WSET

WSET® Level 2 Award in Beer

specification

wsetglobal.com

WSET
39–45 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF
United Kingdom
wset@wsetglobal.com
wsetglobal.com

© Wine & Spirit Education Trust 2024
Issue 1, 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without the prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Production credits
Design by Ricky Wong

Contents

Introduction	**4**
1 Introduction to the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer	**5**
2 Learning Outcomes	**7**
3 Recommended Tasting Samples	**13**
4 Exam Guidance	**15**
5 Exam Regulations	**16**
6 WSET Qualifications	**21**

Introduction

This Specification contains necessary information for both candidates and Approved Programme Providers (APPs) about the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer.

The main part of the document is a detailed statement of the Learning Outcomes of the Level 2 Award in Beer. These outcomes should be used by APPs to prepare programmes of learning, and by candidates to plan their studies, because the exam is specifically set to test these outcomes.

The Specification also provides a list of recommended tasting samples, guidance concerning the exam and the exam regulations.

At the end of this document you will also find information on the other WSET qualifications.

1
Introduction to the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer

Qualification aims

In order to study the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer, no prior knowledge is required. It is suitable both for beginners and for those who already have a professional or general interest in beer. It is suitable wherever a good level of beer knowledge is required to underpin job skills and competencies, for example in the customer service and sales functions of hospitality, retailing and wholesaling industries. It is also useful for those who have a general interest in beer and wish to broaden their knowledge.

Successful candidates will be able to understand how key ingredients and production processes influence the styles of beer; describe the styles of beer produced; and give basic guidance on appropriate selection and service, as well as understand the principles of beer tasting and evaluation.

Qualification structure

Learning Outcomes

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

Learning Outcome 1	Know the main ingredients used in beer production, understand how they are processed and their influence on the style of beer produced.
Learning Outcome 2	Understand how beer production influences the style and quality of beer.
Learning Outcome 3	Understand how key beer styles are produced and labelled and their typical characteristics.
Learning Outcome 4	Understand the key principles and processes involved in the storage and service of beer.

Enrolment

There are no restrictions on entry to the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer.

Please refer to Section 1 in Chapter 5 for additional eligibility information.

Total Qualification Time (TQT) and Guided Learning Hours (GLH)

TQT is an estimate of the total amount of time, measured in hours, that a learner would reasonably need to be able to show the level of achievement necessary for the award of a qualification. It is made up of GLH and private study time. GLH include all tutor-supervised learning and supervised assessments.

The TQT for the Level 2 Award in Beer is 28 hours. This is made up of 17 GLH (of which 1 hour is for the exam) and 11 hours' private study.

2
Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome 1

Know the main ingredients used in beer production, how they are processed and their influence on the style of beer produced.

Assessment Criteria

1. Describe how malt and adjuncts are produced and used in beer production and how they influence style.
2. Describe how water influences style.
3. Describe how different types of hops are grown and processed, and their influence on style.
4. Describe how yeast and bacteria are used in beer production and their influence on style.

Ranges

Range 1: Malt (malted grains) and adjuncts	
Barley	Parts of the barley grain Starch, enzymes, proteins and nutrients Malting process – steeping, germination, kilning The Maillard reaction, caramelisation
Malt options	Base malts – pilsner (lager) malt, pale ale malt Speciality malts – highly kilned malts, dark roasted malts, caramel (crystal) malts, smoked malts Other malted grains – malted wheat The grain bill
Adjuncts	Cereal adjuncts Sugar and sugar syrups Honey, maple syrup and black treacle (molasses)
Other	Unfermentable sugars and sweeteners

Range 2: Water	
Water	Impacts on the flavour profile – carbonates and bicarbonates, sulfate Water and style

Range 3: Hops and other flavourings	
Parts of the hop cone	Strig, bract, lupulin glands
Hop growing and production processes	Hop growing conditions, harvesting and storing
Hop characteristics	Hop bitterness, hop aromas
Hop varieties	Traditional German and Czech hops – Hallertauer Mittelfrüh, Tettnanger, Spalt, Saaz (Žatec) Traditional British hops – East Kent Golding(s), Challenger, Fuggle American hops – Cascade, Chinook, Simcoe®, Citra®, Amarillo®, Mosaic® New Zealand and Australian hops – Nelson Sauvin, Motueka, Galaxy
Hop products	Whole hops, hop pellets, hop extracts, other hop products
Other flavourings	Fruits, spices, herbs, honey

Range 4: Yeast and bacteria	
	Cultured yeast strains
Ale yeast	Abbey ale yeast, saison yeast, witbier yeast, weizen yeast, British ale yeast, American ale yeast Flavours produced in fermentation, impact on beer produced
Lager yeast	Flavours produced in fermentation, impact on beer produced
***Brettanomyces* (Brett)**	Flavours produced in fermentation, impact on beer produced
Bacteria	Lactic acid bacteria, acetic acid bacteria, impact on beer produced

Learning Outcome 2

Understand how beer production influences the style and quality of beer.

Assessment Criteria

1. State the process involved in and the products of alcoholic fermentation.
2. Describe the key stages and equipment used in the brewing process.
3. Know the main beer production options and how they influence the style and quality of beer.

Ranges

Range 1: Brewing	
Alcoholic fermentation process	Yeast converts sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide and produces aromas and heat
Brewing process	Milling Mashing Mash separation – sparging Wort boiling and main hop additions Wort clarification Wort cooling Fermentation – fermentation with cultured ale yeast or lager yeast, mixed fermentation, attenuation Maturation – ale maturation, lager maturation Fermentation or maturation in wooden vessels Filtration Carbonation Packaging Pasteurisation Cask-conditioning
Brewing equipment	Mill, mashing vessel, lauter tun, kettle (copper), whirlpool, heat exchanger, fermentation vessel, filter, maturation vessel
Beer production options	Timing of hop additions Original extract and original gravity Fermentation/maturation temperature Fermentation/maturation length
Spontaneous and mixed culture fermentation options	Spontaneous fermentation, maturation in wooden vessels, blending, wort/kettle souring, co-fermentation

Learning Outcome 3

Understand how key beer styles are produced and labelled and their typical characteristics.

Assessment Criteria

1. Identify the terms used to label key beer styles and describe the typical characteristics of the beer associated with these labelling terms.
2. Describe the options for using malt and adjuncts, hops, and yeast and bacteria in the production of key beer styles.
3. Describe key brewing processes used to produce key beer styles.

Ranges

Range 1: Malt-driven styles	
Malt-driven lagers	
Straw or gold-coloured lagers	American lager International pale lager Light lager Munich helles
Amber, copper or brown-coloured lagers	Munich dunkel International dark lager Märzen Vienna lager International amber lager
Strong lagers	Helles bock Dunkles bock Doppelbock
Smoked lager	Rauchbier märzen, *Rauchbier*
Malt-driven ales	
Straw or gold-coloured ales	American blonde ale American wheat ale Kölsch
Amber, copper or brown-coloured ales	Irish red ale Brown ale (American-style, British-style)
Brown or black-coloured ales	Porter (American-style, English-style) Dark mild ale Irish stout Other stouts: oatmeal stout, American stout, sweet stout
Strong ales	Imperial stout Barley wine (American-style, English-style) Scotch ale

Range 2: Hop-driven styles	
Hop-driven lagers	
Traditional Czech and German hops	Czech pilsner German pilsner
American, Australian and New Zealand hops	Contemporary hopped lager
Hop-driven ales	
Traditional British hops	Bitter: ordinary bitter, best bitter, strong bitter (extra special bitter)
Traditional German hops	Altbier
American hops	American pale ale (APA) American amber ale IPA (India pale ale): American IPA (West Coast IPA), double IPA (imperial IPA), hazy IPA (New England IPA, juicy IPA), other IPAs

Range 3: Yeast-driven styles	
Yeast-driven ales	
Abbey ale yeast	Dubbel Tripel Related labelling term: Trappist
Saison yeast	Saison
Witbier yeast	Witbier
Weizen yeast	Weissbier (hefeweizen) Dunkelweizen Kristallweizen Weizenbock

Range 4: Mixed fermentation styles	
Production	Spontaneous fermentation, coolship (*koelschip*) Mixed culture fermentation: Wort/kettle souring, co-fermentation
Spontaneous fermentation styles	Lambic styles: geuze (gueuze), fruit lambic (*kriek*, *framboise*) Related labelling terms: *oude or vieille/vieux*
Mixed culture fermentation styles	Berliner weisse Gose Flanders red Oud bruin

Range 5: Other Speciality Beers	
	Barrel aged beer Flavoured beer Low-alcohol and alcohol-free beer Gluten-free or gluten-reduced beer

Learning Outcome 4

Understand the key principles and processes involved in the storage and service of beer.

Assessment Criteria

1. State the ideal conditions for storing beer.
2. State the recommended temperatures and correct procedures for serving beer.
3. Describe how common faults affect the aromas and flavours of beer.
4. Describe the principal food and beer interactions.

Ranges

Range 1: Storage and service	
Ideal conditions for storage	Drink beer as fresh as possible, keep beer cool, keep beer sealed, protect beer from light, store cans and crown-cap bottles upright, bottle ageing
Packaging and shelf life	Kegs, casks, bottles and cans, growlers
Service temperature	Suggested service temperature
Glassware	Glassware examples: chalice, dimpled mug, footed pilsner, *Masskrug*, nonic pint, shaker, snifter, *Stange*, stemmed tulip, teku, thistle, *Weizenglas*
Beer on tap	Pouring keg beer Pouring nitrogenated beer Pouring cask beer
Bottled beer	Opening a bottle sealed with a crown cap Opening a bottle sealed with a crown cap and cork Opening a bottle sealed with a mushroom cork Pouring bottled beer
Common faults	DMS (dimethyl sulphide), acetaldehyde, diacetyl, phenolic off-flavours, staling, light strike (skunking), bacterial infection
Beer and food	Preferences and sensitivities Primary interactions: sweetness in food, umami in food, acidity in food, salt in food, bitterness in food, chilli heat in food Application Other considerations: intensity, aromas, carbonation

3 Recommended Tasting Samples

Samples should be chosen from the list of styles included in this Specification under Learning Outcome 3.

Tasting and evaluating beer

- One amber, copper or brown-coloured malt-driven ale or lager
- One hop-driven ale or lager brewed with American, Australian or New Zealand hops
- One yeast-driven ale
- One mixed fermentation style with prominent acidity
- Optional: up to two additional styles that show contrasting characteristics

The samples chosen should show a clear contrast in aroma profile as well as variety in terms of colour, clarity, bitterness, sweetness and acidity levels.

Brewing process and malting

- One straw or gold-coloured malt-driven ale or lager
- One amber, copper or brown-coloured malt-driven ale or lager

The samples chosen should focus on malt-driven characteristics, showing a clear contrast in aroma profile and colour.

Malt-driven styles

- Two malt-driven lagers
- Two malt-driven ales

The samples chosen should focus on malt-driven characteristics, showing a clear contrast in aroma profile, colour and alcohol level.

Hop-driven styles

- Two hop-driven lagers
- Two hop-driven ales

The samples chosen should focus on hop-driven characteristics, showing a clear contrast in aroma profile and bitterness.

Yeast-driven styles

- Four yeast-driven styles

The samples chosen should focus on yeast-driven characteristics, showing a clear contrast in aroma profile.

Mixed fermentation styles

- One spontaneous fermentation style
- One mixed culture fermentation style
- Optional: two additional mixed fermentation styles

The samples chosen should focus on mixed fermentation characteristics, showing a clear contrast in aroma profile.

Other speciality beers

- One low alcohol beer
- One gluten-free or gluten-reduced beer
- One flavoured beer (brewed with non-traditional flavourings)
- Optional: one additional flavoured beer (brewed with traditional flavourings)
- One barrel aged beer

Storage and service – off-flavours

Light strike tasting:

- Straw or gold-coloured malt-driven lager (control sample)
- Same brand of straw or gold-coloured malt-driven lager (light-struck sample)

Staling tasting:

- Straw or gold-coloured malt-driven lager (control sample)
- Same brand of straw or gold-coloured malt-driven lager (stale sample)

4
Exam Guidance

Exam administration

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

Assessment method

The WSET Level 2 Award in Beer is assessed by a closed-book theory exam of 50 multiple-choice questions, to be completed in 60 minutes. Each question has only one correct answer, which should be indicated on either (a) a computer-readable answer sheet, or (b) a computer/other device, depending on the mode of assessment delivery. Full instructions on how to complete the test will be given on the day of the exam.

Each correctly answered multiple-choice question is worth one mark, and marks are NOT subtracted for incorrect answers. A candidate is required to pass with a minimum mark of 55 per cent (28 marks out of 50).

About the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer exam

All exam questions are based on the published Learning Outcomes and exam papers are carefully compiled to reflect this content. The recommended study materials (*Beer: Looking behind the label*) contain the information required to answer these questions.

A chart giving a detailed breakdown of the exam weighting is shown below.

Learning Outcome	Number of multiple-choice questions (1 mark per question)
Learning Outcome 1	14
Learning Outcome 2	14
Learning Outcome 3	16
Learning Outcome 4	6
Total number of questions	**50**

5
Exam Regulations

1 Entry requirements

1.1 Eligibility

1.1.1 Candidates applying to sit the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer exam must be over the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country where the exam is being held, or be preparing for the exam as part of a recognised full-time programme of study, or have obtained consent from their parents or legal guardians.

1.1.2 There are no restrictions on entry to the WSET Level 2 Award in Beer through overlaps with other qualifications or parts of qualifications.

1.1.3 Candidates who are under the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcoholic beverages in the country where the exam is being held, or those who choose not to taste alcohol (e.g. for health or religious reasons) will not be allowed/required to sample any alcoholic beverage as part of their course, but this is not a barrier to successfully completing the qualification.

1.2 Recommended prior learning

1.2.1 There are no requirements for candidates to have previous knowledge or previous experience of alcoholic beverages.

1.2.2 Candidates sitting in English where it is not their first language are strongly recommended to have IELTS at 6 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 exam.

2 Format and results

2.1 The WSET Level 2 Award in Beer assessment is a closed-book exam of 60 minutes' duration and consists of 50 multiple-choice questions worth one mark each.

2.2 Exam results are issued by WSET as follows:

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

2.3 Results are graded as follows:

Grade band	Required percentage
Fail unclassified	Mark of 44% or below
Fail	Mark of between 45% and 54%
Pass	Mark of between 55% and 69%
Pass with merit	Mark of between 70% and 84%
Pass with distinction	Mark of 85% or more

WSET reserves the right to make changes to the grading algorithms and grade thresholds published above.

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

3 Reasonable adjustments

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

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

4 Resits

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

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

5 Exam conditions and conduct

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

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

In-person exams

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

- Any candidate who is suspected of misconduct will be advised to leave the exam room immediately.
- No exam question papers are to be removed from the exam room; candidates who fail to submit the question paper with their answer sheet will be deemed guilty of misconduct.

Remote invigilation exams

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

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

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

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

6 Exam feedback, enquiries and appeals

6.1 Candidates requiring enquiry (re-mark) and/or feedback on their exam paper should contact their APP and request an Enquiry and Feedback Form.

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

7 Candidate satisfaction

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

8 General conduct

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

9 Exam regulations

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

6
WSET Qualifications

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

WSET Level 1 Award in Beer
WSET Level 2 Award in Beer

WSET Level 1 Award in Sake (603/2051/5)
WSET Level 2 Award in Sake
WSET Level 3 Award in Sake (603/2066/7)

WSET Level 1 Award in Spirits (600/1501/9)
WSET Level 2 Award in Spirits (600/1507/X)
WSET Level 3 Award in Spirits

WSET Level 1 Award in Wines (600/1504/4)
WSET Level 2 Award in Wines (603/4432/5)
WSET Level 3 Award in Wines (601/6352/5)
WSET Level 4 Diploma in Wines

More information about all of these qualifications can be found on the WSET website wsetglobal.com.

Regulation

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

Diversity and equality policy

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

WSET prizes

Candidates who have achieved outstanding marks in their exams may be eligible for a prize and will be contacted by WSET should this apply. For more details on the prizes available, please go to:
https://www.wsetglobal.com/about-us/awards-bursaries/

WSET

A world of knowledge

WSET
39–45 Bermondsey Street
London SE1 3XF

+44(0)20 7089 3800
wset@wsetglobal.com
wsetglobal.com

Issue 1