

**Hong Kong Wine Judges Association
Programme Board**

DEFINITIVE PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

for

**Vintage Wine Scholar
(VWS)**

SPECIFICATION

Version March 2025
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Table of Content

Table of Content	2
Introduction	3
Introduction to Vintage Wine Scholar	4
Qualification Aims:	4
Qualification Structure:	4
Recommended Study Time (RST) Guided Educational Hours (GEH)	5
Learning Outcome 1 : Analyze Factors Influencing Vintage Variation	6
Learning Outcome 2 : Evaluate Historical and Cultural Significance	8
Learning Outcome 3 : Conduct Sensory and Critical Evaluations	10
Learning Outcome 4 : Interpret Economic and Market Trends	12
Learning Outcome 5 : Develop Vintage Analysis Tools	14
Learning Outcome 6 : Develop Basic Knowledge about Wine Fraud	16
Learning Outcome 7 : Navigate Regulatory Frameworks	18
Learning Outcome 8 : Back Vintage Practical Skills	20
Examination Guidance	22
Examination Administration:	22
Assessment Method:	22
About the Vintage Wine Scholar (VWS) Examination	23
Sample Examination Questions	25
Examination Regulations	28
1 Entry Requirements	28
2 Format and Outcomes	29
3. Appropriate Modifications	30
4. Resits	31
5. Examination Conditions and Conduct	31
6 Examination Enquiries, Feedback, and Appeals	34
7. Candidate Satisfaction	34
8. Regulations of the HKWJA	34
About SOVY	35
About Hong Kong Wine Judges Association (HKWJA)	36

Introduction

The Vintage Wine Scholar (VWS) Programme is described in detail in the Outline, which includes all of the pertinent information for applicants.

A comprehensive statement of the learning outcomes for Vintage Wine Scholar is the primary component of the publication. Because the examination is designed to test these outcomes precisely, candidates should use them to plan their studies and SOVY should use them to develop learning programs. This is because the examination is especially designed to assess these outcomes.

The Specification also includes the requirements for the examination, example questions for the examination, and recommendations regarding the examination (including the weight of the content of the learning outcomes).

There is information regarding SOVY and the Hong Kong Wine Judges Association that can be found at the conclusion of this document.

Before enrolling in this program, we strongly recommend that you first successfully complete either the WSET Level 2 Award in Wines or the Court of Master Sommelier Introductory level.

Introduction to Vintage Wine Scholar

Qualification Aims:

The program aims to understand, analyse, and contextualise vintages in wine production, history, and appreciation. The qualification aims to deepen awareness of meteorological, geological, and viticultural elements that determine vintage variance in wine region like Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, and Napa Valley. Help scholars analyse wine quality and ageing potential by interpreting historical weather patterns, harvest records, and vintage charts. Explore how landmark vintages have shaped regional reputations, market trends, and worldwide wine culture. War and technology have affected vintage outcomes and customer perceptions. Encourage wine academics to investigate, write, or mentor to further vintage studies. Digital resources and networks for harvest reports and climate data can help track vintages.

Qualification Structure:

Learning Outcomes

In order to meet the qualification aims there are eight learning outcomes.

Learning Outcome 1	Analyze Factors Influencing Vintage Variation
Learning Outcome 2	Evaluate Historical and Cultural Significance
Learning Outcome 3	Conduct Sensory and Critical Evaluations
Learning Outcome 4	Interpret Economic and Market Trends
Learning Outcome 5	Develop Vintage Analysis Tools
Learning Outcome 6	Develop Basic Knowledge about Wine Fraud
Learning Outcome 7	Navigate Regulatory Frameworks

Learning Outcome 8	Back Vintage Practical Skills
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Recommended Study Time (RST) Guided Educational Hours (GEH)

RST is an estimation of the entire duration, quantified in hours, that a learner would typically require to demonstrate the requisite level of proficiency for the attainment of a certificate. It consists of GEH and private study periods. GEH encompasses all tutor-guided learning and supervised evaluations.

The RST for the Vintage Wine Scholar (VWS) is 28 hours in duration. This comprises 14.5 GEH, including 2 hours allocated for the examination, and 13.5 hours dedicated to private study.

Learning Outcome 1 : Analyze Factors Influencing Vintage Variation

Learning Outcome 1:

Analyze factors influencing vintage variation focusses on gaining a grasp of the factors that contribute to the annual variations in wine quality and style. The following is a list of examination criteria and factors that should be considered when determining one's level of proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Locate characteristics of vintage items and justify them with factors, identify and explain all of the important aspects, such as climate, soil, and viticulture.
2. "Interconnected Analysis": Show how different elements interact with one another (for example, vine stress is caused by conditions such as drought and inadequate soil drainage).
3. "Regional Application": Accurately analyse vintage variance in certain locations (for example, reason why 1955 Bordeaux reds are structured as opposed to 1959 opulence).
4. To conduct a critical evaluation, you should prioritise the factors that influence the outcome of a vintage (for example, heatwave in 2003 Bordeaux against the optimal growing season in 2010).
5. As part of your case study proficiency, you should make use of historical data and weather reports in order to validate your evaluations of legendary vintages.

Range of Factors

1. Climate & Weather:

- Macroclimate (regional) vs. mesoclimate (vineyard) vs. microclimate (grape cluster).
- Seasonal weather extremes (frost, hail, drought, heatwaves, rainfall timing).
- Growing season temperature, sunlight hours, and diurnal shifts.

2. Phenological Stages:

- Timing of budbreak, flowering, véraison, and harvest.
- Impact of weather disruptions (e.g., spring frosts, rain during flowering).

3. Soil & Topography:

- Soil composition (drainage, water retention, mineral content).
- Slope, elevation, and proximity to water bodies (moderating effects).

4. Viticultural Practices:

- Pruning, canopy management, irrigation, and yield adjustments.
- Organic/biodynamic adaptations to weather stress.

5. Disease/Pressure:

- Fungal diseases (mildew, botrytis) linked to humidity/rain.
- Pest outbreaks influenced by temperature.

6. Human Decisions:

- Harvest timing (balancing sugar, acid, tannin).
- Winemaking adaptations (e.g., whole-cluster fermentation in cool years).

7. Regional Case Studies:

- Compare regions with continental vs. maritime climates (e.g., Burgundy vs. Bordeaux).
- Historic vintages (e.g., 2005 Bordeaux, 2013 Burgundy) illustrating extremes.

8. Climate Change:

- Long-term shifts in growing seasons (earlier harvests, rising alcohol levels).

Learning Outcome 2 : Evaluate Historical and Cultural Significance

Learning Outcome 2:

Evaluate historical and cultural significance focuses on understanding how historical events, traditions, and cultural practices have shaped wine production, regional identity, and global perception. Below is the range of topics to study and assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Depth of Historical Knowledge:

- Accurately identify key historical events and explain their lasting impact on wine regions.

2. Cultural Impact Analysis:

- Analyze how cultural practices (e.g., festivals, religious use) shape wine styles or regional identity.

3. Contextualization of Legal/Classification Systems:

- Link appellation laws or classifications to cultural preservation (e.g., AOC protecting terroir identity).

4. Evaluation of Globalization:

- Assess how globalization has eroded or enriched traditional practices (e.g., New World techniques adopted in Europe).

5. Critical Thinking on Preservation:

- Critique efforts to revive heritage practices (e.g., qvevri winemaking) vs. modern market demands.

6. Case Study Application:

- Use specific examples (e.g., Prohibition's effect on U.S. winemaking) to illustrate broader trends.

Range of Factors

1. Historical Context:

- Key historical events impacting wine regions (e.g., phylloxera epidemic, World Wars, Prohibition).
- Role of ancient civilizations (Rome, Greece, monastic orders in medieval Europe).
- Colonial influences (e.g., Spanish missionaries in the Americas, French winemakers in Algeria).

2. Cultural Traditions:

- Wine in religion, rituals, and daily life (e.g., sacramental wine, Mediterranean "wine culture").
- Regional identity tied to wine (e.g., Port in Portugal, Champagne in France).
- Festivals, festivals, and folklore (e.g., Beaujolais Nouveau, Vendimia in Argentina).

3. Legal & Classification Systems:

- Development of appellations (AOC, DOC, AVA) and their cultural significance.
- Historic classifications (1855 Bordeaux, 1716 Chianti decree).
- Impact of EU wine regulations on traditional practices.

4. Influential Figures & Movements:

- Pioneers (Dom Pérignon, Baron de Rothschild) and modern innovators (Robert Mondavi).
- Movements like biodynamics, natural wine, and their cultural resonance.

5. Globalization & Market Shifts:

- Colonial trade routes (e.g., Madeira, Sherry).
- New World vs. Old World rivalry (1976 Judgment of Paris).
- Modern trends (organic wine, celebrity labels).

6. Preservation & Revival:

- UNESCO World Heritage vineyards (e.g., Lavaux, Douro Valley).
- Revival of indigenous grapes (e.g., Georgian qvevri wines, Nero d'Avola in Sicily).

Learning Outcome 3 : Conduct Sensory and Critical Evaluations

Learning Outcome 3:

Conduct sensory and critical evaluations focuses on developing the ability to analyze wine through systematic tasting, identify key sensory characteristics, and critically assess quality, typicality, and potential flaws. Below is the range of topics to study and assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Accuracy in Identification:

- Correctly identify sensory components (e.g., blackcurrant in Cabernet, wet stone in Chablis) and faults.

2. Articulation of Structure:

- Describe structural elements (acid, tannin, alcohol) and their balance/persistence.

3. Critical Judgment:

- Assess quality and typicality based on regional/style benchmarks.
- Differentiate between intentional stylistic choices and flaws.

4. Blind Tasting Proficiency:

- Accurately deduce grape, region, or vintage using sensory evidence (e.g., high acid + green apple = cool-climate Chardonnay).

5. Contextual Awareness:

- Explain how winemaking techniques (e.g., oak aging) or regional practices influence sensory outcomes.

6. Communication Skills:

- Write clear, structured tasting notes using standardized terminology.
- Justify scores or opinions with sensory evidence (e.g., "High tannins suggest extended maceration").

7. Fault Detection & Analysis:

- Diagnose common faults (e.g., identifying TCA vs. Brettanomyces) and propose causes.

Range of Factors

1. Sensory Analysis Framework:

- **Visual**: Clarity, color intensity/hue (e.g., purple vs. garnet in reds), viscosity (legs).
- **Aromatic**: Primary (fruit, floral), secondary (yeast, oak), tertiary (aging) aromas; fault detection (e.g., TCA cork taint, volatile acidity).
- **Palate**: Structure (acid, tannin, alcohol, body), flavor intensity, balance, finish.

2. Quality Assessment:

- Criteria for evaluating quality: complexity, balance, persistence, typicality.
- Differentiation between *faults* (e.g., Brettanomyces) and *style choices* (e.g., oxidative aging in Sherry).

3. Critical Evaluation:

- Assessing wine against regional benchmarks (e.g., Barolo's tar/roses vs. Brunello's cherry/tobacco).
- Identifying winemaking techniques (oak type, lees aging, carbonic maceration).

4. Wine Faults & Flaws:

- Common faults: Cork taint (TCA), reduction (sulfur compounds), oxidation, Brettanomyces.
- Contextualizing "acceptable" flaws (e.g., volatile acidity in Amarone).

5. Blind Tasting Skills:

- Deductive tasting to identify grape, region, vintage, and quality using sensory clues.
- Regional typicality (e.g., Riesling's petrol vs. Albariño's salinity).

6. Scoring Systems & Communication:

- Use of scales (e.g., 100-point, 20-point) and descriptive language (Wine & Spirit Education Trust [WSET] lexicon).
- Writing structured tasting notes for professionals vs. consumer

Learning Outcome 4 : Interpret Economic and Market Trends

Learning Outcome 4:

Interpret economic and market trends focuses on analyzing how economic forces, consumer behavior, and global market dynamics shape wine production, pricing, distribution, and consumption. Below is the range of topics to study and assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Data Interpretation:

- Analyze production/consumption statistics, import/export reports, and pricing trends.

2. Impact Analysis:

- Explain how tariffs, trade policies, or economic shocks disrupt markets (e.g., Chinese tariffs on Australian wine).

3. Consumer Insight Application:

- Link trends (e.g., premiumization) to shifts in marketing or production strategies.

4. Critical Evaluation of Markets:

- Compare regional strategies (e.g., Bordeaux's en primeur system vs. Napa's DTC focus).

5. Forecasting Skills:

- Predict market responses to events (e.g., climate-driven yield reductions affecting bulk wine prices).

6. Ethical & Sustainability Awareness:

- Assess the economic viability of sustainable practices (e.g., organic conversion costs).

7. Case Study Proficiency:

- Use real-world examples (e.g., Prosecco's success) to illustrate broader economic principles.

Range of Factors

1. Global Supply & Demand:

- Vineyard acreage trends (e.g., shrinking European plantings vs. New World expansion).
- Overproduction crises (e.g., EU wine lakes, Australia's 2020 surplus).
- Emerging markets (China, India) vs. mature markets (US, EU).

2. Trade Policies & Tariffs:

- Impact of tariffs (e.g., US-China trade war, Australian wine tariffs in China).
- Trade agreements (e.g., EU-South America Mercosur, Brexit's effect on UK-EU wine trade).

3. Consumer Trends:

- Premiumization vs. bulk wine decline.
- Sustainability-driven purchases (organic, biodynamic, lightweight bottles).
- Generational shifts (Millennial/Gen Z preferences for rosé, natural wine).

4. Distribution Channels:

- Rise of e-commerce/DTC (direct-to-consumer) sales.
- Traditional three-tier system challenges (US) vs. supermarket dominance (Europe).
- Luxury wine auctions and investment markets (e.g., Bordeaux en primeur).

5. Economic Crises & Resilience:

- Recession impacts (e.g., 2008 downturn affecting luxury sales).
- COVID-19 pandemic shifts (e.g., on-trade collapse, off-trade/online growth).

6. Regional Market Dynamics:

- Old World reliance on exports (e.g., France, Italy) vs. New World domestic consumption (e.g., Argentina, South Africa).
- Monopolies/oligopolies (e.g., Gallo, LVMH) vs. boutique producers.

7. Climate Change Economics:

- Costs of adaptation (frost protection, drought-resistant rootstocks).
- Insurance premiums and risk management in volatile vintages.

8. Marketing & Branding:

- Role of critics/scores (e.g., Robert Parker's influence on Bordeaux pricing).
- Social media's impact on trends (e.g., #OrangeWine, celebrity endorsements).

Learning Outcome 5 : Develop Vintage Analysis Tools

Learning Outcome 5:

Develop vintage analysis tools focuses on building and applying methodologies, frameworks, and technologies to systematically assess and predict vintage quality, marketability, and aging potential. Below is the range of topics to study and assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Tool Development:

- Design frameworks (e.g., scoring systems, predictive models) tailored to specific regions or goals.

2. Data Accuracy & Relevance:

- Select appropriate data sources (e.g., satellite vs. ground sensors for drought analysis).

3. Methodological Rigor:

- Justify statistical methods (e.g., regression analysis for heatwave impacts).

4. Technological Proficiency:

- Demonstrate use of GIS, AI, or blockchain tools in vintage analysis.

5. Critical Evaluation:

- Identify limitations of tools (e.g., AI's inability to capture terroir nuance).

6. Market Application:

- Link vintage analysis to pricing or distribution strategies (e.g., 2019 Napa fires affecting insurance premiums).

Range of Factors

1. Data Sources & Collection:

- Climate/weather databases (e.g., NOAA, Météo-France).
- Historical vintage charts (e.g., Bordeaux, Burgundy).
- Winery production records (yield, harvest dates, fermentation logs).

2. Analytical Frameworks:

- Statistical models (correlating weather data to wine quality).
- Predictive tools for aging potential (e.g., tannin/acid analytics).
- Regional benchmarking (comparing vintages against historical averages).

3. Technological Tools:

- GIS mapping (vineyard site analysis, soil moisture tracking).
- AI/ML applications (predicting vintage outcomes from climate trends).
- Blockchain for traceability (vintage authenticity, supply chain transparency).

4. Vintage Scoring Systems:

- Critic scoring (e.g., Wine Advocate, Vinous) vs. regional classifications (e.g., Bordeaux's 1er Cru).
- Developing custom scoring matrices (weighting factors like heat units, rainfall).

5. Market Forecasting Tools:

- Pricing models (e.g., en primeur valuations, auction trends).
- Demand prediction (e.g., impact of high-scoring vintages on exports).

6. Ethical & Practical Limitations:

- Bias in data collection (e.g., overreliance on critic scores).
- Climate change uncertainty in long-term predictions.

Learning Outcome 6 : Develop Basic Knowledge about Wine Fraud

Learning Outcome 6:

Develop basic knowledge about wine fraud focuses on understanding the types, methods, and impacts of wine fraud, as well as strategies for detection, prevention, and ethical compliance. Below is the range of topics to study and assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Fraud Identification:
 - Recognize common fraud types (counterfeiting vs. adulteration) and their red flags.
2. Detection Proficiency:
 - Explain laboratory methods (e.g., isotope ratio analysis) and provenance verification.
3. Legal & Regulatory Knowledge:
 - Summarize appellation laws and penalties relevant to fraud prevention.
4. Prevention Strategy Application:
 - Propose solutions (e.g., blockchain, tamper-proof labels) for specific fraud risks.
5. Ethical Evaluation:
 - Critique the impact of fraud on industry trust and consumer safety.
6. Case Study Analysis:
 - Dissect historic fraud cases to identify vulnerabilities and lessons learned.

Range of Factors

1. Types of Wine Fraud:
 - **Counterfeiting**: Fake labels, bottles, or provenance (e.g., Refill, Recreate, Unicorn).
 - **Adulteration**: Adding unauthorized substances (e.g., sugar, dyes, diethylene glycol in the 1985 Austrian scandal).

- **Mislabeling**: False claims about origin, vintage, or grape variety (e.g., non-Champagne labeled as Champagne).

2. Detection Methods:

- Laboratory analysis (isotope testing, chemical composition checks).
- Provenance research (bottle serial numbers, import/export records).
- Technology tools (blockchain traceability, UV light for label authentication).

3. Historic & Modern Fraud Cases:

- Rudy Kurniawan's counterfeit fine wines (2000s).
- The 1973 "Château Pétrus" bulk wine scam.
- Fake rare Burgundy bottles (e.g., Domaine de la Romanée-Conti).

4. Legal Frameworks:

- Appellation laws (e.g., EU Protected Designation of Origin [PDO], AVA in the US).
- Penalties for fraud (fines, imprisonment, loss of licensure).
- Role of organizations like INTERPOL, Wine Fraud Unit, and ISO 22000 (food safety).

5. Prevention Strategies:

- Secure packaging (tamper-proof capsules, holograms).
- Blockchain and QR codes for supply chain transparency.
- Educating consumers and professionals (e.g., WSET's anti-fraud modules).

6. Ethical Implications:

- Erosion of consumer trust in the wine industry.
- Balancing rarity/price with accessibility and transparency.

7. Case Studies:

- The 2014 "Fake Napoleon Cognac" scam.
- Italian "Brunellopoli" scandal (2008: blending non-Sangiovese grapes).

Learning Outcome 7: Navigate Regulatory Frameworks

Learning Outcome 7:

Navigate regulatory frameworks focuses on understanding and applying the legal, ethical, and procedural standards governing wine production, labeling, trade, and compliance across global markets. Below is the structured range of topics and assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Regulatory Knowledge:
 - Identify key regulations (e.g., TTB labeling rules, EU PDO requirements).
2. Practical Application:
 - Design a compliant wine label for a target market (e.g., EU vs. US).
 - Analyze production methods for adherence to organic certification standards.
3. Analytical Skills:
 - Evaluate case studies (e.g., Brexit's impact on UK-EU wine trade) to identify compliance challenges.
4. Problem-Solving:
 - Propose solutions for navigating tariffs or export documentation hurdles.
5. Ethical Judgment:
 - Critique the balance between marketing claims and regulatory compliance.
6. Adaptability:
 - Update compliance strategies in response to new regulations (e.g., climate policies).

Range of Factors

1. Global Regulatory Systems:
 - ****Old World vs. New World Regulations****: AOC (France), DOC/G (Italy), PDO/PGI (EU), AVA/TTB (US).
 - ****International Bodies****: OIV (International Organisation of Vine and Wine), WWTG (World Wine Trade Group).

2. Labeling Compliance:

- Mandatory elements (alcohol content, origin, vintage, health warnings).
- Prohibited claims (misleading terms, unauthorized geographical indications).

3. Production Standards:

- Additives (sulfites, coloring agents) and processing methods (organic/biodynamic certifications).
- Sustainability and ethical practices (Fair Trade, carbon footprint regulations).

4. Trade and Export Laws:

- Tariffs, import/export documentation (certificates of origin, phytosanitary certificates).
- Impact of geopolitical shifts (Brexit, US-China trade agreements).

5. Certifications and Compliance:

- Organic, biodynamic, vegan, and ISO 22000 (food safety) certifications.
- Audits, inspections, and penalties for non-compliance.

6. Anti-Fraud Measures:

- Provenance tracking (blockchain, QR codes), anti-counterfeiting laws.
- Case studies (e.g., Rudy Kurniawan fraud, Brunellopoli scandal).

7. Emerging Trends:

- Digital tools for compliance management (software, AI-driven analytics).
- Climate-driven regulations (water usage, pesticide bans).

8. Ethical and Legal Considerations:

- Truth-in-labeling laws, marketing ethics, labor practices.

Learning Outcome 8 : Back Vintage Practical Skills

Learning Outcome 8:

Back vintage practical skills focuses on developing hands-on expertise in assessing, storing, and managing back vintages (older or rare wines) for collectors, auctions, or wine programs. Below is the range of topics and assessment criteria for evaluating proficiency:

Assessment Criteria

1. Provenance Authentication:
 - Accurately verify a bottle's history using labels, capsules, and documentation.
2. Condition Grading:
 - Assess fill levels, cork integrity, and label condition to grade wine quality.
3. Storage Competency:
 - Identify SPOT process to manage vintage wine.
4. Tasting Proficiency:
 - Identify aged wine characteristics (e.g., tertiary aromas, resolved tannins) and flaws.
5. Practical Case Studies:
 - How to use Ah So / Durand / Port Tong correctly.
6. Practical Problem-Solving:
 - Propose solutions for restoring or reselling compromised back vintages.

Range of Factors

1. Provenance Verification:
 - Authenticating labels, capsules, and bottle formats (e.g., verifying Bordeaux bottle shapes by era).
 - Assessing cellar records, import stamps, and auction house certifications.
2. Condition Assessment:
 - Identifying ullage (fill levels) and cork condition.

- Detecting signs of damage (label wear, leakage, oxidation).
- Using tools like UV lights to spot counterfeit labels or bottle inconsistencies.

3. Storage & Cellar Management:

- Identify SPOT process to manage vintage wine.
- Optimal storage conditions (temperature, humidity, light control).
- Mitigating risks (vibration, temperature fluctuations).

4. Tasting & Valuation:

- Evaluating aging potential (balance of acid, tannin, fruit).
- Recognizing flaws (maderization, cork taint) vs. desirable bottle evolution.
- Pricing based on provenance, condition, and market demand.

5. Practical Case Studies:

- How to use Ah So / Durand / Port Tong correctly.
- How to tell the filled level and condition
- Identify Vintage Wine Colour

6. Restoration & Handling:

- Recorking techniques for aged wines.
- Safe decanting of fragile vintages (e.g., sediment management).

Examination Guidance

Examination Administration:

The SOVY Wine Centre is the one responsible for giving examinations. The HKWJA policies and procedures that are outlined in the Examination Handbook must be adhered to throughout the SOVY process.

Assessment Method:

Examining candidates for the VINTAGE WINE SCHOLAR is done through a closed-book test that consists of fifty questions with multiple-choice answers and ONE glass of wine which need to open by candidate with Ah So / Durand Vintage Wine Opener for tasting examination and must be finished within 2 hours in both the theory (Unit 1) and the tasting (Unit 2) examination.

All of the questions on the examination are derived from the learning outcomes that have been published that is necessary to answer these questions. In order to be successful, an applicant must achieve a passing grade of at least 50 percent in both the theory (Unit 1) and the tasting (Unit 2) examination.

About the Vintage Wine Scholar (VWS) Examination

The Vintage Wine Scholar test consists of a total of 60 scores, divided between the theoretical (Unit 1) and tasting (Unit 2) components.

Unit 1: Theory Examination

The Vintage Wine Scholar examination comprises 50 multiple-choice questions.

Every question possesses a singular proper response. The examination proctor will provide comprehensive instructions for completing the answer sheet on the day of the exam. Each accurately answered multiple-choice question is valued at one mark. All Vintage Wine Scholar assessment papers are meticulously curated to align with the Learning Outcomes content. A chart providing a comprehensive analysis of the examination weighting is presented below.

Learning Outcome	Multiple-Choice Questions (1 mark per question)
1	10
2	10
3	4
4	4
5	4
6	10
7	4
8	4
TOTAL	50

Unit 2: Tasting Examination

The tasting examination occupied 10 scores assesses Learning Outcome 2 AND 8. It will be internally set and marked by a HKWJA Internal Assessor using an assessment brief provided by HKWJA. The results will be verified by HKWJA.

The examination will consist of ONE blind wine which need to open by candidate with Ah So / Durand Vintage Wine Opener and will assess a candidate's ability to accurately describe a wine's vintage and analyze the level of wine based on these observations. The tasting and theory examination must achieve a passing grade of at least 50 percent which is 30 scores.

A chart providing a comprehensive analysis of the examination weighting is presented below.

Practical Exam Total 10 Scores:	Scores
The Fill Level of Vintage Wine e.g. (-3cm / Mid Shoulder)	2
Vintage Range e.g. (1970 - 1979)	2
Exactly Vintage e.g. (1976)	2
Any wine fault? (Yes / No) Only focus on Trichloroanisole (TCA)	2
Which Country of this wine? e.g. (France) No need to answer sub-region	2

Sample Examination Questions

A total of five example examination questions are included in this section for the purpose of providing applicants with an idea of the types of questions that may be expected of them.

You will be asked fifty questions that are quite similar to these on the examination.

1. What major historical incidents occurred in 1976 affect the wine industry?
 - a. The Judgement of Japanese Wine
 - b. The Crisis of Phylloxera
 - c. The Judgement of Paris (Wine)
 - d. The Project of Mission Grape

Correct Answer: C

The Paris Wine Tasting of 1976, also known as the Judgment of Paris, was a wine competition, to commemorate the United States Bicentennial, organized in Paris on 24 May 1976 by Steven Spurrier, a British wine merchant, and his American colleague, Patricia Gallagher, in which French oenophiles participated in two blind tasting comparisons: one of top-quality Chardonnays and another of red wines (Bordeaux wines from France and Cabernet Sauvignon wines from California). A Napa County wine was rated best in each category, which caused surprise as France was generally regarded as being the foremost producer of the world's best wines.

2. Which of the following is MOST likely to cause significant vintage variation in a cool-climate wine region like Burgundy?
 - a. Consistent summer rainfall
 - b. A heatwave during véraison
 - c. Stable diurnal temperature shifts
 - d. Low mineral content in soils

Correct Answer: B

The heatwaves during the ripening process, known as véraison, can hasten the accumulation of sugar and disrupt the retention of acid, so significantly affecting the character of wine.

3. Which tool is MOST effective for tracking soil moisture variations across a vineyard?

- a. Blockchain
- b. GIS mapping
- c. En primeur data
- d. Vintage charts

Correct Answer: B

GIS integrates spatial data to monitor soil conditions.

4. Which method is MOST reliable for detecting wine adulteration?

- a. Label inspection
- b. Isotope ratio mass spectrometry (IRMS)
- c. UV light scanning
- d. Social media reviews

Correct Answer: B

IRMS analyzes chemical isotopes to identify unauthorized additives.

5. Which one is not the legendary vintage in Bordeaux?

- a. 1961
- b. 1959
- c. 2000
- d. 2003

Correct Answer: D

1961: A historic year, especially for wine in Bordeaux. Post-war scarcity and perfect weather yielded concentrated, long-lived wines. Considered a classic benchmark.

1959: Exceptional balance, elegant and creating structured, age-worthy wines with perfect.

2000: The "Millennium Vintage". Consistent excellence across all sub-regions, offering balance and structure.

2003: One of the most controversial and atypical years in recent history, marked by an extreme heatwave.

Examination Regulations

1 Entry Requirements

1.1 Eligibility Rules

1.1.1 Candidates who wish to take the examination must either be over the age of the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country in which the examination is being held, or they must be preparing for the examination as part of a recognised full-time program of study, or they must have obtained consent from their parents or legal guardians.

1.1.2 The Vintage Wine Scholar program does not impose any restrictions on applicants based on whether or not they have overlaps with other requirements or sections of qualifications.

1.1.3 The candidates who are under the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country where the examination is being held, as well as those who choose not to taste alcohol for reasons related to their health or religion, will not be permitted to sample any alcoholic beverage as part of their course. These candidates will not be able to participate in the evaluation for Unit 2 of the Vintage Wine Scholar Examination until they have completed the assessment.

In these kinds of situations, candidates will be given a record of achievement upon successfully completing Unit 1, but they will not be awarded the qualification of Vintage Wine Scholar.

1.2 Recommended prior learning

1.2.1 Completion of the WSET Level 2 Award in Wines or an equivalent level of experience is recommended for entry to the VintageWine Scholar Program.

Candidates who believe they have a sufficiently good understanding of the subjects covered by the Level 2 Award in Wines are advised to consult their prospective tutor 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 6.0 or above or be able to demonstrate an equivalent ability level.

1.2.3 Candidates sitting in other languages should have an equivalent level of literacy in the language used for the examination.

2 Format and Outcomes

Candidates must successfully complete a closed-book examination consisting of two units.

Unit 1: An Examination of Theory

- Fifty multiple-choice enquiries

Unit 2: A sensory evaluation conducted by a blind tasting of a single wine

Both examinations must be finished within two hours. A minimum score of 50 percent is necessary to attain a passing grade overall.

Candidates must attain an overall passing score to be awarded the Vintage Wine Scholar designation.

Results are graded as follows:

Aggregate mark of between 95% and 100%	First Class Honours
Aggregate mark of between 80% and 94%	Second Class Honours
Aggregate mark of between 65% and 79%	Third Class Honours
Aggregate mark of between 50% and 64%	Pass
Aggregate mark of between 40% and 50%	Fail
Aggregate mark of 40% and below	Fail unclassified

HKWJA retains the authority to modify the grading algorithms and grade thresholds stated above.

3. Appropriate Modifications

3.1 Examination applicants with unique examination needs, substantiated by independent written evaluation, must inform the examinations officer at SOVY of their requirements upon enrolling. Additional guidance for examination officers and applicants is accessible from HKWJA as needed.

3.2 HKWJA's policy stipulates that such applicants must not be disadvantaged in the examinations.

Candidates must notify SOVY or HKWJA of any such necessity at the time of enrolment.

4. Resits

4.1 Candidates may request to resit the examination if they do not achieve a passing score. No restrictions exist on the number of attempts permitted.

4.2 Candidates who have successfully completed the examination are allowed to retake it to enhance their mark.

4.3 Resit cost is HKD\$980 including Unit 1 and 2.

5. Examination Conditions and Conduct

5.1 Candidates must consent to the following specified requirements for entry into the closed-book test.

- All applicants must present photographic identification to the invigilator at the commencement of the examination.
- All examination responses must be composed in the language of the examination paper.
- The examination must be finished within the allotted time.
- After the invigilator has confirmed that examination conditions are established, candidates are prohibited from any kind of contact until they exit the examination room or the invigilator announces the conclusion of the examination.
- Candidates are permitted to possess just the following items during the examination: tasting glasses, a spittoon, pens, pencils, erasers, drinking water, and a small handbag or shoulder bag, provided it contains solely personal belongings.

- Candidates are forbidden from photographing the examination room or examination materials.
- Candidates are prohibited from wearing perfume, aftershave lotion, or any other potent fragrance during tasting examinations.
- The utilisation of any electronic gadgets is forbidden.
- Mobile phones are prohibited on the examination desk; they must be powered off and concealed from view.
- The utilisation of any type of dictionaries is forbidden.
- The utilisation of audible alarms on any clock or watch is forbidden.
- Candidates are prohibited from exiting the room until 15 minutes of the examination period have passed.
- Candidates arriving after the designated start time will be prohibited from taking the examination if any other candidate has already exited.
- Candidates arriving late may be permitted in at the invigilator's discretion, provided that the integrity of other candidates is not compromised. Typically, candidates arriving more than 30 minutes after the designated start time would not be permitted to commence the examination.
- Candidates are prohibited from exiting and re-entering the examination room once the examination has commenced, unless accompanied by an invigilator at all times throughout their absence.

- Candidates who finish the examination early may exit the examination room until the last 15 minutes, provided they do not disrupt other candidates; re-admission is not allowed.
- Invigilators lack the authority to remark on, interpret, or express opinions regarding any examination question.
- Any applicant suspected of misbehaviour will be instructed to exit the examination room immediately, and their examination paper will be sent to the Examination Panel for validity assessment.
- Examination question papers must not be removed from the examination room; candidates who do not present the question paper along with their answer sheet will be considered guilty of misconduct.
- Candidates are forbidden from disclosing the content of examination papers to anyone or reproducing it in any manner.

5.2 Candidates shall also comply with the Invigilator's directives. Neglecting to comply may invalidate a candidate's findings.

5.3 Examination papers and answer sheets are the property of HKWJA and will not be returned to candidates.

5.4 HKWJA retains the authority to permanently disqualify candidates adjudged guilty of misbehaviour from Vintage Wine Scholar qualifications.

6 Examination Enquiries, Feedback, and Appeals

6.1 Candidates seeking an inquiry (re-mark) and/or feedback on their examination paper may contact HKWJA to receive an Inquiry and Feedback Form.

6.2 Any candidate dissatisfied with the outcome of an examination paper inquiry should contact the HKWJA to request an Appeal against Enquiry Application Form. This form must be completed and submitted to HKWJA, along with the requisite fee, within 10 working days of receiving notification of the inquiry decision. Appeals submitted beyond this timeframe will not be considered.

7. Candidate Satisfaction

7.1 If any candidate has concerns that the SOVY Platform is not delivering the expected service or is acting contrary to the required standards of administration, tuition, or examinations, they should initially address this with HKWJA. If this does not result in a satisfactory resolution, candidates should contact our Quality Assurance Team at info@hkwja.com. All concerns will be addressed confidentially; however, HKWJA cannot respond to anonymous complaints.

8. Regulations of the HKWJA

8.1 HKWJA retains the authority to modify or add to any of these regulations in accordance with its professional judgement.

About SOVY



Sovy was founded in 2015 and was originally a Chinese wine review app with wine label recognition function.

In 2017, Sovy began to pilot a small order service in Europe in response to user feedback, which was the prototype of the old wine market.

Starting from 2019, we stepped up our efforts and established a branch in the Netherlands to operate our exclusive wine logistics to support two air shipments to Hong Kong per month.

In 2021, the Old Wine Market already has more than 20,000 options, with wine merchants from France, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium.

In 2024, the Old Wine Experience Center in Sha Tin will be officially opened and begin shipping orders from Taiwan.

SOVY uphold the spirit of promoting aged wine and are committed to promoting the culture of old wine in Asia. Through articles sharing aged wine skills, aged wine tasting workshops, aged wine direct delivery ordering services from Europe, etc., we are able to fill in the gaps for appreciating the beauty of wine.

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About Hong Kong Wine Judges Association (HKWJA)



The Hong Kong Wine Judges Association (HKWJA) is a non-profit entity committed to advancing wine knowledge and appreciation in Hong Kong and abroad.

Founded in 2010, the group has evolved into a reputable and important entity within the wine community. The HKWJA, with a broad and seasoned membership, is dedicated to promoting wine education, judging, and communication.

Membership in the HKWJA is available to people with a fervour for wine and an eagerness to enhance their knowledge thereof. Candidates must successfully complete a stringent admission examination that evaluates their oenological knowledge and taste proficiency to gain membership. Membership advantages encompass access to special wine events, educational seminars, and networking possibilities.

The HKWJA provides various educational and training programs to enhance members' wine knowledge and tasting abilities. These events encompass workshops, seminars, and tastings conducted by seasoned wine specialists and instructors. The organisation moreover promotes members to obtain wine certifications and graduate degrees to augment their proficiency.

The HKWJA conducts multiple wine contests and events annually, such as the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Competition and the Hong Kong Wine & Spirits Fair. These events offer members the chance to demonstrate their talents and knowledge while networking with fellow wine experts and aficionados.

Hong Kong Wine Judges Association (HKWJA)

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