

DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY POLICY

Thames Valley Wine School is committed to creating and supporting a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected. We consider and uphold the principles of diversity and equality in all areas of our work, seeking to ensure that all students, staff and other stakeholders are treated fairly and equally at all times.

Thames Valley Wine School assures equality of participation and opportunity for all by:

- Promoting open access to all events and qualifications (while observing relevant local legislation including the legal minimum age for the retail purchase of alcohol and assessment competence standards)
- Ensuring that the format and content of all events and qualifications and any related promotional or course materials do not discriminate unlawfully against anyone on the grounds of disability, age, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation or any other protected characteristic
- Allowing candidates with special educational needs, disabilities, or temporary injuries to access WSET qualifications in line with WSET's Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policies
- Inviting feedback on diversity issues from attendees, staff and stakeholders and working with relevant organisations as appropriate to develop measures to identify and prevent inequality of opportunity
- Reviewing this policy regularly to ensure it continues to meet legislative and organisational requirements and goals.

Any enquiries relating to this Diversity and Equality Policy should be made via email to Thamesvalley@localwineschool.com. Any individual who believes that they have been unfairly discriminated against by Thames Valley Wine School, its staff or representatives should, in the first instance, notify Thames Valley Wine School by emailing Thamesvalley@localwineschool.com. Should such individual feel that their concerns have not been adequately addressed or resolved, and where such concerns relate to the delivery of WSET Qualifications and a possible failure of Thames Valley Wine School to meet the WSET code of conduct, they can report their concern to QA@wsetglobal.com.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS POLICY

Special consideration is any adjustment given to a student who has temporarily experienced an illness or injury, or other event outside of their control at the time of the exam that significantly affects their ability to take the exam or their ability to show their knowledge and understanding in the assessment. Special consideration is only for things that happen *immediately before or during* an exam that have a material impact on your, the student's, ability to take the exam or on your performance. To be eligible for special consideration, you must have completed the whole course and would have been fully prepared if not for the temporary illness, injury or other uncontrollable event. A special consideration may be for an individual (e.g. a student becomes ill the day of the exam) or a group of students (e.g. an exam is interrupted by a natural disaster).

You may be eligible for special consideration if:

- Your performance on the exam is adversely affected by an event outside of your control. This may include temporary illness, temporary injury, bereavement or exam room conditions;
- Reasonable adjustments which were agreed in advance of the exam proved inappropriate or inadequate;
- The application of special consideration would not make a passing result and certificate misleading about the student's ability to satisfy the qualification's assessment criteria.

Applying for special consideration

If you have taken an exam, or your exam is immediately approaching, and you feel that you have a temporary injury or illness, or other uncontrollable event that has interfered with your ability to complete your exam, please contact Alex Stevenson at thamesvalley@localwineschool.com as soon as possible. Thames Valley Wine School will provide you with a Special Consideration Application Form, which must be completed and returned with supporting documentation within **5 working days** after the effected exam. The information you submit will be shared with WSET and will be handled under WSET's Privacy and Data Protection Policy.

If there has been serious disruption during an exam affecting a group of students, Thames Valley Wine School will submit a detailed report of the circumstances and candidates affected to WSET to request a special consideration.

Thames Valley Wine School will keep records of all applications for special consideration.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY

Thames Valley Wine School is committed to providing a friendly, professional and efficient service to all of its customers. However, we acknowledge that sometimes issues may arise that might prevent us from delivering the levels of service to which we strive. In such cases where any individual feels that Thames Valley Wine School has failed to deliver the high standard of service expected, they should follow the steps below in order to make us aware of their concerns and allow us to investigate and resolve them.

All complaints should in the first instance be made via email to thamesvalley@localwineschool.com and include:

- The name of the person making the complaint
- Email and telephone contact details of the person making the complaint
- A description of the complaint and the event or service or lack thereof to which it relates
- The date on which the events relating to the complaint took place
- Details of any prior written or verbal communication between the individual and Thames Valley Wine School or any of its staff or representatives relating to the complaint

Any and all such complaints will be treated in strict confidence.

Upon receipt of a complaint via email to the address stated above, Thames Valley Wine School will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days of delivery
- Will begin an investigation of the circumstances surrounding the complaint. At this stage, should any further information or detail be required, Thames Valley Wine School will contact the complainant via email at the address provided in their initial complaint to request such information
- Within 14 working days of either i) the receipt of the initial complaint or ii) in the case of a request for further information to be provided by the complainant, the receipt of such further information, provide a detailed response to the complaint which provides an explanation of the circumstances around its occurrence
- Make clear to the complainant whether the complaint is accepted or rejected (such as where the cause of the complaint can be shown to be wholly or in part due to the action or inaction of the complainant).
- Propose a resolution to the complaint. Such resolution may include, but not be limited to, a written apology, a refund of part or all of any fees paid, provision of a voucher or discount code for a future event or any other such measure as deemed appropriate by Thames Valley Wine School.

Should the above actions fail to result in a resolution of the individual's complaint, they should notify Thames Valley Wine School via email to thamesvalley@localwineschool.com and Wine School Franchises Ltd (t/a Local Wine School, the franchisor under which Thames Valley Wine School operates) at rob@localwineschools.com. Local Wine Schools will review the complaint and act as arbitrator, as required, between the complainant and Thames Valley Wine School.

If the complaint relates to the delivery of WSET Qualifications and a possible failure of Thames Valley Wine School to meet the WSET code of conduct, and after all other avenues have been explored, the individual may address their complaint to Governance@WSETglobal.com.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

As an APP, Thames Valley Wine School is required to identify to WSET and assist in managing or monitoring actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest ('Conflicts of Interest') involving both APP staff and students. This policy complements WSET's Conflicts of Interest policy and works to safeguard the integrity of WSET qualifications and promote confidence in WSET and Thames Valley Wine School processes and procedures.

This policy applies to all Thames Valley Wine School staff and students and to any individual acting on behalf of Thames Valley Wine School.

A Conflict of Interest exists where an individual has interests or loyalties that could adversely influence their judgement, objectivity or loyalty to WSET or Thames Valley Wine School when conducting activities associated with WSET qualifications. Examples of Conflicts of Interest include:

- The assessment of candidates by an individual who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment for any or all individuals concerned
- The moderation of assessment of candidates by an individual who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment for any or all individuals concerned
- The undertaking of a WSET qualification by any individual employed by an APP
- The invigilation of a WSET assessment by any individual involved in the delivery of training leading to the assessment
- The coaching of candidates by any individual involved in the assessment of candidate scripts
- The employment by an APP of individuals engaged in the delivery of taught programmes or in the role of Internal Assessor in another APP
- The investigation of a non-compliance incident by someone who is unable to act impartially.

Some of these Conflicts of Interest are manageable and therefore acceptable. For example, if family member of one of Thames Valley Wine School's educators or APP staff takes a qualification and exam through Thames Valley Wine School, or when an employee of Thames Valley Wine School, or of the WSET, takes a WSET qualification through Thames Valley Wine School, we can notify WSET in advance and work with them to put in place measures to maintain the integrity of the exam.

Some Conflicts of Interest are not manageable and are not acceptable. For example, no mitigation efforts overcome the conflict created when a single individual serves as the educator and exam officer of an exam for a family member where an external invigilator is not available. Any staff member or student of Thames Valley Wine School who becomes aware of a Conflict of Interest must inform the Main Contact, Alex Stevenson, via email to thamesvalley@localwineschool.com as soon as possible. Alex Stevenson will inform the WSET of the possible conflict of interest and will work with WSET to put any protective or mitigating measures in place to manage the conflict on a case-by-case basis.

If WSET and Thames Valley Wine School determine the conflict is not manageable, Alex Stevenson will inform any impacted APP staff or students.

Please note that the failure to declare a conflict of interest may have consequences for the student or Thames Valley Wine School because we are required to report conflicts to WSET.

MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION POLICY

Both Thames Valley Wine School and WSET have policies and procedures in place to protect WSET students and safeguard the integrity of WSET qualifications. Thames Valley Wine School ensures compliance with Thames Valley Wine School and WSET's policies through this Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, which gives a framework for both us and you to identify, report and manage potential malpractice or maladministration.

Non-compliance with Thames Valley Wine School or WSET Policies and Procedures can fall into two distinct, but related, categories:

1. Maladministration, where the non-compliance is generally unintentional, or the result of mistakes, carelessness, inexperience or poor processes; and
2. Malpractice where the non-compliance is intentional or the result of a negligent or reckless action without consideration of the consequences of the action.

Context is important and the line between maladministration or malpractice is not always clear: for example, maladministration incidents may become malpractice (eg if you fail to implement corrective measures, repeat the same or similar incident, or attempt to misrepresent or hide information during an investigation); or there may be mitigating factors that turn potential malpractice into maladministration. Though malpractice and maladministration are distinct concepts, they can shade into one another. Malpractice and maladministration are always case, context and fact specific. Both APPs and students can commit malpractice and maladministration.

There are many ways that malpractice or maladministration could occur, including new ways we have not seen yet. But some examples of malpractice or maladministration include:

APP Malpractice or Maladministration:

- Failure to adhere to WSET Policies and Procedures
- Failure to follow WSET requirements for course delivery or exam regulations
- Failure to follow WSET's candidate registration and certification procedures
- Late student registrations
- Fraudulent claims for certificates/fraudulent use of certificates/reproduction or forgery of certificates
- Withholding critical information from WSET quality assurance
- Insecure storage of exam materials
- Revealing or sharing confidential exam materials with candidates ahead of an exam
- Intentional attempts to manipulate exam results so that they do not reflect the candidate's actual exam performance
- Issue of incorrect exam results/failure to issue results to students in a timely manner
- Failure to respond to WSET in a timely manner
- Unauthorised reading/amendment/copying/distribution of exam papers
- Failure to report changes in APP ownership/personnel/location/facilities
- Denying WSET access to information, documentation, workforce, facilities

- Failure to return exam papers within the specified timeframe or to follow delivery and tracking regulations
- Infringements of WSET copyright, trademarks, intellectual property rights and brand identity
- Use of unqualified and/or unregistered educators or internal assessors
- Breach of confidentiality
- Misleading advertising/publicity
- Any action likely to lead to an adverse effect
- Failure to disclose a Conflict of Interest

Student Malpractice:

- Cheating, or facilitating cheating, including the use of unauthorised devices or materials
- Disruptive behaviour in an exam
- Plagiarism of any nature by students
- Impersonation (including forgery of signatures)
- Unauthorised reading/amendment/copying/distribution of exam papers
- Any action likely to lead to an adverse effect
- Breach of confidentiality

In general, we also expect that both Thames Valley Wine School staff and our students should treat others, and be treated, professionally and respectfully at all times. We will treat inappropriate behaviour including verbal or physical abuse, persistent or unrealistic demands, or threats that cause stress to staff as misconduct and may report student misconduct to WSET as necessary.

Reporting and Investigation of Malpractice or Maladministration

As an APP, we aim to ensure compliance with WSET Policies and Thames Valley Wine School policies and will keep records of potential or actual malpractice or maladministration by you, our students, or our staff.

We are required to notify WSET immediately of any non-compliance issues that could be malpractice or maladministration, so that WSET can investigate the non-compliance under their own Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

We ask that you also raise any concerns or non-compliance issues that may be malpractice or maladministration with Thames Valley Wine School as soon as possible by following the process outlined in our Complaints policy. During WSET's investigation, they may reach out to Thames Valley Wine School or to you directly to request further information or conduct an interview. Please respond to any requests promptly and honestly.

Managing Non-Compliance

If WSET identifies malpractice or maladministration, they will consider its impact and may apply sanctions. WSET will take all reasonable steps to ensure the sanctions do not disadvantage uninvolved students affected by malpractice or maladministration. However, in some cases, they may need to disallow or withhold results and/or certificates.

WSET will consider all relevant information on a case-by-case basis, balancing the facts with potential or actual effects, and against the seriousness of the sanctions against those effects. WSET records all malpractice and maladministration incidents for both APPs and students. If WSET determines that a student has committed malpractice or maladministration, they may apply one or any of the following sanctions:

- **Written Warning:** the student is issued with a written warning that if the offence is repeated within a set period of time, then further specified sanctions will be applied
- **Exam Result Declared Null and Void:** a student's exam result is disallowed. This may include invalidation and recall of a certificate already issued
- **Disqualification from a Qualification:** the student is disqualified from participating in the concerned qualification with immediate effect and further excluded from participating in any further WSET qualifications for a period of 12 months. This includes access to WSET materials
- **Student Disqualification:** the learner is disqualified from participating in any courses or assessments leading to WSET qualifications. This includes access to WSET materials
- **Disqualification from use of WSET certified logos and postnominals:** actions bringing WSET into disrepute may result in the student or graduate being barred from use of WSET postnominals and WSET certified logos.

Appeals

If you wish to appeal penalties or sanctions WSET has imposed due to Malpractice or Maladministration, please follow the procedures laid out in WSET's Complaints Policy.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS POLICY

WSET and Thames Valley Wine School want to make WSET assessments accessible for all students, so none are at an advantage or disadvantage based on a disability or differing ability. This policy and the reasonable adjustment process allows us, Thames Valley Wine School, to work with you, our student, *before an assessment* to gather the information we need to submit a request to WSET and work with them to make arrangements that give students access to WSET qualifications.

A **reasonable adjustment** is any accommodation or arrangement that helps to reduce the effect of a known disability or difficulty that substantially disadvantages a student's assessment. Using a reasonable adjustment does not impact how WSET grades your exam, or your result, but WSET cannot agree to reasonable adjustments where your particular difficulty directly affects performance necessary to complete the assessment outcomes (e.g. inability to smell or taste for a Level 3 Exam). The goal of a reasonable adjustment is to give you equal access to a WSET qualification, not to give unfair advantages over other students who take an assessment without the same adjustment, or to affect the overall reliability of the assessment outcomes that are explained in the course Specification.

Examples of reasonable adjustments may be:

- Changing standard assessment arrangements, for example allowing candidates extra time to complete the assessment activity;
- Adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in large text format;
- Providing access facilitators during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or reader;
- Re-organising the assessment room, such as removal of visual stimuli for an autistic candidate.

Thames Valley Wine School will gather the information we need from you to submit a Reasonable Adjustment Application form to WSET. WSET must approve and arrange reasonable adjustments before the assessment activity takes place. Before completing enrolment with Thames Valley Wine School, we will give all students access to this policy and the chance to identify any special needs that could require a reasonable adjustment. If a student identifies a special need, Thames Valley Wine School will give the student the Reasonable Adjustment Application form as soon as possible and work with the student to gather the necessary information.

For any student seeking a reasonable adjustment, please contact Ian Hardwick at info@eastlondonwineschool.com with:

- your full name
- contact information
- description of the special need, disability or differing ability that requires an adjustment; and
- supporting documentation.

You must submit this information **at least 30 working days** before the exam date for Levels 1-3 qualifications. The information you submit will be shared with WSET and will be handled under WSET's Privacy and Data Protection Policy.

Thames Valley Wine School will keep records of all reasonable adjustment applications.