



WSET
WINE & SPIRIT
EDUCATION TRUST

WSET® Level 3 Award in Spirits

Specification

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1

Introduction to the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits

Qualification aims

The WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits is designed to give you a thorough **knowledge** and **understanding** of the world of spirits as well as the factors that account for their style and quality. It is also designed to develop your **skills** of tasting, description and explanation.

After attending the course and passing the exam you will be able to:

- Taste accurately as well as identify and assess the quality of selected spirits
- State the characteristics of the spirits covered in the curriculum
- Describe and explain the principal production choices used by distillers and how they influence the style and quality of selected spirits
- Use your knowledge, understanding and skills to support job roles and competencies, for example in product selection in the retail and hospitality sectors
- Advise confidently, answer queries authoritatively, and make informed selections of spirits in a variety of situations

Key considerations before enrolling

Prior learning

We recommend that any prospective student has either passed the WSET Level 2 Award in Spirits or has an equivalent level of knowledge. If you are considering enrolling, you should discuss your current level of knowledge with the course provider you intend to study with to ensure that this is a suitable qualification for you.

Your time investment

From the time of your enrolment to the end of your exam, we recommend that you invest 84 hours into this qualification.

WSET uses three measures to recommend how much time you should spend studying for this qualification. They are:

- Total qualification time (TQT), which is an estimate of the total amount of time, measured in hours, that a learner would reasonably need to be able to show the level of achievement necessary for the award of a qualification
- Guided learning hours (GLH), which includes all educator-supervised learning and supervised assessments
- Private study time, which covers all unsupervised studying

The recommendations for the Level 3 Award in Spirits are:

- Total qualification time – 84 hours
- Guided learning hours – 32 ½ hours (of which 2 hours and 40 minutes are for the exam)
- Private study time – 51 ½ hours

Enrolment

WSET courses and qualifications are offered through a network of independent course providers throughout the world. You can find them at <https://www.wsetglobal.com/where-to-study>.

Course content

Tasting

You will learn how to use the WSET Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits to:

- Describe the characteristics of a spirit
- Write an assessment of quality with supporting reasoning

Theory

Using the textbook created by WSET for this qualification, your study will focus on three key areas. You will:

- Learn the principles of spirits production and how choices made during production affect both the style and quality of a spirit
- Learn how to apply these principles to a select number of spirits so that you can describe how they look, smell and taste, and explain why they look, smell and taste the way they do
- Learn about the world of spirits and the types and styles of spirits that are made around the world

The exam

The exam is made up of three sections that test the knowledge, understanding and skills you have developed throughout the course in different ways:

1. **A blind tasting of two spirits** – This tests your ability to accurately describe, identify and assess the quality of a spirit.
2. **50 multiple-choice questions** – This tests your overall knowledge of the world of spirits.
3. **10 short answer questions** – These are limited to the principles of spirits production and a select number of spirits. They test your knowledge, understanding and ability to describe and explain how spirits are made, and why they look, smell and taste the way they do.

Exam timing

Section	Timing
Section 1: Tasting	30 minutes
Sections 2 and 3 combined: multiple-choice and short answer questions	2 hours and 10 minutes

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Learning Outcomes

Unit 1: Theory

Learning Outcome 1: Principles of spirits production

Understand the principal factors involved in spirits production and how they influence style and quality.

Assessment Criteria

1. State or describe the processes and principles that relate to raw materials, fermentation, distillation, and post-distillation operations.
2. Explain how select processes and principles relating to fermentation, distillation, and post-distillation operations influence the style and quality of spirits.

Ranges: Spirits production (Module 2)



Note

Topics accompanied by the symbol can feature in an 'explain' short answer question.

Stage 1: Processing the raw material

Chapter	Parts
Raw materials (Chapter 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are carbohydrates? • Carbohydrates and fermentation

Stage 2: Alcoholic fermentation

Chapter	Parts
Yeast, fermentation and bacteria (Chapter 4)	<p>Yeast fundamentals (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are yeast? • Environmental preferences of yeast • Nutritional requirements of yeast Yeast outputs • Competition from other microorganisms (spoilage) Yeast choice <p>Approaches to fermentation (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fermentation sequence (sequential, parallel) • Fermentation state (liquid-, semi-solid-, solid-state) <p>Bacteria (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flavour creation: short and long fermentations

Stage 3: Distillation

Chapter	Parts
The fundamentals of distillation (Chapter 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Key terms: fractions, congeners, vapour, highly rectified spirit, neutral spirit <p>Key principles (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Boiling and volatility ④ Concentration and selection ④ Reflux and rectification <p>Distilling fermented alcoholic liquids (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Fractions in a fermented alcoholic liquid ④ Managing reflux in a still <p>Other methods of flavour management in a still (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maillard reactions • Esterification • Varying the pressure in the still • Sulfur compounds
Pot stills (Chapter 6)	<p>Common features of pot stills (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat sources ④ Still design <p>Batch distillation (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ An overview of Scottish double pot still distillation <p>Using still management to shape the style of a spirit (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Inclusions ④ Exclusions ④ Examples of how distillers manage inclusions and exclusions <p>The advantages and challenges of using pot stills (Part 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ The advantages of pot stills ④ The challenges of pot stills
Column and hybrid stills (Chapter 7)	<p>Common features of column stills (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat sources ④ Managing reflux ④ Rectification plates • Packed columns • Condensers <p>Distilling a two-fraction liquid (using a single-column still) (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Making a neutral spirit from a two-fraction liquid of ethanol and water <p>Distilling a fermented alcoholic liquid (using a single-column still) (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Running a tall single-column still ④ The stripping section ④ The rectifying section ④ Dynamic equilibrium and continuous operation <p>Other types of column stills (Part 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other types of single-column stills ④ Double-column stills • Multiple-column stills <p>Hybrid stills (Part 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ How hybrid stills are used ④ The benefits of hybrid stills

Stage 4: Post-distillation operations

Chapter	Parts
Storage and maturation (Chapter 8)	Oak and oak vessels (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making oak barrels ④ Key functions of oak vessels
	The impact of an oak vessel's design and use (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ An oak vessel's design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: Species of oak will not appear in any 'explain' questions. ④ An oak vessel's previous use ④ An oak vessel in use
	Oak management (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Matching spirits to oak vessels ④ Barrel location ④ Rebarrelling and finishing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak alternatives • Other woods
	Inert vessels (Part 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage • Maturation • Preservation
Other post-distillation operations (Chapter 9)	Blending (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Creating style and complexity ④ Managing consistency
	Removals and additions (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Filtration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding colour • Adding sweetness • Textural additives • Adjusting alcohol
	Packaging (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Containers • Closures

Learning Outcome 2: Selected global spirits

Understand the key characteristics and labelling terms of selected global spirits and how legal frameworks and production choices influence their style and quality.

Assessment Criteria

1. State or describe the different styles of the selected global spirits.
2. State or describe how different raw materials are processed.
3. State or describe the production processes for the selected global spirits and explain how production choices influence their style and quality.
4. State or describe the legal framework for the selected global spirits and how it can influence their style and quality.

Ranges



Note

Topics accompanied by the symbol can feature in an 'explain' short answer question.

Grain spirits and Asian spirits (Module 3)

Chapter	Parts
Processing starch (Chapter 10)	Starch formation and conversion (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starch formation The stages of starch conversion European traditions for converting starch (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with grains • Inside grains Making a sugary liquid from malted barley • Distiller's malt and speciality malts Making a sugary liquid from unmalted grains • Working with potatoes Asian traditions for converting starch (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing filamentous fungi
Scotch whisky (Chapter 11)	Making Scotch whisky (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making Scotch malt whisky Making Scotch grain whisky Making Blended Scotch Whisky Scotch whisky and the law (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules that apply to all Scotch whisky • The five types of Scotch whisky • Other defined labelling terms Production choices that affect the style and quality of Scotch whisky (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Styles of Scotch whisky Processing the raw material Alcoholic fermentation Distillation Post-distillation operations
American whiskey (Chapter 12)	Making American whiskey (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making Bourbon Making Tennessee whiskey Making rye whiskey American whiskey and the law (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of whiskey • Labelling terminology Production choices that affect the style and quality of American whiskey (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Styles of American whiskey Processing the raw material Mash bill and recipe Distillation Post-distillation operations

Fruit spirits (Module 4)

Chapter	Parts
Processing fruit (Chapter 17)	Processing fresh fruit (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crush, press, ferment • Macerate, distil • Challenges of processing fresh fruit Processing grape pomace (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is grape pomace? • White wine and white grape pomace • Red wine and black grape pomace
Cognac and Armagnac (Chapter 18)	Making Cognac and Armagnac (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Grape varieties ④ Alcoholic fermentation ④ Distillation in Cognac ④ Distillation in Armagnac ④ Post-distillation operations Cognac, Armagnac and the law (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognac • Armagnac Production choices that affect the style and quality of Cognac and Armagnac (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Styles of Cognac and Armagnac ④ Processing the raw material ④ Distillation ④ Post-distillation operations

Sugar cane spirits (Module 5)

Chapter	Parts
Processing sugar cane and making sugar cane spirits (Chapter 20)	Processing sugar cane (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating sugar cane juice • Creating sugar cane syrup • Creating molasses and brown sugar • Factors that can affect the quality of sugar cane products Alcoholic fermentation (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Creating a sugary liquid ④ Short and long alcoholic fermentation ④ Ester production in sugar cane spirits Distillation (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Pot stills with double retorts ④ Column stills and Rhum Agricole ④ Other column stills Post-distillation operations (Part 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Storage and maturation ④ Other post-distillation operations
Sugar cane spirits of the Caribbean (Chapter 21)	Context (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Caribbean • Sugar cane spirits and legislation Sugar cane spirits of the Caribbean (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Martinique and Guadeloupe ④ Cuba ④ Jamaica

Agave spirits (Module 6)

Chapter	Parts
Growing and processing agave (Chapter 23)	<p>Growing agave (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are agave? • Growing agave • Harvesting agave <p>Processing agave (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Fructans ④ An overview of creating a sugary liquid from agave ④ Approaches to cooking agave ④ Approaches to crushing agave ④ Diffusers
Tequila and Mezcal (Chapter 24)	<p>Making Tequila and Mezcal (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Making a sugary liquid ④ Alcoholic fermentation ④ Distillation ④ Post-distillation operations <p>Tequila and Mezcal and the law (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tequila • Mezcal <p>Production choices that affect the style and quality of Tequila and Mezcal (Part 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Styles of Tequila and Mezcal ④ Processing agave ④ Alcoholic fermentation • Distillation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: The distillation of agave spirits will not appear in any 'explain' questions due to anomalies caused by high levels of methanol in agave fermentations. ④ Post-distillation operations

Vodka, adding flavours and colours from sources other than oak, and gin (Module 7)

Chapter	Parts
Vodka (Chapter 25)	<p>Making neutral spirit and vodka (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Processing the raw material ④ Alcoholic fermentation ④ Distillation ④ Post-distillation operations <p>Vodka and the law (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA • EU <p>Production choices that affect the style and quality of vodka (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Styles of vodka ④ Processing the raw material ④ Distillation ④ Post-distillation operations
Adding flavours and colours from sources other than oak (Chapter 26)	<p>Adding flavours from sources other than oak (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of flavours ④ Adding botanicals to a spirit (maceration, percolation, redistillation) • Adding other flavourings to a spirit • Adding animal flavourings to a spirit <p>Adding colours from sources other than oak (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural colours • Artificial colours
Gin (Chapter 27)	<p>Making gin (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Base spirit ④ Post-distillation operations <p>Gin and the law (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA • EU <p>Production choices that affect the style and quality of gin (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ④ Styles of gin ④ Base spirit ④ Botanical recipes ④ Post-distillation operations: redistillation ④ Other post-distillation operations: after redistillation

Learning Outcome 3: Other named global spirits

Know the key characteristics of other named global spirits, their labelling terms and key production choices that are made.

Assessment Criteria

1. Describe the style and quality of the other named global spirits.
2. State the meaning of legally defined and other commonly used labelling terms.
3. State the key legally defined and/or optional choices that are made during the production of the other named global spirits.

Ranges

Grain spirits (Module 3)

Chapter	Parts
Other American whiskeys (Chapter 12)	American whiskey and the law (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of whiskey (wheat, malt, corn) • Labelling terminology
Irish, Canadian and Japanese whiskies (Chapter 13) Chapter 13 contains information about brands and the whisk(e)y industry that is interspersed with the other content in the chapter. Brands and the whisk(e)y industries of these countries are not examinable.	Whiskey from the island of Ireland (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making whiskey on the island of Ireland • Irish whiskey and the law • Types of Irish whiskey Canadian whisky (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Canadian whisky • Canadian whisky and the law • Styles of Canadian whisky Japanese whisky (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Japanese whisky • Japanese whisky: law and identity • Styles of Japanese whisky
Shōchū (Chapter 14)	Making shōchū (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making column-distilled shōchū • Making pot-distilled shōchū (Honkaku Shōchū and Awamori) Shōchū and the law (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules that apply to all shōchū • Rules that apply to pot-distilled shōchū Styles of shōchū (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honkaku Shōchū • Awamori
Baijiu (Chapter 15)	An overview of baijiu (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing the raw material • Alcoholic fermentation • Distillation • Post-distillation operations Common production techniques (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Qu</i> • Traditional baijiu stills Subcategories of baijiu, production choices and style (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Aroma Baijiu • Sauce Aroma Baijiu • Light Aroma Baijiu • Rice Aroma Baijiu
Soju (Chapter 16)	Making soju (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making diluted soju • Production decisions affecting the style of diluted soju • Making distilled soju • Styles of distilled soju

Fruit spirits (Module 4)

Chapter	Parts
Other fruit spirits (Chapter 19)	<p>Brandy de Jerez (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grape varieties • Distillation • Post-distillation operations • Brandy de Jerez and the law <p>Pisco (Part 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peruvian Pisco • Chilean Pisco <p>South African brandy (Part 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making South African brandy • Labelling terminology <p>Grappa (Part 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pomace • Distillation • Post-distillation operations • Grappa and the law <p>Calvados (Part 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apples and pears • Alcoholic fermentation • Distillation • Post-distillation operations • Calvados and the law <p>Note: The section 'Labelling terminology' is not examinable.</p> <p>Other European fruit spirits (Part 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits • Alcoholic fermentation and maceration • Distillation • Post-distillation operations

Sugar cane spirits (Module 5)

Chapter	Parts
Sugar cane spirits of the Caribbean (Chapter 21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haiti • Puerto Rico • Barbados • Trinidad and Tobago • Guyana • Central America, Colombia and Venezuela • Blended rums
Other sugar cane spirits (Chapter 22)	<p>Brazil and Cachaça (Part 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Styles of Cachaça • Making Cachaça • Cachaça and the law

Other agave spirits and Sotol (Module 6)

Chapter	Parts
Other agave spirits and Sotol (Chapter 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacanora • Raicilla • Sotol

Flavoured spirits and aromatised wines (Module 7)

Chapter	Parts
Other flavoured spirits (Chapter 28)	Flavoured vodka (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making flavoured vodka • Styles of flavoured vodka
	Aniseed-flavoured spirits (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making aniseed-flavoured spirits • Aniseed-flavoured spirits and the law
	Aquavit (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making aquavit • Styles of aquavit • Aquavit and the law
	Bitter spirits (<i>amari</i>) (Part 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making bitter spirits • Styles of bitter spirits
	Cocktail bitters (Part 5)
	Genever (Part 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making genever • Styles of genever • Genever and the law
	Spiced rum and flavoured whiskey (Part 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making spiced rum and flavoured whiskey • Spiced rum, flavoured whiskey and the law
	Liqueurs (Part 8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making liqueurs • Types of liqueurs • Liqueurs and the law <p>Note: The sections ‘Other labelling terminology’ and ‘Notes on the EU regulations’ are not examinable.</p>
	Non-alcoholic spirits (Part 9)
	Aromatised wines (Chapter 29)
Aromatised wines and the law (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA • EU <p>Note: The section ‘Sweetness levels’ is not examinable.</p>	
Production choices that affect the style and quality of aromatised wines (Part 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base wine • Fortifying alcohol • Botanicals • Sweetness • Resting and maturation • Styles of aromatised wines 	

Unit 2: Tasting

Learning Outcome

Describe the key characteristics of selected global spirits and use the description to identify the type and category of the spirit. Identify the quality level and give supporting reasons.

Assessment Criteria

1. Describe the key characteristics of the selected global spirits using the WSET Level 3 Systematic Approach to Tasting Spirits® (SAT).
2. Identify the type and category of the spirit and identify its quality level, giving supporting reasons.

Assessment method

- Tasting exam of two blind samples taken from the list of examinable samples

Ranges

Examinable samples

Type	Category
Scotch whisky	Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Blended Scotch Whisky
American whiskey	Bourbon, rye whiskey
Grape spirits	Cognac, Armagnac
Sugar cane spirits	Made from molasses, made from sugar cane juice
Agave spirits	Tequila, Mezcal
Gin	Juniper-forward style, contemporary style

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Exam guidance

Exam administration

Exams are conducted by WSET Approved Programme Providers (APPs) who must comply with WSET policies and procedures set out in the APP Handbook.

The assessment for the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits is made up of two exams:

- The theory exam, which assesses Unit 1
- The tasting exam, which assesses Unit 2

Candidates must sit both exams at the same sitting. Only candidates who have previously achieved a pass in one Unit (theory or tasting) are permitted to resit the other individually.

Theory exam

The theory exam is split into two parts:

- Part 1: multiple-choice questions (designed to assess your knowledge)
- Part 2: short answer questions (designed to assess your knowledge and your skills of description and explanation)

All questions are based on the Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Ranges in Chapter 2 of this Specification. The textbook *Understanding spirits: Explaining style and quality*, created by WSET to accompany this qualification, contains all the information required to answer any question correctly.

Summary for candidates

- **Equipment** – Pens, pencils and other writing equipment
- **Duration** – 2 hours and 10 minutes
- **Parts:**
 - Part 1 – This part is made up of 50 multiple-choice questions.
 - Part 2 – This part is made up of 10 short answer questions.

Part 1: Multiple-choice questions

Each question has only one correct answer and is worth one mark. The questions will cover Learning Outcomes 1, 2 and 3. Marks are NOT subtracted for incorrect answers. Part 1 is marked/graded by machine.

- **You will** – Answer the multiple-choice questions using either a computer-readable answer sheet, or a computer/other device. The questions are allocated as follows:
 - Principles of spirits production – 10 marks
 - Selected global spirits – 15 marks
 - Other named global spirits – 25 marks
- **Timing** – You are free to allocate your time as you please during the theory exam, but we recommend spending no more than 40 minutes on Part 1.
- **Marks** – Each multiple-choice question is worth one mark, giving a total of 50 marks.
- **Pass mark** – The pass mark for this part of the exam is 55%, which equates to 28 marks.

Part 2: Short answer questions

The 10 questions are broken down into six 5-mark questions, three 10-mark questions and one 20-mark question. They assess your knowledge and skills of description and explanation. The questions will cover Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 only. Part 2 is marked/graded by specialists trained by WSET.

- **You will** – Write your answers to the six 5-mark questions, three 10-mark questions and one 20-mark question on your exam paper/device in the spaces provided.
- **Timing** – You are free to allocate your time as you please during the theory exam, but we recommend spending 80 minutes on Part 2.
- **Marks** – There are 80 marks in total, which are allocated across Learning Outcomes 1 and 2.
Note: The Learning Outcome ‘Other named global spirits’ is not assessed in this part of the exam.
- **Pass mark** – The pass mark for this part of the exam is 55%, which equates to 44 marks.

Theory pass

In order to pass the theory exam, you need to achieve a pass mark for both Part 1 (multiple-choice questions) and Part 2 (short answer questions). Failing either part results in a fail for Unit 1 (theory).

Exam protocol

Before the exam starts, exam conditions come into force. Once the exam has started, you are free to manage your time. We recommend that you use all available time and allocate 40 minutes to Part 1 and 80 minutes to Part 2 with 10 minutes held in reserve for planning.

After 2 hours and 10 minutes, you must stop writing or you will be penalised.

Tasting exam

The tasting exam is designed to assess your ability to:

- Write a complete and accurate description of a spirit
- Identify its category and type
- Identify its quality level and give supporting reasons

It is set and marked by a WSET Approved Level 3 Internal Assessor using an assessment brief provided by WSET. The results are verified by WSET.

Summary for candidates

- **Equipment** – Two glasses, spittoon/spit cup, bottle of water or similar, pens/pencils
- **Duration** – 30 minutes
- **Samples** – Two, served blind in neutral bottles. The samples that could appear in the exam are:
 - Scotch whisky – Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Blended Scotch Whisky
 - American whiskey – Bourbon, rye whiskey
 - Grape spirits – Cognac, Armagnac
 - Sugar cane spirits – made from either molasses or sugar cane juice
 - Agave spirits – Tequila, Mezcal
 - Gin – juniper-forward style or contemporary style
- **You will** – Write a full tasting note for each sample; identify its quality level and give supporting reasons for this; identify its category and type; write your answers on your exam paper/device in the spaces provided.
- **Timing** – You are free to allocate your time as you please, but we recommend spending 15 minutes on each sample.
- **Marks** – There are 50 marks in total. There are 25 marks allocated to each sample, broken down as follows:
 - Appearance – 2 marks
 - Nose – 5 marks
 - Palate – 10 marks
 - Conclusions – 8 marks
- Marks for each question are indicated on the exam paper. Marks are NOT subtracted for incorrect answers.
- **Pass mark** – The pass mark is 55% across the whole tasting paper, which equates to 28 marks.

Exam protocol

Before the exam starts, exam conditions come into force and you will be asked to pour your own samples. It is your responsibility to ensure that the correct sample is in the correct glass. Whilst the samples are being poured you may not assess the samples or write any notes.

Once the exam has started, you are free to manage your time. We recommend that you use all the available time and allocate 15 minutes to each sample.

After 30 minutes you must stop writing or you will be penalised.

Final grade calculation

You will be issued with a grade for Unit 1 Theory and a grade for Unit 2 Tasting according to the grade bands in the table below.

In order to achieve the Level 3 Award in Spirits qualification you must achieve a passing grade in both units (including each part of Unit 1 Theory).

To calculate your final grade, the examiners add your percentages for Theory Part 1 (multiple-choice questions), Theory Part 2 (short answer questions) and Unit 2 Tasting, and divide the total by three to give an average.

A fail in any individual part of the assessment will result in a failing grade being issued for the Level 3 Award in Spirits qualification.

Once the final mark has been calculated, it is graded as follows:

Grade band	Required percentage
Fail unclassified	Mean average mark of 44% or below
Fail	Mean average mark of 45% to 54%
Pass	Mean average mark of 55% to 64%
Pass with merit	Mean average mark of 65% to 79%
Pass with distinction	Mean average mark of 80% or more No result below 65% in any individual part of the assessment

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Exam regulations

1 Entry requirements

1.1 Eligibility

1.1.1 Candidates applying to sit the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits exam must be over the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country where the exam is being held, or be preparing for the exam as part of a recognised full-time programme of study, or have obtained consent from their parents or legal guardians.

1.1.2 There are no restrictions on entry to the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits through overlaps with other qualifications or parts of qualifications.

1.1.3 Candidates who are under the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country where the exam is being held, or those who choose not to taste alcohol (e.g. for health or religious reasons) will not be allowed/required to sample any alcoholic beverage as part of their course. These candidates will NOT be eligible to complete the assessment of Tasting (Unit 2) of the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits. In such instances, candidates will receive a record of achievement on successful completion of Theory (Unit 1) but will not be awarded the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits qualification.

1.2 Recommended prior learning

1.2.1 Completion of the WSET Level 2 Award in Spirits or an equivalent level of experience is recommended for entry to the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits. Candidates who believe they have a sufficiently good understanding of the subjects covered by the Level 2 Award in Spirits are advised to consult their prospective educator before enrolment on a course of study for guidance on the accreditation of prior learning.

1.2.2 Candidates sitting in English where it is not their first language are strongly recommended to have IELTS at 6.5 or above or be able to demonstrate an equivalent ability level.

2 Format and results

2.1 Candidates will be required to pass a closed-book assessment comprising two units. Unit 1 is the theory exam, which is in turn split into two parts: Part 1, which is made up of multiple-choice questions, and Part 2, which is made up of short answer questions. Unit 2 is the tasting exam.

2.2 The pass mark in the tasting exam, the multiple-choice part of the theory exam and the short answer part of the theory exam is 55% and above.

2.3 Candidates are required to pass the tasting exam and both parts of the theory exam in order to gain the WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits.

2.4 The final result is the mean average of the three individual exam results expressed as a percentage.

2.5 Once the final result has been calculated it will be graded using the following grade bands.

Grade band	Required percentage
Fail unclassified	Mean average mark of 44% or below
Fail	Mean average mark of 45% to 54%
Pass	Mean average mark of 55% to 64%
Pass with merit	Mean average mark of 65% to 79%
Pass with distinction	Mean average mark of 80% or more No result below 65% in any individual part of the assessment

2.6 While WSET would not normally make changes to grade algorithms or thresholds, there may be circumstances in which it is necessary to do so to secure the maintenance of standards over time.

2.7 Exam results are issued by WSET as follows:

- WSET will issue an all-candidate grade list to the APP so that they can communicate results to their candidates.
- Subsequently, WSET Awards posts candidates' student letters and certificates to APPs, who are responsible for forwarding these documents to their candidates.

3 Reasonable adjustments

3.1 Exam candidates who have special exam requirements, which are supported by independent written assessment, are requested to notify the exams officer at their APP of any such requirement at the time of enrolment. Further guidance for exam officers and candidates is available from WSET Awards as required.

3.2 It is the policy of WSET that such candidates should not be placed at a disadvantage in the exams. Candidates are responsible for informing their APP of any such requirement at the time of enrolment.

4 Resits

4.1 Candidates may apply to resit an individual exam if they are unsuccessful. There is no limit on the number of attempts that may be made.

4.2 Candidates who have passed an exam are not permitted to retake it to improve their grade.

5 Exam conditions and conduct

5.1 By registering for a WSET exam, candidates agree to the following conditions:

- Candidates must not be involved in any unfair or dishonest practice in any part of the exam. Malpractice or misconduct will be investigated in line with published WSET policy and may lead to sanctions including disqualification from the exam.
- Before the exam all candidates must supply the invigilator with proof of identity in the form of photographic ID.
- The exam is to be completed in the time specified for each unit.
- Possession of reference material of any kind is prohibited.
- Once exam conditions are in place, no communication of any kind between candidates is permitted until they have left the exam room or the end of the exam has been announced.
- During the exam, candidates are only permitted to have the following items with them: tasting glasses, spittoons, pens, pencils, erasers and drinking water.
- For the tasting exam, candidates should not wear perfume, aftershave or any other strong scent.
- It is prohibited for candidates to photograph materials, reveal the content of exam papers to others, or to reproduce it in any way. The use of electronic devices of any kind, other than a computer or mobile device that is being used to sit an exam, is prohibited.
- Mobile phones (that are not being used in the context of remote invigilation) must be switched off and placed out of sight, away from the exam desk.
- The use of audible alarms on any clock or watch is prohibited.

In-person exams

- Candidates may not leave the room until the first 15 minutes of the exam time have elapsed.
- Candidates who arrive after the published start time will NOT be allowed to sit the exam if any other candidate has already left the exam.
- Candidates who arrive late may be allowed to enter the room at the discretion of the invigilator and only if other candidates are not compromised. Under normal circumstances, we would not expect any candidate to be allowed to start the exam if they arrive more than 30 minutes after the published start time.
- Candidates may not leave, and then return to, the exam room once the exam has started unless they can be accompanied by an invigilator at all times while they are out of the exam room.
- Candidates who complete the exam early may leave the exam room up until the last 10 minutes, providing they do not disturb other candidates; no re-admission is permitted.
- Invigilators have no authority to comment upon, interpret, or express an opinion on any exam question.
- Any candidate who is suspected of misconduct will be advised to leave the exam room immediately.
- No exam question papers are to be removed from the exam room; candidates who fail to submit the question paper with their answer sheet will be deemed guilty of misconduct.

Remote invigilation exams

- Clear guidance on how to sit remotely invigilated exams and associated regulations will be given to applicable candidates in advance of their exam.

5.2 Candidates also agree to abide by the invigilator's instructions. Failure to do so may render a candidate's results invalid.

5.3 WSET reserves the right to permanently exclude candidates found guilty of misconduct from WSET qualifications.

5.4 Exam papers and answer sheets are the property of WSET and will not be returned to candidates.

6 Exam feedback, enquiries and appeals

6.1 Candidates who want to request an enquiry (re-mark) and/or feedback on their exam paper should contact their APP and ask for an Enquiry and Feedback form.

6.2 Any candidate dissatisfied with the result of an enquiry should contact the APP and request an Appeal form, which must be completed and returned to WSET, together with the appropriate fee, no more than 10 working days after notification of the enquiry decision. Appeals received outside this time frame will not be reviewed.

7 Candidate satisfaction

7.1 Should any candidate have concerns that their APP is not providing the service that they expect, or is behaving in a way that is inconsistent with the standards required in terms of administration, tuition or exams, they should first make a complaint with their APP. If this does not lead to a satisfactory resolution, candidates are asked to contact our Governance Team by emailing governance@wsetglobal.com. Please note that all complaints will be dealt with confidentially, but WSET cannot act on anonymous complaints.

8 General conduct

8.1 WSET has a reasonable expectation that its staff and those representing WSET at our APPs will be treated professionally and respectfully as they carry out their jobs. Inappropriate behaviour including verbal or physical abuse, persistent or unrealistic demands, or threats that cause stress to staff will be viewed as misconduct and may lead to permanent exclusion from WSET qualifications.

9 Exam regulations

9.1 WSET Awards reserves the right to add to or alter any of these regulations as it thinks fit.

5

WSET qualifications

WSET has a range of qualifications that cover wine, spirits, beer and sake. In full, the qualifications are:

WSET Level 1 Award in Beer

WSET Level 2 Award in Beer

WSET Level 1 Award in Sake (603/2051/5)

WSET Level 2 Award in Sake (610/3646/8)

WSET Level 3 Award in Sake (603/2066/7)

WSET Level 1 Award in Spirits (600/1501/9)

WSET Level 2 Award in Spirits (600/1507/X)

WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits

WSET Level 1 Award in Wines (600/1504/4)

WSET Level 2 Award in Wines (603/4432/5)

WSET Level 3 Award in Wines (601/6352/5)

WSET Level 4 Diploma in Wines

More information about these qualifications can be found on the WSET website: [wsetglobal.com](https://www.wsetglobal.com).

Regulation

WSET is recognised as an awarding organisation by Ofqual, the English regulator for qualifications and exams. Where applicable, the Ofqual accreditation numbers are listed next to the qualification titles above.

Diversity, equity and inclusion policy

WSET fully supports the principle of diversity, equity and inclusion and is responsible for ensuring that all candidates for its qualifications are treated fairly and on an equal basis. A copy of our diversity, equity and inclusion policy can be obtained from the Governance Team by emailing governance@wsetglobal.com.

WSET prizes

Candidates who have achieved outstanding marks in their exams may be eligible for a prize and will be contacted by WSET should this apply. For more details on the prizes available, please go to:

<https://www.wsetglobal.com/about-us/awards-bursaries/>



WSET
WINE & SPIRIT
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A world of knowledge

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