

The sommelier certification is a multi-layered examination designed to see if a student had been able to indeed absorb the width and detail that is required to work at the highest levels. It ensures that our graduates are theoretically sound in all alcohol knowledge, are adept at understanding how to properly act and manage oneself within the industry in order to become successful.

**The curriculum is exhaustive in breadth and length, but all of the tools are provided so that students will have a realistic ability to pass their examinations and achieve good passing success rates and avoid the merry go round of exam failures, further time and resources in rewriting examinations or penalized with time constraints.**

**Our grading method is standardized and consistent for each and every student.**

The examinations can be broken down to what one would call **theory** (which consist of 3 examination components) and secondly **practical** (which consists of 3 additional examination components).

All 6 components of the examinations must be passed with a 75% in each; meaning this is not a combined average but rather mastering each component is essential. This is a multilayered exam process. The examinations are completely based on the curriculum, book, videos and the additional 300 hour of instructor lectures.

The examinations are split into 3 consecutive days.

### **Theory (Day 1)**

**Exam 1- Multiple Choice:** It is based and determined by the number of curricular hours devoted to that topic and therefore although that may fluctuate every single year, one could never have a completely disproportionate allotment to a country that currently is 40th in production. However, please remember that as the fluctuation changes and the bottom producing players have increase in market share, so will the readjustment of questions proportionality be reflected in the exams.

The ISG's approach to multiple choice is not unique and follows standard educational structure. Students are provided with 4 possible answers (a, b, c, or d) and only one of those answers is correct; there is no room for judgment. This is what we would call overview so that every subject can be addressed.

**The examination consists of 300 questions with an allocation of 3 hours in total.**

### **Exam 2- Sommelier Management and Food Menus:**

This section consists of two components, Section A and Section B that are graded with equal weight and are combined to form one final mark.

#### **Section A: Cellar Management Essays**

Although the primary evaluative tool employed by the ISG related to the sommelier profession and ability to create and launch a restaurant or any food outlet, here we specifically address cellar management which includes the entire business aspect of the profession.

5 Essays are to be written within the scope of: sommelier business, management of a food outlet at any size, investment and inventory with respect to a food outlet the question asks, sales and marketing, and lastly social media.

Each of the 5 essays are to be written in proper full sentence and paragraph writing development format and bullet points are not acceptable. Each essay is to be no less than 900 - 1,000 words in length. All essential terminology spelling and grammar will count up to 10% off the grade. **The examination has an allocation of 3 hours in total.**

**Section B: Table d'hôte Food Menus** Given the importance of wine and food pairing to the sommelier profession, the ISG uses the menus in this section as an evaluative tool. Students are required to show that they are able to read a menu description, understand the primary structural and aromatic components of a dish, and then suggest two precise wines (name, producer, vintage), one being a traditional match while a second one being a different wine completely for each plate.

Although theoretical dishes paired with theoretical wine will never replace real food and wine pairing, the student must write a full explanation as to why the particular wine will match each dish.

In this section, students are presented with 5 different menus of table d'hôte with 2 menus based on 2 different European/regional classical cuisines, 1 Eastern European or Asia Minor/Mediterranean cuisine, 1 Asia cuisine and 1 American (either Californian, Pacific Northwest, Tex-Mex or Creole cuisine).

The menus always follow the same pattern: cold appetizer, warm appetizer, main course, cheese course and dessert.

There are some restrictions that students must observe when suggesting wine. For all 5 menus, sparkling wine may be suggested only for one appetizers. Similarly, for all menus alcoholic beverages other than wine (beer, sake, spirits, etc.) may be suggested only for the last course.

Most challengingly, the two products suggested per menu item in all menus, each suggestion must come from different varieties and different regions.

For example, if a main course from the European menu has a main course of Confit de Canard, the student faces the following restrictions: the dish must be paired with a classical European wine; both suggestions must be still wine; the two suggestions must come from different regions and different varieties. If the first wine suggested is a 2010 Marsannay from Domaine Méo-Camuzet, then the second wine cannot be from Burgundy and cannot be Pinot Noir. And, since the question always comes up, when we say region, we mean large-scale region.

Students may not, for example suggest a left-bank Bordeaux and a right-bank Bordeaux for the duck, even though the primary grape varieties are different. Students may not suggest a Barbaresco and Dolcetto d'Alba (both from Piedmont) even though the varieties are different. This rule, by the way, only applies to each course or dish on the menu. Students may suggest wines from Burgundy—even red Burgundy—for other dishes on the same menu if they want.

Explanations (or justifications) related to the food and wine pairing should demonstrate the following: an understanding of the primary structural relations and interactions between the wine and food (weight, alcohol, tannin, acidity, residual sugar, aromatic intensity, saltiness, bitterness, spiciness); an understanding of the cultural relationships between the dish and wine (if there are any); an understanding of the aromatic relationships between the wine and the food; and an understanding of the progression of wines through the full menu.

**The examination has an allocation of 2 hours in total.**

**Theory (Day 2)**

### **Exam 3 - Essays**

This section consists of 10 essay topics. Students are required to produce these essays so that the ISG can evaluate the depth and breadth of the student's knowledge. Each essay must be at least 1,200-1,300 words in words. The student's economy of expression and development is as critical as the quality of the information. Students are required to write in complete sentences (bullet-pointed lists are not acceptable). All essential terminology spelling and grammar will count up to 10% off the grade.

The essays will come from the following 10 subjects; please note that when we state a country, it can be in relation to one particular region or it may be from multiple regions including often comparing and contrasting 2 different regions within a country:

1. History or Viticulture
2. Vinification
3. France
4. Italy
5. Iberia Peninsula
6. European Cool Climate (Germany, Austria or Switzerland), Middle or Eastern Europe, Mediterranean/Levant or Asia Minor
7. United States
8. Oceania or South America
9. Sparkling
10. Fortified or Distillate/li>

**The examination has an allocation of 8 hours in total.**

### **Practical (Day 3)**

#### **Exam 4- Blind Tasting**

The ISG's blind tasting examination consists of 32 products arranged in 5 flights.

The first flight consists of 4 sparkling wines

The second flight consists of 8 rosé & white wines

The third flight consists of 8 red wines

The fourth flight consists of 6 products, spirits, sake, beer and cider

The fifth flight consists of 6 products, fortified wines, dessert wines, flavored wines and faulty wines.

Students are required to provide complete tasting notes and to identify the origins of the products and finishing with quality to price ratio evaluation and potential in the market place.

All of the products appearing on the blind tasting are classic expressions of regions, varieties, or beverage alcohol styles.

All 32 products are valued at 50 points each; half of the points are awarded for a descriptive tasting note the other half of the points are awarded for identification of the product and market evaluation.

**The examination has an allocation of 4 hours in total.**

## **Exam 5- Service**

The goal is to see a student's ability to serve wine and to communicate about wine, food, and service with guests.

In this section, the student uses his or her own full food and wine menus from their Cellar Management Practicum. Guests order wine and may also request advice on wine and food pairing.

The student will provide information and perform two forms of service—proper service of sparkling wine, and proper decanting service of mature red wine in a basket.

Students are graded on their grooming and appearance, interactions with judges, economy of movement, professionalism, proper suggestions based on judges' requests or questions and the appropriate way of complete service from beginning to end for both products.

**The examination has no specific time allocation, but typically students average between 30-40 minutes from beginning to end.**

## **Exam 6- Cellar Management Practicum**

The Cellar Management Practicum is a skill-building assignment which must be completed by all ISG sommelier students. The goal of the assignment is to introduce you to the practical managerial elements of the sommelier position and help you to develop a skill set which you can take with you into the hospitality workplace. It is also designed to help you orient yourself and how to deal within your local wine community and establish working relationships.

Parts of this assignment will also be used in the service exam and therefore it must be completed prior to examinations or the student will automatically fail their Service exam.

Furthermore, it is of enormous importance that you begin your work early in the course. This is a course length assignment which will require considerable effort, and which will provide significant rewards.

The Practicum is divided into 7 sections and must be addressed prior to examination commencement. As this is a term project due prior to exams, it does not require examination at this stage.