



THE INSTITUTE OF
MASTERS *of* WINE

2010 EXAMINERS' REPORT

Without prejudice, this report is delivered for information purposes only, and may not be relied upon by individual candidates with reference to their particular examination papers.

Chairman of Examiners Panel Introduction

This report highlights the key observations of the Examiners so as to provide information and help for those who sat the 2010 Exam and for future candidates.

Each section has been written by the Chair of the respective panel of Examiners, and this introduction provides an overview of more general issues.

General Comments

It is with real pleasure that the examiners were able to record a much higher number of passes in both the Theory and Practical parts of the 2010 exam. It was good to see much better papers in this element of the exam. The successful candidates and their mentors and teachers are to be congratulated. However, the Practical report does highlight potential improvements.

The comments that follow should be taken in the context of these improved results.

Theory Paper 1 results were poor for the second year running. The Chief Examiner's review confirmed the panel Chair's observations that there was not enough detailed knowledge and understanding of viticulture and vinification. In some cases, the average mark for a candidate was rescued by good marks on papers 2, 3 and 4. This cannot be relied upon always to happen. Future candidates and their mentors need to read carefully the panel Chair's report and to allocate enough study time to learning about and understanding the issues covered in this part of the syllabus.

Generally, Theory answers that failed showed evidence of insufficient planning and had poor introductions. Most questions in the MW exam require an essay answer, and practice is needed to make sure that facts are clearly written with arguments coherently made. A concise introduction, well argued body of the answer and a clear summary are always important.

In Theory Paper 3, there were too many factual errors, some of which are commented on in the report. It might sound obvious but incorrect facts do not help candidates' chances!

Guidelines on spelling are again indicated in the report, which will help future candidates.

The Dissertation

We do not comment in detail on the 2010 Dissertations in this report, as candidates receive individual feedback. However, as successful candidates move on to the Dissertation, the Examiners urge them to remember that passing the Dissertation is not a foregone conclusion. Candidates should make full use of help from their mentors and of the information provided by the Institute. Those whose dissertations have been referred must be ready to act on comments from the Examiners.

Robin Kinahan MW

Chairman of the Examination Board

Guidelines to students on examiners' approaches to handwriting, spelling and grammar

Handwriting. If Examiners are unable to read scripts because they are illegible, then they cannot award a mark. Such scripts will fail. Candidates should also understand that poor handwriting makes it hard to follow the flow of an answer, with the danger that relevant detail may not be appreciated by Examiners.

Spelling and grammar. Examiners take a lenient attitude to a small number of minor spelling and grammatical errors. It is also recognised and fully accepted that some candidates come from English-speaking countries that use different grammar or spelling conventions from the UK. However, Examiners do expect candidates to spell wine names and terms correctly, and persistent incorrect spelling thereof will be reflected in the award of marks.

Theory Paper 1, Production of Wine Part 1

Paper One is, essentially, a technical paper which requires a demonstration of understanding of the fundamentals of viticulture and vinification. The questions are usually broad, with candidates being required to link vineyard practices to cellar outcomes, thereby requiring sifting of information to ensure that only truly relevant points and examples are included. There is neither space nor time for unnecessary padding. The Examiners understand the broadness of the questions in this paper, and reward candidates who hone their answers down to the relevant points, resisting the temptation to wander off the point. It is evident in these broad questions where a candidate has spent time in vineyards and cellars, as their answers apply to their personal experiences and demonstrate understanding of the principles under discussion without being sidetracked.

Once again the issue of examples has been raised by the Examiners. Whilst examples must be included to illustrate a point or statement, they must be relevant to the statement they are being used to illustrate; otherwise they are of much less value. This year there were several instances of generic, sweeping statements such as: 'In Bordeaux, producers use reverse osmosis machines' without saying who, why, and for what purpose. Rather than displaying knowledge, this suggests to the Examiner that the candidate does not really understand the principles under discussion.

1. How might a winemaker influence the alcohol levels in unfortified wine from the vineyard to the cellar and why might this be desirable?

This was a broad question that addresses the basic principles of viticulture and vinification. It should be noted that there are two parts to the question – how and why.

Examiners were looking for an understanding that potential alcohol can be manipulated through the growing season and right through to the end of fermentation (and beyond), and they were looking for the range of techniques which may be used to alter potential alcohol levels throughout the process, from pruning/training, vineyard practices (green harvesting, etc.), yields, timing of harvest, cellar practices such as chaptalisation/addition of must/stopping ferments/RO/spinning cone (and all their attendant restrictions). For each method of influencing alcohol, Examiners expected to see noted the expected outcome (e.g. green harvesting for yield reduction and increased concentration). Generally the cellar part of the question was answered more completely than the vineyard part, with many opting to start their answers on the vineyard part at harvest time, whereas practices in the earlier season also have an important influence on alcohol levels.

2. What are the effects of different extraction methods used when vinifying a) Pinot Noir and b) Cabernet Sauvignon grapes?

The question turned out to have the lowest overall grade of any of the questions on Paper One, with one Examiner commenting that they were shocked that there appears so little understanding of how red wine is made. There were two potential ways of approaching this question: either by tackling each grape variety separately or as a comparison between similar techniques on each grape variety and their outcomes. The latter approach ran the risk of omitting a technique which applied just to one variety. What was clear was that many of the answers did not have a full understanding of the techniques they were discussing (e.g. cold soak being done in water). As a minimum, Examiners were looking for: options on

crushing/destemming, macerations pre and post fermentation, temperatures of maceration, and cap management with all the attendant explanations for each technique and its desired outcome.

3. What is the potential of THREE of the following grape varieties for making high quality table wine:

- **Carignan**
- **Petit Verdot**
- **Roussanne**
- **Petit Manseng**
- **Touriga Nacional**

This question was best answered by writing a section on each grape discussed. The question required three grapes to be considered, each carried equal marks so deserved equal attention. Although quite widely answered, it was not one of the higher scoring questions overall.

Answers needed to assess whether the variety was capable of high quality, and could conclude either way – providing that they substantiated this conclusion by their arguments. In the course of the argument Examiners expected to see a brief description of the grape (thick/thin skinned, high/low acid, yields, temperature/disease resistance etc) and where it is currently found, i.e. real examples, and what its natural restrictions were (i.e. if too hot/too high yielding/too much chalk in soil etc). In order to prove the potential for high quality wine, candidates needed to indicate areas where the grape had particular success with particular types of handling.

4. How would you manage an established vineyard in a ‘hot climate’?

The key words in this question were the word ‘established’ and ‘hot climate’. Answers were expected to show an understanding that the vineyard was already planted in a hot climate. The question was essentially asking students to examine how the heat may be mitigated (or used to benefit) and the fruit protected to reach full maturity. The best answers examined both a high production hot zone and a low production/high quality hot zone. Answers needed to define what was meant by a hot climate, indicating that some may be very hot by day but cool by night, others are hot all day and night, some are hot and humid and some hot and dry. Detailed figures for such things as temperatures and humidity were important. The essential points that needed to be covered included water availability, canopy management mid-season (as trellising may be assumed to be in place), pest/disease management, soil management, timings of procedures, and the effect of temperature on grape ripening and maturity.

5. How can vine nutrition be improved through soil management?

A fundamental question about the relationship between the vine and the soil, this question was the most successfully answered and one of the most popular on the paper. Encompassing both the impact of physical cultivation techniques (ploughing, cover crops etc.) on vine nutrition as well as additions or adjustments to the soil makeup, this required firm knowledge with an understanding of deficiencies and their corrections as well as an indication of how the soil and the vine's nutrition would be assessed (soil testing, petiole testing). It also required an understanding of hydrology and how nutrients are accessed by the plants.

6. Examine the importance of temperature at different stages of vinification, with examples from both red and white winemaking.

A very popular question, which was generally answered quite well. Essentially it required students to evaluate the effects of different temperatures during the winemaking process. It is a big question, and the best and most coherent answers were those which approached it in two parts: red and white wines.

The vinification period includes up to the end of malo-lactic conversion and the subsequent run into barrel where relevant: not covering MLF was, therefore, considered an omission. Some asserted that it was not part of this paper and therefore was not going to be included in their essay (i.e. they had considered it), but as Paper 1 is considered to run through from vineyard up until the beginning of maturation MLF should always be considered in a question like this. Equally, students needed to know where to stop as some considered temperature influence right up to bottling, which is not strictly within the scope of the question. Whilst this clearly did not lose them marks, it did mean that valuable time was spent on a part of an answer which was not going to gain extra points. Basic points to be considered were: temperature at every point of the winemaking process, from harvest, to pre and post fermentation holds, and the reason for the choices behind these processes and their outcomes.

Theory Paper 2 - The Production of Wine Part 2

General

This year's Theory Paper 2 provided candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their technical knowledge and understanding of many of the subjects forming the core of the syllabus. The questions required varying approaches if they were to be answered successfully.

This is a technical paper, requiring precision and accuracy. A colloquial written style is therefore not appropriate, nor well suited to expressing the candidate's knowledge. All of the Paper 2 Examiners remarked on the prevalence of the inaccurate use of technical terms. It is essential to ensure that responses remain at all times focused on answering the question itself, and not using the question as a prompt for a more freelance exploration of a particular subject. Those candidates employing a well structured essay form tended to be better equipped to communicate to the Examiners.

1. How might the most common faults in finished wine be avoided and detected?

This question required no complex knowledge or chemical formulae, although scripts with more facts and technical detail did garner higher marks. Structurally it was not complex, allowing a list type response as long as the two key parts of the question – avoidance and detection – were covered. Whilst there were some outstanding answers, which were compelling and articulate with excellent use of examples, it was disappointing that many failed to cover the key points. Basic syllabus material must not be ignored if candidates wish to pass.

The best scripts did not just focus on the negative side of what is considered to be a fault, but also mentioned that a little bit of brettanomyces and volatile acidity, for example, can add to the complexity of the wine. Good answers also commented that some styles of wine are made in a deliberately oxidative manner (e.g. gran reserva Rioja, tawny port, or oloroso sherry), and that sparkling wines are more protected against oxidation. There was some very good technical detail which was to be commended. Sadly, a number of answers failed to mention how the faults can be detected, despite an excellent discourse on their avoidance. This failure to answer both parts of the question meant fewer marks could be awarded.

Candidates should refrain from referring to “corky” taint. Corks were often simply dismissed as a closure with LSC, Vino-lok etc. being heralded as the only viable alternative and no mention made of the changes and developments in the cork closure industry. Moreover, having HACCPs is not the cure all that many scripts seemed to suggest and this was not the place to hold a discourse on QC, QA, BRC etc. Monitoring and observation by themselves do not prevent faults.

2. What issues should be considered when replacing an existing bottling line?

This question required a very clear knowledge and understanding of the bottling line and the issues surrounding it. It was attempted by relatively few candidates and, with one or two notable exceptions, the answers were not strong, giving only superficial detail.

The question concerned the replacement of an existing bottling line, while some responses addressed the installation of a new one. Equally, many used this as an opportunity to give a descriptive of the bottling process, rather than getting to grips with the question set.

Many candidates covered HACCP in detail, although all that was required was to mention to check if it was sufficient to cover the new line. The responses showed that many candidates had not spent time in a bottling facility, and revealed a lack of hard information such as machinery/plant specifications, financial costings, time lines for installation, line speeds etc. Few candidates covered why the bottling line was being replaced.

3. Write concise notes on three of the following:

a. TCA (2,4,6-trichloranisole)

b. American oak

c. Fining agents

d. Volatile acidity

This question was generally well answered, and had the highest average mark for Paper 2. It required technical explanations, concisely expressed.

Some points to be noted:

- a) Must know threshold for TCA is ppt NOT ppm
- b) Must understand how TCA is formed and the names of the fungi involved.
- c) Must know legal limits for VA
- d) Commercial names for fining agents should not be used since they do not always translate across the world
- e) Proteins do not bind proteins

4. Why and how should wine be stabilised before bottling?

This was the least well answered question for Paper 2, on a subject that should have been better understood. While many answers demonstrated a good working knowledge of the basic principles, it was the level of depth and detail required at this level which let far too many down.

There was some confusion between clarifying a wine versus stabilising a wine prior to bottling. Many answers used/quoted addition rates that were not correct or were used in the wrong context.

To stabilise a wine is to remove unstable proteins and tartrates (calcium and potassium). This is all that was needed but it did need to be covered in detail. Few answers demonstrated an understanding of this. Too many focused on filtration, MLF, and fining. Sterile filtration is performed at bottling so was outside the range of the question. Answers could have covered colour stability as well but what we wanted was WHY and HOW wines are protein and tartrate stabilised BEFORE bottling.

5. What impact does temperature have on the storage and maturation of wine?

This question was attempted by relatively few candidates, possibly suggesting a lack of understanding of a basic part of the syllabus.

The few good answers used real world examples to support their reasoning, while poor ones were shallow, lacked precision and relied on generalisations. Clear definitions of storage versus maturation were required for a well-structured answer and some understanding of the effect of temperature on the rate of chemical and enzymatic reactions was vital. The implications behind use of different vessels including inert tanks, oak and glass bottles were important too, but often not clearly covered. Very few mentioned that oxygen is more soluble at low temperatures and thus failed to consider the implications of low temperature handling. Sloppy use of the word “sulphur” when the writer means sulphur dioxide is to be discouraged; it may be in widespread usage in the wine business but it is inaccurate in chemical terms.

6. What are the main factors, following the first alcoholic fermentation, that affect the quality and style of sparkling wine?

This question prompted a small number of very strong responses, but a greater number which were in some way lacking. Answers needed to cover both general factors that apply to all types of sparkling wine (blending, MLF, tirage, yeast, time on lees, dosage and temperature) as well as factors applicable to the particular method of making sparkling wine. Too many candidates lost marks by only describing what happens rather than making their answers relevant to the question. Several made sweeping claims about the high quality of Champagne and appear not to be aware of the existence of entry level, lower quality Champagnes. Very few considered the possibility of lees ageing and stirring in tank. Transfer method was frequently dismissed as lower quality without any real explanation, or recognition that this is used in Champagne for large and small format bottles without any notable impact on quality. Different gas pressures and how these are achieved, plus their effect on style and quality were rarely covered and very few candidates showed awareness of the possible role of yeast autolysis products in foam stability and thus bubble quality. Examples cited were largely confined to Champagne, Prosecco, Cava and Asti.

Theory Paper 3 – The Business of Wine

General

Overall, there were a good number of sound answers, which showed understanding of the commercial and financial issues required. The emphasis of this paper is the Business of Wine, and candidates must always consider financial aspects and cost implications in their answers. A list of facts shows knowledge but not necessarily understanding of the subject, which is what the Examiners are looking for.

The questions required candidates to give clear definitions within their introductions in order to define the scope of the answer and to avoid unstructured digressions from the subject. Figures quoted must be accurate: the Examiners do check, and have often shared the relevant figures with each other in advance. One answer, for example, quoted the population of China as 7.9M.

Examples quoted must be relevant, detailed, specific and accurate, not simplistic nor anecdotal and should be attributed if appropriate. There continue to be many answers that show poor planning, wandering off the topic, or being too focused on one country (usually the UK or USA).

1. Does the short term get in the way of the long term? Answer from the point of view of a wine brand owner.

This question demanded a clear understanding that the answer would vary by price and brand volume. It also required a discussion of the major trade-offs between short-term and long-term issues, especially as to how they relate to financial implications. Too many answers did not distinguish between large and small brands, and were too USA or UK centric without any global reference. Several answers turned into an attack upon poor brand management, which was not acceptable.

The most common structure was using the 4 Ps, which generally worked well, often supported by a SWOT analysis. Clear planning lifted the good answers. In each area, the long and short term should have been contrasted, with the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Weaker answers showed a lack of examples to illustrate points and lack of structured content.

2. As a wine brand owner, what can you do to reduce the carbon footprint of your brand?

This was the more popular of the two questions in this section, and many candidates appear to have considered it as deceptively easy to structure: vineyard, winery, bulk and packaging. However, this made the introduction and conclusion very important, especially the issue of why a brand should do it. Too often a 'one size fits all' answer was given with no discussion of the implications and trade-offs of such actions. Essays that went from ploughing with horses to shipments in flexitanks via organic and biodynamic viticulture without discussing the practicalities did not demonstrate mastery of the question.

There was little discussion of accreditation and off-setting was often poorly understood. There were some poor examples with a number of glaring inaccuracies. One answer indicated that Constellation's new bottling plant in Bristol has a capacity of 2M cases per year, whereas it is actually 26M cases per year.

The better answers displayed a clear sense of priorities, examining which areas had the potential for the greatest impact and areas of direct versus indirect influence. Answers were stronger on packaging and distribution and weaker on winemaking and viticulture options.

3. What are the risk and reward factors that need to be considered when evaluating whether buying fine wine is an appropriate part of an investment portfolio?

This question was generally well answered with some clear definitions and discussions of what constitutes fine wine, how that may have changed, and including discussion of a wide range of possible risks and rewards. The best answers used multiple examples and made comparisons with other types of investment.

Less successful answers set out how to invest in fine wine, rather than discussing the risks and rewards. Several used a SWOT analysis structure which tended to lead them off the subject in this question. Critical thinking as opposed to rote use of memorized information and facts was important to success. Many quoted the recent articles regarding Liv-ex: again these were checked by the Examiners and needed to be accurate but also put into context and understood, not merely quoted. Those who showed understanding of practical realities scored highest.

4. Evaluate the most effective ways in which wine producers can communicate with consumers?

This was a very popular question but not generally well answered. There were many long, unstructured essays, written in an informal style, that were little more than lists with no critical analysis. Too many were too chatty with little perspective and many were narrow in outlook with no global view or examples.

The answer had to demonstrate the understanding that effective communication will vary significantly by price, size and geographical location of the producer, and that there are a wide range of communication vehicles. Examples were needed throughout with some notion being given of the impact and costs of each. Many concentrated on the new social media areas, dismissing the more traditional areas without considering the target market and the financial side. The discussion needed to include why each way is effective and to what extent.

5. Who makes the most profit on a bottle of wine in today's market? How is this changing?

This was the least popular question, yet is fundamental to an understanding of the wine trade. There were few borderline answers; most were a clear fail or a good pass.

A successful answer required a clear definition of 'profit' as opposed to margin and better answers discussed return on assets or investment as well as simple return on sales. A common failing of unsuccessful answers was wandering between profitability and margin definitions in the course of the essay and being inconsistent.

There was no single correct answer but what was required was an understanding of how the answer might vary by price, geography and position in the supply chain. A point of view was required. The easiest structure was to follow the supply chain from grower to retailer. The second part of the question was also missed in the less successful answers.

There were many instances of incorrect margins quoted, at retailer and agent level, and also errors in tax. Statistics must be accurate. Several answers did not consider growers at all.

6. How can France regain its market share of the global wine market?

This question required a good knowledge of the French wine industry and about specific markets and brand building. It was essential to separate premium and mass market and to focus on mature and immature markets, including domestic. A planned structure was needed and a SWOT analysis worked best with some discussion of the 4 Ps. Some answers focused too much on the premium end, which is not where the main problem lies.

However, there were many answers which were little more than attacks on perceived French attitudes and which offered no other solution than varietal labelling. A similar question came up in 2006, and the market has changed significantly since then. Some answers did not seem to have moved with the market and showed little understanding of the implications of new legislation.

Inaccurate facts and brand names made it difficult for candidates to score high marks.

Theory Paper 4 – Contemporary Issues

General

Paper 4 presents an opportunity for candidates to show their knowledge of contemporary issues in the international wine trade. It gives candidates the chance to develop strong arguments, which must be supported by relevant facts and literature. Discussion is essential to demonstrate that the candidate has a broad vision, accommodating more than one point of view on any issue. This paper requires answers that are illustrated with solid evidence from around the world: simply writing from the perspective of one country will rarely allow the candidate to achieve enough marks to pass. Candidates are therefore encouraged to read extensively and to widen their knowledge of international wine trade issues in preparation for this paper.

The questions in Paper 4 are deliberately wide ranging and so there must be a clear logic to the way that arguments are built up and demonstrated in the answers. In general the answers in 2010 were on the same high level as in 2009, with many candidates showing a good global perspective and supporting their analyses with facts and relevant examples. However, poor answers were too often insufficiently analytical and lacking relevant examples. Furthermore, many candidates would have done better if they had spent more time on planning their essays. Whilst there are no precisely right or wrong answers on this paper, candidates are reminded that factual errors will result in lower marks.

1. Examine the extent to which ‘wine is a social evil’.

This was a broad ranging question and the most popular on this year’s Paper 4. The question needed a definition of the term ‘social evil’. Answers also needed to assess why wine might be considered as such, and to address both sides of the argument in order to pass.

In such a wide-ranging question, where answers need to discuss as many issues as possible, planning the answer is essential and time is well spent doing this before starting to write. The examiners expected answers to cover health effects, social behaviour issues, commercial issues and government policies as well as cultural issues. Good answers were wide-ranging, supported by relevant examples from around the world and with a sound conclusion. Poorer answers did not appear planned, did not have enough examples, did not cover enough ground, were too simplistic, were at times difficult to follow and/or were lacking a proper conclusion.

Overall there were a good crop of passes and two outstanding answers.

2. Looking ahead towards 2050, what impact do you think climate change will have upon wine production?

The key terms in this question were ‘climate change’ and ‘wine production’. Many answers took ‘climate change’ to equal ‘global warming’, but global warming is only part of climate change and answers that took this narrow approach did not pass. Candidates must answer the question that is set and not what they think they can write about. Furthermore, many candidates seemed to be misled by the term ‘wine production’ and answered narrowly only in terms of viticulture and vinification.

To answer the question properly, answers needed to consider 'climate change' and 'wine production' in a wider sense and then to make a judgement of what to expect in 40 years time.

Consideration should have been given to the influence of climate change on viticulture, vinification, where vines are grown, wine styles, wine packaging, consumer trends in different parts of the world and international legislation as well as financial issues. Good answers needed a wide range of examples from around the world.

Overall the pass rate on this question was high but because many otherwise good answers were too narrow in their approach, many passes were borderline. However there were two very good answers.

3. 'The wine business is reaching a tipping point' (Troy Christensen, Constellation). In your view, who will be the winners of the future wine industry in the next 10 years and why?

Again, this was a very broad question where successful answers benefited from good planning. Candidates needed to define the term 'tipping point', explain what defines a winner and to answer all parts of the question, specifically both the 'who' and the 'why', in an international context.

Of those answers that did define the term 'tipping point', some took it to mean 'the critical point at which the business is no longer profitable' whilst others defined it as 'the change from niche to mass market'. The examiners accepted both definitions as long as the answers were sufficiently analytical, well argued and wide-ranging in their approach.

However too many answers just listed key points, and did not show enough analysis. They answered the 'who', but not the 'why'. Good answers addressed both and analysed the question itself, with good examples from around the world to support the arguments being made.

4. Can Riesling challenge Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc for dominance on the world stage?

This was a straightforward question, but again good planning was essential.

Many answers began by describing the current world market for Riesling, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, and put it into a historical context. However, to gain a pass, answers needed to express knowledge from throughout the rest of the syllabus: viticulture, vinification, taste profiles with and without food, and marketing in terms of how to change consumer choices. Answers should not only have covered fine wines but needed to include international examples of entry and mid-price points as well. The best answers showed a good structure, a wide-ranging knowledge, a good breadth of examples and persuasive arguments.

5. Can the classification of first growth (Erste Lage) vineyards do the German wine industry any good?

This should have been an easy option for those who knew the German wine industry well. But as with last year's question about Fairtrade wines this was a very specific question, which

was not attempted by most of the candidates. Only four candidates answered the question, with one answer being incomplete as the candidate apparently ran out of time.

The successful answers briefly explained the German classification system and the term Erste Lage, gave reasons for the change and made well-argued comparisons to the classification systems in Bordeaux and Burgundy. The question also invited an assessment of the quality of the new German classification system, although none of the answers took this approach.

Practical Examination 2010

General

1. Timing

It is almost impossible for candidates to pass the exam if they leave blank sheets. The best candidates all put something down for every section of every answer, however brief. It is critical to get on with the answers as soon as possible; do not be delayed by agonizing over one or two wines. Many candidates wrote too much when there were not that many marks on offer. Try to write enough to secure maximum points, but do not over-elaborate.

2. Reasoning

Check that your arguments are logical. Good answers do of course contain mistakes but their reasoning invariably appears sound. By contrast what are examiners to make of:

“High acid suggests cool climate. While plush and fruity maintains an elegance that suggests old world. Sweet fruit suggests warm/cool climate and high alcohol as well”.

Two sentences that make sense, followed by an obscure conclusion. The good points fail to attain their deserved marks when they are undermined by a few words dashed off in haste.

Another answer identified correctly a Malbec (from Cahors), but justified it by saying *“not firm enough tannins for Cab Sauv”*. Obviously Cabernet Sauvignon does have firm tannins, but all good candidates will know that Malbec, particularly in Cahors, is noted for its (very) firm tannins.

One Examiner commented: *“Many answers lacked structure and logic. It might help candidates to approach the whole exercise of blind tasting in a very systematic manner which ensures all elements of the wine have been discussed, every time, and in a logical order. For example, talking about tannins at the beginning of your argument when they are not the key that unlocks the origin argument makes little sense and comes across as a weak argument that lacks authority.”*

3. Language

Try to use language that is both intelligible and apposite. One (good) answer referred to a wine as popular with ‘*Millennials*’. Examiners (trying not to be like antiquated Law Lords) did of course check the expression using Google. But whilst enlightened as to the word itself, we remain in the dark as to its relevance in the context of the question.

It is important to use terminology and names that are relevant to the wine and area of its production. Thus, Syrah is preferred to Shiraz to refer to grapes grown in the Rhone valley in France. One Examiner commented on the Rhone question:

“The question about quality within the context of the region was poorly answered. Candidates should firstly use the terminology relevant to the region concerned and secondly think carefully about the language they use in order to be specific about the quality they conclude. The best answers served to illustrate a deep knowledge of the area concerned”.

An otherwise outstanding candidate took the use of abbreviations to an unprecedented level. Half of page 1 of each paper was taken up with a full code to explain the system. It was

perfectly logical and apposite. However it was of such length and complexity that the examiners had to flick back to the unusual code from every subsequent page and the candidate felt obliged to give regular reminders of the acronyms throughout the answers. More importantly the process encouraged a 'formula' approach to answers. So for example the term "RN&SP" (restrained nose and savoury palate) proved a useful argument for some of the wines shown. It failed, however, when it became the 'rote' justification for all old world wine. It was clearly not appropriate, for instance, in trying to justify a conclusion of Alsace Gewurztraminer, which, obviously, does not often have a "RN". The Examiners' advice is to use abbreviations sparingly. By all means cut down verbiage wherever possible. Simply be sure to remain clear and easy to understand.

Can we also ask that if asked for a region or grape variety, the answer should be complete - e.g. not simply 'Gruner' or 'Pessac'. If referring to a currency then clearly state the origin e.g. US\$.

4. Get the Knowledge

Everyone has strong and weak areas of knowledge. Good candidates have clearly built around their areas of expertise to enable them to display a sound grasp of every major wine producing area and variety. It seems invidious to quote disastrous mistakes, but it is important that we do so for all to see the kind of thing that can let a student down. Anyone can make such a 'clanger', but most can be avoided if the background work is done before the exam.

- a) There was an answer, for example, which noted high acidity in one of the Rhone quartet and then concluded Châteauneuf du Pape. This may have been a last moment guess. But the impression given is that the student feels that high acidity is a typical feature of Châteauneuf. A very similar impression was given by a note of "*semi-aromatic, high acidity = Viognier*". More subtle perhaps, but equally unacceptable at this level: "*Lacks cool climate definition of Casablanca. More likely consistent with Leyda*".
- b) One answer suggested Tempranillo for the pair of Malbecs. They garnered some good marks, however, for some sound reasoning. This was then wasted by suggesting that the first of the two wines was a Douro red. Although Tinta Roriz and Tempranillo are the same grape, Douro reds are rarely dominated by Tinta Roriz. If the student felt that this example was Tinto Roriz dominated he/she should have said so, to reassure the Examiner of his knowledge. Instead the Examiners are left with the impression that the student has no grasp of Portuguese grape varieties. It is therefore hard to give many marks for the answer, despite some of the reasoning being sound. The same candidate correctly indentified Vinho Verde but put Verdejo as the main variety. This was a talented taster who could have passed if they had not made a succession of such errors. We hope he/she will brush up on their finer points of varietal knowledge before next year's exam.
- c) As a variation of point a) above, the Examiners sometimes have the impression that the candidate probably does know what a classic style tastes like, but manages to give the opposite impression by 'shoe-horning' a wine into a given answer. So for instance a candidate who tasted a Cabernet Franc and identified it as a Nebbiolo. The note stated: "*...a high tannin variety. Full body, medium-high alcohol, medium acidity; consistent with Nebbiolo*". The wine did indeed have high tannins and was (for a red Loire) quite full-bodied. An argument for Nebbiolo could have garnered good points.

But we all know that Nebbiolo is, above all, a variety of high tannins and high acidity. If a candidate feels that a wine is Nebbiolo but does not have those traits in abundance, then they should say so – i.e. “Although the acidity is only medium, the high tannins and medium-high alcohol are consistent with Nebbiolo – which is confirmed by...”

- d) Many answers got in a tangle with sweet and fortified wines in Paper 3. Again, a lack of factual knowledge really hindered their chances. For instance, referring to the Rutherglen Muscat as un-fortified and suggesting that the likely ageing period was around 2 years.
- e) As ever, spelling was an issue. The Examiners are not concerned about ‘normal’ spelling mistakes but candidates simply have to learn how to spell the classic wines/wine terms. Examples this year were Prosecco from ‘*Valdibadore*’; ‘*Greuner Veltliner*’; ‘*Method Champenoise*’; “*Botrutis*”. They have to be mentioned to indicate how easily a candidate’s credibility can be compromised. There was also some confusion between Albarino and Alvarinho.
- f) Learn how classic wine styles are made and labelled (we assume this is also helpful for the theory exams!). More than one candidate correctly identified Prosecco but suggested it was made by the injection of CO₂. Someone else thought it was made with Muscat; others that it originates primarily from Tuscany and Piedmont. Other errors included Rueda DOCG, Bordeaux Superiore, and Napa AOC; Vinho Verde, Greco di Tufo and Soave offered as grape varieties; the Solera system used for port production

5. A General Suggestion

The choice of when to sit the exam is entirely down to the candidate but bearing in mind the cost and, most importantly, the limited number of attempts allowed, the Examiners’ suggestion would be to take the Practical Exam only when you feel ready to pass it. To perform very poorly is disheartening and, contrary to what some believe, little will be learned in the process. The exam is simply three sets of 12 wine questions made more difficult by the pressure and intensity of exam conditions. Such 12 wine questions can be practised outside exam conditions and only when you feel consistently confident in your abilities should you take the final plunge.

This year’s practical contingent contained some outstanding candidates and many good ones who showed the potential to pass in the near future. The overall picture is made to look much worse than it is by up to 25 candidates who showed from early on in each paper that they did not have the requisite background knowledge to succeed at this stage in their studies.

Paper 1

Question 1 asked for the origin as closely as possible. Several candidates simply put Côte de Beaune. They were correct but they failed to get maximum marks by not even attempting to drill down to the actual origins of the respective wines. “Closely as possible” does always mean what it implies.

Discussion of oak should normally consider new vs used, timing and type. Some answers appeared to rattle off pre-prepared notes regarding barrel-fermented Chardonnay, without

thought as to current practices in Burgundy, or what was in their glass. Extended skin contact with Chardonnay is not a common practice, nor is 18-24 months oak aging.

The section comparing relative quality was generally well done, but only the best answers got maximum points in estimating the capacity for aging. Candidates need to be more specific in their answers, referring to the key issues such as concentration and acidity.

Question 4 featured three less 'obvious' wines. However the question provided much help with identification. The best answers did not necessarily identify all three correctly, but did stay calmly logical throughout. Please do not panic if uncertain over origin. One can at least consider some of the obvious pointers in the glass and suggest a possible conclusion based on the evidence.

The commercial angle of this question required a consideration of whether any of these non-classic styles could be marketed successfully, based (as the question reminded) on what could be tasted from the glass. Relatively easy marks could be gained by referring to the lightness and liveliness of wine 9 being in tune with an increasing demand for wines of that style; by simply suggesting that wine 10 managed to attain a certain complexity and intensity without recourse to oak and without losing delicacy (again in tune with what many consumers would seem to want); or by accepting that wine 12 was obviously a more 'difficult' commercial proposition, combining as it does high alcohol, oak and high acidity.

It is helpful to mention in these answers the possible route to market of each style. But it is only speculative to mention other issues that may have relevance to a marketing strategy, but cannot possibly be gleaned from tasting. An example: *"Convenience from screwcap closure... may catch eye of the adventurous consumer"*.

Paper 2

Overall the best set of Paper 2 answers seen in recent years.

In Question 1 a surprising number of answers confused Syrah and Grenache, which have very distinct characteristics in terms of acidity, colour, use of oak and fruit character. It was also surprising that many found Viognier in several of the wines. The Hermitage was often mistaken for a Grenache blend, possibly because of its high level of alcohol.

When identifying wine's age and maturity, some candidates only considered the current state of the wine. To reiterate, answers on maturity should always consider the wine's future/potential. The best candidates, realising they were dealing with a classic area, considered vintage options, not just age in general.

In Question 2 there was confusion among some about the acid levels of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah as compared to Merlot.

In Question 4 c – Quality with reference to the commercial potential of this style - only the best answers grasped what was required: to consider not just the specific commercial potential of this wine, but of the style that it represents. So, for instance, most answers recognised the Beaujolais but only a few gave a measured analysis of the potential for the style. It was not enough to refer only to the lightness and freshness of the wine in question (and therefore its suitability for wine by the glass etc). The best candidates also considered how Beaujolais is one of the few areas providing a solution for those increasing numbers looking for a lighter style; and yet how Beaujolais is struggling with younger drinkers, partly because of an 'image problem' but also because the 'sparseness' of the style does not always prove popular with those introduced to wine by modern, fruit-forward, commercial styles.

Paper 3

Unusually, this was the least successfully answered paper, despite being a 'classic' Paper 3 i.e. a mix of sparkling, sweet and fortified. High sugar levels make it difficult to judge alcohol levels but this does not explain all the problems encountered.

One candidate this year was on course to pass the whole exam after Papers 1 and 2 and wines 1-3 of Paper 3. Disaster then struck with the candidate misunderstanding botrytis levels and consistently confusing fortified and non-fortified styles. These should be the easiest styles to spot with every candidate being able to keep open bottles of Port, Madeira, PX etc. for regular tasting practice. Comment from one Examiner: *"An alarming number of candidates failed to correctly employ their theory knowledge, and embarrassingly exposed their lack of preparation for the exam"*.

Reflecting the general comments at the beginning of this report, candidates must do the basic homework e.g. learning residual sugar levels and alcohol parameters for classic sweet wine styles. One otherwise successful candidate nailed the PX but suggested it was 11% alcohol. It seems a pity to lose easy marks having made a correct identification.

However, it is also true that many responses contained 'rote' answers for production and maturation, and did not properly use relevant evidence from the glass for support. It is worth noting that at no point in the paper were the candidates asked to identify grape varieties. The focus was on method of production and detailed structural analysis. Too often candidates made quick assumptions about wines, not least from their appearance (especially in Question 3) and then fitted their analysis around this position. The failure to break down each wine and analyse its structural parts – acidity, sugar, tannins, alcohol – was the undoing of many. There also appeared to be simple lack of experience.

Question 1 - Wines 1 and 2 were well answered. Wine 3 was generally thought to be Champagne. Candidates should remember to look beyond the obvious lees-aged character and consider the wine's complexity, minerality and overall balance before making a final conclusion.

Question 2 - Some candidates took the wording of the question to assume some level of botrytis was present in all the wines. Only the most confident and well-prepared were able to state no botrytis for wine 4. Candidates were often able to recognize the characteristics of noble rot, but they did not always identify the correct level of influence. Judging residual sugar and alcohol levels is clearly a skill that many candidates need to practise. Examiners realise precise identification of sugar and alcohol is difficult at extreme highs and lows, and so leeway is given during the grading. Note that a single number is required, not a range.

Question 3 - This proved to be the most challenging question in the entire practical exam. Most candidates correctly identified the Muscat Beaumes de Venise (or got very close) and the Rutherglen Muscat. The rest were very mixed with many students finding fortification where there was none.

Final comment from an Examiner: *"Perhaps candidates have begun to take Paper 3 for granted, expecting a flight of rosés, Pinot Noirs, or classified growth Bordeaux to show up, and not properly reviewing the world's sparkling, fortified and sweet wines"*.

Institute of Masters of Wine Practical Examination Crib 2010

Paper 1

- 1 Bourgogne Blanc, Lafôret, Drouhin
- 2 Meursault, 1er Cru Perrières, Drouhin
- 3 Albarino, Pazo de Senorans
- 4 Einz Zwei Dry, Riesling Trocken, Leitz
- 5 Pinot Grigio, Borgo dei Vassalli
- 6 Vouvray, Le Mont Demi Sec, Huet
- 7 Gewurztraminer, Private Bin, Villa Maria
- 8 Caillou Blanc, Château Talbot
- 9 Semillon-Sauvignon, Samson's Range, Plantagenet
- 10 Vinho Verde, Adega de Moncao
- 11 Gruner Veltliner, 'Kies', Kurt Angerer
- 12 Dry Furmint, Dobogo

Vintage	Alcohol	Region	Country
2008	13.0	Burgundy	France
2006	13.5	Burgundy	France
2008	12.0	Rias Baixas	Spain
2008	12.0	Rheingau	Germany
2008	13.0	Venezia Giulia	Italy
2000	12.5	Loire	France
2008	13.5	East Coast	New Zealand
2007	13.0	Bordeaux	France
2008	13.0	Western Australia	Australia
2008	11.0	Moncao	Portugal
2008	12.5	Kamptal	Austria
2007	14.0	Mad / Tallya	Hungary

Paper 2

- 1 Châteauneuf du Pape, Domaine Marcoux
- 2 Côtes du Rhône, La Gerbaude, Alary
- 3 Crozes Hermitage, Alain Graillot
- 4 Hermitage, La Petite Chapelle, Jaboulet
- 5 Merlot, Cafaro
- 6 L'Hospitalet de Gazin
- 7 Cahors, Château de Chambert
- 8 Malbec Reserva, Altos Las Hormigas
- 9 Chinon, La Baronnie Madeleine, Couly-Duthell
- 10 Pinot Noir, Gladstone
- 11 Beaujolais Villages, Louis Jadot
- 12 Valpolicella, Allegrini

Vintage	Alcohol	Region	Country
2006	15.0	Rhone	France
2008	13.5	Rhone	France
2007	13.0	Rhone	France
2006	14.0	Rhone	France
2006	13.8	Napa Valley	California
2006	13.5	Pomerol	Bordeaux
2007	13.0	Cahors	France
2007	14.5	Mendoza	Argentina
2006	13.5	Loire	France
2008	14	Wairarapa	New Zealand
2008	12.5	Beaujolais	France
2008	13	Veneto	Italy

Paper 3

- 1 Cava, bottled for the Co-Operative
- 2 Prosecco, 'Crede', Bisol
- 3 Pelorus, Brut, Cloudy Bay
- 4 Cordon Cut, Mount Horrocks
- 5 Tokaji Aszu 6 Puttonyos, Dobogo
- 6 Pinot Gris, Selection des Grains Nobles, 'Heimbourg', Zind Humbrecht
- 7 Muscat de Beaumes de Venise, Paul Jaboulet Aine
- 8 Vin Santo, Capezzana
- 9 Recioto della Valpolicella, 'Giovanni Allegrini', Allegrini
- 10 Rutherglen Muscat, Stanton and Killeen
- 11 10 year old Tawny, Ramos Pinto
- 12 Pedro Ximenez, 'Triana', Hidalgo

Vintage	Alcohol	Region	Country
NV	11.5	Penedes	Spain
2009	11.5	Valdobbadiene	Italy
NV	12.5	Wairau Valley, Marlborough	New Zealand
2009	11.5	Clare Valley	Australia
2004	10.5	Tokaji	Hungary
2005	10.0	Alsace	France
2007	15.0	Rhone	France
2003	15.5	Tuscany	Italy
2006	14.0	Veneto	Italy
NV	17.5	Rutherglen	Australia
NV	19.5	Douro	Portugal
NV	17.0	Jerez	Spain

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