The Institute of Masters of Wine
Promoting excellence, interaction and learning across the global wine community.
Established 1955

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As the current Chairman I am delighted to introduce the Institute of Masters of Wine (IMW) and our Master of Wine (MW) study programme. The IMW is a not-for-profit membership organisation – our mission is to promote excellence, interaction and learning across the global wine community, and the MW study programme is an important part of our activities.

This prospectus will guide you through the prerequisites to join the study programme and each of the three stages.

The examinations to become a Master of Wine are challenging; testing all aspects of the art and science of wine and require strong written communication skills, in-depth wine knowledge and tasting ability.

On joining the MW study programme you will become part of our community and be guided by Masters of Wine and our executive team; we must stress however that this is a self-directed study programme. Being part of the programme is an enriching experience as you deepen your knowledge and understanding of wine. At the same time, you will be meeting and developing relationships with fellow students, Masters of Wine and other wine professionals.

I hope that you will find this prospectus informative and that it will give you a better understanding of the IMW. My personal view is that the wine trade more than ever needs highly skilled wine professionals, as it battles against increasing competition and even more complexity as the global markets constantly evolve.

Whether you decide to apply to join the programme or not, I wish you every success in your wine career.

Adrian Garforth MW
Chairman
“The Master of Wine has made me a more rigorous global wine professional with the ability to identify problems, analyse issues and present solutions at every tier within the wine industry. It has also made me an exacting, detailed and skilled taster. Analysing quality and commercial positioning with only what’s in the glass is a crucial issue for the trade.”

Jennifer Simonetti-Bryan MW

Why study for the MW?

Master of Wine is the most prestigious title in the world of wine. What started more than 65 years ago as a qualification for the UK wine trade is now held by a global family of more than 380 Masters of Wine (MWs), in 30 countries.

The membership encompasses winemakers, buyers, shippers, business owners, retailers, academics, sommeliers, wine educators, writers, journalists and more.

Becoming a Master of Wine means entry into a unique wine community, dedicated to promoting excellence, interaction and learning. One that brings deeply rewarding personal and professional opportunities, but also lifelong friendships with your fellow Members. It could mean constant travel and media appearances, if that’s what you want. Alternatively, it could mean putting down roots as a winemaker and producing the finest expression of the particular piece of terroir that you’ve chosen.

Our Members run businesses across the globe, and produce award-winning wines, books, films, journalism, and television.

Doors open to Masters of Wine. It is not just the obvious advantage that the initials ‘MW’ give you in a job interview. Masters of Wine are asked to judge at wine competitions all over the world; to lecture on wine courses; to lead tastings; to sample and assess some of the world’s finest private cellars.

However, being a Master of Wine isn’t just about taking advantage of the opportunities that are on offer to Members of the IMW. It’s about offering those opportunities to others.
What is the study programme?

To become a Master of Wine, you must pass the IMW’s study programme. The study programme comprises the stage 1 assessment (S1A) and the three parts of the Master of Wine examination (the stage 2 theory and practical examinations, and the stage 3 research paper).

The IMW offers a self-directed study programme, which aims to assist with preparation for the MW assessments and examinations. It is the student who ensures that they are fully prepared in all aspects of the examination.

However, the journey to becoming a Master of Wine is not a lonely one. You will be assigned a Master of Wine as your mentor to help you along the way. You will have plenty of opportunities to meet your fellow students at residential seminars and course days, as well as Masters of Wine and other industry leaders. In addition the IMW actively encourages the formation of study groups amongst students so you can support and learn from each other.

“While my career was already going well, after earning the MW qualification I was promoted to a director position and received a significant increase in salary.”

Nicholas Paris MW
What does the study programme offer?

As an MW student you will have access to the following:

• An annual residential seminar, offering a variety of lectures, workshops and tasting sessions. You may attend in the USA, Australasia or Europe.

• Tailor-made course days.

• Mentor support from a Master of Wine assigned by the IMW.

• Assessments in the form of the assignment marking schemes for which feedback is provided. These include both theory and practical assignments, which are centrally set, marked and evaluated by MWs.

• Access to the student area of the IMW’s website, which contains important information resources and videos.

• Examination resources including past papers and examiners’ reports and videos.

• A student guide, giving advice on the MW study programme.

• Discounted tickets for IMW events. Tastings and seminars are invaluable sources of information providing unparalleled opportunities to taste across vintages, styles or regions, often with world experts.

• The chance to apply to join MW student visits and trips. Recent visits have included visiting the wineries of Margaret River, Lebanon, Napa Valley, Porto, Bordeaux and Burgundy.

“Becoming an MW is just the starting point of a uniquely privileged experience, being a trusted fellow of many of the most respected and interesting wine personalities in the world. The feeling of belonging to that society is great.”

Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW
How long is the study programme?

The minimum time is three years.

In practice, most students take longer either to take a break during their studies, to refine tasting skills or to re-take examinations. There are set time limits and timeframes stipulated by the study programme, but there is also some flexibility. You can take a year off from your studies if needed.

Where can I study?

You are free to study the programme anywhere in the world, but you will be formally linked to one of three centres: Australasia, Europe and North America.

In practice this means you will need to travel to one of the centres to attend course days and the residential seminar.

Parts of the Australasian programme are delivered in Adelaide, Sydney (Australia), and Hong Kong. The European programme is delivered in Rust (Austria), Bordeaux (France), Berkshire and London (UK). Parts of the North American programme are delivered in San Francisco, Napa Valley, New York City and Washington DC (USA).

You are free to choose which centre you wish to be linked to. It is possible to change between study centres from one year to another. You can sit the stage 1 assessment (S1A) and the MW examination in any of the centres regardless of where you have attended the seminar.
Seminars and course days

Seminars and course days are not only crucial learning events – they are also useful social and networking opportunities.

**Seminars:** The residential seminar is planned and run by Masters of Wine. It is the core building element of the first and second stage of the study programme, and attendance is compulsory.

The stage 1 seminar is five days in length and includes a variety of classes covering both theory and practical sessions.

The lectures, workshops, tasting and theory tutorials aim to cover as wide a range of topics as possible.

The stage 2 seminar is also five days in length, and offers intensive preparation for the examination, including mock exams.

Seminars aim to include hands-on and practical sessions, such as winery or vineyard visits, marketing workshops, and plenary type lectures from renowned industry leaders.

**Course days:** These are always tutored by a Master of Wine and aim to provide continuity throughout the academic year. They combine practical tutored tastings and theory sessions and help you to maintain momentum, gain inspiration and develop yourself.
Trips and events

The IMW organises trips for students, which are generally hosted – and subsidised – by trade bodies and supporters.

Over the years, groups of students have been treated to exceptional hospitality in most wine producing regions of the world, with a level of VIP access that would be the envy of anyone with an interest in wine.

Recent student trips have included visits to the châteaux and vineyards of Bordeaux and Burgundy in France, the producers and port houses in Porto and the Douro Valley in Portugal, and to the wineries of California and Napa. There have also been technical visits to bottling plants and wine closure facilities in the US and Europe, and institutional visits to universities and research centres such as the Australian Wine Research Institute, Geisenheim University in Germany, and Plumpton College in the UK.

The IMW also runs a full events calendar, including international symposia, which take place every four years. You are given a substantial discount to all IMW events. Many of the world’s most respected producers bring their wines to IMW events, in the knowledge that they will be presenting to an audience with a serious understanding of their product.

Events are another chance to meet Masters of Wine, often in informal social settings.
Bursaries and scholarships

MW students are given opportunities to apply for bursaries and scholarships, which often include a travel component.

In the last few years these have come from organisations such as AXA Millésimes, Lallemand, the Spanish Foundation for Wine Culture (La Fundacion para la Cultura del Vino – FCV), Constellation Brands, Napa Wine Academy, and VdP.

Study groups

The MW is a self-directed study programme where individual determination, self-motivation and perseverance are essential. It is also indispensable for you to form study and tasting groups in order to share your knowledge and expertise, and learn from others.

Candidates in the MW student body come from a broad range of professional backgrounds in wine, with different areas of expertise and experiences, and from many different markets around the world.

MW students worldwide create study groups for both the theory and practical parts of the programme – many of which are virtual.
Mentors

The IMW provides you with an MW mentor for the academic year. The mentor role is principally that of a non-judgemental adviser who can give support, insight and guidance, and also challenge assumptions and opinions.

Masters of Wine mentor students voluntarily. They share their experience and insight in order to assist you in preparing for the exams. Mentors are not expected to mark essays or tasting papers, but some may offer to do so. This will vary from mentor to mentor.

The IMW will try to allocate mentors within close geographical proximity to students where possible.

“You would assume that the world changes for you when you become a Master of Wine, but it changes at the moment when you go from becoming a competent student to realising you are good enough to pass.”

Pierpaolo Petrassi MW
Stage 1

This is the foundation stage. For most students it is their first serious interaction with the IMW. It’s also an opportunity to meet Masters of Wine in professional and social settings, as well as fellow students.

Stage 1 involves a five-day residential seminar, and four non-residential course days. You are also able to submit up to six pieces of work for assessment during the year, for which you will receive feedback from a Master of Wine.

The culmination of this stage is the stage 1 assessment (S1A), which takes place in early June in London, San Francisco or Adelaide. It involves one 12-wine blind tasting paper and two theory essays.

Progression to stage 2 of the study programme is dependent on success in the S1A.
Stage 2

Stage 2 is a crucial time as you work towards taking the first two parts of the examination.

Stage 2 involves a five-day residential seminar, and four non-residential course days. You are expected to submit at least six pieces of work for assessment during the year for which you will receive feedback from a Master of Wine.

The culmination of stage 2 is the closed book part of the MW examination (theory and practical), which takes place in early June. Progression to the research paper (RP) depends on passing both the theory and practical parts of the examination.

“Becoming a Master of Wine has meant as much, if not more, to my personal life as my professional life. I have developed some beautiful lifelong friendships, with like minded people, who are infinitely curious about the world of wine!”

Amy Christine MW
The examination

The MW examination was first held in 1953 and has been set every year since. It is designed to test the breadth and depth of your theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the art, science and business of wine.

The standard of the examination remains as rigorous today as it was in 1953, when only six out of the 21 candidates passed. Each year the questions are set by a panel of MWs and marked by MWs who are leading figures in the world of wine.

The exam consists of three parts:

**Theory (stage 2)** – five papers on: viticulture, vinification and pre-bottling procedures, the handling of wine, the business of wine and contemporary issues. Theory papers can be written in a student’s native language.

**Practical (stage 2)** – three 12-wine blind tastings in which wines must be assessed for variety, origin, commercial appeal, winemaking, quality and style. Practical papers must be written in English.

**The research paper (stage 3)** – this is an individual project on a topic chosen by the candidate, resulting in a piece of work of between 6,000 and 10,000 words. Research papers must be written in English.

The theory and practical exams are conducted in three centres: London (UK), Adelaide (Australia) and San Francisco (USA).
The research paper

The final stage of the MW study programme is dedicated to the research paper (RP). Only candidates who have passed the theory and practical parts of the examination can start work on their RP.

The RP is an individual piece of work of between 6,000 and 10,000 words in length. You may propose wine-related topics from any area of the sciences, arts, humanities, social sciences or any other discipline. You also have the freedom to choose the way that you explore your topic, as long as it enables you to provide a rigorous interpretation of the subject and it makes a contribution to the understanding of the world of wine.

The IMW provides you with preparatory workshops on the RP throughout the study programme, well before you start work on your own research.

The RP process also involves a pool of MW advisors. Each of these advisors will be both a mentor and an examiner at various times. This allows for clarity and transparency of requirements and standards.

Only after successfully completing all three stages of the exam is someone eligible for membership of the IMW. Membership of the IMW and abiding by its code of conduct confers the right to the use of the title Master of Wine, or its abbreviated form (MW) after the name.

“Professionally, the two letters after my name are shorthand for knowledge, experience, quality, integrity and the highest of standards. It has set me on my path, both in building the profile of my family business and our region, as well as a wine educator and continual scholar.”

Kate McIntyre MW
Setting and marking the examination

The content, conduct, and marking of the Master of Wine examination are administered by the IMW’s examination board. The examination committee includes Masters of Wine from across the globe.

The committee is made up of three panels, of which two (the practical and theory panels) work on the closed book parts of the examination. The third panel oversees the research paper. Candidates taking the MW examination are anonymous, and are never identified by name. Those marking and moderating the papers can only identify papers by the candidate number. A candidate’s identity will only be revealed when it is announced that they have become a Master of Wine.
How to apply

Applications for the MW study programme are usually open from May to the end of July.

To apply you must hold a wine qualification. This should be at WSET Diploma level or equivalent. A Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree in wine (e.g. Oenology, Viticulture, Wine Business etc.) or an appropriately high level sommelier certificate are considered for entry to the programme.

You must currently work in the wine trade and have a minimum of three years professional work experience in the global wine community.

During the application process you are required to complete a practical and theory assignment. Assignments are assessed to establish whether you have sufficient knowledge, expertise and the requisite communication skills to join the programme.

You must submit a letter of reference to support your application from a Master of Wine or another senior wine trade professional.

If you would like to get more hands-on experience of what the MW study programme entails, you may wish to attend one of the IMW’s introductory courses which are held at various locations around the world, usually over two days. They include introductions to the theory and practical elements of the programme. At the end of the two days, you are invited to sit a practice entrance assessment, which includes a theory and a practical element, to help prepare for the actual entrance exam.

Further information on outreach activities is listed on the IMW’s website at: www.mastersofwine.org/outreach

“I didn’t realise how much my life would change after becoming a Master of Wine. I started to feel the impact as soon as I received the title and within months I had offers flowing in from different companies for consultancy projects, speaking engagements and opportunities in publishing and education that I never had before.”

Jeannie Cho Lee MW
Programme fees

Fees are inclusive of the following:

- Participation in the residential seminars, which offer a variety of lectures, workshops and tasting sessions.
- Participation in course days.
- Mentor support from a Master of Wine.
- Discounted tickets for IMW events.
- Assessments in the form of the assignment marking schemes (AMS).
- A student guide.
- Access to the student area of the IMW’s website, which contains important information and resources.

In addition to fees paid to the IMW, you will need to factor in the costs of travelling to seminars, course days and examinations as well as the purchasing of wines for personal tastings and study.

For latest fee information, please see: www.mastersofwine.org/fees

PRINCIPAL SUPPORTERS
- Austrian Wine Marketing Board
- AXA Millésimes
- Constellation Brands
- The Madame Bollinger Foundation
- Waitrose

MAJOR SUPPORTERS
- Dourthe
- Istituto Grandi Marchi
- Jackson Family Wines
- Riedel
- Ste. Michelle Wine Estates
- Taransaud Tonnellerie

SUPPORTERS
- Le Conseil des Grands Crus Classés en 1855
- Estates & Wines
- Familia Torres
- González Byass
- Hatch Mansfield
- Lallemand
- MACH Flynt, Inc./DC Flynt MW Selections
- Maison Louis Latour
- Primum Familiae Vini
- Silicon Valley Bank
- Südtirol/Alto Adige Wines
- Swiss Wine
- Symington Family Estates
- Trentodoc
- Villa Maria Group
- The Vintners’ Company