to individuals and society. Many governments feel it is appropriate to legislate and issue guidelines in this area and do so in different ways.

The drinks industry must comply with applicable legislation, but also has a vested interest in promoting the consumption of alcohol. Some might say that a tension exists here between 'doing the right thing' and the pursuit of profit. Indeed, it could be argued that the drinks industry – via organisations such as Drinkaware in the UK, Wine in Moderation in the EU, The Wine Institute in California and DrinkWise in Australia – has consciously embraced the concept of social responsibility as a way of preserving its autonomy through self-regulation and minimising government intervention.

There are ethical, social and public health arguments as to whether alcohol consumption should be regulated and, if so, to what extent and by whom.

- a) Why do governments seek to regulate alcohol consumption and/or promote sensible drinking? What methods do they use? (*30% weighting*)
- b) What steps has the drinks industry taken to embrace social responsibility? What are their motives for doing this? (*50% weighting*)
- c) In your opinion, should alcohol consumption be controlled? With whom does any responsibility lie? (*20% weighting*)

Most of those who passed this question did so with a sound pass grade. However, with only a few exceptions, responses were competent rather than exceptional, engaging or imaginative.

The following script is one of the better submissions. It is well-written, a very good length for the time available and has a well-argued conclusion.

Section a)

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Alcohol is harmful to health. Numerous studies across the world confirm this simple observation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) observes that at the level of the individual alcohol consumption is a risk worth taking, there is no safe level of consumption, and at the level of the population it is a worldwide problem.

WHO data shows that alcohol related deaths represent around 3 million deaths annually or around 6% of all deaths worldwide. In the UK in 2014 the Office of National Statistics (ONS) stated that there were 8,758 alcohol related deaths, 65% of whom were male. The ONS reported that this cost the UK £21 billion: £7 billion for lost productivity through sickness and lower work rates, £11 billion tackle the caused crime (it reported that over 20% of all violent crime occurs near bars and clubs) and over £3 billion cost to the NHS managing the over one million hospital admissions.

For an individual alcohol consumption causes direct harm through ill-health (alcohol is related to between 60 and 200 conditions including heart conditions and cancers), causing accidents and injuries either self induced or from violence (suicides, mental health, etc).

Alcohol also causes indirect harm to others through the consequences of the harm to the individual and then the impact such as unplanned pregnancies, rape, other crime, accidents and the longer-term impact of chronic drinking. This is not just ill-health to the individual (or their condition), but to their families. Alcohol consumption therefore affects the individual, their family, communities and the country and its economy as a whole.

In the EU alcohol consumption is the third largest cause of death and the third largest avoidable cause of death after smoking and obesity.

The annual risk of death increases linearly with consumption. The life-time risk increases exponentially.

It is clearly that alcohol consumption should be controlled.

However, alcohol consumption is also a feature of many countries and societies around the world. It brings employment - often in rural economies that may have fewer alternatives - it brings tourism and can support management of the environment. Governments therefore face a balance to control the harm of immoderate consumption against ~~a~~ a reasonably low level of moderate consumption.

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In 2010 the WHO set out its global strategy to manage the harmful effects of alcohol consumption. This sets out ten policy areas, which have largely been reflected in national programmes in member states.

Giving evidence to the UK Health Committee of the House of Commons in 2009, Prof. Peter Anderson from Newcastle University showed that the two most effective levers governments have are availability and price.

Availability is managed by:

1. restricting the place of sale to licensed premises with regulations for the knowledge and skills of those licensed to sell from those premises.
2. restricting the hours in the day or days in the week when sales are permitted.
3. the mode of sale for example limited volume to an individual at sporting venues or night clubs, or the volume of drinking vessel.
4. the minimum age that an individual must reach before being able to buy alcohol.

Price is principally controlled through taxation, although some countries are starting to introduce minimum unit prices (MUP) of Canada and potentially Scotland in the UK.

Governments also set advertising standards or guidelines to ensure advertising of alcohol is targeted at appropriate audiences (e.g. not minors) and promotes responsible behaviour and moderate drinking.

Governments also provide guidance typically in the form of what moderate consumption is considered to be (typically between one to two units per day).

Alcohol consumption is also regulated through parallel policy areas and legislation such as maximum alcohol blood levels to drive vehicles, work in certain industries and/or operate certain machinery.

Finally some governments (for example Norway and not states in Canada) restrict alcohol sales to government outlets (Vinnmønster and, for example in Ontario, the LCBO - Liquor Control Board of Ontario respectively) & fully control its sale.

Section b)

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The alcohol industry faces a challenge. On the one hand it naturally seeks to maximise profit and volume of sales, but equally it wishes to not be associated with the negative consequences of alcohol consumption. Invariably this creates a tension.

Recognising the previous evidence that alcohol consumption harm the industry perhaps accepts that regulation of consumption - at least price, availability and advertising - by government is inevitable. Therefore its steps have been to form bodies with principally two motives:

1. to work with government to promote messages of moderate consumption, and
2. to lobby governments to protect the interest of its members.

More cynically perhaps it is to endorse self-regulation as a less stringent alternative than imposed regulation.

Almost all such bodies around the world (Diukwara, etc) undertake similar activities. These have three target audiences: 1. the consumer, 2. governments, 3. their members.

Considering the consumer, the bodies provide guidance on what could be considered moderate consumption in line with their governments

guidance of maximum number of units and suitable groups (e.g. pregnant women). They advertise and promote responsible consumption and behaviour & reduce, crime and anti-social behaviour, & appropriately manage the risk of drink-driving, etc. These messages are conveyed on packaging, advertising in pubs and clubs and messages through media channels.

To their members such bodies set appropriate standards most notably for advertising. In the UK the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) sets mandatory requirements, but these are essentially the same as those adopted by, for example, Wine in Moderation and the California Wine Institute.

To governments, these bodies, openly or less publicly lobby. Wine in Moderation representing producers from countries with big alcohol industries make it very clear that their mission covers ~~policies~~ promoting those industries. The Wine Institute of California does the same less obviously, bodies are ~~overrepresented~~ judicious over their appointments. For example the California Wine Institute recently appointed George W Bush's brother-in-law as its CEO and Dick Cheney in the UK has a number of former Department of Health advised amongst its staff and indeed trustees.

The motives of the industry are firstly, no doubt, to promote moderate behaviour, and secondly, also with no doubt, to protect their own interest.

Page 2 etc

The industry reasonably does not want to be associated with the "Dampf" effect of consumption. It must wish to do "the right thing", but it also wishes to be seen to be doing the right thing. Government regulation, they who ~~do~~ ^{are} answerable for it, most effective means of managing harm, by definition that must come about through reduced consumption. That must mean lower sales to the industry, voluntarily not as it is. ~~will prefer.~~ Therefore the industry seeks to work with governments to manage its own interests and those of government in a healthier population.

Section c)

Page 1 of 1

Therefore, it does seem to me that alcohol consumption should be controlled. Its harmful effects are beyond doubt and WHO observations conclude that populations, if uncontrolled, do not consume alcohol in moderation.

This however should be balanced by a cultural expectation or may associate forth consumption of alcohol. Some societies, for example those of a "Mediterranean diet" have tended to consume alcohol more moderately, though this may be changing.

Therefore, through the policies of availability and price, alcohol consumption should be sensible. This can be by governments or by the industry, given that it is unlikely to be by society alone.

It seems to me that it cannot be by industry. Industry bodies do not speak for the entirety of the industry and their guidelines do not have the force of law. Moreover the industry is made from individual economic operators, each of whom is profit motivated. Given the WHO's observation that price and availability are two most important factors, individual economic operators cannot effectively control these, as it could only take one operator to change their price or open an hour earlier say and the rest of the industry

would have to react of face rising sales.

Therefore I must conclude that only government can effectively control consumption. Only government can set pricing mechanism and availability parameters that apply to the entire industry, creating a level market for the entire industry.

Prof Anderson from Newcastle University West
Mabuli

Prof. Anderson, Newcastle University went further in his evidence (earlier reference) to observe that if the industry was serious in its efforts to encourage moderate consumption it must embrace minimum unit pricing. Since Prof Anderson's view be correct, which I seem to me that it is, industry has demonstrated that it is not able to control consumption. Therefore it has to be by government.

April 2017: Coursework Assignment

Assignment title: The packaging of wines and spirits

Containers used to store wines and spirits for sale have come a long way since the earthenware amphorae used by the Ancient Greeks and Romans and the wooden casks or barrels from which early négociants and producers sold wines and spirits direct to the consumer. The use of glass bottles is a relatively recent development in wine and spirit production. Since glassware became the preferred packaging format, technological advances have led to the introduction of many alternatives such as PET bottles, Tetra Pak containers, bag-in-boxes and aluminium cans.

Required sections:

1. Types of packaging format (25 marks)

The candidate should identify the main types of container currently used for the sale of wines and spirits, together with the raw materials used in the manufacture of these formats.

2. The advantages and disadvantages of different packaging formats (45 marks)

The candidate should evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each type of container from the point of view of producers, retailers and consumers of wines and spirits.

3. Conclusion and personal commentary (10 marks)

The candidate should comment on any potential future trends or developments in the packaging of wines and spirits for sale.

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

There was a fairly even split between candidates achieving pass and merit grades for this assignment. Most seemed comfortable with the topic but there were some fairly common errors that led to low marks and, in some instances, failure. Those who failed often did so because they did not pay sufficient attention to the information made available to them in the assignment brief, such as the weighting attached to each section or the requirement to submit a minimum of 2500 words. There are always a number of candidates who ignore the instructions set out in the brief and write an essay that largely just expands on the “context” section at the top of the brief. These candidates invariably fail to address the specific questions as set out in the brief and therefore the points the examiner is looking for or only include material of limited relevance. A significant number of candidates wrote far too much about wine closures rather than the containers used for the sale of wine. These were even listed in the briefing document. In some instances, bottle closures were all they wrote about. Some candidates who did limit their response to different types of containers still managed to deviate from the brief by writing needlessly about barrels used in the winery or for shipping purposes when the brief had specifically referred to containers used for the sale of wine. There was also a tendency among weaker candidates to rely too heavily on manufacturers’ websites when evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of containers. This worked well in terms of identifying positive attributes but often led to unbalanced assignments that raised little in the way of negative comments – it is obvious that a manufacturer of Tetra-pak, for example, is not going to mention any of the disadvantages of this form of packaging. Candidates needed to use their own experiences as consumers or look elsewhere for information that would address this part of the question and many failed to do this.

June 2017: Case Study

Selling wine online

An article entitled 'Online Wine Sales To Grow Globally' appeared in the online edition of *The Drinks Business* on 17 June 2015. It quoted a study from Bordeaux's Kedge Business School which had reported growth in online wine sales of around 600% since 2006, picking out Britain and China as potential leaders in this sector. In the USA and other countries this route to market is still quite small.

As with conventional 'bricks and mortar' retailing, the opportunities for online wine sales vary from country to country (and sometimes within a country). Regulations, consumer demographics, internet literacy, cost and local traditions can all influence the speed with which consumers embrace the purchasing of wine electronically.

Over the next few years it will be fascinating to see if e-commerce is a 'disruptive technology' or a 'sustaining technology' when it comes to selling wine.

- a) Discuss the growth in importance of online wine sales to the global wine industry.
(30% weighting)
- b) What are the challenges facing retailers seeking to sell wine online? Candidates are encouraged to use examples from markets around the world.
(50% weighting)
- c) In your opinion, what is the future for online wine sales?
(20% weighting)

Most candidates had no problem covering enough of the valid points to ensure a pass grade generating a pass rate of 83%. This was clearly a topic that was familiar territory for candidates. However, many answers were predictable and unimaginative with few high grades. Most fail grades were the result of simplicity, brevity or failure to address specific sections as required. Some candidates wrote about the advantages of on-line retail in section b) rather than the challenges this generates. Surprisingly few considered fraud or counterfeiting of goods to be a challenge when addressing this section.

Unit 2 – Wine Production

The multiple-choice questions used on the Unit 2 papers for 2016-17 are still live and so are not reproduced here.

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

Unit 3 – Light Wines of the World

Unit 3 tasting and theory examinations were held in January and June 2017.

General Comments

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

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

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

1. **Time management.** Many candidates appear to not plan their answers before writing them, with the result that they often veer off-topic and/or run out of time. Candidates should read the Candidate Assessment Guide which contains essential guidance on how to approach the different types of question in the examination. They should also practise writing answers to exam-style questions under timed conditions. Students who participate in exam preparation/question-marking schemes tend to perform better in the examination than those who do not. Many Diploma Programme Providers run marking schemes for their students or candidates can apply to join the WSET Diploma Assessment Preparation scheme ('DAPs').
2. **Answering the question set.** There are two interrelated issues here, one concerning examination preparation and the other concerning examination technique:
 - There is evidence that candidates are not preparing sufficiently, either by failing to cover the Unit 3 syllabus in the necessary depth or by omitting to revise the basic principles of viticulture and vinification studied for Unit 2 which are often the basis of questions in this examination.

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

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

Unit 3 Tasting Papers

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 1, Question 1

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

January 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1 <i>Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety - Viognier</i>		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Chile Colchagua Valley Cono Sur Viognier 2016
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	France Rhône Valley Condrieu la Petite Côte 2015
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia Eden Valley Yalumba Viognier 2015
Identifying the grape was a challenge for most candidates with relatively few picking this out as Viognier. This was the key reason for a relatively low pass rate of 54%. Chardonnay was often given as the variety and the examiner had been instructed to award some marks for this from the 5 available on the basis that this was not illogical given the style of the wines. However, reasons given for the choice of grape were often weak, consolidating the problem of the rather low pass rate.		
Many candidates were also let down by poor explanations in the “assessment of quality” and “readiness for drinking/potential for ageing” sections of their tasting notes. Guidance on how to answer the various concluding sections of tasting notes is available in the Candidate Assessment Guide and is essential reading for all candidates.		

June 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1***Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety – Merlot***

Wine 1	Country: France Region: Bordeaux Wine: Château Plince Pomerol 2010
Wine 2	Country: Chile Region: Colchagua Wine: Luis Felipe Edwards Gran Reserva Merlot 2015
Wine 3	Country: USA Region: California Wine: Shafer Merlot 2014
<p>A significant number of candidates incorrectly identified the grape as Cabernet Sauvignon on the basis of the Pomerol which they believed to be a wine from the Médoc. This was not illogical given that it was a red Bordeaux, but these candidates made the mistake of “jumping the gun” too soon in their assessment. Those who kept an open mind and reached a conclusion based on their findings from <u>all</u> three samples were more likely to end up with the right grape as the varietal character was easier to identify on the other two samples.</p> <p>Marks were most often lost in the assessment of quality where answers continue to be unconvincing and too formulaic. Far too many candidates rely solely on the “B-L-I-C” principle (balance/length/intensity/complexity) applying it simplistically with no explanation. For example, in the case of “complexity” it is much better to say “the wine has only a moderate level of complexity as demonstrated by a range of flavours, but all within one cluster grouping” than simply “the wine needs more complexity to be considered of higher quality”. This is a phrase that is used indiscriminately for any wine below “outstanding”. However, it lacks conviction when over-used because pretty much any wine could be judged to be higher quality if it had “more” complexity.</p>	

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 1, Question 2

Question 2 involves three wines linked by origin or some other common feature. For 2016-17, the wines in the January flight were from Bordeaux and the wines in the June flight from the Loire. Despite it being explicit in the question that examiners were looking for one country in each instance, some candidates disregarded this, naming a different country for each wine and were consequently at a disadvantage when it came to the marks allocation in the concluding section.

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

January 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 2		
<i>Wines from the same, unspecified country of origin - Bordeaux</i>		
Wine 4	Country:	France
	Region:	Bordeaux
	Wine:	Château Laville Sauternes 2009
Wine 5	Country:	France
	Region:	Bordeaux
	Wine:	Château de Fontanille Entre-deux-Mers 2015
Wine 6	Country:	France
	Region:	Bordeaux
	Wine:	Château Cos Labory 2010
This question generated a good set of answers with a reasonably high pass rate of 69% and a number of merit and distinction grades suggesting that candidates were more comfortable with the three wines in this question than in previous years.		
As always with this question, success lies in identifying the grape varieties correctly. Having done this, candidates can use logic to connect them to the most likely styles of wine and through that process arrive at the correct region of origin. The combination of dry white, sweet white and oak aged red offered relatively few obvious potential regions, and the clear Cabernet Sauvignon character on the red and Sauvignon Blanc character on the dry white helped to tie these down to Bordeaux rather than other potential contenders such as the Loire (see below).		

June 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 2***Wines from the same, unspecified country of origin - Loire***

Wine 4	Country: France Region: Loire Wine: Muscadet sur Lie 2016
Wine 5	Country: France Region: Loire Wine: Chinon Rouge les Gravières 2015
Wine 6	Country: France Region: Loire Wine: Langlois-Château Coteaux du Layon 2014

This question generated a low pass rate of 50% and a wide span of marks from 16 to 83. Many candidates failed to identify the region as the Loire, instead assuming all three wines must be from Bordeaux on the basis of them being a sweet white, a dry white and a red wine. This is understandable since Bordeaux is probably the first region candidates would associate with this combination of styles but there were clues in the wines that should have discounted Bordeaux. Those who held their nerve and avoided pre-judgements before fully assessing all three wines fully not only tended to write more accurate tasting notes but were also better able to use the evidence in their tasting notes to reach the correct conclusion on provenance. These were the candidates who achieved higher marks.

The key pointers for the Loire rather than Bordeaux were all linked to the cooler climate of this region – the high acidity in these wines, the herbaceous character of the red wine, the lightness of the sweet wine compared to Sauternes and the neutrality of the dry white wine which had none of the Sauvignon Blanc pungency or Semillon body that so many candidates tried to “shoehorn” into their description in mistaking this basic Muscadet for a Sauvignon Blanc / Semillon Bordeaux Blanc blend.

The following script has correctly attributed the wines to the Loire with logical reasons given. Whilst the candidate has mistaken the Muscadet for a Sauvignon Blanc, the assessment of quality is very much in line with the actual style of this wine – they have clearly identified it as being rather simple and neutral. Perhaps they forgot about Muscadet as being a logical candidate for this wine but this error has only cost them a few marks.

Wines 4–6 are from the same region of origin. Describe each wine under the headings below and identify the region of origin in the space provided, giving reasons for your choice.

WINE 4

Appearance:

This wine is medium yellow lemon

Nose:

The wine has pronounced acidity and aromas of lemon, apricot, peach, marmalade, honeydew, orange blossom and some honey.
Rich, ripe and intense.

Palate:

The wine is sweet with high acidity, medium alcohol, full body, medium tannins acidity and a ^{long} ~~sweet~~ finish. Aromas
we of ripe stone fruit (apricot, peach, quince), honeydew,
orange blossom and have a hint of honey.

Assessment of quality: (6 marks)

This wine is outstanding. There is balance between the high sugar levels and the acid so neither stands out, and the ripe rich fruit balances the body and viscosity. There is good varietal typicity through the fruit flavours, and skilled wine making has been employed to bring these

Grape variety/ies: (2 marks)

to the forefront, not mask them in oak etc.

Chenin Blanc

Reasons for your choice of grape variety/ies: (3 marks)

The high acid is typical of the Chenin grape variety, as is its propensity to botrytis and layers of rich, marmalade flavours we see here.
Develop Chenin is generally made using heat rather than oak, so as to enhance fruit flavours, and this we see here.

WINE 5

Appearance:

This wine is pale lemon

Nose:

This wine has medium intensity and aromas of lemon, predominantly green apple, and some stone fruit (apricot, peach). Quite simple but fresh.

Palate:

This wine is dry with medium + acidity, medium alcohol, medium body. Medium flavor intensity and has a medium finish. Aromas are of simple citrus fruit (lemon, grapefruit), stone fruit (apricot, peach) and some passion fruit notes.

Assessment of quality: (5 marks)

This wine is good. Flavours are quite generic and simple, but they are ~~not~~ quite ~~not~~ not relevant in balance with the structural elements, notably acid. The flavours are only in the primary cluster, so the wine lacks complexity, and they are not pure and distinct enough to give the wine varietal typicity. It is likely to be a mid to entry level wine that is destined to be drunk young and cold. Well made.

Grape variety/ies: (2 marks)

Sauvignon Blanc

WINE 6

Appearance:

The wine is medium ruby.

Nose:

The nose has medium intensity.

Tones are of red fruit (cassis, raspberry) and there is a distinct leafy, herbal note bringing earthiness.

Fresh and crisp.

Palate:

The wine is dry with medium+ acidity, medium-shade tannin, medium body and alcohol, and layers of crunchy, fresh red fruit (cassis, raspberry, blackberry) and some brambles.

There are some raspberry leaf and herbal notes and the finish is medium.

Assessment of quality: (6 marks)

~~Very good~~. Good. There is a balance between the acid and the fruit flavours, and flavours are pure, crisp and varieties distinctive. There could be more intensity in the flavours, which is why I didn't score it higher, but it is well-made and very typical of its cool Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks) drinkable and pure style.

Pinkish hue, not enough tannin for ageing, but acid means it would keep.

Flavours are fresh + crisp so drink before there's tade and leave it with only acid.

Cabernet Franc

Reasons for your choice of grape variety/ies: (3 marks)

The red fruit characters and herbal characteristics, low tannins and moderately high acidity are all typical of cab franc.
As is the fresh pure style of winemaking.

REGION OF ORIGIN FOR WINES 4-6: (5 marks)

Loire, France

REASONS FOR YOUR CHOICE OF REGION: (6 marks)

The Loire offers a range of different styles from red to sweet and dry white, all of which we see here. It also makes high quality Chenin with noted Sultry flavours, fresh, cool climate Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc. The latter will not come from one of the pricier vineyards, but there are many others in the centre and

which are made with minimal intervention from the winemakers in order to display the cool climate varietal fruit + aromas, all of which is shown here.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 2, Question 3

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

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

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

January 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3

Part-specified wines - Tuscany

Wine 7	Country: Italy Region: Tuscany Wine: Renieri Brunello di Montalcino 2011
Wine 8	Country: Italy Region: Tuscany Wine: Castelli di Bossi Chianti Classico 2012
Wine 9	Country: Italy Region: Tuscany Wine: Vernaiolo Chianti 2015
This question usually generates a lower pass rate than the other tasting questions because of the large percentage of marks tied up in the assessment of quality - an element of the tasting note where candidates tend to gain low marks due to lack of analysis and explanation. The pass rate in January was however much better than in previous years at 73% but with relatively few distinction grades. The examiner commented that candidates struggled most with wine 9 – the basic level Chianti. This is something that crops up repeatedly in tasting examinations with candidates often overestimating the quality of the simplest wine.	

June 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3***Part-specified wines - California***

Wine 7	Country: USA Region: California Wine: Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyards Chardonnay 2014
Wine 8	Country: USA Region: California Wine: Ca'Momi Napa Valley Chardonnay 2014
Wine 9	Country: USA Region: California Wine: Gallo Chardonnay 2015
<p>Unlike the January examination, this was answered poorly with basic passes rather than higher grades. As usual it was in the assessment of quality where most marks were lost with many candidates only giving "keyword" answers such as "balanced", "complex", "simple", "concentrated" etc. with no explanation. Many simply repeated observations from their description under "palate" with no further analysis or explanation, for example referring to "long length" with no indication of why this might be an indicator of quality. As in previous years the simplest wine was often overestimated in terms of quality with structural components misjudged. Very few commented on the "simplicity" of wine 9 or the slight sweetness that was evident. On the whole, candidates were better at recognizing primary aromas than secondary or tertiary ones. To some extent, this explains consequent weaknesses at judging the quality of the two better wines since this was underpinned by the more developed aromas found on these wines.</p> <p>The following candidate gained high marks in the concluding section for all three wines. The responses are the right length for the number of marks available and contain a good level of analysis and discussion.</p>	

Assessment of quality wine 7

Detailed assessment of quality: (11 marks)

Outstanding. The Flavours and aromas touch on all 3 aroma clusters, giving the wine depth and complexity. fruit flavours are distinct and ripe, but balanced by the high acidity, which keeps the flavours fresh and stops the wine being flabby or bland. There is evidence of good wine making in the use of oak - present but not too dominant, and this is balanced by the pure fruit flavours. There is good length and concentration, and the wine is likely to be made in a top region where diurnal range keeps the flavours fresh.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks) possibly the southern end of the Napa Valley,

Drink now, would age and develop interest and complexity in bottle. Acid is sufficient and so is the depth of fruit flavours, which would become more tertiary as time goes on - nuts, honey and the acid would integrate further.

e.g. Cos Corneos. There is variety typical to the flavours and in the mineralising red.

Assessment of quality wine 8

Detailed assessment of quality: (11 marks)

This wine is very good. The aroma + flavours touch on all three clusters. However the heavy use of oak dominates the wine slightly. This would be perfectly acceptable in time. Acid would balance the full body and the ripe fruit flavours, so there is a harmony. There is good intensity and complexity in the flavours, which remain in the finish - flabby and ripe. The wine has likely been made with little expense spared from a good producer, but could do with being a little Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks) fresher and with purer fruit flavours.

Drink now / the wine would age + develop in bottle another 5-10 years; the oak would integrate and there is sufficient acidity to support the fruit as it gains tertiary characteristics - dried apricot, nut etc.

Assessment of quality wine 9

Detailed assessment of quality: (11 marks)

This wine is good. Flavours are simple and generic and remain in the primary cluster so there is little complexity or range of flavours. The flavours it does have lack depth and precision, and also lack varietal or regional/terrain typicality. They are however in balance - the fruit is just about balanced by the moderately low acidity. The wine is likely to be made for a mass consumer market and in bulk (possibly somewhere like the Gilfornian central valley), so for this target market and brand appeal, it Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks) serves its purpose. Well-made and easy

drink now, do not age. Art flavours | drinking. Not such length or interest, would dwindle as they are not pronounced or intense enough to survive or develop beyond a year or two. Acid is also lacking so the wine ~~would~~ is best drunk now. No complexity or the rest would be gained.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 2, Question 4

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

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

January 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 4		
<i>Unspecified wines</i>		
Wine 10	Country:	Chile
	Region:	Not assessed in the examination
	Wine:	Cono Sur 20 Barrels Pinot Noir 2014
Wine 11	Country:	New Zealand
	Region:	Not assessed in the examination
	Wine:	Kim Crawford Spitfire Sauvignon Blanc 2015
Wine 12	Country:	USA
	Region:	Not assessed in the examination
	Wine:	Turley Juvenile Zinfandel 2014
This flight was well-answered in the main resulting in a good pass rate of 76% but with only two distinction grades from a total of just over 200 candidates. Candidates were not expected to identify the region of origin for these wines, just the country. This was because the examiners felt that regional identity was less prominent in the case of these wines. Instead candidates were expected to identify the grape variety and in some instances justify this choice. There was also a greater emphasis on the assessment of quality for these three wines.		
The New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc posed no problems in this flight of wines, helping to push the pass rate up. However, the Zinfandel was more of a challenge with very few identifying the variety or picking up the tertiary characters in their description.		

June 2017: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 4***Unspecified wines***

Wine 10	Country: Australia Region: Clare Valley Wine: Paulett Polish Hill River Aged Release Riesling 2011
Wine 11	Country: Spain Region: Ribera del Duero Wine: Pesquera Crianza 2013
Wine 12	Country: Hungary Region: Tokaji-Hegyalja Wine: Tokaji Oremus 5 Puttonyos 2007
As with the January examination, this also generated a good pass rate of 72% which is in line with results for this question in previous years. Wines 10 and 12 posed very few problems helping to consolidate the pass rate but only a few candidates were able to pinpoint the red wine in terms of origin. Many concluded it was a Bordeaux which was not illogical given the style. This error only cost them a few marks provided the rest of the tasting note was a reasonably accurate assessment of the characteristics of the wine.	

Unit 3 Theory Papers

January 2017: Section A – Compulsory Question

High levels of sweetness in light wines can be achieved in different ways. With reference to grape growing and winemaking, describe the production of the following three sweet wines.

Version 1: Tokaji 5 Puttonyos, Vin Santo & Niagara Ice Wine

Version 2: Reingau Riesling Beerenauslese, Vin Santo & Niagara Ice Wine

Version 3: Coteaux du Layon, Vin Santo & Niagara Ice Wine

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The aim with this question is to test candidates' ability to differentiate between various production techniques to achieve very different styles of sweet wine – i.e using botrytised grapes, dried / passito grapes and frozen grapes.

Many candidates were unfamiliar with the detail relating to the production of Vin Santo, resorting to (often inaccurate) guesswork. This was the weak point for many and the reason for a significant number of failures. Only a few were able to cover all three wines equally well with responses on the use of botrytised grapes usually the best of the three sections. Winemaking itself was often overlooked completely or only mentioned in passing and was another contributory factor for failure. This is disappointing given the high pass rate for Unit 2 but is a clear indication that many candidates fail to retain the knowledge they acquire for this unit beyond the multiple choice examination.

January 2017: Section B

Why is Sauvignon Blanc popular with both producers and consumers? Use examples of wines from around the world to support the points you make.

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

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

Many answers were short and superficial accounts of Sauvignon Blanc as a grape without a convincing understanding of what the question was asking. The majority of candidates simply summarised where Sauvignon Blanc is grown around the world rather than analysing why this variety is popular with producers and consumers; those who did gained higher marks.

Many wrote about the grape's characteristics, regions where it is grown, winemaking practices used and gave descriptions of different styles of wine, but few linked this information to the question as

set or offered convincing arguments or explanation as to what any of this had to do with the popularity of this variety.

The choice of wines was predictable – New Zealand and the Loire featuring in just about every essay. A significant proportion of candidates forgot all about Bordeaux despite the significance of Sauvignon Blanc in blended dry white wines from inexpensive Entre-deux-Mers to top quality oak aged wines such as Pessac Leognan and its use in the sweet botrytised white wines of the region. Other parts of the world were often just mentioned in passing as a list of locations where Sauvignon Blanc is grown rather than “using” specific wines to support the points being put forward as reasons for the popularity of this variety. The best answers were comprehensive and gave varied and meaningful examples of styles of wine from around the world, naming key producers and explaining why these wines contribute to the popularity of this variety.

January 2017: Section B

**Describe the characteristics of the Malbec vine and the wines it produces in Argentina.
(60% weighting)**

Why do you think Argentinean Malbec has been such a commercial success in recent years? (40% weighting)

The pass rate for this question was poor – only 43% passing and very few achieving high marks. In addition to the usual problems of writing too little, making factual errors, failing to answer one section or being particularly weak in one section or both, other reasons for low marks included:

- Failure to describe the characteristics of the Malbec vine – many just described Malbec wines and not always in the context of Argentina.
- Writing about Argentina in general in the second part of the question without connecting this information to wine style.
- Including too much irrelevant information about France and Cahors – this was a question on Argentina.
- Showing lack of imagination and commercial awareness in the second part of the question.

January 2017: Section B

Describe the Appellation Contrôlée structure of the Côte d'Or. (50% weighting)

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this classification system for producers and consumers. (50% weighting)

The pass rate here was reasonably good at 59% with better proportion of higher level grades. Those who did less well tended to write too much about the history of the AC system in Burgundy

rather than specifically the levels and tiers in the Côte d'Or. Many answers only mentioned Premier Cru and Grand Cru totally ignoring regional and communal ACs and many answers were too superficial – just lists of ACs with no explanation or detail of what the regulations relating to these were.

Some candidates failed to answer the second part of the question, possibly unable to do so since this required more than factual recall. Many answers were superficial, unimaginative and unrealistic showing very little original thought or commercial awareness. Some candidates misinterpreted the second part and wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of the wines of the Côte d'Or rather than the classification system itself.

January 2017: Section B

Discuss the factors responsible for the variety of red DOC/DOCG wines in Piemonte.

This question generated lots of very weak scripts with some extremely low scores. The pass rate of 26% was surprisingly low for what should have been a straightforward question. Poor structure led to many answers that failed to answer the question that had been set. The logical approach was to identify the “factors” concerned and discuss them in the context of the wines produced in Piemonte. This format of question is frequently used in the Diploma examination in the context of various parts of the world and candidates should know very well what the relevant “factors” are, i.e. weather and climate, choice of grape variety, viticulture (encompassing yields, soil, aspect, terroir, vine age, picking times etc) and vinification (specifically fermentation and ageing). Many simply described the wines and therefore failed to consider the factors involved at all let alone the implications of “cause and effect” of these factors – something that is a perennial problem in all questions in the Diploma examination. At best candidates described the climate but only a few explained how it affects style or diversity in the wines produced. Many wrote needlessly about white wines and some completely lost sight of the question and wrote about the DOC/DOCG system itself.

January 2017: Section B

Explain the role of blending in determining the style and quality of the following wines:

- a) Côte Rôtie
 - b) Hermitage
 - c) St-Joseph
- (45% weighting)**

Why are some of these wines so expensive? (55% weighting)

Like the previous question, this was answered very badly. It was a popular question, possibly because candidates mistakenly thought it was simply a question about grape varieties. This was not the case. It was not an easy question and required lateral thinking on the part of the candidate.

Most scripts were superficial – writing only about blending of grape varieties. In doing this, candidates missed the connection between blending and wine quality which lies at the heart of this question and the choice of the three wines spanning different quality levels. Many answers were too generic, simply writing about the three wines in broad terms, such as describing the climate, soil, the topography etc. without linking any of these to blending and the result this has in terms of wine style and quality. Many candidates scored no marks at all or only very low marks in individual sections of the first part of the question – in most instances, this was the section on St-Joseph.

Answers to the second part of the question tended to be better, but only where candidates had read the question carefully and structured their answer accordingly. It asked why some of these wines are so expensive, but a large percentage of candidates wrote about all three wines in the second part of the question. This was often due to the way they structured their response. In many instances candidates wrote three separate paragraphs in answer to this question - one on each of the given wines. For each paragraph they included information about the AC some of which was relevant to the first part of the question and some relevant to the second part. This led to a lot of repetition in terms of the reasons why the wines were expensive, such as low yields and manual labour in the vineyard – both factors common to Côte Rôtie and Hermitage.

Candidates should always aim to structure their response so that it matches that of the question. In this case, taking each wine in turn and writing about the various blending options available and discussing how they contribute to style and quality. The second part of the question was more generic – looking at the Northern Rhône as a whole and discussing why some of the wines produced there are so expensive. This means ACs like St-Joseph would not feature in this second part of the question, being on the whole relatively inexpensive wines. Only a relatively small percentage of candidates took this logical approach and they were the ones who achieved high scores in this question as a result.

January 2017: Section B

With reference to winemaking in Australia, write about FIVE of the following:

- a) GIs, Geographical Indicators
- b) Terra Rossa
- c) Eden Valley OR Adelaide Hills OR Claire Valley
- d) Langhorne Creek OR Barossa Valley OR McLaren Vale
- e) Mornington Peninsula OR Margaret River OR Tasmania
- f) Irrigation

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The topics for this question varied according to examination location.

Results were extremely poor with a pass rate of only 27% and only one borderline distinction grade. There were some very short and superficial answers with some candidates struggling to fill one side of paper when three to four sides is the norm for these multi-section format questions.

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

June 2017: Section A – Compulsory Question

Why is Pinot Noir a difficult grape to grow? (60% weighting)

Comment on the use of this variety in each of the following regions: (40% weighting)

Version 1: Willamette Valley & Walker Bay

Version 2: Ahr & Yarra Valley

Version 3: Martinborough & Carneros

(Each section carries equal weighting)

There was a reasonably good pass rate of 57% for this compulsory question.

A large proportion of candidates made a reasonably good job at identifying why Pinot Noir is a difficult grape to grow although there was also a tendency to write in general terms about the characteristics of the variety rather than specifically those that make it a tricky variety to work with. The most frequently omitted problem was the variety's tendency to mutation and the challenges associated with selecting the right clone in the first instance. The most common errors were linked to ripening and vigour of this variety.

There were clear gaps in knowledge on the various regions where answers tended to be thin and generic at best. Some candidates were clearly relying on guesswork in respect of certain regions leading to answers that were incorrect or too vague. A significant number of candidates were unable to locate these regions in the right country – something that they should be able to do at Level 3, let alone Level 4. Many responses on the regions failed to write about the “regional” influences that determine the style of the wine produced there, relying instead only on basic and often generic descriptions of Pinot Noir wine that was unconvincing.

June 2017: Section B

"Alsace is one of the great under-appreciated treasures of the wine world" (Jancis Robinson, Oxford Wine Companion). Discuss the challenges of selling Alsace wines.

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

This was one of the most popular optional questions on the June paper answered by 79% of candidates sitting the examination. However, this was a disappointing set of scripts, both in terms of content and presentation. Many failed to adopt the required essay format, or to include satisfactory introductions or conclusions. Most launched straight into factual descriptions of the Alsace region with no attempt to link this information to the challenges of selling Alsace wine and no indication of how they might go on to do so. Others started well but then tailed off.

There was the usual failure to answer the question directly – many candidates simply wrote “all they know” about the region, name-checking producers and giving lengthy descriptions of wines they have enjoyed. In addition, some candidates adopt a style of writing that is far too casual and “chatty” for an examination environment. They should remember that their essay is being judged on academic content rather than entertainment value.

The following script adopts a good essay style. It is clearly written, extensive and makes varied and valid points.

①

Jamie Robinson is absolutely correct in her comment on Alsace. So few people know or understand the wine made there or even know where the region is or what it produces. There are many obstacles facing the Alsace wine seller and I will go on to list and explain them in this essay. However Alsace also has many points of difference to other regions in the world and I believe the future is bright for Alsace once word has spread more and it is definitely beginning to.

Firstly Alsace produces mostly varietal wines, this however puts it in direct competition with New World wine markets so for example Riesling from Australia's Clare Valley and also in competition with Germany for that specific wine variety. Again the same problem with Pinot Gris, it faces stiff competition (although so different in style) with Pinot Grigio in Italy and Grauburgunder in Germany, which whilst it is very similar in style, it does come more into its own with German wines but there are many other countries

2 where in cooler climates they are grown (Germany, New Zealand, Australia, also in Penedes in Spain and other regions in Germany). Alsace doesn't just have other varieties it is competing against others. There is an abundance of styles ~~for~~ of predominantly white wine in France alone. It is competing with better known wines such as Sancerre or other Saumur, Blaye, Loire wines, Chardonnay with Chablis as almost a brand. It ~~is~~ is also difficult for wines of Alsace to have place names that can create a kind of brand as for most English speakers they are very difficult to pronounce and/or remember. Would you like a Schlossberg from Kaysersberg? That is a difficult sell! ~~if~~ The varietal grape element helps but again it is not helped by the classifiable system. There are wines such as Fidewicher and Gentil, they are blends, but how would you know? The difference in quality is also not very obvious. 5% of wines produced are Grand Cru, but unlike Burgundy there is no Premier Cru (~~yet!~~) the next rung down is Alsace AOC of which some are vastly better than others. There are some lieux-dits, but again these are hard to pronounce + remember.

3 80% of Alsace wines are AOC so the quality will vary hugely. A massive problem facing Alsace is the sweetness levels in ~~wines~~ the wines. In Germany they are at pains how to label their wines halben or halbhalben or use the Prädikat system. Unforunately a system like this does not exist in Alsace. Once you've opened the bottle and tasted the wine, then you know the level of sweetness - a bit late then! It is to be expected with Vendage Tardive (late harvest) and Selección de Grains Nobles (Noble rot selected), however the levels of sweetness in these still very much vary. The levels of residual sugar can also vary with the same wine from year to year, so if your Grand Cru Steinmeulen Riesling was pretty dry last vintage it could be it doesn't work so well with your pork dish this vintage with an undesired level of residual sugar. Alsace produces mostly white wines so it is not really a go to for red wine and it only really produces red wine for the local market.

9 so if that or big reds are your tipple of choice you won't have much luck there. Also the Pinot Noir really has far too much competition from Burgundy just down the road and Baden (Kesselschlöss) just across the river. And just to add to its wrinkles the bottle is a very awkward shape and size. It doesn't fit in your case box; it is too tall for the fridge and looks very backward which can put the modern consumer + likely millennial off.

It is not however all bad. Alsace wines are fabulous for food pairing and this is an angle sellers and sommeliers really agree on. They are wonderfully characterful wines which pair incredibly well with Asian cuisine, particularly Germanic ham and the residual sweetness works very well with chilli burn. The area itself is stunning. Towns such as Ribeauville and Riquewihr are quaint and were clearly designed for postcards, the stalks and the storks and towns are a tourist attraction in themselves. Above all the prices are phenomenally reasonable. These are world class wines with huge aging potential and are incredibly complex.

5

with fantastic expression. The fact that a Grand Cru wine of one of the noble varieties (Muscat, Riesling, Gewürztraminer + Pinot Gris) can cost around €20 is mindblowing and the AOC Alsace wines are incredibly great value too. The future looks promising for Alsace too as the wine growers + committee understand the difficulty in selling their wines. The imminent introduction of a Premier cru category will definitely help sales so consumers understand the quality levels a bit better. But it would be helpful if not essential for levels of subsidies to be more applied on the label. There is however great interest in these wines from Benelux and the USA where they export most. As Riesling is one of only 27 Dogras in Alsace, the effect by normal means is an unbalanced culture in price. To conclude, yes there are many barriers to selling Alsace wine but I highly believe that when the world realises how great they are thanks to Sommeliers + critics + writers such as Jancis, they will start to sell themselves.

June 2017: Section B

Climate varies significantly across the vineyards of regions of Chile. Describe these differences with reference to Limari, Maipo and Maule. (60% weighting)

How do these differences influence the wines produced in each region? (40% weighting)

This was one of the least popular questions on the June paper and many were wise to avoid it as generalisations would not suffice here – this required sound factual knowledge of the climate and wines of all three regions. The low pass rate of 43% was indicative that this was lacking in many scripts.

Whilst a number of candidates were reasonably good on climate in Chile in broad terms, they were unable to differentiate between the variations in the given regions leading to very generic answers that failed to answer the question that had been set. Maule was the region that generated the weakest answers with many candidates unable to write anything meaningful at all. Candidates who were unable to adequately identify the regional climatic differences were subsequently also unable to convincingly address the second part of the question since this was dependent on factual knowledge of the former.

June 2017: Section B

Explain how grape growing (35% weighting), winemaking (35% weighting) and industry structure (30% weighting) influence the style, quality and price of red Rioja.

A significant proportion of the candidates who chose this question achieved low marks because they did not read the wording carefully enough. They simply treated this as a “paragraph” question rather than the discursive question it needed to be. Provided they linked the information given in each section by explaining how they influence wine style, quality and price this disjointed style was fine, but factual statements relating to grapes used, identifying sub-regions within the Rioja DO and stating minimum ageing requirements in isolation were not sufficient to answer the question as set. All of this factual information needed to be linked to resulting wine style, quality and price and very few candidates did this.

Another problem was an apparent lack of understanding of what was meant by “industry structure”. Very few candidates provided the information the examiner was looking for here and lost out on 30% of the marks as a result. If responses were also superficial and lacking explanation and analysis in other sections, a fail grade was unavoidable. Many candidates took “industry structure” to mean the legal requirements regarding production and simply wrote about ageing definitions which should have been addressed under winemaking instead. Some candidates just listed export markets which was extremely simplistic. A large number of candidates wrote nothing at all in answer to this part of the question.

A good starting point would have been the Consejo Regulador – what it does, where it is based, what effect it has on wine style, quality and price. However, this would not suffice in isolation.

Further discussion of industry structure in a wider sense was required. What is the role of brokers in the Rioja DO? Are they important? If so, why are they important? Similarly, co-operatives needed mention as well as the part all of these play in determining wine style, quality and price. Examiners were also hoping candidates would mention new initiatives such as Vinedos Singulares.

This was one of the most popular questions on the paper and having been answered badly by so many of those who attempted it generated a very poor pass rate of only 39%.

June 2017: Section B

Discuss the factors in the vineyard (*30% weighting*) and winery (*70% weighting*) that account for the style and quality of the dry and sweet red wines of Valpolicella.

This was also a relatively popular question and generated a good pass rate of 58%.

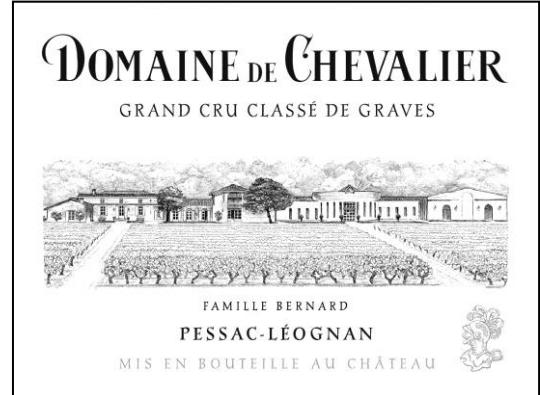
There was a tendency in some instances to overlook the weighting with the result that candidates did not provide enough detail in terms of explaining how different approaches to winemaking determine the various styles of wine. There was inevitable confusion about the processes used in the production of the various styles of wines with ripasso being the one most commonly misunderstood. Some candidates also attributed the wrong names to the various styles. “Ordinary” Valpolicella and Valpolicella Classico were often overlooked completely or mentioned only in passing before moving on to the other styles. Whilst there is certainly less to say about these, they definitely should have formed part of any answer to this question.

Candidates achieving low marks either made fundamental errors in terms of the various styles or failed to provide sufficient detail in their answers, often relying on vague references to “conventional winemaking” or “ageing in oak” without supplying the specific facts to back these up.

June 2017: Section B

Discuss the two white wines pictured below under the following headings:

- a) **Viticulture (*40% weighting*)**
- b) **Winemaking (*30% weighting*)**
- c) **Resulting style (*30% weighting*)**



The low pass rate of 46% for this question was caused by a number of problems. It was clear that a large percentage of candidates who answered this question were unfamiliar with the style of Hunter Valley Semillon. Many wrote a generic answer assuming this to be an inexpensive, Australian bulk produced wine for easy drinking. This often included references to the use of oak barrels and even oak chips, blending with other varieties such as Chardonnay, and style descriptions that referred to high alcohol, ripe fruit, low to medium acidity, vanilla character from oak etc. None of this was convincing or relevant in the case of this wine. There were frequent misconceptions in terms of the climate in the Hunter Valley, with many generic descriptions of a hot, dry Australian climate that showed a lack of knowledge of the region and the wine itself.

The Pessac Léognan was also problematic for some, particularly those who had not read the question carefully enough and wrote about the red wines of this AC. This clearly earned them very few marks in a question that had specified white wines as the topic of discussion. However, even some of those who had restricted their answer to white wines gained low marks in this section because they mistakenly believed this to be a sweet, botrytised wine rather than a dry, oak aged white wine. Where candidates misjudged the style of the wine in both instances, the result was clearly catastrophic resulting in some extremely low marks.

In terms of question structure, only a small percentage actually followed the format of the question as presented, i.e. writing about both wines under the three given headings. The majority of candidates wrote two paragraphs – one on each wine. This was fine provided they also structured their response to reflect the weighting attached to each of the three required sections. Often this was not the case with many scripts containing lengthy descriptions of the wines (which were not always accurate) and relatively little depth or detail in terms of production which accounted for the bulk of the marks at 70%.

June 2017: Section B

With reference to winemaking in France, write about FIVE of the following:

- a) Michel Rolland
- b) Lirac OR Tavel
- c) Picpoul de Pinet
- d) Sancerre OR Pouilly Fumé
- e) INAO (Institut National des Appellations d'Origine)
- f) Guigal OR Drouhin OR Chapoutier

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The topics for this question varied according to examination location.

This was very poorly answered with a pass rate of only 38% and an equal split between the number of pass and fail grades and only four distinctions from a total of 361 scripts. Many submissions were incomplete, suggesting candidates had selected this question as their least preferred option, answered it last and ran out of time. In fact, it was one of the least popular questions on the paper. This was surprising given the subject matter and the “multi-part” format which a significant proportion of candidates sitting this examination mistakenly believe to be the easier option.

In this instance, it seems likely that many were dissuaded from attempting this by some of the less mainstream topics such as Lirac, Picpoul de Pinet and the producers in the Rhône. Many scripts were factually incorrect in these sections or simply too vague. A large proportion of answers were simply too brief – some barely more than a single side of text.

A sound approach where short-form responses are required is to think of key questions that can form the basis of the answer. For example, in the case of Lirac or Picpoul candidates could have asked themselves:

- What is this?
- Where exactly in France is it?
- What style of wine is produced?
- Which grape variety/ies is/are used?
- What are the characteristics of this/these variety/ies?
- What is the climatic here?
- Are there any particular winemaking techniques specific to this region/style of wine?

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

The following is an example of a script which gives sound responses in all five sections. Answers are extensive with a good level of detail. Far too many candidates seem to think that a single page answer will be sufficient. This is not the case. This candidate submitted four sides of text which is about average for a good response. Anything less than three sides is unlikely to be sufficient for this format of question.

④ Michel Rolland:

French
One of the most famous ~~wine~~ ^{French} winemakers in the world and consults wineries from all over the world. Michel Rolland has his own winery Bon Pasteur in Pomerol and consults for many great wine estates in Bordeaux such as Pontet ^{the great growth} Canet and the famous, more gravel, limestone-based Chateau Figeac who is Saint Emilion Grand Cru Classe 1B (and one of the best 1Bs too). Michel Rolland's fame is world-wide. He consults for numerous ~~wine~~ wineries in ~~this~~ Chile, Argentina, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy and many others. He is also famous in making his "Clos de Siete", a good-value Argentinian Malbec in Mendoza. In China, he is consulting for Great Wall Sungod, which belongs to the state controlled "COFCO".

Michel Rolland is well-known for his blending expertise and his advice on micro-oxygenation to many wineries. While he is widely acclaimed for his job, many also criticize that he tends to make ^{all the} wines of ~~any~~ "Michel-Rolland" style, of which he denies. He is also criticized for helping wineries to make wine to suit some critics' preference, mostly, most importantly Robert Jr. Parker, of whom he is also a friend. He is also featured along with Robert Parker in the documentary "El Monje Vino".

⑤ Tavel:

An AOP wine appellation under Southern Rhone of France. Climate is influenced both by Mediterranean climate and continental climate. Dry, severe Mistral wind still has an impact here. The soil has a good amount of pebbles and granite with alluvial, sand and clay. The wine in Tavel is required ^{to be} 100% Rosé based on Grenache, Cinsault with Syrah, Carignan and some white such as Clairette rose.

permitted. It is regarded as a high-quality rosé region where wines take a deeper pink color than most rosés. This is mainly due to a longer maceration under low temperature for 12–48 hours. Some big negociants have significant holdings here along with co-ops and smaller producers. Vidal-Fleury is a leading ^{Tavel} negociant here (now mostly owned by Etienne Guig). The price of rosé is never too low or inexpensive due to a good demand and prestige. However, Tavel-rosés cannot be aged for a long time. It is recommended to be consumed fresh although it can certainly hold for 2–3 years without losing fresh fruit. A typical Tavel-rosé should be deep pink with racy strawberry, cherry, watermelon fruit and dry with moderately or high acidity and a crisp, refreshing palate.

- (c) Picpoul de Pinet is an ^{AOP} appellation with Languedoc, southeast of France. It is also one of the few IGP appellations which were recently promoted as AOP status. It has a moderate Mediterranean climate with warm, dry summers and mild winters. Picpoul de Pinet is prized for the hilly, elevated sites rich in limestone. The appellation requires that the wine made here to be all white based on Picpoul, which is a variety high in acidity but may lack character or a and concentration. The south-facing stony vineyards is believed to give further concentration and a "mineral" whiff to the wine. A typical Picpoul de Pinet has simple lemon-citrus fruit with green apples. It should have high acidity, crisp, light body and moderate alcohol and intensity. Moderate examples can be too bland and light. It is however rarely oaked and is consumed for freshness and thus is never expensive (mostly inexpensive to mid-priced). The promotion of Picpoul de Pinet ^{to AOP status} however does add diversity of Languedoc's wine portfolio and arguably gives Languedoc AOP wine system more credibility as many IGP appellations are still applying to be promoted)

(d) Pouilly-Fumé: An AOP appellation in Central vineyards; east of Loire. ^{Similar} Same latitude with Burgundy at $47^{\circ}N$. Cool, continental climate with warm, hot summers and cold winters. All the wines in Pouilly-Fumé are white with Sauvignon Blanc. The best soil here is "Silex", a flint-rich soil which gives very good minerality to the soil and is well-drained. Best sites are based on this kind of soil on higher, south-facing mid-slopes where they receive more sunshine and ^{achieve higher} ripeness. Pouilly-Fumé wine is very highly-regarded for Sauvignon Blanc wine and a typical Pouilly-Fumé is pronounced with flinty, gunpowder accents along with limy fruit and rich flavours. It should be high in acidity with medium alcohol with a medium body. The best versions go through a long-time sur-lie process which can be full-bodied and rich in flavours. Some producers also use oak barrels to soften the austerity of Pouilly-Fumé, one of the most renowned ones is Dicker Daguenay, whose top cuvée is named as "Silex" which is oak-aged and commands super premium price. Most Pouilly-Fumé is however, never cheap. They should be high-priced to premium-priced. It is also regarded ~~as~~ slightly more restrained than its cousin "Sancerre", which can be more pungently grassy. Compared to Sancerre, ~~but~~ some Pouilly-Fumé often with pyrazine-driven nose. good value, but it does not like Sancerre, which produces a Pinot Noir-based Sancerre Rouge, which takes nearly 30% of Sancerre's production.

④

Drouhin: A renowned Burgundy negociant producing high quality negocié-wines whose cellar is based in the city of Beaune. Its Burgundy business is called "Joseph Drouhin" and makes both red and white wines (Pinot Noir and Chardonnay) throughout Burgundy. While it buys grapes and wines from contracted growers and producers, it also owns several vineyards in Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits. Joseph Drouhin also makes wine from Côte de Chablis, in Givry, for example, where it makes a trustworthy, more affordable cuvée. Its Bourgogne Aligoté and basic Burgundy-label Chardonnay are not bad at all. In Beaune, Joseph Drouhin is keen in wine tourism and has one of the oldest cellars in Burgundy (shared with Jaffelin, another smaller negociant (belong to Boisset)). It does however charge more for Nuits compared with other negociants such as Bouchard Père & Fils, Louis Jadot, Chanson and Petrus. Compared with its competitors in negociant business, Drouhin is however also more acclaimed and is widely believed as one of the best producers/negociants in Burgundy. (Another I believe is Bouchard Père & Fils, but I also like the reds made from Albert Bichot). And Fairly.

Apart from its Burgundy business, Drouhin also have winery in Oregon, USA. The Drouhin wines in Willamette Valley is also widely acclaimed by critics and public.

Unit 4, 5 and 6 Examinations - Overview

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

Tasting questions

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

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

Theory questions

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

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

Unit 4 – Spirits of the World

The Unit 4 examinations took place in November 2016, March 2017 and June 2017.

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

November 2016: Unit 4 TASTING		
Spirit 1	Country: Spirit:	Barbados Doorly's 3yr old Fine Old Rum
Spirit 2	Country: Spirit:	United Kingdom Plymouth Gin
Spirit 3	Country: Spirit:	Mexico 1800 Reposado Tequila

On the whole, candidates did fairly well with a good percentage of them correctly identifying the spirits although not always accurately enough for the full allocation of marks available. Where the style within the category was correct this usually followed through to a good performance in the concluding section of the paper.

Loss of marks was often down to the following:

- Not using the Systematic Approach that is specifically written for use when assessing spirits.
- Not identifying enough aroma characteristics for the marks available.
- Using terms that are too generic and vague for this level of assessment such as "citrus", "oak" or "spice". All of these need to be more specific to gain the mark.
- Not answering the question as set in the concluding sections. A significant number of candidates insist on writing an "assessment of quality" where this has not been asked for.
- Making factual errors in the concluding section such as giving the wrong ageing requirements for the Tequila.

November 2016: Unit 4 THEORY

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

- a) Use of oak in spirits production
- b) Smirnoff
- c) Calvados OR Brandy de Jerez OR Pisco

This paper generated a reasonable pass rate of 59% but there was a wide divergence in marks from a low of 12% to a high of 88%.

The section on use of oak was answered well. Being a topic that spanned many different categories of spirits, most candidates were able to write enough to get a pass in this section. However, it was a different story with the section on Smirnoff. Far too many candidates simply wrote about vodka production in broad, generic terms rather than concentrating on facts relevant to this particular brand.

Section c) also caused problems for some candidates due to inaccuracies or confusion in terms of methods of production and legal classifications / regulations.

March 2017: Unit 4 TASTING

Spirit 1	Country: France Spirit: Calvados Pays d'Auge 2009
Spirit 2	Country: Spain Spirit: Solera Gran Reserva Brandy de Jerez
Spirit 3	Country: France Spirit: Pastis de Marseille

The inclusion of the Pastis in this line up helped many candidates achieve a pass grade despite rather weak descriptions and/or conclusions elsewhere. As is often the case, the main reason for failing this paper was not following the Spirits SAT or only doing so haphazardly. Some candidates continue to default to the Wine SAT in their answers which is substantively different to the Spirits SAT; needless to say, this results in lost marks. Many candidates who made this error forgot to mention the state of maturity on the nose or the nature of the finish on the palate since these are very specific to the Spirits SAT.

The following candidate wrote three very accurate tasting notes and gained high marks.

SPIRIT 1

Appearance:

This spirit is clear and medium gold in color. It has legs.

Nose:

The nose is clean with pronounced intensity of ~~fee~~ green apple, pears, baked apples, ~~hay~~, ~~and~~ ^{almonds} ~~grass~~ and vanilla.

This spirit is short aged.

Palate:

This spirit is dry with ~~(high)~~ ^{warming} alcohol and medium body. The alcohol is warming. It has a pronounced flavour intensity and flavour characteristics of apples, baked apples, pear, hay, ^{almonds} ~~and grass~~ and vanilla. It has a short length with simple complexity.

Raw material: (1 mark)

Apples

Country and region of production: (2 marks)

Calvados, France

Comment on how the maturation of this spirit has influenced its character (4 marks)

The maturation in large old oak barrels has given this a slight oxidative character - the hay and walnut character point me to this. It also has a hint of vanilla and spice thanks to the oak ageing

SPIRIT 2

Appearance:

This spirit is clear (rather pale and
intensity) and medium amber in
colour. It has ~~signs~~ of legs.

Nose:

This spirit is clean with pronounced
intensity and aromas of prunes, dates,
walnut, caramel, figs and raisins.

This spirit is mature.

Palate:

This is dry with ~~medium~~ ^{high} smooth alcohol and
full body. It has a rounded texture.
It has a pronounced flavour intensity and
flavour characteristics of prunes, dates,
walnut, caramel, figs and raisins.
The finish is long.

Raw material: (1 mark)

Grapes

Country and region of production: (2 marks)

Jerez, Spain

Assessment of quality (4 marks)

This is very good. It has complex
characteristics on both the nose and
palate and displays obvious signs of
ageing. The finish is long making it
very good. The alcohol is smooth and
well integrated.

[TURN OVER

SPIRIT 3

Appearance:

This is clear and medium amber in color. It has legs and shows foaming when water is added which turns it cloudy.

Nose:

It has a clean nose and a pronounced flavour intensity of ~~aniseed~~ aniseed, star anise, fennel, cloves and liquorice. This spirit is unaged.

Palate:

sweet

This is off-dry with warming alcohol and full bodied. It has a mouth-coating texture. It has a pronounced flavor and characteristics of aniseed, star anise, fennel, cloves and liquorice. It has a medium finish and shows some complexity.

Style within the category: (1 mark)

Aniseed-based flavoured spirit

Outline how this spirit is flavoured: (5 marks)

This spirit can be flavoured in one of three ways → maceration whereby the botanicals are left to soak in a highly rectified spirit (HRS) or distillation whereby the HRS plus the botanicals are distilled together in a pot still typically. Lastly the botanicals in the form of pekoration. The botanicals are either nature or nature identical.

March 2017: Unit 4 THEORY

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

- a) Finishing in spirits production
- b) Pernod Ricard
- c) Tennessee Whiskey OR Irish Whiskey OR Canadian Whisky

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

Section a) was generally answered well. The main issue here was confusing the concept of "finishing" with the processes of maturation and blending that precede "finishing". The wording in the question in this instance was very tight and comments relating to processes that occur outside the finishing stage were "off-topic". Questions that ask about key producers or brands often generate weak responses, as was the case with Pernod Ricard. However, on the whole, most candidates were able to successfully position the company and its key brands thereby achieving a basic pass grade in this section. There were also some excellent answers to this section but they were in the minority. Section c) generated a mixed bag of responses. Tennessee Whiskey was covered well, whilst answers on Irish Whiskey tended to be weak and Canadian Whisky was often confused with Bourbon.

June 2017: Unit 4 TASTING

Spirit 1	Country: Spirit:	Not assessed Absolut Vodka
Spirit 2	Country: Spirit:	Carribean Spiced Rum
Spirit 3	Country: Spirit:	France 10 yr old Bas Armagnac

The pass rate of 72% for this question was good and there was a fairly even split between candidates achieving pass and merit but considerably fewer distinction grades.

It was important with this trio of spirits to read the question carefully. Two of the samples required the candidate to comment in the concluding section on how production determined the style, having first identified the style within the category. The instruction in the case of the Armagnac was different, requiring an assessment of quality. Some candidates ignored this and wrote an assessment of quality for all three samples. This inevitably cost them a considerable portion of the marks in the case of the first two spirits. It is understandable that candidates will make errors due

to exam nerves but good examination discipline could so easily have eliminated this error. The most important part of any examination is reading the question and making sure you know exactly what you are being asked to do.

Notes for the Vodka fell into two distinct camps – either very poor or very good. Only a few candidates correctly identified the style of the Rum. What examiners were looking for here was “spiced rum”. With five marks available for comments on how production determined the style of this spirit, examiners were looking for more than a generic description of rum production.

A good number of candidates identified the Armagnac as such rather than Cognac. They were the ones who spotted the spirity nature and the slight rusticity and tannic grip. On the downside, far too many candidates mistook this for Whisky. Those who went for Bourbon were easier to understand, having presumably been misled by the oaky character. Those who identified it as Scotch Whisky were far less convincing, particularly those who commented on peaty character that simply was not there.

June 2017: Unit 4 THEORY

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

- a) **Scotch Malt whisky regions OR Blending in Scotch whisky production**
- b) **Bacardi Ltd and its portfolio**
- c) **Cultivation and processing of agave prior to fermentation OR Grappa**

There were a good number of pass grades here but relatively few merits and distinctions. Some sections of this question were answered well whilst others were weak. Very few candidates were good across all three sections.

Candidates often failed to limit their answer to the question as set. For example, writing everything they knew about Tequila, rather than the processes that take place prior to fermentation. Many candidates included irrelevant detail on distillation, maturation and labelling terminology when all that was required was information relating to the cultivation of agave, harvesting, cooking, milling and fermentation. Examiners were looking for depth here rather than a broad-brush account of the whole process through to bottling. Many candidates forgot to include Mezcal in their answer or were unaware of the differences between this and Tequila in the context of the question as set.

Most candidates were able to identify the five Scotch Malt whisky regions and say something about them. Responses on blending in Scotch whisky production were more variable with most covering Blended Scotch but failing to consider the concept of blending within single distilleries etc.

Bacardi and Grappa generated the weakest responses.

Unit 5 – Sparkling Wines of the World

Unit 5 examinations also took place in November 2016, March 2017 and June 2017.

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

November 2016: Unit 5 TASTING		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	France Champagne Champagne Jannison et fils Tradition Brut NV
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Germany Mosel Dr Loosen Extra Dry Riesling Sekt
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	France Champagne Charles Heidsieck Brut Millesime 2005
<p>For this paper candidates were not required to identify the wines but to focus on their quality and ageing potential / readiness for drinking. To answer these sections well, candidates needed to draw on the observations made about the wines under the headings “appearance”, “nose” and “palate”. Obviously, the more extensive and accurate the description, the more meaningful and accurate the conclusion.</p> <p>These three wines were very different in style and the examiner was looking for evidence of these differences in the tasting notes. Wine 2 was a modestly priced, fruity German Riesling Sekt. It is a wine for drinking now due to the dominance of primary characteristics. Wine 3 was also a wine for “drinking now” but for very different reasons as good candidates explained. There were no autolytic or tertiary characters on wine 2 yet some candidates commented incorrectly on both. There is a tendency towards overuse of descriptors linked to autolysis in this paper, but the marking process is heavily linked to the principles of “clusters” of aromas and flavours and where there is no evidence of certain clusters on a wine, marks will be restricted to those clusters that are relevant. In this case, it was important to comment on the relative simplicity of this wine. This characteristic also comes into play when assessing the quality and the readiness for drinking of this wine. It is not enough to simply state that the wine is ready for drinking now. Such statements need to be justified as well. In this instance, whilst the wine had high acidity (a characteristic that can contribute to longevity), there was insufficient concentration of fruit to support the ageing process.</p> <p>Whilst wine 2 was simple and full of primary fruit character, wine 3 was at the other end of the scale – complex and savoury as demonstrated by the presence of limited primary fruit but abundant secondary and tertiary character. Where a wine has multiple clusters of aromas and flavours such as here, candidates need to comment on all evident clusters to gain the marks available. Leaving out comments relating to any one cluster would limit the number of marks that could be achieved elsewhere irrespective of how many descriptors are listed. In the case of this wine, it was the</p>		

tertiary character that was dominant and so marking was more heavily weighted towards this cluster. This is the kind of judgement candidates need to make when assessing wines in an examination. There is little point in identifying a long list of primary aromas for a wine like this. This dominant tertiary character was the clue to the fact that this wine, like the German Sekt, was also ready to drink but for very different reasons, i.e. the primary fruit was fading. The very overt development on this wine was missed by many candidates.

When writing an assessment of quality too many candidates apply the “B-L-I-C” principle in its most simplistic format. For example, they would describe wine 3 as outstanding because it is “balanced, has long length, great intensity and is complex”. This may well be true, but is not a detailed assessment of quality and would not gain high marks. If the wine is balanced, the assessment needs to indicate in what way this balance is displayed. In the case of wine 3, although it is fully mature, the acidity still provides a freshness and structure that supports and balances the savoury tertiary characters.

November 2016: Unit 5 THEORY

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

- a) Tank method
- b) Champagne Bollinger S.A.
- c) Franciacorta OR Crémant OR Cava grapes

The pass rate for this question was rather disappointing at 53%. With a median mark of 56% and 75% of candidates achieving a mark between 45% and 69%, there were relatively few scripts at the extremes - fail (unclassified) or distinction.

The section on tank method was generally answered well. Most candidates were able to describe the process with better candidates offering explanation and examples to accompany the various stages of production. Some candidates either totally or partially confused this method with others such as transfer or carbonation.

As in past examinations it was the section on the named producer that generated weak responses – in this instance, Bollinger. This was compounded even further by the fact that a considerable number of candidates were unaware that Champagne Bollinger S.A. is the full and official name of the French Champagne house and has nothing to do with South Africa. A considerable number of candidates wrote about fictitious joint ventures between Bollinger and sparkling wine producers in South Africa. It was very difficult to award more than a few marks in such instances. Even those candidates who did not make this mistake struggled with this section. There were many very brief or generic answers that fell short of the pass mark. The range of wines produced was often poorly known and few knew about the company’s interests outside of Champagne (but not in South Africa).

Responses in section c) varied. Franciacorta was a topic that many were comfortable with. There were many convincing answers with plenty of relevant facts relating to viticulture, grape varieties, vinification, rules for lees ageing etc. However, climate was often misunderstood and only a few

brought commercial issues into their answer. The section on Crémant was less good, with rather generic answers that focused too heavily on a description of the traditional method rather than regulations specific to Crémant wines. There were very few good answers on Cava grape varieties. These were often simply listed with no accompanying detail and very few were able to name all the varieties or indeed spell them correctly.

The following script has extensive answers in all three sections and gained high marks as a result.

a) Tank Method

THE TANK METHOD WAS INVENTED BY THE ITALIAN MARTINOTTI IN 1895.

IN 1907 EUGENE CHARMAIT UPDATED THE DESIGN AND PROCESS

IN ADDITION TO BEING KNOWN AS MARTINOTTI AND CHARMAT IT IS

ALSO CALLED CAVO Close OR AUTOCLAVE

THE METHOD OF PRODUCING LIGHTLY SPARKLING WINE INVOLVES

A PRESSURIZED TANK. THE BASE WINES (ALREADY FERMENTED SEPARATELY) ARE BOTTLED (ASSEMBLAGE) IN A PRESSURIZED TANK.

LIGURE DE TRACE IS ADDED (COMBINATION OF SUGAR SYRUP AND YEAST) WHICH INITIATES A SECOND FERMENTATION.

THE 2ND FERMENT TAKES PLACE MORE QUICKLY THAN THE FIRST AND AT SLIGHTLY COOLER TEMPERATURES (EG. 16-18°C).

GIVEN THAT THE TANK IS SEALED THE CARBON DIOXIDE PRODUCED BY THE FERMENTATION CANNOT ESCAPE AND DISSOLVES INTO

THE WINE - GIVING IT ITS SPARKLE

WHEN THE DESIRED RESIDUAL SUGAR IS REACHED THE TANK IS CHILLED TO -5°C, ARRESTING THE FERMENTATION.

THE DOSAGE IS ADDED DIRECTLY TO THE TANK, DETERMINING THE FINAL SWEETNESS AND STYLE OF THE WINE

THE WINE IS STABILIZED, CLARIFIED AND BOTTLED UNDER COUNTER PRESSURE

THE TANK METHOD IS USED IN THE PRODUCTION OF PROSECCO WITH THE AROMATIC WHITE GRAPE LA MARCA IS ONE OF THE LARGEST PRODUCERS.

IT IS ALSO USED IN SEKT PRODUCTION WHERE BLSE WINES ARE FORCED FROM MULTIPLE COUNTRIES AND VARIETIES (HEKKE - LARGE PRODUCER) AND IN 95% OF LAMBRUSCO PRODUCTION IN ITALY

IN ALL CASES THE METHOD DEMANDS FRESH FRUIT CHARACTER
OF THE GRAPE. IT IS ~~USED~~^{USED} FOR WINES THAT ARE NOT
MEANT TO AGE AND PRODUCES WINES MOST LIKELY TO BE
DESCRIBED AS "STILL WINE WITH BUBBLES IN IT!"

THE TANK METHOD LOWERS PRODUCTION COSTS, RESULTING IN
MODERATELY PRICED WINES

IT IS CAPABLE OF MAKING ~~HIGH~~ HIGH OUTPUT WINES
IF USING QUALITY BASE WINES

EXTENDED LEES CONTACT IN TANK IS AN OPTION BUT
NOT THE NORM

THE TANK IS ALSO USED IN THE FINAL STAGES OF THE
TRANSFER AND TRANSVERSE METHODS, IN THE
FILLING OF SPECIALTY BOTTLE SIZES FROM WINES
THAT ~~WERE~~ UNDERWENT 2ND FERMENTATION IN BOTTLE

b) Champagne Bollinger S.A.

CHAMPAGNE BOLLINGER SA WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1829 IN EPERNAY BY JACQUES BOLLINGER. IT IS FAMILY OWNED AND RUN TODAY. LILY BOLLINGER (1899-1977) PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN EXPANDING PRODUCTION, SHE BOUGHT UP PLENTY OF VINEYARDS AFTER WWII AND BY HER DEATH THEY WERE PRODUCING 1 MILLION BOTTLES PER YEAR AND OWNED 160 HA THEIR OWN VINEYARDS.

BOLLINGER PIONEERED THE SHIPMENT OF LOW DOSAGE WINES TO THE UK IN THE 1860S WHEN SWEET WAS THE NORM.

LILY BELIEVED IN 5 DESIGNING CHARACTERISTICS STILL FOLLOWED TODAY

- 1) MAJORITY OF FRUIT SHOULD COME FROM THEIR OWN VINEYARDS - OVER 80% FROM PREMIER OR GRAND CRU
- 2) PINOT NOIR DOMINANT BLEND
- 3) BLANCHED FERMENTATION IN OVER 3,000 OAK CASKS TO ENCOURAGE MICRO-OXYGENATION
- 4) LESS AGEING 2-3 TIMES MINIMUM, EVEN FOR NV CUVEE
- 5) ADDITION OF RESERVE WINES IN MAXIMUM BOTTLES UNDER WORK (NOT CROWN CAP)

BOLLINGER TRADEMARKED R.D (RECENTLY DISCHARGED) WITH FIRST RELEASE IN 1950S. R.D. WINES HAVE A MINIMUM 8 YEARS LEES AGEING, PRONOUNCED ANTHOCYANIC NOTES WHICH ARE WELL INCREASED AND A FRESHNESS AND VIVACITY DESPITE THEIR Maturity.

BOLLINGER'S VIEILLES VIGNES FRANCAISE IS THEIR RAREST LABEL AND SOURCES FROM 2 WALLS PRE-PHYLLOXERA, UNGRAINED GRAND CRU VINEYARDS - A BLANC DE NOIRS FROM 100% PINOT NOIR THAT FEELS THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS A BOTTLE, WITH ONLY 3,000 BOTTLES PER VINTAGE. IT IS A RARE EXAMPLE OF A SINGLE VINEYARD PRESIDENTIAL CUVEE →

BOLLINGER IS KNOWN IN POPULAR CULTURE AS THE CHOICE
OF JAMES BOND AND THEY PERIODICALLY RELEASE
SPECIAL CUVEE TO TRADE OFF THE ASSOCIATION.

BOLLINGER PRODUCES 1.7 MILLION BOTTLES PER YEAR.

THEIR NV CUVEE TYPICALLY USES 55% REBOURG WINES

THEIR LINE ALSO INCLUDES VINTAGE AND ROSE CUVEE

c) Crémant

CRÉMANT IS TRADITIONALLY THE SPARKLING MADE IN 8 REGIONS IN FRANCE. SECOND FERMENT TAKES PLACE IN BOTTLE AND TRANSFER METHOD IS ONLY PERMITTED FOR $\frac{1}{2}$ SIZE BOTTLES OR SMALLER AND 1.5L BOTTLES OR LARGER.

73 MILLION BOTTLES ARE PRODUCED WITH 20 MILLION BOTTLES BEING EXPORTED.

CRÉMANT D'ALSACE IS THE LARGEST ACCOUNTING FOR 50% OF PRODUCTION AND OVER 35 MILLION BOTTLES.

CRÉMANT DE BOURGOGNE IS THE 2nd LARGEST WITH 25% AND 18 MILLION BOTTLES.

THE OTHER AOC'S ARE BORDEAUX, DÉ, JURA, LOIRE, LIMOUX AND SAVOIE (WHICH WAS JUST ADDED IN 2014).

THE NEW ADDITION - SAVOIE - USES LOCAL GRAPES JACQUERES AND ARTESSE (MIN 60% COMBINED) WITH THE BALANCE CHARDONNAY, CASSELAS AND AT LEAST ARICONE. THERE ARE 100 PRODUCERS MAKING A VARIETY OF THE SAVOIE AOC AND 1,200 PRODUCERS OF CRÉMANT IN TOTAL.

PINOT NOIR AND CHARDONNAY ARE THE MOST POPULAR GRAPES - TAKING OFF CONSUMER PREFERENCE FOR CHAMPAGNE. ONLY BORDEAUX AND DÉ DO NOT USE EITHER.

OTHER REGIONS - LOIRE, BORDEAUX - USE MORE AROMATIC VARIETIES LIKE PREMIER, SAUV BLANC, CHENIN Blanc. CLIMATE VARIES, AS DO SOILS, BUT GENERALLY THE BEST SITES IN THESE REGIONS ARE USED FOR THE STILL WINES WHICH COMMAND HIGHER PRICES.

LARGE PRODUCERS INCLUDE JOSEPH CATIN AND PIERRE SEGUIN



GRADES ARE USUALLY PICKED 1-2 WEEKS EARLIER THAN
STILL TO PRESERVE ACIDITY BUT CREMANT CAN BE
MADE FROM DECLASSIFIED STILL WINE

STRICT CONTROLS ARE CONSISTENT ACROSS REGIONS:

- 4-10 HARVESTINGS
- 100L JUICE FROM 150 KG OF GRADES MAX
- MAX 150mg/L SULFUR DIOXIDE
- MIN 9 MONTHS (LES AGERS AND MIN 12
MONTHS FROM TIRAGE TO RELEASE)
- MIN 9% ABV (9.5% ABV FOR LIMOUX)

HARVEST YIELDS VARY. ALSACE HAS THE HIGHEST AT 80hl/ha.
THE DOSAGE IS A MAX OF 95 50g/L SUGAR BUT
BRUT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT STYLE.

WINES CAN BE WHITE OR ROSE. E.G.

WHITE CREAMT D'ALSACE - FROM PINOT BLANC, PINOT GRIS,
RIESLING, PINOT NOIR, Auxerrois, ETC. IN ANY COMBINATION
ROSE CREAMT D'ALSACE - 100% PINOT NOIR

THE CREAMT AOCs CAME OUT OF A 1990S EU AGREEMENT
WHERE NON-FRENCH PRODUCERS (EG CAVA) AGREED TO
STOP USING THE WORD "CHAMPENOISE" TO AVOID MARKET
CONFUSION

A TYPICAL CREAMT WILL HAVE PRONOUNCED AROMATIC NOTES
THAT ARE NOT AS WELL INTEGRATED DUE TO SHORTER TIME
SPENT AGING ON LEES. BOTTLE PRICES HOWEVER ARE
MUCH CHEAPER THAN CHAMPAGNE MID TO THE LOW
END OF ITSELF PRICED

March 2017: Unit 5 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Australia Region: South-Eastern Australia Wine: Omni Australian Sparkling Wine
Wine 2	Country: France Region: Champagne Wine: Louis Roederer Carte Blanche Demi-sec NV
Wine 3	Country: Italy Region: Piemonte Wine: Asti San Silvestro NV

This flight of wines was well answered with a relatively high pass rate, which is not unusual for Unit 5. Weaker candidates failed to give convincing descriptions of aroma and flavour profiles, sometimes giving descriptors from one cluster in isolation or, in the case of wine 3 which only had primary aromas/flavours, they wrote about autolytic character that simply was not there. There were also the usual issues – some candidates were erratic in their use of the SAT, missing out on potential marks by failing to comment on all of the structural components of the wines.

In this trio, the emphasis in the concluding section was on the assessment of quality – these were three very different categories of sparkling wine, not only in terms of their style but also from a quality point of view.

March 2017: Unit 5 THEORY

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

- a) Producer classifications in Champagne, e.g. NM, Négociant Manipulant
- b) Prosecco DOC
- c) Meunier OR Pinot Noir OR Chardonnay

The pass rate for this question was good at 66% but there were very few really outstanding responses.

A number of candidates wrote nothing at all on producer classifications in Champagne despite having been given one example of what examiners were looking for here. A large number of those who did answer it wrote only about the example given rather than covering ALL the classifications in use. Some candidates wasted their time writing about classifications that do not come under the umbrella of producer classifications but which refer to particular styles of Champagne such as RD.

Some candidates did not read the question carefully and in section b) included irrelevant information on the Prosecco DOCGs rather than limiting their response to the DOC wines and covering these in more depth.

The section relating to one of the three Champagne grapes varied according to where the examination was being sat. Responses were sometimes too generic or vague and, in a couple of instances, were not addressed in the context of sparkling wines.

June 2017: Unit 5 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Spain Region: Catalonia Wine: Mont Marçal Brut Reserva NV
Wine 2	Country: France Region: Champagne Wine: Pol Roger 2008
Wine 3	Country: Italy Region: Lombardy Wine: Bortolotti Prosecco Superiore di Valdobbiadene NV

The high pass rate of 79% was almost certainly down to some very good descriptions for the Pol Roger as notes for the other two samples were often less good.

The sweetness on the Prosecco was often misjudged, leading many to confuse this wine with Asti. A number of candidates identified autolytic character on this wine which was not there. This tends to suggest that some candidates try to “hedge their bets” in this paper by listing autolytic characteristics for all three samples. This can backfire because available marks may be “capped” where the candidate incorrectly identifies a characteristic that is very definitely not a feature of the wine.

Tasting notes for the Cava were the least convincing with many candidates overestimating the quality. The assessment of quality for all three samples was often weak with some candidates placing too much emphasis on justification for their given provenance of the wine or superfluous, long-winded comments about whether the wine was ready to drink or should be kept. The “assessment of quality” and “readiness for drinking / potential for ageing” are two distinct parts of the WSET Systematic Approach to Tasting and will not always appear together on examination papers, as was the case here. When asked to give an assessment of the wine’s quality, candidates should refrain from comments relating to its readiness for drinking / ageing potential.

June 2017: Unit 5 THEORY

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

- a) **Montagne de Reims OR Côtes des Blancs OR Vallée de la Marne**
- b) **Sparkling red wines**
- c) **Prestige Cuvées**

Some candidates failed to understand what was meant by Prestige Cuvées and included too much information of limited relevance. Answers on section b) tended to be rather vague and generic with a clear distinction between those guessing and hoping to get by on generalisations and those who were able to write knowledgeably about the specific regions of production, grapes used, styles produced, techniques used etc. Some candidates wrote about red grapes instead of red wines and usually covered very little of any relevance in doing so. Comments about rosé sparkling wine were also pointless in the context of a question on red sparkling wines.

Unit 6 – Fortified Wines of the World

Unit 6 examinations took place in November 2016, March 2017 and June 2017.

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

November 2016: Unit 6 TASTING		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Spain Jerez Principe de Barbadillo Amontillado
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Douro Fonseca Unfiltered LBV 2009
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Madeira Henriques & Henriques 15 yr old Verdelho
<p>This trio of unrelated fortified wines generated a good pass rate of 68%. The marker commented that a significant number of candidates failed to answer the question as set in the concluding section. This is invariably because they do not read the examination paper carefully enough and just assume the concluding section will always ask for an assessment of quality because this is set out in the concluding section of the SAT. The concluding section of all tasting papers will vary, depending on the samples chosen. Sometimes candidates will be expected to identify the samples as closely as possible, they may be asked to comment on a particular aspect of production such as ageing or they may be required to give an assessment of quality or comment on readiness for drinking and ageing potential. In the case of these wines, the instruction on the examination paper was to identify the style within the category and explain what evidence in the tasting note supported this conclusion.</p> <p>Taking sample 1 as an example, the correct response would have been Amontillado Sherry (the style within the category) and the evidence in the tasting note would have included comments such as the following (it is helpful to think of terms of why it is Sherry rather than any other fortified wine and then why it is Amontillado rather than another other style of Sherry):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower level of acidity eliminates Port or Madeira• Absence of tannin eliminates Port• High level of alcohol compared to VDN, for example• Complexity and length indicates a high level of quality of which Sherry is capable• Absence of any residual sugar eliminates Port, Madeira or sweeter styles of Sherry• Concentrated dried fruit notes, complexity of tertiary flavours and presence of volatile acidity indicate long ageing with deliberate oxidation which eliminates many styles of fortified wine		

- Evidence of flor eliminates Oloroso
- Colour eliminates fino/manzanilla
- Aroma/flavour profile indicative of Amontillado

In terms of the tasting notes themselves, candidates lost marks because their descriptions were too generic, using descriptors such as “spicy”, “oaky” etc or because they “hedged their bets” through over-use of the “medium” category when describing the structural components of the wines. These were very different and distinctive styles of fortified wines exhibiting more “high” and “low” ends of the scale.

November 2016: Unit 6 THEORY

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

- a) Colour and tannin extraction in Port
- b) The solera system in Sherry production
- c) Beaumes de Venise OR Banyuls OR Maury

Scripts varied significantly in terms of factual accuracy with some candidates performing well whilst others clearly struggled. A common problem was candidates’ handling of the various topics which was often too generic or superficial. For example, describing the whole production process for Port in very broad terms rather than very specific issues related to colour and tannin extraction in detail. Terminology was also often used incorrectly, for example referring to fortification with RCGM (which is grape must) rather than with grape spirit.

March 2017: Unit 6 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: France Region: Languedoc Wine: Domaine de la Pigeage Muscat Beaumes de Venise 2015
Wine 2	Country: Portugal Region: Douro Wine: Croft Triple Crown Port NV
Wine 3	Country: Spain Region: Jerez Wine: Fernando de Castillo Antique Pedro Ximénez NV

This paper generated a pass rate of 89% with an equal split between the number of candidates achieving pass and merit grades, plus a good number of distinctions. This was almost certainly

down to the very good responses on wine 3 which compensated for generally rather moderate quality answers on the other two samples. Rather surprisingly, it was the Port that caused problems with many overestimating the quality and far too many describing it as "outstanding".

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

March 2017: Unit 6 THEORY

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

- a) Maturation in oak
- b) The role of climate in Port production
- c) Amontillado OR Fino OR Oloroso

Candidates generally handled section c) most effectively – possibly because of the factual nature of the question which simply required candidates to get down as many facts about the style of Sherry as possible. There was no need for interpretation or manipulation of the data as with the other two sections of the question.

When discussing the role of climate in Port production many candidates forgot to consider the effect of climate in terms of maturation and the differences achieved by maturing wines up in the Douro compared to on the coast. Some candidates limited their response to a description of the climate in the various sub-regions which was not sufficient. Candidates need to think in broader terms and make their answers more encompassing.

In similar fashion, weak answers on maturation in oak simply listed ageing requirements for various styles of fortified wines. Some candidates wrote about oak maturation in general rather than in the context of fortified wines. The best answers discussed the various options available in terms of oak ageing, included some analysis of the impact of these various options and linked this information to the various styles of fortified wines that undergo maturation in oak.

June 2017: Unit 6 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Spain Jerez Tio Pepe Fino
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Wine 2	Country: France Region: Roussillon Wine: Mas Amiel Vintage Maury 2014
Wine 3	Country: Portugal Region: Douro Wine: Ramos Pinto Quinta da Ervamoira 10 yr old Tawny
The emphasis in the concluding section here was on identifying the region of origin and giving an accurate assessment of the quality of these wines.	
A significant number of candidates misjudged the sweetness of the Port and also either overstated or underestimated quality levels.	
Marks were also lost where instead of identifying flavours on the palate, candidates simply wrote "same as nose".	
Most candidates had no trouble in identifying the Fino Sherry but wine 2 was often mistaken for a ruby style Port - the alcohol really was not high enough for this to be the case.	

June 2017: Unit 6 THEORY

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

- a) Canteiro and Estufa OR Malvasia and Sercial OR Viticulture in Madeira
- b) Sweetening in Sherry production
- c) Fortification of Port

On the whole, this was a reasonably good set of responses but with a wide variance in quality with marks ranging from a low of 3% to a high of 80%.

Few candidates were able to answer the section on "sweetening in Sherry production" well. Most simply gave descriptions of the different styles of sweet Sherry rather than explaining how the sweetness is achieved. Where an attempt at describing the methods was made, it was often in very basic terms or contained errors. No candidates identified all 6 methods available – RCGM; fresh Palomino must that has been vacuum concentrated and with the colour removed; sun-dried Pedro Ximénez grapes; dried Palomino grapes made into a mistela; arrope grape concentrate and fortified Moscatel. Each of these options required some explanation of what they are, how they are produced, when and why they are used and what effect they have on the resulting style. Very few candidates were able to provide this information.

The following candidate was one of those who did address this section reasonably well and was backed up by a very good response on section a) and a fairly sound if rather brief account of the fortification of Port in section c).

a) Viticulture in Madeira

Madeira is an island of 2 halves. For a climatic standpoint and this drives the viticulture.

The Southern part of the island ~~is~~ is very hot and humid (around Funchal). It is also much flatter and there is comparatively little rainfall.

The Northern part of the island is cooler and the terrain is much higher in altitude, often on steep slopes. There is much higher rainfall on this part of the island.

Grapes:

As a general rule, Sercial and verdelho are grown at the North (at heights of 800m and 400m respectively). Boal, Malvasia and Tinta Negra are grown more commonly in the South. ~~After~~ Phylloxera most noble grapes are no longer planted (max 20% of total). Tinta Negra is by far the most common.

Soil:

The soil is primarily fertile volcanic soil throughout the island. Some ~~soils~~ areas are less fertile.

Vine system:

The classic system was to construct "paços" (terraces) on the ~~banks~~ the slopes. On these paços the method was "Latados", which is the pergola system. However, increasingly (mainly in the South) produces using Espalier (Cordon VSP) system. This is helpful on flatter terrain. Here in the north it is all manual, there is limited automation in the south.

Graves:

Most of the large producers (Mata Modesta wine company, Barbeito) don't own vineyards. These are owned by the growers. There are many growers each with small holdings. Hence people such as Ricardo Freitas of Barbeito have entered into long-term contracts with growers to ensure quality.

Irrigation:

The south is very dry, so there are irrigation channels (Lerodas) down from the hills.

Time of Picking:

This is very important. In general sercial is the latest to ripen and the reds after sweater grapes earlier. However some producers such as Ricardo Freitas find sercial can be too harsh when fully dry out sometimes pick it at different times.

Disease:

All the noble grapes are susceptible to disease (e.g. rot, botrytis), so the growers must spray. Tinta Negra is the most resistant variety, which explains some of its popularity (I believe it represents 78% of all planting).

b) Sweetening in Sherry production

Most sherry is produced as a dry ^{wine} naturally. Hence, with the exception of Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel, most of the sweetening happens at the end of the production.

Naturally sweet sherry (Vinos Dulces Naturales).

This is from the PX and Moscatel grapes. The sweetening occurs from drying the grapes in the sun (Solea). This dehydrates the grapes by causing the water to evaporate and concentrates the sugars. This leaves very sweet wines that stop fermentation after a few degrees. Consequently they have a sugar level of (for ex) at least 212 g/l, sometimes up to 500 g/l. An example is Barbadillo's Pedro Ximénez.

Vino generoso / ice wine

These are wines where sweetness is added. Generally, RGM is added to sweeten lower quality wines and PX is added to sweeten higher quality wines. The basic categories are:

Cream: Must show signs of Biological aging.
→ typically made by adding RGM to fino sherry
→ must have a sugar content of 45-115 g/l.

Medium cream: must show signs of biological and oxidative aging.
→ typically made by adding PX to Amontillado sherry.
→ must have sugar content of 5-115 g/l.

Cream sherry: must have signs of oxidative aging
→ typically made by adding PX to oloroso sherry
⇒ must have sugar levels of at least 115 g/l.

The most famous sherry cream is the mass produced Harvey's Bristol Cream. However there are many high quality sweetened sherries.

Harvey's, themselves, have a sweet VSOP and VCP, which Tancis Robinson says represents real value for money.

Gonzalez Byass have their 1847 solera Oloroso Dulce that has a delicate balance. They also have an ~~old~~ oloroso "chocado" that is ~~sweetened~~ sweetened.

A final method of sweetness might be what Gonzalez Byass do with their Apostoles Palo Cortado. After the ~~wine~~ wine is cut the solera, it is aged in PX barrels for many years. This allows it to absorb some sweetness.

c) Fortification of Port

Fortification port is a very traditional practice dating back to the 1600s. It was originally done to preserve the wine from spoilage, as the higher alcohol level would kill micro-bacteria.

The actual process of fortification is relatively uniform. Typically once the grapes have had their rigor (24-36 hours) extracted and fermented, grape spirit is added to stop the fermentation.

The grape spirit added is a 77% spirit, which is now commonly from France. This is done in a ratio of 4 parts port to 1 port spirit. The relatively high percentage of lower rectified spirit is what gives port its "warming" character.

This is contrasted to say, VDN, where a 95-96% spirit is used ($5\text{--}10\%$) in lower proportions, which gives less feel of the high alcohol.

The use of spirits from France is a relatively new concept. Prior to joining the EU, Portuguese producers had to use an inferior quality spirit from the Cava do Douro in Portugal. EU competition has meant that this monopoly could not continue and producers are free to choose what they wanted. Adrian Bridge of Taylor Fladgate noted in an interview with Levi Dalton that their chief wine master travels to France every year to taste the spirit. They want something high quality and neutral to ~~possibly~~ allow the quality of the fruit to come through. Dirk Meepat has also experimented with using different types of spirit.

The same furfication process is used for all red parts (wood-aged and special category). For white parts and "pink" parts, my understanding is that the ratio of spirit to part may vary.

Furikake rubs part has a final alcohol of between 18-21 typically.

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

Paper	2016/17			2015/16			2014/15			2013/14			2012/13			2011/12		
Unit 1 CWA	April 91%		Nov 91%	April 89%		Nov 85%	April 84%		Nov 82%	April 91%		Nov 90%	April 88%		Nov 91%	April 90%		Nov 91%
Unit 1 Case Study	Nov 85%	Mar 82%	June 83%	Nov 85%	Mar 80%	June 80%	Nov 58%	Mar 72%	June 79%	Nov 72%	Mar 73%	June 83%	Nov 77%	Mar 71%	June 85%	Nov 87%	Mar 68%	June 74%
Unit 2	91%			91%			92%			90%			91%			93%		
Unit 3 Tasting	June 59%		Jan 71%	June 77%		Jan 65%	June 69%		Jan 59%	June 82%		Jan 64%	June 82%		Jan 64%	June 74%		Jan 66%
Unit 3 Theory	June 45%		Jan 34%	June 45%		Jan 52%	June 32%		Jan 27%	June 40%		Jan 29%	June 40%		Jan 47%	June 43%		Jan 46%
Unit 4	66%			64%			52%			55%			57%			67%		
Unit 5	76%			59%			66%			71%			84%			75%		
Unit 6	80%			58%			53%			82%			61%			65%		

Appendix 2 – Grade Bands for Diploma Closed-book Examinations

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

Appendix 3 – Grade Bands for Diploma Coursework Assignments

GRADE BANDS FOR DIPLOMA COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS	
Fail Unclassified	<44%
	A seriously inadequate assignment which, through lack of information or errors of fact, demonstrates a very weak understanding of the subject. Very limited evidence of relevant research. Poorly expressed or confused with unsatisfactory presentation/referencing; lacks coherence and structure.
Fail	45% to 54%
	A borderline assignment which may contain some correct detail but fails to address the question in sufficient depth or is too narrow in focus. Little evidence of research beyond the recommended reading. Lacks original thought with poor or superficial analysis of source material. Rudimentary structure/presentation, possibly with inaccurate referencing.
	This grade is also awarded for assignments which do not meet the minimum word count.
Pass	55% to 64%
	A satisfactory if basic assignment with sound explanation and some evidence of critical thinking/personal commentary. Analysis of key concepts, terminology and use of examples is limited but clearly expressed. Adequate presentation as well as sound referencing and a competent bibliography.
Pass with Merit	65% to 74%
	A good assignment which demonstrates a clear understanding of the subject. Thorough analysis and critical use of a wide range of relevant source material, properly referenced in the bibliography. Clear evidence of original thought and engagement with the question combined with rigorous argument and mature expression. Evaluates more than one side of the argument with good use of examples. Correct presentation with mostly accurate referencing.
Pass with Distinction	>75%
	An excellent assignment which demonstrates mastery of the subject. Comprehensive analysis of key themes and sophisticated personal commentary with well-chosen examples. Extensive evidence of original research with judicious and critical use of source material. Evaluates more than one side of the argument, linking theory and practice as appropriate. Excellent presentation with coherence, clarity and flair. Relevant and accurate referencing.