



WSET® Level 4 Diploma in Wines and Spirits

Examiners' Report for 2017-18

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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 2017-18 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 2017-18 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 2017: Coursework Assignment

Assignment title: Protectionism in the drinks industry

For the first time, the post Second World War consensus concerning free trade seems to be under threat. In the years ahead it is possible that tariffs and other barriers could be imposed in several key markets. Drinks producers already face restrictions on free trade in many countries.

Required sections:

1. The tools of protectionism (20 marks)

The candidate should outline the various tariffs and other barriers that a government can impose to restrict free trade.

2. Protectionism in the drinks industry (40 marks)

The candidate should give examples of existing restrictions on free trade that wine and spirits producers face today. Candidates must draw their examples from contrasting markets around the world.

3. Conclusion and personal commentary (20 marks)

Drawing on their findings, the candidate should speculate on how protectionism may create profitable opportunities for some businesses in the drinks industry.

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

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

Section 1 was handled well on the whole, since this was simply a case of presenting the facts which were easy to research. Sections 2 and 3 required a certain degree of personal input and this was certainly where better candidates came to the fore. Section 3, in particular, generated many weak responses, usually because candidates did not adhere to the Assignment Brief in speculating on how protectionism can create profitable opportunities for some businesses. A number of candidates simply summarised the content they presented in sections 1 and 2 and therefore missed the point of this section.

The following example script is well researched, referenced and presented. It maps tightly to the candidate brief in terms of content and weighting and has a well thought through conclusion.

PROTECTIONISM IN THE DRINKS MARKET

Section 1. The tools of protectionism

Protectionism is defined in the Collins English Dictionary as 'The policy some countries have of helping their own industries by putting a large tax on imported goods or by restricting imports in some other way'. It is not a new topic¹. Whilst the media regularly and enthusiastically reports on reduced levels of protectionism (examples of which are shown in Section 2), it remains a major issue affecting international trade and the wine and spirits trade in particular. It is estimated that 43% of wine is consumed outside of its country of origin² and the UK alone imports £3billion of wine, and exports £4billion of Scotch whisky.³

For the 18 months to 31 December 2015, the European Commission reported 201 new potentially trade restrictive measures introduced and only 16 withdrawn⁴. There are many examples of discussions aimed at reducing protectionist measures proceeding at glacial pace (for example the United States of America (US) and the European Union (EU) signed an agreement affecting wine trade in 2006 , by 2014 many issues remained unresolved⁵ and more recently was still at the 'management stage'⁶). Also whilst statements by Donald Trump in his election campaign , by Vladimir Putin, and many of the 'Brexit' comments may only be political rhetoric, they are being taken seriously as evidenced by IMF head Christine Lagarde speaking about 'myopic pursuit of zero-sum policies'⁷.

The impact of reducing protectionism was summarised in an unusual source as "Free trade agreements reduce barriers, increase competition, lower prices and promote alcohol consumption".⁸

There are many protectionist tools in evidence which I summarise below;

¹For example, the British Navigation Act of 1651 prohibited foreign ships from trading in British coastal waters. In 1846 the repeal of the Corn Laws reduced the level of protectionism. A brief history of international trade agreements, Matthew Johnston, <https://www.investopedia.com/.../011916/brief-history-international-trade-agreements.asp> (last accessed 06/07/17)

² Andrzej Binkiewicz, 3 August 2017, <https://www.decanter.com/wine.../ups-to-ship-wine-in-three-days-to-more-countries-373923/> (last accessed 05/10/17)

³ Nick Clegg laying out the potential challenges facing the UK's food and drink industry after Brexit 17 October 2016, Page 3, <https://www.libdems.org.uk/brexit-challenge-fooddrink-paper> (last accessed 09/09/17)

⁴ Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Trade and Investment Barriers and Protectionist Trends 1 July 2014 – 31 December 2015 {SWD(2016)204 final} page 4 https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/june/tradoc_154665.pdf (last accessed 14/9/17)

⁵ Renee Johnson, 24 July 2014 Congressional Research Service Report on *The US Wine Industry and Selected Trade Issues with the European Union* 24 July 2014, CRS 7-5700, www.crs.gov R43658 (last accessed 22/6/17)

⁶ The Wine Institute *International Trade Policy: US-EU Agreements Affecting Trade in Wine* https://www.wineinstitute.org/international_trade_policy (last accessed 06/07/17)

⁷ Katie Allen, 9 November 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/trumps-economic-policies-protectionism-low-taxes-and-coal-mines> (last accessed 05/10/17)

⁸ *The alcohol industry and trade agreements: a preliminary assessment*, Donald W. Zeigler https://iogt.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Zeigler_Alcohol-Trade-PrelAss.pdf (last accessed 14/09/17)

- Tariffs are taxes or duties applied in cross border transactions. They can be manipulated to favour ‘home’ producers by imposing higher costs on importers. They vary in type and can be preferential up to set volumes, then become expensive or punitive (known as Tariff Rate Quotas). They can apply as fixed fees per unit of sale or be *ad valorem* (a percentage of sales value).
- Quotas and quantitative restrictions occur where governments set absolute limits (weight, volume or unit) on annual imports of products.
- Outright trade bans or sanctions often have political motives preventing all specified trade with countries (e.g. UK and US with North Korea and Russia).
- Intellectual property and trade mark protections can prevent (or hinder) imports of goods which could be seen as passing off as or copying items which have legally registered protection in home countries.
- Geographic origin indications (GIs) restrict production or processing of products to particular geographic areas. The TRIPS⁹ Agreement defines GIs as ‘indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a Member or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographic origin.’ Member countries of WTO¹⁰ (currently 164¹¹), representing 95% of world trade agreed to protect GI product names to prevent misleading consumers as to the product source.
- Production method rules dictated by governments ensure that consumers understand what is being purchased. If rules differ from other countries they can be used to hinder imports.
- Import licensing, restricting numbers of importers or agents, can require stringent criteria to be met and the number of licenses can be restricted.
- Voluntary export restraints operate where country X agrees not to export products to country Y in exchange for reciprocal agreements on different products.
- Foreign currency controls restrict movement of currency (e.g. Zambia has severe restrictions on foreign currency movements, hindering payment for imports).
- Exchange rates can be manipulated by governments making imported goods prohibitively expensive. (China has been accused of this by US¹²)
- Preferential market access allows easier market access to some importers over others.

⁹ World Trade Organisation (WTO)’s Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

¹⁰ World Trade Organisation, which together with its predecessor GATT (the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade) has sought to bring countries together to discuss and form agreements on reducing protectionism and entering into free trade agreements. WTO provides guidelines under which international free trade should be carried out

¹¹ <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/.../10-things-know-about-world-trade-org>, 22 June 2017 (last accessed 06/07/17)

¹² Katie Allen, 9 November 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/trumps-economic-policies-protectionism-low-taxes-and-coal-mines> (last accessed 05/10/17)

- Preferential government purchasing is where governments favour home producers over foreign producers (e.g. UK government purchasing of English wine^{13 14)}
- Customs checks, port of entry and warehousing requirements are applied, varying from non-existent (countries trading within the EU) to severe and time consuming.
- Government procurement and monopolies (applied by Finland, Norway, Sweden and Canada¹⁵) puts governments directly in charge of favouritism.
- Listing rules (e.g. Canada) where restrictions are placed on displaying for sale other countries' products.
- Subsidies, incentives and preferential tax treatment benefit producers in 'home' countries, making their products more competitive than imports.
- Product composition testing, certification standards (including sanitary and phytosanitary requirements) are legitimately used to protect consumers but can be used overzealously on importers.
- Local content requirements require set percentages of products to originate from 'home' countries.
- Labelling regulations vary across the world. Differences from producers' own labelling (e.g. size or information content) require importers to incur additional cost.
- Government inaction occurs where governments choose not to prevent protectionist activities (e.g. France not intervening in its farmers' disruption of Spanish wine imports)¹⁶
- Free trade can be a protectionist measure. In circumstances where governments believe that their own producers are the best and most efficient in the world, they could protect this position by having the freest possible reciprocal access to world markets.
- Minimum unit price can protect local producers against importers dumping large quantities at low prices. (The Scotch Whisky Association warned that widespread use of this approach could have a significant detrimental effect on its industry¹⁷.)

Section 2. Protectionism in the drinks business

The drinks business has many examples of protectionism, too numerous to cover in an essay of this size. I therefore concentrate on one major topic - GIs -and on two countries, the land

¹³ Ellie Douglas, 11 September 2017, <http://www.decanter.com/wine-news/english-wine-makes-half-uk-governments-cellar-purchases-> (last accessed 05/10/17);

¹⁴ Ellie Douglas, 18 July 2017, *UK ambassadors should 'serve British', says Foreign Office chief*, 18 July 2017, www.decanter.com/wine-news/uk-ambassadors-english-wine-372805/ (last accessed 1/8/17)

¹⁵ The Wine Institute *International Trade Policy: US-EU Agreements Affecting Trade in Wine* https://www.wineinstitute.org/international_trade_policy (last accessed 06/07/17)

¹⁶ Yohan Castaing, www.decanter.com/.../french-winemakers-destroy-spanish-bag-in-box-wines-366966/ www.decanter.com/wine.../french-winemakers-attack-spanish-wine-lorries-353266/ (last accessed 05/10/17)

¹⁷ Natalie Thomas, 3 March 2013 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/9904983/Drinks-industry-attacks-unfair-pricing-plan.html> (last accessed 9/9/17)

of the free (trade?) USA, and Canada, and include brief examples from elsewhere in the world.

GIIs (see Section 1), are used widely in the drinks industry to protect particular brands or production methods. Wines and spirits have a higher level of protection than other goods¹⁸, but with varying degrees of interpretation of rules, hence controversy around the world. In European wine, the two principal GI designations are PDO¹⁹ and PGI²⁰. Many examples can be found in spirits, such as Scotch whisky. PDO is the higher order of GI wine classification²¹ with stricter rules covering the grape varieties, geographical environment, production methods, yields etc. PGI has lower qualifying criteria²² needing only to possess specific qualities, reputation or characteristics relating to its geographic origin.

In July 2014 E-Bacchus reported 2,885 GI names²³ of which 60% were EU based. Disputes exist as to whether protection should be provided to certain designations, for instance the US claims²⁴ that it is unfair to give GI protection to Prosecco as this is a widely grown grape variety. The EU response has been to revert to the traditional grape name (Glera), allowing the name Prosecco to stand for the protected GI. A further example resulted from the 2006 agreement between US and EU whereby Champagne, Chablis and others could only be protected in US if they had not been used by a producer until that date. Thus to the annoyance of the French champagne industry, Donald Trump's inauguration lunch was served with 'Californian Champagne'²⁵.

The Congressional Research paper²⁶ and Wine Institute Report²⁷ provide backgrounds (the latter in more emotive terms) to US concerns with apparent unfair treatment and slow progress in bilateral discussions. They point out that since the formation of WTO the US import tariff for wine fell from 31.5 (10%) to 6.6 cents per litre (1.4%) whilst other countries' tariffs have only decreased slightly, furthermore rates for emerging countries are high with China, Russia, Brazil, Vietnam and India at 14%, 20%, 27%, 50% and 150% respectively. Other countries' high tariffs include EU, Japan and Switzerland 32%, 22.5% and

¹⁸ Jancis Robinson and Julia Harding, *The Oxford Companion to Wine* (Fourth edition) page 311.

¹⁹ Protected Designation of Origin

²⁰ Protected Geographical Indication

²¹ *The Oxford Companion to Wine* (Fourth edition) Jancis Robinson and Julia Harding page 540

²² *The Oxford Companion to Wine* (Fourth edition) Jancis Robinson and Julia Harding page 548

²³ Renee Johnson, 24 July 2014 Congressional Research Service Report on *The US Wine Industry and Selected Trade Issues with the European Union* 24 July 2014, CRS 7-5700, www.crs.gov R43658 page (last accessed 22/6/17)

²⁴ idem

²⁵ Chris Mercer, Decanter 20 January 2017 www.decanter.com/wine-news/trump-inauguration-menu-wines-353341/ (last accessed 15/7/17)

²⁶ Renee Johnson, 24 July 2014 Congressional Research Service Report on *The US Wine Industry and Selected Trade Issues with the European Union* 24 July 2014, CRS 7-5700, www.crs.gov R43658 (last accessed 22/6/17)

²⁷ The Wine Institute *International Trade Policy: US-EU Agreements Affecting Trade in Wine* https://www.wineinstitute.org/international_trade_policy (last accessed 06/07/17)

90% red/106% white respectively. US is aggrieved that its tariff reductions have not been reciprocated by other countries.

The reports point out that other countries pay significant subsidies to wine growers (EU allocating \$1.41 billion in 2014), reducing their costs of production and marketing in comparison with US; wine labelling requirements are a burden in Thailand, Kenya and Russia; and testing and certification rules in many countries (Canada, Russia, China,) are more burdensome than in US making it more difficult to export to those countries.

The last few paragraphs suggest that US is at the forefront of allowing free trade into America but is the victim of barriers in other countries hindering its exports. However, drinks trade within US is far from free. Following the prohibition era in the 1930s a strict alcohol sales regime was introduced to 'protect' consumers from the adverse effects of excess alcohol and to allow State governments (rather than illegal groups) to control sales. Many of the remnants of this regime exist today despite a 2005 Supreme Court ruling; including the three tier system²⁸, restrictions on transport and sale of wine across State boundaries²⁹, days and times when alcohol may be sold, purchase and delivery restrictions (including proof of age). Several major retailers including Amazon, Allvino and Total Wine³⁰ are seeking to liberalise many of the protectionist practices. This has to be done State by State and progress is slow. Allvino currently sells US wines to 41 of the 50 States. These laws currently prevent non US drinks companies selling directly into the US market without going through a State controlled distributor or retailer.

Historically, Canada controlled sales of wines and spirits through exclusive control by provincial government liquor boards which bought and 'listed' products. US in particular felt that unfair protection was being given to Canadian products through; 'unfair' listing practices (in the 1980s the Ontario Liquor Control Board listed no Californian wines), additional 'mark-ups' on imported wines; and blending requirements. In 1989 CUSFTA³¹ commenced. A subsequent major academic work³² noted that significant increases in US imports occurred, the greatest impact coming from removal of nontariff barriers, particularly listings. CUSTFA however has not resolved all problems as follows.

²⁸ The three tier system in the US was introduced in the 1930s after prohibition and allowed strict State control of all alcohol sales. The three tiers are: 1) the winery who must sell to 2) a distributor who must sell to 3) a retailer (sometimes the distributor and retailer are State owned but must be State licensed). This system allows each State government to place its own laws and restrictions on alcohol sales.

²⁹ On 3 October 2017 FedEx was rumoured to be considering withdrawing from alcohol delivery due to the complexity of State laws. W. Blake Gray, <https://www.wine-searcher.com/m/2017/10/interstate-wine-sales-threatened-by-shippers> (last accessed 5/10/17)

³⁰ Dan Adams, The Boston Globe, 20 May 2017 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2017/05/20/for-total-wine-total.../story.html> (last accessed 27/5/17)

³¹ Canadian-United States Free Trade Agreement

³² Heien, Dale and Sims, Eric; *The Impact of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement on US wine exports*, American Journal of Agricultural Economics, Feb 2000, volume 82 issue 1

On 22 June 2017 US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer highlighted the perceived problem with British Columbian province grocery stores only being allowed to sell wine produced in the province³³. US argue this is discriminatory as are restrictions on listings, cost-of service mark-ups, maximum or minimum price points, distribution policies and labelling requirements. These protections date to Canada's attempts to protect its growing wine industry in the 1980s. Canadian representatives point to US having a 67% share of its home market in contrast to Canadian wines having a 32% home share. Demonstrating the political importance of the Canadian wine industry, Prime Minister Trudeau 'vowed to protect Canada'swine industries' during trade negotiations³⁴

On 11 July 2017 Ontario's province owned liquor stores were told to remove Israeli wine from their shelves if they were produced in 'occupied' territories. This was a political decision which was withdrawn on 13 July in recognition of the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement³⁵.

A brief summary of other examples of protectionism

- In June 2017 it was announced that Australian wine exports to Greater China had increased by 33% in 2016-17 partly as a result of implementing a free trade agreement, however tariffs will not reduce to zero until 2019³⁶. This is to the detriment of Hong Kong which had been used as an intermediary to avoid the Chinese import tariffs. The staged reduction in tariffs started at 14% and still stands at 5.6%³⁷
- Chile reduced its tariffs on US imports in 2004 ,but in 2017 maintains a 'luxury goods' tariff on imports of whisky (31.5%) and wines, sparkling wines, cider and beer of 20.5%³⁸. This contrasts with the import tariffs charged by US.
- In July 2017 a Greek appeals court upheld a ruling fining Heineken for infringing the Competition Act and EU law by excluding competitors from the on trade market by use of exclusivity agreements forcing bars to stock Heineken brands.³⁹

³³ Joanna Smith, The Star, 7 August 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/08/07/dispute-over-canadian-wine-sales-on-the-table-at-nafta-talks.html> (last accessed 05/10/17). On 2 October US officials lodged a second complaint at the WTO against Canada and its wine-selling laws.

³⁴ Allan Benner in The Standard 27 August 2017 www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/.../trudeau-discusses-wine-and-nafta-during-college-visit (last accessed 03/10/17)

³⁵ Rupert Miller, The Drinks Business, 14 July 2017 <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2017/07/ontario-overturns-israeli-wine-ban/> (last accessed 15/07/17)

³⁶ Natalie Wang, The Drinks Business, 19 July 2017 <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/.../china-the-us-lead-australian-wine-export-growth-in-2016-2017/> (last accessed 01/08/17)

³⁷ Emily Stewart, ABC News, 5 January 2017 www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01.../wine-exporters-to-benefit-from-further.../8164312 (last accessed 05/10/17)

³⁸ Chile import tariffs prepared by US embassies abroad 15 August 2017 <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Chile-Import-Tariffs> (last accessed 5/10/17)

³⁹ Lauren Eads, The Drinks Business, 6 July 2017 <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2017/07/greek-court-upholds-23m-fine-for-heineken-over-market-abuse/> (last accessed 7/7/17)

- Brazil exemplifies the emotions involved in protectionism. In 2012 the Brazilian government opened a consultation⁴⁰ about proposals to protect the national wine producers, including;
 - Raising import tariffs from 27% to 55%
 - Introducing country by country quotas
 - Imposing minimum prices on imported wines
 - Making labelling in Portuguese compulsory
 - Banning use of terms organic or biodynamic unless certified by a Brazilian agency.

These proposals being relatively extreme thinking on protectionism were not enacted in full, but even today import tariffs stand at 27%, labels must be in Portuguese with significant content requirements, product testing must be done by an agency accredited by the Brazilian government and import licenses must be obtained in advance of shipment⁴¹. The net result of these requirements is that 75% of wine sold in Brazil is locally produced⁴² which is not a reflection of the relative quality of Brazilian wine.

- In July 2017 after four years of negotiation EU and Japan agreed to introduce a free trade agreement for EU wines and Scotch whisky which will eliminate all import tariffs on these products (an actual agreement is yet to be finalised)⁴³. This puts EU on a par with Chile. Scotch whisky already has a zero rate tariff and this agreement provides further legal protection. Some 200 EU GIs will receive the same protections in Japan as in EU.
- The 2016 'Trade and investment barriers report'⁴⁴ listed new barriers introduced around the world including; excise tax on spirits imported in Malaysia, lack of GI Prosecco protection in Moldova, excessive registration requirements in Ecuador and discriminatory spirits taxes in Brazil.
- Since 2012 action by the Chinese government has seen a significant reduction in sales of premium international spirits including Cognac and Scotch whisky. This

⁴⁰ Paul Medder, Jancis Robinson .com 23 March 2012 <https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/brazils-wine-imports-threatened> (last accessed 6/7/17)

⁴¹ Importing Wine into the Brazilian Market <https://www.tuv-sud.com/home-com/resource-centre/publications/e-ssentials-newsletter/food-health-e-ssentials/e-ssentials-2-2016/importing-wine-into-the-brazilian-market> (last accessed 22/09/17)

⁴² Brazilian wine market - a snapshot, Vinex, 30 March 2017

https://en.vinex.market/articles/2017/03/30/brazilian_wine_market_a_snapshot (last accessed 5/10/17)

⁴³ Lauren Eads, The Drinks Business, 7 July 2017 <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2017/07/japan-agrees-fta-with-european-union> (last accessed 7/7/17)

⁴⁴ Liz Newmark, Just Drinks, 29 June 2017 https://www.just-drinks.com/news/european-wine-spirits-sectors-hit-by-new-foreign-trade-barriers-in-2016_id123457.aspx (last accessed 10/7/17)

action, to reduce corruption, has curtailed ‘lavish gifting’ and ‘luxury banquets’. It is felt that this action may improve market conditions for mid priced spirits⁴⁵.

Section 3. Conclusions and personal commentary

The economic benefits of free trade for consumers are well argued by academics⁴⁶ and in economic textbooks (Greater access to markets, greater competition, lower prices for consumers, raising of quality, etc.). Brent Radcliffe argues strongly that tariffs are pro producer and anti-consumer⁴⁷, that long term lack of competition results in inefficiency, higher prices and lower quality products. A 1987 HBR article⁴⁸ argued that the case for protectionism was often flawed when exposed to the facts, that protection is an extremely costly, unpredictable and inefficient device for saving jobs; in advanced economies even start-up companies can raise capital to invest without the need for blanket subsidies; and the argument that it supports basic industries misses the point that over time businesses and industries need to change.

It is interesting however to look at how protectionism could be of benefit to drinks producers. Justifications for protectionism include:

- protection of infant industries – wine or spirits as a new venture for a country may have high start up costs and low returns whilst vines are established, production techniques are learned and markets and brands established. Subsidies to producers, quotas and tariffs against competitors through this period could ultimately lead to a highly profitable industry. India and China both have significant potential as drinks producers making it understandable why they wish to protect their producers.
- prevention of ‘dumping’ and other unfair practices. There is an excess of world wine production over consumption (274 versus 240 million hectolitres in 2015⁴⁹). French farmers argue that their direct protectionist measures against Spanish wines are protecting their profitability.
- prevention of importation of harmful products. Both the Austrian diethyleneglycol⁵⁰ and Southern France Algerian wine scandals in the last century caused major

⁴⁵ An Introduction to the global drinks business, WSET, page 10 – Government Action in China

⁴⁶ Holmes, Hannah, Principal lecturer, Manchester Metropolitan University Business School; Discussion 18 -24 July 2017

⁴⁷ The Basics of Tariffs and Trade Barriers, Brent Radcliffe

www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/08/tariff-trade-barrier-basics.asp (last accessed 22/06/17)

⁴⁸ Why Protectionism Doesn’t Pay, Robert Z. Lawrence and Robert E. Litan, Harvard Business Review

<https://hbr.org/1987/05/why-protectionism-doesnt-pay> (last accessed 22/06/17)

⁴⁹ An Introduction to the global drinks business, WSET, page 17 – Global wine production (original source OIV)

⁵⁰ Scandal over poisoned wine embitters village in Austria, John Tagliabue, 2 August 1985,

<http://www.nytimes.com/1985/08/02/world/scandal-over-poisoned-wine-embitters-village-in-austria.html> (last accessed 4/10/17)

reputational and profitability damage to the respective wine trades. The imposition of strict product specification rules by the EU is a method by which standards, reputation, quality and profitability are maintained.

- encouraging long term research and investment can be facilitated by providing subsidies to producers in the short to medium term. The quality standards of many Spanish wines (and profitability of its producers) have improved over the last 30 years with significant investment in equipment, production techniques and marketing. This investment almost certainly would not have been possible were it not for the EU subsidies.
- protection of smaller innovative or historically significant brands from larger, more efficient overseas competitors. Scotch whisky and sherry are examples which have benefitted from GI protection. Arguably the superior quality of the products would have maintained their markets, but without protection they would have faced greater competition from larger, more modern, efficient and better capitalised companies.

Protectionism in the drinks business seems to be a constant in that in some form or other it is always there, through government action or inaction; political interference; or the industry's own specification, labelling, PDO/PGI or marketing efforts. Whether it is a bad thing depends on which side of the protection barrier one stands. It seems to me that one person's protectionism is another person's patriotism and legitimate defence.

Whether protectionism is increasing or decreasing, seems to be a very fluid area, with almost daily reports of the benefits of barriers falling (Australian and Italian wine sales into China) countered by macro (Trump's 'USA First' agenda) and micro (French prevention of Spanish wine transport) level events. 'Brexit' is a study in itself. Will it enable UK to take back control, entering into free trade agreements outside of the shackles of EU, or will it be an administrative nightmare with trade grinding to a halt as UK negotiates multiple trade deals over the next ten years? We will have to wait to see how much of the political rhetoric becomes reality and when.

Arguably, the ultimate protection for any industry is to provide consumers with products which exceed their quality expectations at prices which consumers feel give value for money. It is naive to assume that the drinks business can be free from political intervention, whether it be from government or from within its own industry. So despite the opportunities for many created by a free market, protectionism of some variety is here to stay.

[Word count 2985]

November 2017: Case Study

Has the bubble burst for Cava?

Today there are 35,500 hectares of vineyard registered for the production of Cava, the vast majority being in Catalunya. Over the years the Cava industry has been active with innovations in the vineyard and cellar.

Cava exports grew strongly between 1980 and 2010. In many markets Cava came to hold a dominant position in the non Champagne sparkling wine sector. However, the meteoric rise in Prosecco sales in markets such as the USA and UK has exposed weaknesses in the Cava proposition. For instance, a large amount of Cava is heavily discounted and sold at bargain basement prices.

The Cava industry has been aware of the threat to its export sales and its image. A lot of soul-searching has gone on. There has been the well-publicised decision by some producers to leave, or not join, the *Denominación de Origen Cava*, and there is scepticism surrounding the new designation *Cava de Paraje Calificado*.

- a) Outline the key factors in the vineyard and cellar that distinguish Cava from the world's other traditional method sparkling wines. (15% weighting)
- b) Account for the rapid growth in export sales of Cava between 1980 and 2010. (20% weighting)
- c) Explain why Cava has come under pressure in several of its main export markets in recent years. (30% weighting)
- d) Discuss the initiatives in production and marketing that have been taken to raise the quality profile of Cava. (35% weighting)

The pass rate for this question was good at 83%, with a reasonable number of merits but relatively few distinctions. This was largely due to lack of breadth and depth leading to superficial, but factually correct responses that failed to bring the topic to life.

Responses in section d) tended to be weak with very few initiatives discussed. Some candidates just wrote in broad terms about improved viticulture and winemaking rather than considering issues specific to the Cava industry. Many candidates failed to look beyond the example of the introduction of Cava de Paraje Calificado given in the brief.

To answer this section well, candidates needed to not only look at what is currently being done, but also speculate on what could be done. Some of the better topics for discussion put forward were as follows:

- One of the ways back, might be the very brand strength of the major players, backed by other smaller producers, stressing premium offerings in independent and on premise situations.
- Cava de Paraje Calificado is difficult to assess at present and good candidates at least speculated on its chances of success. They were aware that there is a lot of energy

being directed towards this, but at 36 months minimum lees ageing (6 in excess of Gran Reserva), and with Cava's inherent medium to low acidity, it could have limited success in volumes, but might create a platform for other quality initiatives.

- The inherent problem seems to be low grape prices to producers, which severely restricts viticultural experimentation, and is one of the reasons why Torres have not registered in the D.O. and why others such as Raventós i Blanc have left the D.O. to try to gain better price/quality acceptance.
- Codorniù recently announced plans to move from Penedès to Rioja with Freixenet to follow suit, possibly to Navarra. This would virtually destroy Penedès as a production centre for Cava.

Beyond these issues, there was also scope for "Blue Sky" thinking. Some candidates suggested there was also probably a need to disqualify some high volume / lower quality vineyard production sites, especially in the warmer areas of Valencia, Tarragona, Castilla and Extremadura; although from a socio-economic point of view this would need help from the EU. Some suggested permitting acidification for Cavas of Reserva status upwards or increasing plantings of Chardonnay. Some offered more radical suggestions aimed at competing directly with Prosecco such as adding Moscato to the list of permitted varieties or even planting Glera!

March 2018: Case Study

The South African Wine Industry

Wine production in South Africa started in the 17th century. According to the Oxford Companion to Wine, the dessert wines of Constantia "*seduced 18th and 19th century Europe at a time when names such as Lafite and Romanée-Conti were still in the making*".

Since South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, and the subsequent dismantling of the apartheid regime, the wine industry has seen many changes in production and trade structure. These have had a profound effect on South Africa's ability to sell wine globally.

Despite much inward investment, significant improvements in viticultural and winemaking techniques and technical know-how, there has not been the expected surge in quality recognition globally. Indeed, to quote one industry source – "*For some key, mature export markets, South Africa is not on the map – they still think there are lions on our streets!*"

- a) Give an historical overview of the South African wine industry up to 1994. (25% weighting)
- b) Discuss the changes that have occurred since 1994 in respect of grape growing, trade structure and export development. (40% weighting)
- c) How successful is the South African wine industry today and what might the future hold? (35% weighting)

Most of those who passed this question did so with a basic pass grade – there were few outstanding answers and a relatively low percentage of merit grades. This was disappointing and responses were largely competent rather than exceptional, engaging or imaginative. The pass rate of 83% was mainly down to the amount of information available on Wikipedia, which was reproduced by most candidates. The few who demonstrated evidence of genuine research were rewarded with a higher grade, but they were in the minority.

The following script is a good example of one of those that was considerably better than a basic pass. It is a good length for the time available and makes many valid points. It did not achieve a distinction grade and the key reason for this was a slight lack of commercial focus and a rather generic answer in section c). Nevertheless, it is a very good submission.

Give an historical overview of the South African wine industry up to 1994

The wine industry in South Africa started in the 17c with the Dutch East India Company using Cape Town as a supply stop. During that time they planted grapes mostly muscadet thinking the grapes + wine made from it would ward off scurvy. During the same century Cape Governor Simon van der Stel planted a quality vineyard called Constantia. He employed French winemaking staff + imported grapes from France namely Chenin Blanc + aromatic varieties like muscadet. This was the beginning of the sweet Constantia.

Simon van der Stel put South Africa on the map and this sweet wine was revered in Europe. After his death the Estate was left to degrade until purchased in the 18th C by an wine enthusiast who split it into 3 areas which still exist today.

In the 19c vines were pulled + alfalfa + other crops were grown to support the ostrich feather industry + the sweet wines of Constantia were no more.

By the 20thc - grapes had again been planted to support domestic consumption but the varieties were

high yielding like Cinsault and soon enough there was a lake of wine, in other words a glut with vine plantings soaring at 80,000 vines.

In 1948 apartheid was introduced

During the 20thC a cooperative of growers/Farmers was set up called KWV. This organisation had the power to legislate and thus controlled the wine industry setting minimum prices + also looking after export + marketing of wine. Whilst the cooperative protected the interests of the farmers it did not encourage innovation or ideas on how to improve quality, in fact quality was not a factor.

By the time apartheid was introduced in 1948 the glut, high yielding varieties planted, oversupply were fuel to fire for a country who was then cut off from most international markets due to trade sanctions banning their products.

The South African wine industry was then reliant on domestic consumption + became even more inward looking.

In the 1980's + 1990's there was a general perception that South African wine quality was substandard.

Discuss the changes that have occurred since 1994 in respect of grape growing, trade structure + export development.

During the years following the disestablishment of apartheid + the first democratic election KVV was also disestablished. This was a big change for the industry as it enabled producers to be more independent + make decisions regarding grape varieties planted, winemaking techniques + also the ability to market their own wines to export markets.

There are now organisations that are not for profit who advocate for winemakers, growers + Brand owners to enable export routes to market.
Brand

VINPRO -

Has 2500 members made up of growers + producers + advocates domestically + internationally

Winetech -

Are involved in research + development + passing on this information to the wine sector about new varieties + international trends.

Saldg -

Advocate for brand owners + marketers

WOSA -

This is the organisation that are responsible for marketing + educating on South African wine. Very important link to international trade + producers.

SANDIS -

This organisation looks after workers, ensuring their safety + livelihood. They also provide a link between producers + workers to ensure sustainability, + practices are adhered to.

When apartheid was over + Nelson Mandela became President the world opened up to South Africa. This provided untold opportunity but also many political, economic + social challenges. The wine industry pre-apartheid was mainly controlled by white Farmers/grapevines /producers. Quality was low due to the closed market conditions so all of a sudden there was a real need for education + training, in the industry. This could be one reason why South Africa is still known as a bulk wine producer + has the ~~best~~ reputation for lower quality + cheap wines. 61% of wine produced is sold Bulk at lower price points. The quote you used in the brief 'For some of our mature markets...' refers to Sebeke's brand who was a JV with Gallo + a Swartland producer Pieter Terblanche. They invested \$10m dollars in the brand over 5 years in USA with the target of 1m cases in 5 years. They only sold 300,000.

Pieter Terblanche felt it was due to South African wine not being a category in the USA. Another issue could have been the success of Jo Deltch Constellation, Yellowtail being marketed as a cheap + cheerful wine. As a colleague who worked in brands. *The US said - That wine could have been from anywhere'

How successful is the wine industry today + what might the future hold?

The SA wine industry is the 7th largest producer by volume but is still hampered by the amount of wine sold as Bulk wine making up 61% of sales. The challenge is to convert bulk to branded sales. This may mean accessing new export markets where there is no quality perception.

Premiumisation is key, ~~and~~ in order to do this they need to continue to plant lower yielding varietals that are in line with the climate and terroir of South Africa. This is happening, and there are some great examples of innovation Eg:

Jackson Family Vineyards in the USA are in partnership with a South African Vineyard + produce 885 (USA) bottles of Chardonnay.

There are some young winemakers coming through who are focussing on quality + style Eg:
Eben Sadie - voted the Winemaker Winemaker by Drinks Business 2016.

Influencers + Advocate

Then there are the influencers + advocate, pushing South African wine like Tim Atkin MW who continually reviews + praises quality South African wine. We need to see + hear more positive stories.

accessibility -

They also need to make their wines more accessible in countries outside Europe. In N.2 we ~~eat~~ rarely see any quality S.A Wine. It's normally the bulk grocery brands like Obikwa - sold by Countdown - Progressive Enterprise.

Marketing

Marketing South African Wine is also key, getting into markets as an organised group to engage & show industry & consumers the ~~breadth~~ breadth of quality wine available. ~~This~~

Summary

Because SA existed in a closed market situation, they are only now catching up with the rest of the world's producers of wine. They need to focus on all the points I raised:

Changing the mix from Bulk to branded.

Keep innovating w/ new technologies.

Premiumise - release quality wines to export markets far & wide.

Market - organise & market themselves internationally.

The future does look bright even if it takes some time I am sure they will go from strength to strength.

Sources:

Printed Business - VINPRO website

Jancis Robinson - IWSR data.

WOSA website - SANDIS website

April 2018: Coursework Assignment

Assignment title: Cognac: past, present and future

It is a basic rule of marketing that brands must invest and innovate to survive. This can be a challenge for a product such as Cognac, which has a venerable history and is subject to appellation regulation. However, it is a tribute to the region's producers that they have managed to keep their brands relevant and successful in today's rapidly changing global drinks market.

Required sections:

1. Historic trade in Cognac (15 marks)

The candidate should present an overview of how the Cognac trade has evolved since the 16th century.

2. The current market for Cognac (15 marks)

The candidate should report on today's global market for Cognac.

3. How Cognac's brands refresh and reinvent themselves (35 marks)

The candidate should describe and discuss how the companies in the cognac industry keep their brands fresh and in so doing ensure that the region survives and even flourishes. Reasoned argument, evidence and well-chosen examples should be deployed to support any assertions made.

4. Conclusion and personal commentary (15 marks)

Drawing on their findings and their general knowledge of the drinks industry, candidates should speculate on the threats and opportunities facing the Cognac industry going forward.

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.

The biggest problem with this assignment was the number of candidates who wrote extensively on the historic trade in Cognac despite this only having a 15% weighting. Very often the amount of text devoted to this section far exceeded that written for section 3 which had a much higher weighting of 35% and should have formed the bulk of any assignment.

June 2018: Case Study

The restaurant wine list

For many restaurant owners the wines they offer to their customers are as integral to their business as the menu. Traditionally, a restaurant would have a printed wine list but this can be expensive to produce and maintain. Nowadays, many restauranteurs have dispensed with printed wine lists and are communicating their wine range to customers in different ways.

A good restaurant wine range serves many purposes. It is not simply a case of offering the perfect wine to accompany the chef's signature dish. Commercial and practical considerations also come into play and these should be central to deciding which wines to stock. For example, it would not be practical for a small bistro with limited cellar space to list a hundred wines.

Whilst a lot of thought and effort goes into the production of a great wine list this is rarely an end in itself. A successful restaurant needs to be innovative and imaginative if it is to maximise wine sales.

- a) What are the advantages and disadvantages of a restaurant having a printed wine list? (25% weighting)
- b) What are the key commercial and practical considerations when putting together a restaurant wine range? (50% weighting)
- c) Apart from a wine list, what other initiatives can a restaurant use to maximise wine sales? (25% weighting)

Most candidates had no problem covering enough of the valid points to ensure a pass grade for this case study generating a high pass rate of 89%. 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.

Unit 2 – Wine Production

The multiple-choice questions used on the Unit 2 papers for 2017-18 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 2018.

General Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unit 3 Tasting Papers

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 1, Question 1

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

January 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1		
<i>Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety - Riesling</i>		
Wine 1	Country:	France
	Region:	Alsace
	Wine:	Domaine Bott-Geyl Riesling Les Elements 2015
Wine 2	Country:	Australia
	Region:	Clare Valley
	Wine:	Mount Horrocks Watervale Riesling 2016
Wine 3	Country:	Germany
	Region:	Mosel
	Wine:	Von Hövel Oberemmeler Hutte Auslese 2007
Identifying the grape was relatively easy for most candidates given the typical floral, stone fruit and tell-tale kerosene characteristics on all three wines. Candidates who leapt to conclusions on the basis of the botrytized sweet wine character of wine 3 paid the price of incorrectly concluding that the variety was Semillon, which further added to the problem by leading the inaccurate descriptions for wines 1 and 2 and they tried to engineer these to fit their incorrect conclusion.		
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 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 1***Wines from a single, unspecified grape variety – Chardonnay***

Wine 1	Country: France Region: Chablis Wine: Premier Cru Vaulorent 2015
Wine 2	Country: Chile Region: N/R Wine: Chateau los Boldos Tradition Reserve 2016
Wine 3	Country: Australia Region: Adelaide Hills Wine: Shaw & Smith M3 Chardonnay

A significant number of candidates correctly identified the grape as Chardonnay but were less good at presenting logical arguments to support this conclusion. The obvious pointers for Chardonnay were as follows:

- The range of style and quality levels
- The absence of sweet wines
- The absence of strong aromatics and clear varietal character
- The green fruit, stone fruit and tropical character
- The medium to medium (+) alcohol and body
- Wines that reflect climate and winemaking techniques rather than varietal character
- Wines showing a range of winemaking techniques
- Grape showing affinity with oak and use of high quality oak
- Evidence of lees ageing

In terms of the wines themselves, a good percentage of candidates were able to spot the quality of wine 3 and the best of them covered the three aroma / flavour clusters of primary fruit, use of oak and tertiary development. A number of weaker candidates overestimated the quality of the Chilean Chardonnay, being misled by the ripeness and the use of oak. However, unlike wine 3, this was not as well integrated and the fruit lacked concentration.

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 any wine could be judged to be capable of higher quality if it had “more” complexity.

Unit 3 Tasting Paper 1, Question 2

Question 2 involves three wines linked by origin or some other common feature. For 2017-18, the wines in the January flight were from a specific, single region (the Veneto) and the wines in the June flight from a wider country designation (in this instance, Spain). This highlights the importance of reading the question to make sure the information you provide corresponds to that being requested. Despite it being explicit in the question that examiners were looking for one region in the first instance and a country in the other, some candidates disregarded this, naming a different region / country for each wine and were consequently at a disadvantage when it came to the marks allocation in the concluding section.

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

January 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 2

Wines from the same, unspecified region of origin - Veneto

Wine 4	Country: Italy Region: Veneto Wine: Soave Terre di Monteforte 2016
Wine 5	Country: Italy Region: Veneto Wine: Brigaldara Recioto della Valpolicella Classico 2014
Wine 6	Country: Italy Region: Veneto Wine: Monte Faustino Amarone Classico 2012

This question generated a rather disappointing pass rate of 66% given the very distinctive style of both red wines in this trio. Those who failed to trust their tasting skills and keep an open mind, often misread the sweetness on wine 5. This not only resulted in the loss of the mark for this, but also incurred a further penalty in the form of a “cap” to the marks for the palate section of the tasting note. In addition, identifying this feature of the wine correctly was also a key pointer for the concluding section of this question as the likely provenance of sweet red wines that are not fortified is relatively limited and it should have been an easy deduction therefore to place these in the Veneto. Many candidates also missed the relative simplicity of wine 4 which had a specific “cluster” devoted to descriptors conveying this characteristic.

June 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 1, Question 2
Wines from the same, unspecified country of origin - Spain

Wine 4	Country: Spain Region: Rias Baixas Wine: Martin Codax Albariño 2016
Wine 5	Country: Spain Region: Rioja Wine: Viña Ardanza Reserva 2008
Wine 6	Country: Spain Region: Priorat Wine: Torres Salmos 2015
<p>This question generated a low pass rate of 50% and a wide span of marks from 12% to 86%. Many candidates failed to identify the country as Spain and a significant number left the concluding section blank or entered this as France or Italy instead. With such a wealth of regional typicity in both of these countries, the examiners are unlikely to present wines from either location in this wider context of “country” rather than “region”.</p> <p>As always with this question, success lies in identifying the grape varieties correctly and / or in spotting a distinctive style of wine that is a “banker” for the region or the country. In this trio, the Rioja performed this function, being a wine that candidates should have been able to pick out at this level.</p>	

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 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3		
Part-specified wines – Argentina, Mendoza		
Wine 7	Country:	Argentina
	Region:	Mendoza
	Wine:	Terroir Series Finca Orellana Trapiche 2011
Wine 8	Country:	Argentina
	Region:	Mendoza
	Wine:	Sierra Alta Malbec 2016
Wine 9	Country:	Argentina
	Region:	Mendoza
	Wine:	Malbec Finca Castro Barros Bodega Foster 2013
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 no exception at 55% with very few merit and distinction grades. The examiner commented that some very low marks were awarded for wines 8 and 9 (the less good wines) with wine 8 being most often “misread” in terms of overestimating the quality. This is something that is very common in the Unit 3 tasting examination with candidates often reluctant to describe a wine as only “adequate”.		

Weak candidates failed to provide sufficient “detail” in their assessment of quality, using too many generic descriptors such as “good balance”, “nice length”. With 9 marks allocated for this section of the tasting notes, examiners are looking for plenty of analysis and explanation here rather than “stock phrases” that lacked conviction.

June 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 3

Part-specified wines – Northern Rhône

Wine 7	Country: France Region: Northern Rhône Wine: Côte Rôtie “Brune et Blonde” de Guigal 2013
Wine 8	Country: France Region: Northern Rhône Wine: St Joseph E Guigal 2015
Wine 9	Country: France Region: Northern Rhône Wine: Crozes-Hermitage Domaine des Lises 2016

Like the January examination, this was answered poorly with a pass rate of only 48%. 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 to back these up. 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. On the whole, candidates were better at recognizing primary aromas than secondary or tertiary ones. To some extent, this explains subsequent weaknesses at judging the quality of the two better wines since this was underpinned by the more developed aromas found on these wines. In the case of wines 7 and 8, the examiners used wines from a single producer as these demonstrated a very clear progression from the very good quality of the St Joseph to the outstanding quality of the Côte Rôtie, with both wines in turn being clearly a large step up from the rather simple, juicy and one-dimensional quality of the Crozes-Hermitage.

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. In contrast, the other examples are very weak for the following reasons:

- The candidate actually detects no difference between the three wines in terms of quality, with all three described as “good”.
- The “assessment of quality” for wines 8 and 9 is almost identical despite the wines being very different.

- Despite describing wine 7 as "good" just like the other two, the "assessment of quality" itself suggests a wine of less good quality than the other two.
- Wine 7 was "outstanding" quality, yet the candidate finds faults that simply were not there.

Wine 7:

Good assessment of quality:

Detailed assessment of quality: (9 marks) OUTSTANDING.

Lots of fruit concentration giving a rounded texture
Rich + powerful but still elegant. Oak is very
well done - does not dominate. Very complex - has
attractive primary fruit, classy oak ageing + tertiary
development. Lovely balance between fruit, oak
+ acidity + ripe tannins. The finish is long
+ silky.

Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks)

Very poor assessment of quality:

Detailed assessment of quality: (9 marks)

GOOD QUALITY BUT NOT GREAT
THE ACIDITY LEVEL IS OUT OF BALANCE SLIGHTLY
THE LENGTH IS MEDIUM

THE FRUIT AND FLAVOUR INTENSITY COULD BE
BETTER INTEGRATED -

GOOD QUALITY ACCEPTABILITY OF THE STYLE

Wine 8:

Good assessment of quality:

Detailed assessment of quality: (9 marks) **VERY GOOD**

Shows some varietal typicity, but a bit closed at present. Lacking the richness + roundness of wine 7 (slightly green + herbaceous). Well balanced on the whole but acidity is a little too marked. Still quite youthful but some complexity from oak + age finish is only moderate rather than long.

Very poor assessment of quality:

Detailed assessment of quality: (9 marks) ~~GOOD~~

~~GOOD QUALITY WINE WITH BALANCED ACIDITY
THE LONG FINISH IS INDICATIVE OF AGE'S.~~

~~THE FLAVOUR INTENSITY AND FRUIT CONCENTRATION
SUGGEST A GOOD WINE
GOOD EXPRESSION OF THE STYLE~~

Wine 9:

Good assessment of quality:

Detailed assessment of quality: (9 marks) **GOOD**

Lots of juicy primary fruit + very expressive of the variety but no complexity from oak or development. Structure is a little light + lacking concentration but not unbalanced. Rather simple + one-dimensional. Fruit is attractive but not perfected. Finish + clean + fresh but only medium in length.
Readiness for drinking/potential for ageing: (4 marks)

Very poor assessment of quality (almost word for word the same response as for wine 8)

Detailed assessment of quality: (9 marks)

GOOD QUALITY WINE - WELL STRUCTURED AND WELL BALANCED
THE LONG LENGTH IS INDICATIVE OF THIS.

THE FLAVOUR INTENSITY AND FRUIT CONCENTRATION
ARE WELL INTEGRATED

THIS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE STYLE

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 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 4		
<i>Unspecified wines</i>		
Wine 10	Country:	France
	Region:	Burgundy
	Wine:	Domaine Michel Niellon Chassagne Montrachet 1er Cru 2013
Wine 11	Country:	Spain
	Region:	Rioja
	Wine:	La Rioja Alta 904 Gran Reserva 2007
Wine 12	Country:	New Zealand
	Region:	Marlborough
	Wine:	Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon Blanc 2017
This flight was well-answered in the main resulting in a relatively good pass rate of 71% with an even split between those achieving pass and merit grades. This was not surprising given the mainstream nature of these wines, with the New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc giving many candidates the necessary marks to push them into the pass threshold.		

June 2018: Unit 3 - TASTING PAPER 2, Question 4***Unspecified wines***

Wine 10	Country: South Africa Region: N/R Wine: Cederberg Private Cellar Sauvignon Blanc 2017
Wine 11	Country: USA Region: California Wine: Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyard Pinot Noir 2014
Wine 12	Country: Australia Region: N/R Wine: De Bortoli Noble One 2014
<p>This question generated a very good pass rate of 83%. This may have been the result of candidates not needing to identify wines 10 and 12 as precisely as in some past papers.</p> <p>In the case of wine 10, the examiners took the view that this was a style of wine that could come from a number of different New World countries and identifying this specifically as South Africa was as likely to be the result of a “lucky guess” as much as skill. The emphasis therefore was put on identifying the grape variety and explaining the logic behind this. For wine 12, candidates were only required to identify the country of production rather than the region. This was the wine that tripped up the largest number of candidates with many deciding it was a Sauternes rather than the Australian noble rot Semillon that it was. Whilst similar in terms of having characteristics of botrytis, from a structural standpoint the wines are different and the best candidates were able to spot this.</p>	

Unit 3 Theory Papers

January 2018: Section A – Compulsory Question

Account for the styles and quality levels of the wines produced in:

Version 1: Muscadet, Chinon & Vouvray

Version 2: Muscadet, Saumur & Sancerre

Version 3: Muscadet, Chinon & Sancerre

(Each section carries equal weighting)

Most candidates were able to write reasonable responses in respect of Muscadet and Sancerre but were less convincing in terms of the other regions where answers tended to be rather thin and generic.

There was an overreliance on tasting notes from the weaker candidates with little or no explanation to back these up. Discussion of quality levels was often overlooked or simply mentioned in passing as “varying” with no discussion of how regional and environmental aspects impact on differences in quality levels.

January 2018: Section B

Discuss the developments in grape growing, winemaking and the marketplace that have shaped the wines of the Languedoc over the past forty years.

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

Despite generating a good pass rate of 68%, the majority of the answers to this question were basic passes with very few really enlightening scripts. Some candidates simply gave a snapshot of the current situation in the Languedoc which was very general, providing little historical context/background or relevant examples of wines. This made for many unconvincing answers. The best essays were more comprehensive with varied and meaningful examples of wines from the region to illustrate the points made in respect of more recent developments. They also named key producers who have been instrumental in spearheading such developments.

The strongest 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 comment and the latter offering little in the way of insight or analysis. Many failed to reach any conclusion about the topic at all.

The following essay is well written, focused and demonstrates a good understanding of the region both in terms of its current position and the problems of the past. It uses examples of wines intelligently and with purpose.

The Languedoc region has undergone a somewhat of a renaissance in terms of quality at the vineyard, winemaking and, more slowly, the marketplace over the last 40 years. The region, while not as tied to sweet wine production as its neighbor Rhône, has been working hard to overcome the label of a bulk region due to its ties to importation of low quality fruit from Algiers in the past. While this practice has stopped, there are still rampant accusations of illegal use of bulk juice brought in from Spain, and even domestic terror attacks on these shipments, dumping thousands of hectolitres of wine onto the streets from tankers. That said, the region has a number of reasons to be optimistic about its future.

The Languedoc's history is intertwined with cheaply made Carignan, a variety that, at its worst and most common, is harsh, bitter, alcoholic, and simply unpleasant to drink if made poorly. It was popular in the Languedoc because it has the potential for incredibly high yields something bulk areas need. Interestingly, most sites were planted as bush vines, which has ended up being a blessing in disguise today. The 40+ year old bush vines can be incredibly valuable today as low yielding old vines can provide great fruit for quality wines. Some of the vines are so old that they tower over 6 foot tall. Truly a unique,

and marketable, piece of its troubled past that is now a key feature. Grape growing today is much more site and soil specific, as vines are used and vines are in more favorable locations that have been defined more specifically over the last 40 years. Smaller demarcations and AC's are now present, with better sites being identified in Cuchieres, Fargues, Etilas, Terrasses du Larzac. These all have higher potential for quality and crus are even being introduced into these AC's to denote even smaller areas of quality and specialities such as Bouteac in Cuchieres. Limited yields, older vines, vine pull programs, higher density plantings, and trellis systems are all playing a big part in the quality renaissance in the vineyard.

Winemaking has also undergone a major overhaul, as modern innovative equipment and even legislation has spearheaded a movement towards quality. The legislation ^{recently} ~~present~~ centers around the limiting of yields, but also limits the amount of carignan that can be used in blends. Even some of the more specialized sites, like Bouteac, that are renowned for quality old vine carignan, can be limited to 50% of the vine. This is a stark contrast to the bulk period where co-operatives were putting in as much as they could to boost production. Modern equipment like temperature controlled tanks, gravity fed nurseries and modern bottling operations are having an impact as well. Mobile bottlers are now present, taking one large portion of the production process out of vineyards hands to ensure that a clean, stable product is bottled properly. The relative ease of availability of bag-in-box vines has allowed other small producers

to embrace the old bulk wine mentality and put quality wines in this large format. Innovations and open-mindedness go hand in hand with the regions efforts to promote itself as a great destination for lifestyle wineries. More and more, foreigners from americans to british to the dutch, are recognizing the incredible terroir and mediterranean climate as a place to own good quality sites for a good price, and enjoy a climate that is eerily similar to California without the fog. Modern infrastructure projects are facilitating the ability for off-site wineries to be a feasible option in the future.

While all the effort to transition away from the bulk label are going on within the region itself, it has not been as widely accepted in the marketplace. The most successful brands are still relatively cheap, and rosé is becoming more and more what people are getting excited about from the region. Small, high quality producers from places like Faugeres will eventually get the recognition they deserve but it is difficult for the average wine consumer to justify the price that those wines are demanding in the current market. Even renowned producers from famed importers, like Domaine Fontaine, imported by Kermit Lynch, are struggling to sell their top bottlings of red while their value driven rosés are consistently selling out.

Perhaps the future lies in quality value rods, reminiscent of the bulk wines of the past, with an increased focus on rosé and an eventual adoption of smaller AOCs of the mentality of successful cult regions like Bandol in its neighboring region, Provence.

January 2018: Section B

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Merlot in each of the following?

- a) Vineyard (40% weighting)
- b) Winery (30% weighting)
- c) Marketplace (30% weighting)

The pass rate for this question was very poor – only 37% with no distinction grades. There were the usual problems of candidates writing too little, making factual errors, failing to answer one section or being particularly weak in one or more sections. Many answers were far too superficial for a qualification of this level, presented as bullet point lists of characteristics of the grape with no attempt at discussion or explanation to underpin the facts being put forward. Candidates needed a broad understanding of viticulture, vinification and market dynamics of the Merlot grape to answer this well but very few showed this across the board with vinification often being the weakest section. Far too many candidates simply wrote everything they knew about Merlot with little regard to the three specific sections of the question. In many instances, submissions amounted to little more than a travelogue of countries and regions where this variety is grown.

January 2018: Section B

Identify and discuss the factors in the vineyard that give the wines of the Mosel Valley their unique character.

(Weighting will vary for each factor)

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 the Mosel. This format of question is frequently used in the Diploma examination applied to various parts of the world and candidates should know at this stage of their studies what the relevant “factors” are, i.e. weather and climate, choice of grape variety and all

elements of viticulture (encompassing yields, soil, aspect, terroir, vine age, picking times etc). Many simply described the region or the wines and therefore failed to consider the factors involved, let alone the implications of these factors. This lack of evidence of understanding of "cause and effect" is a perennial problem in all questions in the Diploma examination.

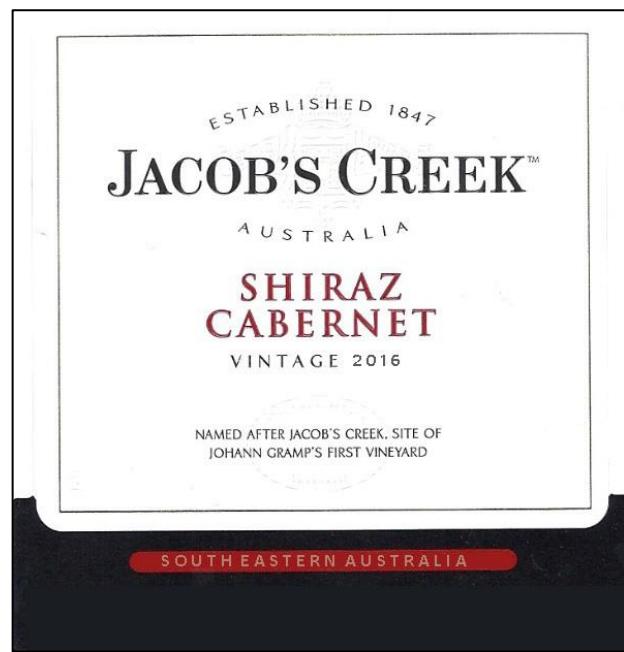
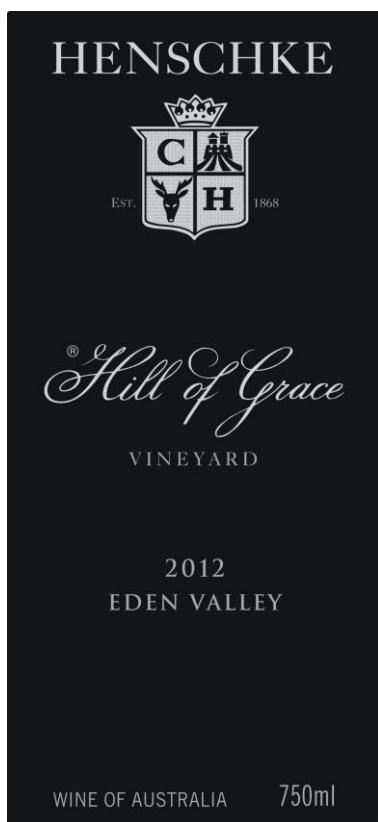
Most responses were basic passes or near misses with very few really good answers with many only making statements of fact about the climate, soil and aspect without linking these to wine character and the uniqueness of these wines. Those who did make this link gained higher marks. There was also very little discussion of grapes beyond Riesling and some candidates wasted time writing about vinification techniques in a question that was clearly limited to "factors in the vineyard".

January 2018: Section B

Compare the two wines shown below under the following headings:

- a) viticulture
- b) winemaking
- c) resulting style

(Each section carries equal weighting)



This question generated lots of very weak scripts with some extremely low scores. The pass rate of 31% was disappointingly low. The marker commented that the tone in far too many scripts was descriptive rather than discursive. The majority of answers simply lacked depth and detail and the number of scripts that were just a single side of text or even less shows how badly candidates underestimate the level of this qualification. This general poor level of execution was compounded by the fact that a number of candidates mistakenly thought the Hill of Grace wine was a Riesling because the area of production is Eden Valley. This inevitably cost them marks in the sections on vinification and wine style.

January 2018: Section B

Describe the wines produced in the following DOs with specific reference to grape varieties used, climate and soil:

- a) Bierzo
- b) Rueda
- c) Ribera del Duero

(Each section carries equal weighting)

Like the previous question, this was answered very badly with a very low pass rate of 37%.

Candidates were clearly most comfortable with the section on Ribero del Duero. Answers in other sections were often superficial and clearly the result of guesswork rather than factual knowledge. Many answers were unconvincing and too generic, almost identical in all three sections, listing all possible types of soils with the only difference being the named grape varieties. As so often in poorly answered questions, the emphasis was on unimaginative, lifeless tasting notes of the wines ("medium acidity, medium tannin, red fruit" etc.) with only limited explanation of the role of climate, grape or soil. Often these were not mentioned at all, or only in passing at the end of the description of the wine.

January 2018: Section B

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

- a) Wine production in New York State
- b) Carmenère
- c) Wine production in Uruguay OR Mexico OR Brazil
- d) Pierce's disease
- e) Wine production in Sonoma OR Mendocino OR Napa
- f) North American liquor monopolies
- g) Ice wine

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The topics for this question varied according to examination location.

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

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

A handful of candidates did not understand what was required in section f) (North American Liquor monopolies), writing instead about large companies. An example of one of these is duplicated below. It is followed by an example of a good “all-round” answer which gives a good indication of the kind of length answers to this style of question needs to be. This was not an exceptional script, but a very solid pass / borderline merit. Answers in some sections were rather brief, but others were very sound.

Example of candidate who misunderstood the question in section f):

NA Liquor Monopolies In the past twenty years there have been a consolidation of distributors; ie Southern merging with Glazers & also the recent, but not finalized merger between RMD & Breakthru Beverage. These Mergers & Acquisitions will mean two companies will control over 50% of North American wine & spirit "Liquor" landscape. Also the fact that Gallo is now not just a wine supplier but also has a significant footprint with their spirits such as Catriona, New Amsterdam Vodka and will have brown spirits in the markets soon.

Brown-Forman has recently been approached by Canadagua, sonny Constellation about acquiring them, but BF says there not for sale. In fact Brown Forman is now producing Irish Whiskey (Now a 4th distillery).

Diageo is the 650 pound gorilla and although they based in Britain have a huge impact on North American Liquor with George Dickel Tennessee Whiskey & Captain Morgan Rum. Also, Smirnoff which is distilled in Connecticut is a huge seller of triple distilled Vodka.

Example of good "all-round" answer:

- a) New York State's wine industry is one of the oldest in the US. In the modern era, hybrids that thrive in cold weather like Seyval Blanc have given way to Vinifera vines, especially Riesling, in the state's cool northern Finger Lakes AVA. Vinifera vines were long thought unsustainable until Konstantin Frank began conducting experiments. His eponymous estate now produces wine from Riesling, Rkatsiteli, Gewürztraminer, Cabernet Franc and more. Other top producers like Boundary Breaks, monovarietally committed to Riesling and its expression on their varied terrains, are raising the region's profile. Long Island has also become a hotbed of innovation, with producers growing Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir in addition to whites.
- b) Long misidentified as Merlot in Chile, Carménère has only been afforded the spotlight since the mid-1990s. Its somewhat green character is showing less and less as underripeness (as when it was thought to be the earlier-ripening Merlot) in top bottlings, and producers like Concha y Toro are producing super-polished (if somewhat international in style) bottlings like their Carmín del Paine at super-premium prices. Others are exploring Carménère as a grape of terroir, as Caso Silveira with their single-vineyard Colchagua bottlings. Carménère's bid to be the next Argentine Malbec may be a bit of a stretch if it's to keep its character, but there's no doubt that its place in the market is better-represented every year.
- c) Mexico has been producing wine since Spanish

✓ missionaries first brought vines from Europe (California's "Mission" grape, Chile's País, both likely Listan Prieto from the Canary Islands). Fine wine production, however, is a much newer phenomenon. The vine is grown primarily in ~~Baja California~~, on the Pacific Coast, and producers like LARicetto are making better-than-respectable wine from varieties as unlikely as Chenin Blanc. The ocean helps to moderate the temperature at these southern latitudes, as does elevation in terms of site selection.

f) North American Liquor Monopolies like those in Quebec and Ontario (in Canada) and US states like Pennsylvania are holdovers from both countries' experiments with Prohibition in the early 20th Century. In both examples the state positioned itself as the only entity that could responsibly enforce legal alcohol, and only then by controlling every aspect of its distribution. In these setups the state runs the retail shops and governs what items can be sold, making for a uniformity of selection that can benefit everyone but the producer and the consumer. Small-production, artisanal products are generally either not positioned as candidates for such schemes or not selected by the gatekeepers for reasons of inadequate supply. What results is the homogenization of a vibrant industry full of nuance that never makes it to the benighted citizens of such monopoly states.

g) Ice wine, an unctuously sweet elixir made from grapes frozen on the vine, concentrating their sugars and flavour components, is a specialty of the Canadian Provinces of Ontario (Niagara Peninsula VQA) and to a lesser degree in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, as well as in New York's Finger Lakes AVA and occasionally

in other places as far-flung—but uniformly cold enough in winter to freeze grapes (below -7°C) before they rot on the vine—as Michigan, Washington and (only occasionally) Oregon. As with all such wines it is extraordinarily expensive to produce, meaning it comes at a premium to the consumer, due to the necessity of hand-harvesting small yields of valuable fruit. It's also, as with most ^{sweet} wines in the category, suffering from an absence of vogue at the moment. It remains a niche luxury item not destined for supermarket shelves. Some "Icewine-style" wines can be made by freezing grapes artificially, at a lower cost to producer and consumer, but these examples lack convincing concentration and intensity of character. — possibly

June 2018: Section A – Compulsory Question

Describe the typical style and outline the principal selling points of each of the following wines:

Version 1: Alsace Gewurztraminer Sélection de Grains Nobles, Côtes de Provence rosé and inexpensive Argentinian Malbec

Version 2: Tokaji 5 Puttonyos, Côtes de Provence rosé and inexpensive Western Cape Pinotage

Version 3: Tokaji 5 Puttonyos, Côtes de Provence rosé and inexpensive Chilean Central Valley Merlot

(Each wine carries equal weighting)

This should have been a very straight forward question but was answered poorly by a large percentage of candidates. The instruction in the question was clearly set out—candidates were required to describe the typical style of each wine and outline the principal selling points. The three wines in each version of the paper were chosen by the Examination Panel precisely because they were so different from each other, not only in terms of style (high quality sweet white, attractive, easy-drinking rosé, inexpensive, high volume dry red) but also from the point of view of their principal selling points.

Far too many candidates lost sight of what the question was asking and launched into lengthy descriptions of how the grapes are grown and picked (in the case of the sweet wines) or what the various techniques are for producing rosé wine. Nowhere in the question was this information asked for and there were no marks available for it UNLESS it had been very clearly linked to the specific requirements of the question. In most instances this information was simply presented as a narrative with no attempt to link any of the processes to the resulting style of the wine or potential selling points.

June 2018: Section B

Account for the commercial success of New Zealand wines. To what extent can this success be sustained?

(An essay format is COMPULSORY for this question)

This was one of the most popular optional questions on the June paper answered by 90% of candidates sitting the examination. However, this was a disappointing set of scripts, both in terms of content and presentation, generating a low pass rate of only 39%. Many failed to adopt the required essay format, or to include satisfactory introductions or conclusions but the key reasons for low marks were as follows:

- There was the usual failure to answer the question directly – many candidates simply wrote “all they know” about wine production in New Zealand, simply listing grape varieties, regions, name-checking producers and giving lengthy descriptions of wines they have enjoyed.
- Many candidates simply wrote an essay on the popularity of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc which failed to address the topic in the broader sense.
- Many candidates did not address the second part of the question at all, or did so in very superficial terms.
- Some candidates confused the term “sustaining success” with “sustainable viticulture” which is an entirely different topic.

June 2018: Section B

Wine made at top châteaux in Pauillac can be sold under different labels or appellations ranging from Grand Vin to generic AC Bordeaux. Identify and describe all the options and explain why they might be used.

(Weighting will vary for each option)

This was a popular question on the June paper as Bordeaux is a topic many candidates feel comfortable with. However, only a very small percentage of those attempting this question actually answered it as set, resulting in an extremely low pass rate.

The problem stemmed from the fact that the majority of candidates wrote a general answer on wine production in the Médoc, covering topics such as climate, soil, choice of grape varieties, styles of wine produced etc. Others, who also failed to answer the question as set, wrote about the classification system in general terms, writing at length about the 1855 classification or classifications that had no relevance in the context of this question such as Cru Bourgeois or "Garagiste" wines.

One of the most important stages of any examination is reading the question and making sure you understand fully what is expected in the answer. Far too many candidates rush in and lose sight of the real point of the question.

Many candidates find it helpful to highlight key words in the question and then refer back to them regularly to ensure their answer remains relevant and "on-topic". In this question, the following words / phrases were important:

- Top chateaux
- different labels or appellations
- identify and describe
- why they might be used

These defined what was required to answer this question. This was not a question about the Bordeaux Appellation system. It was a question about the most likely options a top chateau would use to bottle their wines. Examination questions are always carefully worded to make it clear what the examiner is looking for. In this instance, the question even contained examples of two of the "options" that candidates needed to address, i.e. Grand Vin and AC Bordeaux. There were also other options and each equated to a portion of the marks available for this question. Candidates who only wrote about Grand Vin and AC Bordeaux were also amongst those who failed this question.

June 2018: Section B

Describe the characteristics of the Riesling grape variety (*50% weighting*). How do producers use Riesling to make wines of different styles? (*50% weighting*)

This was by far the most popular question on the paper, answered by 99% of those sitting the June examination. The pass rate was reasonably good but there were very few really good answers. This was usually down to the fact that many candidates failed to answer the question as set in the second part. A significant proportion of the candidates simply described wines and regions, often in the format of basic tasting notes without explaining how the different styles were achieved by the producers.

The key points examiners were therefore expecting candidates to address were as follows:

- planting location (specifically in terms of its interaction with the climate)
- timing of the harvest, manipulation of sweetness levels in the winemaking process
- winemaking in general
- options for ageing

Each of these topics needed discussion and explanation of the ways in which producers engage with them to achieve different styles of wine. Examples of actual wines from relevant countries / regions around the world would have helped to illustrate the points being made.

June 2018: Section B

Outline the origins of the Zinfandel grape variety (25% weighting). Explain how it came to play such an important part in the California wine industry (75% weighting).

This was another question that generated a poor pass rate, in this instance 39%.

Many answers were too brief (less than 2 sides of text) particularly in the first part of the question where some candidates gave no more than a one or two sentence response, often just identifying this grape as being the same one as Primitivo from Apulia. There was a lot of “fact dump” / “everything I know...” in the second part of the question where many candidates simply described styles of wines produced from the Zinfandel grape – in some instances limiting this only to Blush Zinfandel. This was not a question simply asking candidates to describe Zinfandel wines from California or the characteristics of the grape, which is what most did. The style of the wines produced from this variety did indeed have a key part to play in its success, but to answer this question properly it was necessary to take a much broader view and consider the historical development of this variety in California over time.

June 2018: Section B

Discuss how factors in the vineyard and in the winery contribute to the style of the white wines of Vinho Verde and the red wines of Alentejo.

(Each region carries equal weighting)

This was not a popular question and generated a low pass rate of only 37%. While most candidates were able to write reasonably knowledgeably about Vinho Verde, it was clear that many had to resort to guesswork on Alentejo. As a result, answers in this section were often vague and generic and not convincing.

The following candidate was one of very few high scores. The section on Alentejo is certainly weaker than that on Vinho Verde, but comments are very logical and intelligent even if they lack the specifics and detail that would have made for an excellent response.

For the style of Vinho Verde a brief tasting note will be a good indicator. White Vinho Verde tend to be pale yellow or pale lemon green in colour. The nose after can be intense and is very aromatic. With stone fruit and green fruits both being fresh in nature and an elderflower florality. The wines ~~taste~~ are dry, have high acidity, low alcohol, ^{are} high tannin and have a pleasant if not super-long finish, after they will have a very slight spritz which is noticeable on the palate as well as the glass.

Vinho Verde whites are produced in Northern Portugal with the region bordering the Atlantic ocean and Spain. This location has a large impact on the wine. The proximity to the ocean makes the region very maritime and cool. The ocean provides plentiful moisture throughout the season so irrigation isn't needed. The regular rainfall means that the region is not hot summy and so the growing season is long and not too hot. This preserves the acidity in the grapes and allows for full phenolic ripeness to get the ~~intense~~ aromatic flavor profile the wine is known for.

The vines traditionally were ~~pruned~~ trained as gobelet. At levels of moderate ~~the~~ training technique was needed to harness the breezes from the ocean to stave off Rot and Disease. Now modern plantings are being wire trained and canopy management is improving so healthy grapes are more often achieved, with healthy grapes essential for the fresh fruit forward style of wine produced.

The soils are calcious, mafic that are very free draining but retain enough moisture so that irrigation isn't needed. This results in some water stress for the vines as they have to

Root deep to find the stored moisture but also much irrigation. The focus on grape and ~~soil~~ fruit ripeness rather than vegetative.

Arinto is a principle grape variety of the region and the only one to be bottled individually. The remaining varieties are a mix mark of local white grapes with many smallholders not sure what their plots leading to field blends being co-fermented. All the varieties using Arinto have good aromatic profiles though difficult to produce fresh and fruit wines.

The grapes are harvested early to preserve capture the high acidity needed for a fresh style and this leads the wines to be lower alcohol as grapes may not have reached full sugar ripeness yet.

Grapes will be handled reductively as some of the varieties are very prone to oxidation and the results in an excess of CO₂ being used or pressing until back with slight skins.

(Wine Making) Typically all the vines in the region and cold fermentation temperature controlled fermentations and possibly cold pre-soaking has led to an improved consistency of the aromatic profile of the finished wine.

A Brief tasting note of a typical Red Alentejo wine will give a good feel of the style. The reds are usually deeply coloured Ruby. The nose ~~will~~ can be graced with fruit flavours depending on grape variety being very ripe and concentrated, possibly even jammy. The wines will be dry with medium ~~acidic~~ low acidic, medium or high tannins which will ripe, high alcohol, full bodied and more ripe jammy fruit flavours on the palate. The best examples may be oaked but may want and the finish length will be dependent on quality. There is some high quality premium wine made in Alentejo but most is mass produced cheap wine for local or supermarket consumption.

The vineyards of Alentejo are located in Portugal inland south east from Lisbon. The region is cut off from the coast by Rivers.

and so the Climate is very continental in nature ~~hot~~ and growth. Latitude is above the ~~temperate~~ temperatures. This warm continental climate produces a dry growing ~~so~~ long hot dry summer and cold winter during which time most of the rains fall. These long hot summers give the grapes ample time to ripen and produce the ripe sunny fruit flavours typical for the wines. There is much moderation of the climate, though sides with same elevation and less growth aspect will produce fresher wines though they will never have a refreshing acidity.

There are breezes about the terrain to be cooling in nature but they do keep the vines well ventilated and so a warm dry season disease is never a issue which helps yields. Drought however can be an issue though the region is allowed some irrigation which helps to alleviate those pressures. This allows for a plentiful supply of ripe grapes for the crops.

The area is mostly arid flat and while some old vines exist and are being trained, new plantings are more trained and allow for mechanisation which keeps the costs down for the crops and encourages higher yields which reduces quality.

The best vines are made from Tinta Negra and Agua (the most regions in Portugal the vineyards are field vines so will end up being crossed at into Tinta Roriz, Tinto Cão, Carrascal and many more. Some international varieties are being plated for production outside the DOC but the local varieties still produce the bulk of the wine concentrated front forward wines).

Wine practices are improving in the region all the time with stainless steel ~~fermentation~~ temperature controlled fermentation

allowing for fresher more fruit forward wines. These are designed for immediate consumption at a low price point. Some top producers with more moderate sites and climates are experimenting with oak aging and fermentation resulting in ~~in~~ full bodied and structured wines that should have the ability to age as well. The region does not have a great international reputation though so growth in the premium ~~Abruzzo~~ ^{area} segment offering is slow.

June 2018: Section B

With reference to wine production in Central and Southern Italy, write about FIVE of the following:

- a) Frascati OR Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi OR Orvieto
- b) Volcanic soils
- c) Negroamaro
- d) Climate
- e) Passito di Pantelleria
- f) Cannonau di Sardegna OR Sagrantino di Montefalco OR Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

(Each section carries equal weighting)

The topics for this question varied according to examination location.

This was poorly answered with a pass rate of only 43% and a wide range of marks from a high of 85% to a low of only 6%. Some candidates were worryingly ignorant of where Italy is, with mention of Pacific or Atlantic influence and one even stating it is "close to the equator". Many submissions were incomplete, suggesting candidates had selected this question as their least preferred option, answered it last and run out of time. A large proportion of answers were simply too brief – some barely more than a single side of text. Some candidates forgot to limit their answers to wine production in Central and Southern Italy in the more general sections on "volcanic soils" and "climate", writing about regions in the north of Italy. This was a waste of their time and earned them no marks.

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 any of the DOCs/DOCGs candidates could have asked themselves:

- What is this?
- Where exactly in central and southern Italy 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 climate here?
- Are there any particular winemaking techniques specific to this region/style of wine?

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

The following are two examples for the section on Passito di Pantelleria. The first is weak and just gives a very basic description of the wine as well as incorrectly placing Pantelleria on the island of Sicily. The second is much better because it contains more detail about the climate, the grape, the method of production etc.

Example of a weak answer:

e Passito di Pantelleria

~~It's a sweet wine from Pantelleria of Sicily with the method of passito, the muscat grape are dried to concentrate the sugar and flavors. The wine style is deep golden colour. with high intensity of dried apricot, honey, caramel flavors. the wine is luscious with high alcohol, medium acidity, full body and long finish. The warm climate of south Sicily is suitable to the grapes to be dried.~~

Example of good answer:

Passito di Pantelleria - Made on the small island of Pantelleria which is just off the Southern shore of Sicily, Southern Italy. Conditions on this island are harsh! Strong winds and a hot, dry & arid Climate! It Comprises of Mainly Bush trained Vines of Zibibbo Grapes (Also known as Muscat) The Vines are low to the ground, protecting themselves from the Winds & shading the ground with their leaves to provide cool conditions for the grapes. Passito di Pantelleria is a Sweet/Dessert Wine that is made in the "Passito" or "Appasimento" Method. This means that ripe grapes are picked (Sometimes picked early to retain high levels of Acidity), the berries /or bunches are placed on straw mats, under the baking sun which dehydrates the grapes, turning them into raisins & concentrating the Sugars & Acids. Grapes are dried for varying periods of time, from one month to several months. Nowadays, the process is sped up by drying the grapes in Warehouses with fans). After fermentation, the wines are still intensely sweet but with balanced levels of high acidity. The wine may then be aged in Oak to let the slow ingress of Oxygen allow tertiary aromas (caramel, nuts) to develop & give the wine added complexity. "Ben Ryé" from Donnafugata makes a world class Passito di Pantelleria that is said to compete with Chateau d'Yquem!

- Mediterranean Climate with a big Oceanic Influence!

Unit 4, 5 and 6 Examinations - Overview

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

Tasting questions

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

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

Theory questions

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

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

Unit 4 – Spirits of the World

The Unit 4 examinations took place in November 2017, March 2018 and June 2018.

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

November 2017: Unit 4 TASTING		
Spirit 1	Country: Spirit:	Mexico Herradura Plata Tequila
Spirit 2	Country: Spirit:	France ABK6 VSOP Single Estate Cognac
Spirit 3	Country: Spirit:	USA Four Roses Small Batch Bourbon

On the whole, candidates did fairly well in this paper 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 often followed through to a good performance in the concluding section of the paper although some candidates approached this as if writing an assessment of the quality rather than a justification for the style. Taking the example of the VSOP Cognac, candidates needed initially to explain what led them to conclude that this was some form of brandy rather than one of the other spirit categories (e.g. the grape character, the colour as well as the presence of some tannins indicates a wood-aged spirit which discounts many other categories). They could then move on to refining this even further, i.e. what points to Cognac rather than Spanish Brandy? Are there any aspects of the tasting note that point to high or low quality? Is there evidence of extended ageing / tertiary development that could point to a specific style within the brandy category?

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

- Not using the Systematic Approach that is specifically written for use when assessing spirits. This inevitably led candidates to forget to comment on maturation and the nature of the finish.
- Not identifying enough aroma characteristics for the marks available.
- Using a “range statement” to describe levels of the structural components of the spirits rather than just one level. Examiners are instructed not to award marks in such cases.
- Using terms that are too generic or vague for this level of assessment such as “citrus”, “oak” or “spice”. Similarly, some comments relating to maturation are too vague such as “aged” with no indication of whether this relates to a short period of ageing or a long one as in the case of a spirit that is fully matured.
- Not answering the question as set in the concluding sections. A significant number of candidates insist on writing an “assessment of quality” where this has not been asked for.
- Making factual errors in the concluding section.

November 2017: Unit 4 THEORY

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

- a) Options in Rum distillation
- b) Legal requirements for Scotch Whisky
- c) Poire William OR Grappa OR Kirsch

This paper generated a pass rate of 50% with a wide divergence in marks from a low of 5% to a high of 77%.

Section a) generated variable results and it was clear that a significant percentage of candidates do not really understand the fundamental principles of distillation since this section of the question required them to discuss the variations available through the use of different still types as well as the use of retorts and dunder.

The section on legal requirements for Scotch Whisky was answered well on the whole, probably because it only required candidates to state the facts correctly which was not a problem if these had been learnt. The same could be said for section c) which was also largely fact driven but poorer results here indicated that many candidates had possibly neglected certain areas of the syllabus in their revision plans.

March 2018: Unit 4 TASTING

Spirit 1	Country: Spirit:	Scotland Cutty Sark Blended Whisky
Spirit 2	Country: Spirit:	Scotland Glenfiddich 12 yo Single Malt Whisky
Spirit 3	Country: Spirit:	Mexico Herradura Anejo Tequila

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.

Another reason for lost marks was not reading the question carefully enough. The concluding section for spirit 3 differed from that for the previous 2 samples where an assessment of quality had been asked for. The aim with samples 1 and 2 was to compare two different quality levels from the same spirit category and to assess the candidates' ability to distinguish between these. Being a

different category of spirit, this requirement was not applied to sample 3. Instead candidates were asked to comment on how the maturation of this spirit has influenced its character. Candidates who simply wrote another assessment of quality gained no marks in this section.

March 2018: Unit 4 THEORY

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

- a) Production of London Dry Gin
- b) Calvados
- c) Dark Rum OR Cachaça OR Rhum Agricole

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. Most candidates were able to give an accurate definition of the category and say something about production. Good answers included more detail or gave examples to show which producers are doing what and how this affects the style of the resulting spirit. There were some very good responses on Calvados from candidates who had learnt the facts, but with rules and regulations differing between the three appellations permitted to use the name Calvados, there were also a number of muddled answers. Section c) generated a mixed bag of responses with some disastrous responses on Cachaça and Rhum Agricole from candidates who had clearly ignored certain parts of the syllabus in their revision.

June 2018: Unit 4 TASTING

Spirit 1	Country: Spirit:	Barbados Mount Gay Black Barrel Rum
Spirit 2	Country: Spirit:	United Kingdom Tanqueray No. Ten Gin
Spirit 3	Country: Spirit:	Italy Nonino 41° Grappa

The pass rate of 75% for this question was good with many candidates just pushing into the pass grade band on the basis of their note on the Gin since, almost without exception, this was a high scoring section. At the other end of the scale, many struggled with the Grappa, both in terms of the tasting note itself and with the identification of this spirit. Tequila was the most common incorrect identification, closely followed by white rum.

June 2018: Unit 4 THEORY

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

- a) **Grape growing in Cognac**
- b) **Vodka production post-distillation**
- c) **Reposado Tequila OR Muy Añejo Tequila OR Añejo Tequila**

There were a significant number of fail and fail (unclassified) grades here because candidates did not pay enough attention to the very specific wording in sections a) and b).

When asked about grape growing in Cognac there is nothing to be gained from writing about distillation and maturation, yet this is what many candidates did. All that was required here was information relating to the grape varieties grown, the vineyard areas themselves and the viticultural practices used in these.

It was a similar story in section b) where answers should have been limited to the processes that take place post-distillation – not before or during. Examiners were looking for depth here rather than a broad-brush account of the whole process from selection of raw material through to bottling. The four processes examiners were looking for were: filtration (covering the various options available); dilution; additives (including the sub-topic of flavourings); and maturation. Many candidates forgot to mention the latter and whilst nearly all Vodka is unaged, some producers do have oak-aged Vodkas in their portfolio. This section was the least well answered on the paper with some candidates only writing about flavoured vodkas and others failing to mention them at all.

Unit 5 – Sparkling Wines of the World

Unit 5 examinations also took place in November 2017, March 2018 and June 2018.

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

November 2017: Unit 5 TASTING		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Germany Mosel Dr Loosen Riesling Extra Dry NV
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Italy Lombardy Alma Gran Cuvée Brut Bellavista Franciacorta NV
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia Not assessed Black Queen Sparkling Shiraz 2011
<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”. Inevitably, 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 1 was a modestly priced, fruity German Riesling Sekt. It is a wine for drinking now due to the dominance of primary characteristics. Wine 2 was also a wine for “drinking now” whilst wine 3 had potential for ageing due to the concentration of fruit and the structural elements – specifically the tannin and acidity.</p> <p>There were no autolytic or tertiary characters on wine 1 yet some candidates commented incorrectly on both. Many candidates overuse descriptors linked to autolysis when assessing sparkling wines, with some of them assuming these to be a characteristic of all sparkling wines. Clearly this is not the case and with a marking process that is dictated by the principles of aroma/flavour “clusters”, marks will be restricted to those clusters that are relevant to each specific wine. In some instances, marks may even be capped where a candidate identifies autolytic character in a wine that clearly does not display this. In the case of wine 1 on this paper, it was important to comment on the relative simplicity and dominance of primary fruit. 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. 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 1 was simple and full of primary fruit character, wine 3 was at the other end of the</p>		

scale – complex and savoury as demonstrated by the presence of primary fruit but also clear secondary and tertiary character. Where a wine has multiple clusters of aromas and flavours such as here, candidates need to comment on all clusters to gain the marks available. Leaving out comments relating to any one cluster would limit the number of marks that could be achieved irrespective of how many descriptors are listed under other clusters.

When writing an assessment of quality too many candidates apply the “B-L-I-C” principle in its most simplistic form. Wine 3 is a very good quality wine. Weak assessments of quality either failed to acknowledge this or were poor in terms of reasoning to justify the given quality level. For example, it is not enough to describe this wine as “balanced, with long length, great intensity and complexity”. This may well be true in the case of this wine, but it is not a detailed assessment of quality and would not gain high marks. If the wine is complex, the assessment needs to indicate how this is displayed. If it is balanced, the candidate needs to explain which elements of the wine provide this balance. In the case of wine 3, the complexity comes from the tertiary and autolytic notes giving a savoury character which complemented the ripeness and sweetness of the primary fruit whilst the tannic grip was a good balance for the sweetness of this fruit.

November 2017: Unit 5 THEORY

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

- a) Asti method
- b) Soil in Champagne
- c) Roederer OR Krug OR Dom Pérignon

In this paper, the section on the Asti method varied considerably in terms of accuracy and completeness. Most were aware that it is a variation on the tank method but only the better candidates were able to explain specifically how it differs and offer clear descriptions and explanation to accompany the various stages of production. Many answers were too confused and inaccurate. Some candidates mistakenly wrote about the wine produced or the Asti DOCG rather than the method itself. This is a common error in all theory questions, and an easy way to lose marks as examiners are always looking for very specific information and will disregard anything considered outside the scope of the question as set.

The section on the named producers generated some very weak responses that were too brief or generic. Many candidates simply gave an account of the Champagne method of production and listed the various styles produced by the named Champagne house in very broad terms such as “*they produce non-vintage, vintage, prestige and rosé wines*”. This was far too simplistic and failed to answer the question as set. At the other end of the scale, this section also generated some of the best answers on this paper as in the case of the following response on Krug.

Krug is a small but important producer founded in 1849 by the German Joseph Krug. The house doesn't focus on NV champagne. Instead, they focus on a multi-vintage cuvée: the Grande Cuvée, which is a famous Prestige Cuvée. "It goes far beyond the concept of vintage," says Eric Lebel, the house's cellar master. He chooses from a library containing more than 200 base wines to make the final blend. Krug ferments all their base wines in 205L oak barrels. First fermentation is conducted very quickly, usually at higher temperature. Second fermentation, though, goes very slow. It takes at least 20 years to craft Grande Cuvée. The other styles the house make are a vintage, the Collection (a late release of the vintage) Clos du Mesnil a single vineyard 100% Chardonnay and Clos d'Ambois 100% Pinot Noir and also a single vineyard. Krug has a code on the back label which permits consumers to track the date of disgorgement. The ~~disgorgement is~~ dosage is made with the same wine which is in the bottle and the cuvées spend six

months on the house before they go to the market (after receiving dosage). Krug was incorporated into LVMH portfolio in 1999.

March 2018: Unit 5 TASTING		
Wine 1	Country: Wine:	Spain Mont Marcal Brut Reserva Cava NV
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	France Champagne Pol Roger 2008
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Italy Veneto Ruggeri Giustino B Prosecco 2016
<p>This flight of wines was well answered with a high pass rate, which is not unusual for Unit 5. There were some excellent responses on wine 2 with a number of candidates scoring full marks in this particular section. Notes were often weaker in respect of wine 3 where there was reluctance to comment on the simplicity of this wine despite it being a key feature of the style. With marks for aromas and flavours split across various clusters it is often easy to score marks where these are clearly defined as in the case of wine 2 which had primary fruit aromas, autolytic aromas and tertiary aromas. Candidates tend to be less skilled at separating clusters in the case of less complex wines. This may be due to failure to think beyond primary, secondary and tertiary clusters, but wines that have only primary aromas are just as likely to have multiple clusters of aromas even if lacking in autolytic or tertiary character. In the case of the Prosecco, there was an allocation of marks for the many floral and fruity characteristics but also a separate allocation for marks for descriptors conveying the "simple" character of this wine. They included the obvious descriptor of "simple" itself, but also others such as estery, generic, peardrop, confected, bubblegum, sherbet etc. Only the more skilled tasters commented on these characteristics.</p>		

March 2018: Unit 5 THEORY

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

- a) Sparkling wine production in Germany
- b) CIVC
- c) Marlborough OR Lambrusco OR Franciacorta

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

Section c) varied according to where the examination was being sat. Responses on Marlborough were sometimes too generic or vague and, in a couple of instances, were not addressed in the context of sparkling wines. The CIVC tripped a number of candidates up, either because they did not know what it was, or did not know enough about its role in the context of Champagne production. Too many candidates simply recited off the vineyard classification system, writing extensively about the "Echelle des Crus" but this really did not provide the information the examiner was looking for because, whilst the CIVC was responsible for fixing the price of grapes up until 1990, these are now dependent on market conditions and there are far more significant functions that the CIVC performs today.

June 2018: Unit 5 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: France Region: Alsace Wine: Dopff au Moulin Cuvée Julien NV
Wine 2	Country: France Region: Champagne Wine: Pierre Paillard Grand Cru "Les Terres Roses" NV
Wine 3	Country: Italy Region: Piedmont Wine: Asti Martini NV

The high pass rate of 93% was almost certainly down to some very good descriptions for the Asti and the vintage Champagne, both of which had plenty of clear style indicators which helped candidates write accurate tasting notes. However, at no point were candidates asked to identify the samples according to their origin and whilst this would not have been particularly difficult in the case of samples 2 and 3, it certainly would have challenged many candidates in the case of sample 1 where tasting notes tended to be weaker and less convincing. For this trio of wines, candidates were required to identify the likely method of production, give reasons for their choice and write an assessment of the quality of the wine. With 2 marks available for the method of production, this needed to be as precise as possible and, in the case of the Asti, "tank method" in isolation would only have gained 1 mark with "Asti method" being required for the full 2 marks.

The sweetness on the Asti was misjudged by a surprisingly large number of candidates, even some of those who clearly knew it was Asti and had identified the “Asti Method” as the means of production in the concluding section. (This inability to assess sweetness in wines is something that is also often seen in the Unit 6 examination on fortified wines, particularly in the case of Port, which suggests this is an aspect of tasting that some candidates clearly need to focus on for improvement.)

A number of candidates also identified autolytic character on this wine which was not there. This could be because some candidates try to “hedge their bets” in this paper by listing autolytic characteristics for all three samples on the basis that they have “nothing to lose” if they are wrong. This is not always the case and 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.

June 2018: Unit 5 THEORY

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

- a) Blending in Champagne
- b) Premium Prosecco
- c) California OR Cap Classique OR Tasmania

Section a) generated some very good responses but too many candidates did not take a wide enough approach here and never got much beyond the blending of the three Champagne varieties for NV wines. This was not a complete picture. Blending to maintain house style or adjust the structure, balance or flavour of the wine is only one aspect of blending and answers needed to also consider the commercial and economic drivers of blending in the Champagne region. Similarly, candidates needed to think beyond the grape varieties themselves in terms of the constituent parts of any blend. This would entail discussion of topics such as wines from different vineyard regions or individual plots, wines made using different vinification techniques etc. Many also forgot to include the production of rosé in the context of blending and a number seemed to be unaware that even single vintage Champagnes are blended wines. Good candidates not only identified all the components and the reasons for blending but also discussed the various stages at which these take place.

Some candidates failed to understand what was meant by the term “premium” Prosecco and included too much information of limited relevance. Answers on section c) 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 in terms of production, grapes used, styles produced, techniques used etc.

Unit 6 – Fortified Wines of the World

Unit 6 examinations took place in November 2017, March 2018 and June 2018.

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

November 2017: Unit 6 TASTING		
Wine 1	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Madeira Blandys 10 yr old Sercial
Wine 2	Country: Region: Wine:	Portugal Douro Valdespino Tio Diego Dry Amontillado
Wine 3	Country: Region: Wine:	Australia Victoria Stanten & Killeen Classic Rutherglen Muscat
<p>This trio of unrelated fortified wines generated a pass rate of 60%. The marker commented that a significant number of candidates failed to answer the question as set in the concluding section. This invariably happens because candidates do not read the examination paper carefully enough or assume the concluding section will always ask for an assessment of quality. 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 and then give reasons to justify this decision. They may be instructed to comment on a particular aspect of production or 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 to explain how maturation defines the style of the wine. A significant number of candidates failed to do this convincingly enough. Even where comments were limited to the maturation of the wines, in many instances these simply <u>identified</u> the maturation processes rather than <u>explained</u> how these processes define the style of the wine.</p> <p>The following extracts are taken from a paper where the candidate has not answered this section of the question as required. They attempt to give an assessment of quality and comment on the readiness for drinking rather than focusing on the outcome of the various maturation techniques used in these wines. In the case of wine 2 (the first example) the examiner has attempted to allocate marks where possible (in this instance for the reference to "oxidation"), but in the case of wine 3 (the second example), there is nothing of any relevance for which marks can be awarded as the candidate just describes the wine, making no reference to <u>maturation</u> at all.</p>		

Wine 2:

Explain how maturation defines the style of this wine: (5 marks)

The wine is good quality, can drink now but not suitable for ageing. Oxidative flavour such as hazelnut shows rancio flavour. It indicate the wine is made by oxidation ageing. Also the wine has sugar caramelization flavour. It shows the sugar of the wine changed caramelize due to heat.

[TURN OVER]

The wine has good balance between complexity flavours and high acidity, but lack of intensity.

Wine 3:

Explain how maturation defines the style of this wine: (5 marks)

The wine is outstanding quality, can drink now, but has ageing potential. The wine has concentrative fruits flavour with comfortable alcohol. It has also rich sweet taste with acidity. The wine has dried raisin character, and rich sweetness. IT indicate the wine made by sun dried grape.

Answer the question below on the lined paper provided

November 2017: Unit 6 THEORY

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

- The role of climate in Sherry production
- Languedoc-Roussillon
- Colheita Port OR Basic Ruby Port OR Tawny Port with an indication of age

Scripts varied significantly in terms of factual accuracy with some candidates performing well whilst others clearly struggled. A common problem was candidates' handling of the various topics which was often too generic or superficial. For example, simply describing the whole production process for Sherry in broad terms rather than explaining the significance of climate to very specific processes related to production.

In section b), far too many candidates wrote about Muscat de Beaumes de Venise as a wine produced in the Languedoc-Roussillon. Such errors are unacceptable at this level.

March 2018: Unit 6 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Spain Region: Jerez Wine: Barbadillo Solear Manzanilla
Wine 2	Country: Portugal Region: Madeira Wine: Henriques & Henriques 15 yo Malmsey
Wine 3	Country: Spain Region: Jerez Wine: Williams & Humbert Canasta Cream Sherry

This paper generated a pass rate of 77% with an average mark of 61%, a maximum of 85% and a minimum of 35%. Of the three wines, it was the Cream Sherry that generated the weakest responses with a significant percentage of candidates overestimating the quality of this wine.

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 typicality is indicative of quality. Far too many candidates fail to take this further step.

March 2018: Unit 6 THEORY

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

- a) The soil in the Douro and its cultivation
- b) Oxidation in Sherry production
- c) Banyuls OR Rivesaltes OR Maury

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

Those who generated weaker answers in sections a) and b) usually did so because their responses lacked focus or failed to answer the question specifically as set. For example, when asked to write about “the soil in the Douro and its cultivation” there is little point writing generally about the regions, grapes, rainfall etc. unless these are specifically linked to issues connected to soil.

June 2018: Unit 6 TASTING

Wine 1	Country: Portugal Region: Douro Wine: Taylors Fine Tawny Port
Wine 2	Country: France Region: Maury Wine: Mas Amiel Maury 2014
Wine 3	Country: Portugal Region: Douro Wine: Grahams 20 yo Tawny Port

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. This was particularly important in the case of the two tawny Ports, where examiners were looking for evidence of clear understanding of the difference in quality between these two wines. This was not the place for generic / “stock” phrases such as “the wine is balanced” or “lacks complexity and length for a higher grading”. Candidates use these observations far too frequently without substantiation. In this instance, candidates needed to be able to differentiate between the elements of balance in wine 1 that pointed to a more modest quality level – the “hot” alcohol that dominated, the acidity that was rather too low for the sugar leaving the wine rather cloying, and the balance indicators in wine 3 that pointed to the other end of the quality spectrum – the alcohol being held in check by the sugar, acid, tannin and weight of the palate. Balance is, of course, only one element of a quality assessment but it is the one that is most frequently over-simplified by candidates in their assessment of quality.

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

June 2018: Unit 6 THEORY

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

- a) Fortification and maturation of Madeira**
- b) Muscat**
- c) Palo Cortado OR Manzanilla OR Cream Sherry**

The pass rate for this question was good at 60% but there were very few outstanding scripts with the maximum mark only just making it into the Distinction grade band and a minimum mark of only 11%.

Most candidates were aware that “maturation of Madeira” required them to cover Estufagem and Canteiro and these were addressed well on the whole but with some candidates clearly confused about the variation in temperature and duration of the processes. However, answers relating to “fortification” of Madeira tended to be weaker with some candidates writing very little about this or not fully understanding the basic premise of differences in timing and the level of fortification. There were the inevitable errors such as writing about fortification “with RCGM” and a number of candidates gave long accounts of the “history” of Madeira’s long sea voyages that did little to address the question of what happens now.

In the section on Muscat, the characteristics of the grape were often overlooked resulting in answers that amounted to little more than a list of AOCs in the South of France. Some candidates went “off topic”, writing about Asti which had no place in a fortified wine examination.

Answers in the final section were either very good or very poor depending on how well the candidate had revised to the syllabus.

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

Paper	2017/18			2016/17			2015/16			2014/15			2013/14			2012/13								
Unit 1 CWA	April 90%		Nov 94%		April 91%		Nov 91%		April 89%		Nov 85%		April 84%		Nov 82%		April 91%		Nov 90%					
Unit 1 Case Study	Nov 83%	Mar 83%	June 90%	Nov 85%	Mar 82%	June 83%	Nov 85%	Mar 80%	June 80%	Nov 58%	Mar 72%	June 79%	Nov 72%	Mar 73%	June 83%	Nov 77%	Mar 71%	June 85%						
Unit 2	94%			91%			91%			92%			90%			91%								
Unit 3 Tasting	June 76%		Jan 74%		June 59%		Jan 71%		June 77%		Jan 65%		June 69%		Jan 59%		June 82%		Jan 64%					
Unit 3 Theory	June 40%		Jan 41%		June 45%		Jan 34%		June 45%		Jan 52%		June 32%		Jan 27%		June 40%		Jan 29%					
Unit 4	59%			66%			64%			52%			55%			57%								
Unit 5	66%			76%			59%			66%			71%			84%								
Unit 6	53%			80%			58%			53%			82%			61%								

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.	