



COFFEE QUALITY  
INSTITUTE®

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## Q Arabica and Q Robusta

*Promoting a Common Language of Quality*



The Q Program, developed by Coffee Quality Institute (CQI), identifies quality coffees and brings them to market through a credible and verifiable system. A common standard for **Q Arabica** (Specialty Grade) and **Q Robusta** (Fine Robusta Grade) has resulted in a universally shared language and top scoring lots.

The Q Program provides opportunities for producers to access premium prices, increase competitiveness, and improve economic viability. Considered “the tool of the trade”, it allows buyers and sellers to better articulate their needs and provides producers with a tool to increase competitiveness. It teaches specialized skills to coffee industry professionals so they can identify and distinguish cup attributes according to global standards. Independent of geographic, linguistic, or cultural barriers, buyers and sellers benefit from a shared understanding of product value linked to quality, allowing for more effective negotiations.

In order to become a certified grader by CQI, individuals must pass 19 tests that measure their ability to accurately and consistently cup and grade coffee according to standards set by the Specialty Coffee Association (arabica) or CQI (robusta). Licenses must be renewed every three years through a CQI calibration course, which allows the opportunity to not only calibrate skills but to adapt to coffee standard developments and changes.

## 6000 Licensed Cuppers Worldwide



Since 2003, the Q Program has trained thousands of passionate coffee experts across the value chain, certifying that cuppers have the necessary sensory skills, technical knowledge, and judgment to grade quality coffee from green analysis to an in-depth cupping evaluation. This license, the most relevant coffee taster certification in the world, is a globally recognized professional accreditation.

CQI's Q Arabica and Q Robusta Grader courses are built for individuals who have experience cupping, with the respective arabica (SCA) and robusta (CQI) forms, on a regular basis. CQI also offers a three-day introductory course to prepare novice cuppers for the more rigorous Q Grader course, or to better understand specialty coffee grading processes and purpose.



Q ARABICA™



Q ROBUSTA™





## Q Arabica Grader

Q ARABICA



Q Arabica Graders are trained and licensed by CQI based on the industry-standardized cupping protocols and standards for arabica coffee, established by the Specialty Coffee Association.

## Q Robusta Grader

Q ROBUSTA



Q Robusta Graders are trained and licensed by CQI based on fine robusta protocols and standards; these standards were originally developed in collaboration with the Uganda Coffee Development Authority.

## The Pre-Q Course

The Pre-Q Course, offered for both arabica and robusta, is a foundational training in the professional skills required to cup coffee samples using physical and sensory criteria. This course involves lectures, cupping practice and mock-testing, and provides the students with a solid understanding of how to identify and differentiate coffees using globally recognized standards. It is appropriate preparation for CQI's Q Grader Courses and supports general professional development for all coffee professionals.

### Expected Results:

Students will have a professional level understanding of the mechanisms used to identify quality coffees using a cupping form (SCA arabica or CQI fine robusta). They will be able to use a common language of coffee standards to discuss coffee quality as well as have an understanding of their own sensory acuity and flavor memory. Students are strongly encouraged to wait three months after taking the Pre-Q Course to practice their newly acquired skills before participating in a full Q Course. CQI's Pre Q-Course is a participation course only (not a professional certification).



### Course Content:



- 1 How to evaluate coffees using a cupping form (SCA arabica or CQI robusta)
- 2 Calibration discussions to learning common language to describe specialty coffees
- 3 Use of and practice with Le Nez du Café / Le Nez du Vin kits to identify aromas and the SCA Flavor Wheel.
- 4 Understand and perform mock triangulation exams
- 5 Learn to identify sensory levels: sweet, salt, sour and bitter
- 6 Understand SCA and CQI tools used to grade green coffee samples
- 7 Understand CQI Q System

## The Q Arabica Grader Course

There are no prerequisites to enroll in a Q Arabica Grader Course. However, the individual must be very experienced in sensory analysis and use of the arabica standards and cupping form in order to pass all tests.

### Course and Exams

This course is an intensive overview of the cupping skills and grading protocols required of a certified Q Arabica Grader, combined with a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's ability to consistently cup and grade green arabica coffee. A Q Arabica Grader is a highly trained and calibrated coffee taster who evaluates coffee using SCA cupping standards and protocols.

Students successfully completing this course will be able to objectively evaluate arabica coffee based on cup quality and provide feedback on cup nuances, defects and flavors and will gain a thorough understanding of the arabica cupping and grading standards and protocols, including the SCA cupping form.

This course consists of two parts: the first is a 3-day training in all activities, which is followed by a 3-day series of exams regarding the material presented. There are a total of 19 different exams taken during the course. The course includes activities to train and test the cupper's skills in evaluating coffee using a traditional cupping format: tests include olfactory senses, green coffee grading, acid identification, basic cupping skill evaluations, sensory skills tests, and roasted coffee. The purpose of the exams is to evaluate the student's ability to accurately and consistently cup and grade coffee according to standards set for arabica coffee by the Specialty Coffee Association.

This course is rigorous and consequently some students find it challenging to pass all 19 exam on the first try. The final day will allow participants to retake certain tests, as needed or allowed, per CQI rules and available supplies.

### Certificate:

Students completing this course, including passing all 19 exams, will receive a Q Arabica Grader certificate from CQI. This signifies that the individual is a highly trained and calibrated coffee taster who is able to evaluate coffee using SCA cupping standards and protocols for specialty coffee. CQI's Q Arabica Grader certificate is valid for three years.

### Course Modules:

- 1 Introduction to CQI and the Q Coffee System
- 2 SCA Arabica Cupping Form and Calibration
- 3 Cupping and Triangulation Sessions: Washed Milds, African, Natural and Asia
- 4 Green Grading and Roasted Grading
- 5 Sample Roast ID
- 6 Organic Acids
- 7 Le Nez du Café
- 8 Sensory Skills
- 9 General Coffee Knowledge

## The Q Robusta Grader Course

There are no prerequisites to enroll in a Q Robusta Grader Course. However, the individual should be very experienced in sensory analysis and familiarized with CQI's fine robusta standards and cupping form.

### Course and Exams

This course is an intensive study of cupping and grading protocols required of a certified Q Robusta Grader, combined with a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's ability to consistently cup and grade green robusta coffee. A Q Robusta Grader is a highly trained and calibrated coffee taster who evaluates coffee using CQI's fine robusta cupping standards and protocols.

This course consists of two parts: the first is a 3-day training on all activities, which is followed by a 3-day series of exams regarding the material presented. There are a total of 19 exams taken during the course. The course includes various activities to train and test the cuppers' skills in evaluating a coffee in a traditional cupping format: tests include olfactory senses, green coffee grading, acid identification, basic cupping skill evaluations, sensory skills tests, and roasted coffee tests. The purpose of the exams is to evaluate the student's ability to accurately and consistently cup and grade coffee according to standards set by the CQI for robusta coffee.

This course is rigorous; consequently some students find it challenging to pass all 19 exam on the first try. The final day will allow participants to retake certain tests, as needed or allowed, per CQI rules and available supplies.

### Certificate:

Students completing this course, including passing all 19 exams, will receive a Q Robusta Grader certificate from CQI. This signifies that the individual is a highly trained and calibrated coffee taster who is able to evaluate coffee using CQI cupping standards and protocols for quality differentiated coffees. CQI's Q Robusta Grader certificate is valid for three years.

### Course Modules:

- 1 Introduction to CQI and the Q Coffee System
- 2 CQI Fine Robusta Cupping Form and Calibration
- 3 Cupping and Triangulation Sessions: East and West Africa, Asia, America
- 4 Green Grading and Roasted Grading
- 5 Sample Roast ID
- 6 Organic Acids
- 7 Le Nez du Café and Le Nez du Vin
- 8 Sensory Skills
- 9 General Coffee Knowledge – Robusta Focused



IMPROVING QUALITY  
CHANGING LIVES.