

WSET Level 4 Diploma Theory Guidance

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1. How Should I Approach My Theory Studies?

The Diploma follows the WSET *Level 3 Award in Wines* (previously the *Level 3 Award in Wines and Spirits*), but its scope – both in terms of what you need to know and how you need to apply it – is much broader.

You will need to pass five closed-book examinations and one open-book coursework assignment. These assessments are designed to test your knowledge of the world of wines, but also a variety of skills, such as, the ability to explain concepts clearly and apply understanding from one concept to another.

All of this means that you will need to plan your studies carefully, settling on a learning strategy that works for you. If you feel that you have yet to find the right method for you, speak to your educators or ask fellow students for their tips. In this section, we make some suggestions that may help you to organise your work throughout the course and in the run-up to the examinations.

PLANNING YOUR STUDIES

Given the amount of material you will need to cover for the Diploma, planning your studies is especially important. If you have a clear idea of what you are going to do and when, you are more likely to:

- Cover everything you need to study
- Fit your study around your other commitments
- Avoid having to cram just before the exam

Before you get started, you should read the latest version of the Specification for the WSET *Level 4 Diploma in Wines* (here referred to as the '**Specification**'). This sets out in detail the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each Unit of the Diploma and therefore is the definitive guide on what topics you need to know and what skills you may be expected to demonstrate in the examinations. Reading the Specification carefully before you embark on your studies will help ensure that you cover the necessary material for each Unit in the correct level of detail.

The Specification also provides useful information about how the syllabus is weighted between Units, and lists important regulations that you should be familiar with when you come to take the Diploma examinations.

The next step in planning your studies should be to find out when your examinations will take place and work out what material you need to cover by when. Taking account of the course activities included in your study programme (be they classroom sessions or assignments within the online course), you should then allocate time to:

1. Reading and taking notes
2. Consolidating your knowledge
3. Tasting
4. Revising and practising exam technique

The Specification estimates that the total time that a learner would reasonably need to be able to show the level of achievement necessary to obtain the Diploma qualification is 500 hours, of which 372 hours is private study time. This estimate may, of course, be more or less accurate for different students. Consider your reading speed, how easily you memorise large amounts of information, and how much time you may need to work on exam technique. It is typically better to be generous when planning how much time you need to dedicate to your studies.

Reading and Taking Notes

Reading and taking notes is the first step in accumulating knowledge. There are many ways of taking notes and which method you use will be a matter of personal preference. Some people use digital

means (e.g. a note taking app), others pen and paper. Some people write their notes while others highlight sections in a text.

Whichever way you choose to take notes, you should focus on extracting the key points from the learning material you are using. Too much detail can be overwhelming, so try to identify and link common themes between topics as building blocks to structure your learning. By getting to grips with D1 topics such as the growing environment, grape growing and winemaking, and D2 topics such as the factors that contribute to the price of a bottle of wine, options for getting the wine to market and considerations within marketing, you can build a solid foundation of knowledge which can streamline the learning process for other Units.

It would be a good idea at this point to log in to the eBook platform and have an initial glance at the books required for your course. Consider the length of each book and how long reading and taking notes may take when drawing up your study plan.

Consolidating Your Knowledge

Everyone takes on information at different rates. Some people can absorb a lot of detail quickly with minimal difficulty; others prefer to take more time. Consolidation involves reinforcing the knowledge you are acquiring as you study. There are several methods of doing this, active and passive.

By actively reviewing your theory notes, and clarifying any ambiguities as you cover each topic, you can produce a clear and concise set of notes that you can revise from confidently. By referring to the Specification, you can also check whether or not you have all the details you need for that particular Unit.

Another active method of consolidating your knowledge of a specific topic is to try to explain it to someone else. Their questions can focus the mind, helping you to make important connections between material from different Units which might not have been obvious when you first studied the topic.

You are not required to read additional resources outside of the eBooks provided by WSET. However, you may find that exploring additional resources is a helpful method of passively consolidating your knowledge and understanding. Keeping up with developments in the wine industry by reading the trade press can give context to what you are learning. This in turn can provide a fresh perspective and reinforce your understanding of the subject matter. The examiners will give credit for information gained in external resources should it be relevant to the question set. However, in all questions, you can pass, and even gain a Distinction grade, by solely using the information provided in the Diploma eBooks to answer the question.

The classroom sessions and activities provided in the online course are also designed to help consolidate your knowledge (as well as to enable you to learn and practice exam technique and the skills required for the tasting exams). You should approach any session or activity having already read the required sections of the book to get the most out of your course.

Tasting

Consolidating your practical knowledge of the wines covered on the course is also important. You can achieve this by tasting widely, practising not only your tasting technique, but also how to write tasting notes in accordance with the Level 4 Diploma Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine.

When you are tasting a wine, you should think carefully about how its aromas, flavours and structural components relate to your theory studies, i.e. what you have learned about that style of wine and how and where it is made. Your theory knowledge of relevant production factors should help you understand why a wine tastes as it does. Tasting a particular style of wine repeatedly when you know how it is made can also create positive associations which reinforce your understanding. This two-way learning process – making connections between the theory and tasting components of the Diploma – is key to success.

For more information on how to approach tasting wines at Diploma level please refer to the Tasting Guidance document.

Revising and Practising Exam Technique

This is the point when you should get yourself 'exam-fit', i.e. ready to deploy the information that you have learned in an examination scenario. Revision should be the final push in your studies, when you fine-tune the knowledge you have acquired and commit topics to memory so that you can recall them easily.

In addition to re-reading your consolidated notes to ensure you have all of the necessary information front-of-mind, you should test yourself on topics by thinking about how you would answer specific questions. This is also helpful to identify any areas of weakness so you can fill in remaining gaps in your knowledge.

Practising writing your answers in timed conditions is likely to be helpful at this point and you should read the most recent Examiners' Report (available in the online classroom). This document contains useful examples of candidates' answers to previous exam questions and tips on how to avoid common mistakes.

2. The Diploma Examinations

The Diploma examinations will assess your knowledge of the world of wines by testing both your ability to recall relevant facts correctly and how you apply those facts to the question. It is important to understand at the outset how you will be assessed so that you can maximise the effectiveness of your study technique.

Units D1 and D2, and the theory components of D3, D4 and D5 are all accessed by open-response papers. Further details on format of these exams can be found in the Exam Format Guidance document. Unit D6 is assessed by the completion of a research assignment. Further details can be found in the document D6 Guidance, Submission Procedure and FAQs.

In all Diploma examinations, you should:

- **Manage** your time
- **Answer** the question as set
- **Plan** your answer
- **Write** clearly

Doing each of these things will maximise your chances of success.

MANAGING YOUR TIME

Diploma examinations are challenging because you have to give detailed written answers to a series of questions in a specified time. It is vital that you leave yourself enough time to answer every question that you are required to answer.

To help ensure that you do not run out of time in the examinations, you should practise writing answers in timed conditions as part of your preparation. The examiners are not expecting you to cover every possible detail; instead they are assessing whether you can demonstrate the appropriate knowledge and skills required by the question.

All exam papers contain guidance about the weighting of the questions within the examinations. The weighting of the question may have been chosen for a number of reasons; it may reflect the amount of information that is expected in the answer (the size of the topic), or the difficulty of the question (either in terms of the content required to be recalled or the skills required to be demonstrated).

The number of questions and weighting of each question will vary in the examinations for Units D1, D2, D4 and D5. Weightings are always given as a percentage. In each of these Units you should consider the length of the examination and calculate what proportion of that time should be spent on each question. Some examples are given below. These timings include the time in which you would need to read the question, plan and check your answer, as well as to write it. Therefore, in practice, you may wish to subtract five to ten minutes from the total exam time before making such calculations to better ensure you stay within time.

Unit	Length of time (spent on theory)	Examples of timings
D1	90 minutes	10% weighting = 9 minutes 20% weighting = 18 minutes 35% weighting = 31.5 minutes
D2	60 minutes	10% weighting = 6 minutes 20% weighting = 12 minutes 35% weighting = 21 minutes
D4	45 minutes (90-minute exam with equal weighting of theory and tasting)	10% weighting = 4.5 minutes 20% weighting = 9 minutes 35% weighting = 15.75 minutes
D5	45 minutes (90-minute exam with equal weighting of theory and tasting)	10% weighting = 4.5 minutes 20% weighting = 9 minutes 35% weighting = 15.75 minutes

In the theory examination for D3, all the questions have an equal weighting (this is stated on the front of the exam pack). It is intended that 40 minutes is spent on each question. For example, this may include 5 minutes to read the question and plan the answer, 30 minutes to write the answer and 5 minutes to check your work. Questions in the D3 exam paper may contain guidance about weightings within the question. For example,

Explain how the grape growing practices and winemaking options used in Sauternes and Jurançon influence the styles of wines produced.

(Each section contains equal weighting)

In this case, you should spend approximately equal amounts of time on Sauternes and Jurançon, and on the grape growing and winemaking factors. Even a very detailed explanation of styles in Sauternes is unlikely to gain a pass if Jurançon has barely been mentioned.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION AS SET

It is vital that you read the question carefully. Every question will contain key words that tell you what you should focus on in your answer. Even if you are accustomed to sitting written exams, we recommend that you underline or highlight these key words in the question so that you can plan your answer accordingly. This can focus the mind and help to prevent you straying off-topic. More detail on answering the question as set can be found in Chapter 3. Command Verbs and Answering the Question as Set.

PLANNING YOUR ANSWER

Planning what you write in answer to an exam question is equally important. How you plan may depend on the type of question, but will most likely involve making some rough notes before you start to write out your answer. It is not possible to suggest a strategy for answering every possible type of question but some suggestions can be found in Chapter 4. Structuring and Planning Your Answer.

WRITING CLEARLY

Many candidates – particularly those for whom English is not a first language or those who have limited experience of written examinations – worry about writing style. The examiners are most concerned with how well you demonstrate your understanding of the topic by applying relevant facts to the question. How well you write is of secondary importance. Rather than adopting a writing style which does not come naturally to you, we recommend concentrating on expressing yourself clearly. Often this means using short sentences and the signposting techniques outlined in the Writing your Answer section in Chapter 4.

No candidate will be penalised for poor spelling or grammar if the meaning is clear but you should take particular care to spell correctly any technical vocabulary (such as the names of grape varieties or soil types) and wine terms which appear in languages other than English. This is important whether or not English is your first language.

3. Command Verbs and Answering the Question as Set

Every WSET qualification is based on a solid foundation of product knowledge, which increases in detail and scope with progression upwards through Levels 1–4. However, particularly at Diploma, the examiners are not just looking for evidence that you have acquired the necessary level of knowledge, but also that you are able to interpret what you have learned and apply it in a focussed way to answer a specific question. Unfortunately, it is often the lack of demonstration of these latter skills that let students' answers down, and students not answering the question set is one of the most common observations in the Examiners' Reports year on year.

It is therefore vital that you understand what any exam question is asking both in terms of the skills and knowledge that you are expected to demonstrate. Every question will contain key words to guide you and it is advised that you identify and highlight these before planning your response.

First, you should identify the command verb. This is the word that tells you what skills you are expected to demonstrate in your answer. Examples include 'describe', 'explain' and 'compare'. More information about command verbs can be found below.

Next, you should identify any words that give you information about the focus of the question. This may help you to concentrate on the parts of the Specification that are necessary to answer the question.

Let's take the example that was used above:

Explain how the grape growing practices and winemaking options used in Sauternes and Jurançon influence the styles of wines produced.

The command verb is 'explain how'. This means that the examiners want to see you making links, in this case between grape growing and winemaking options and the styles of wines produced in Sauternes and Jurançon. A certain number of marks can be gained by describing the grape growing and winemaking options, and by also describing styles of wines. However, the amount of marks you will be awarded will be limited unless you link the grape growing and winemaking practices (for example, choices surrounding harvest) with the influence they have on the wines.

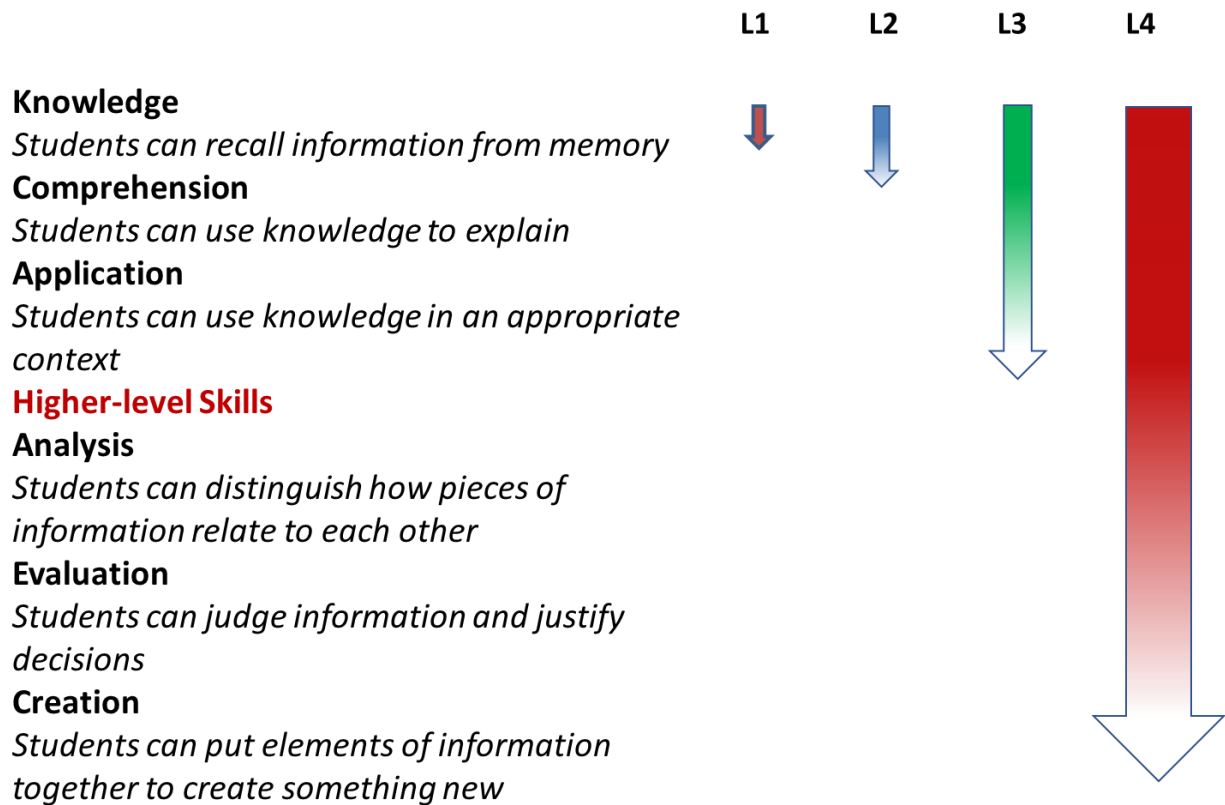
Explain how the grape growing practices and winemaking options used in Sauternes and Jurançon influence the styles of wines produced.

The other key words include 'grape growing practices', 'winemaking options', 'Sauternes', 'Jurançon' and 'styles'. These set the focus and scope. In this particular question, no marks are available for writing about, for example, the growing environment in either region. Writing in detail about the growing environments would waste time that could have been spent on planning, checking over work or focusing on other questions (students failing to answer all the questions on the paper, potentially through running out of time, is another common observation from the Examiners' Reports).

COMMAND VERBS

At Diploma, students are not only expected to demonstrate a higher level of knowledge than in Levels 1-3, but also a broader range of cognitive skills, including 'higher-level skills'. At Diploma, these skills are those that will help prepare you to be decision makers in the global wine industry.

As can be seen from the below diagram, for Level 1 through to Level 3, there is a gradual progression in the skills that are learnt and are expected to be demonstrated in the examination. The Level 4 Diploma requires students to demonstrate all of these prior learnt skills, but also the higher-level skills of analysis, evaluation and creation. This can be seen in the assessment criteria for the qualification, presented in the Specification.



Each skill can generally be tested in numerous ways, and command verbs are used to indicate exactly how the skill is to be demonstrated.

For Diploma, there are a limited number of command verbs that may appear in the assessments.

	Command Verbs	Diploma Assessment
Knowledge	define, describe, identify, name, give example, comment on,	Open-response examination questions
Comprehension	explain, outline, summarise	
Application	explain, give reasons	
Analysis	analyse, compare, research, select, examine	Research assignment
Evaluation	assess, conclude, evaluate, investigate, recommend, discuss	
Creation	create, produce, plan	Research assignment

Command Verbs used in Examinations for D1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

	Command Verbs used in Tasting Examinations
Knowledge	define, describe, comment on, identify
Comprehension	explain (how and why)
Application	explain (how and why), give reasons
Analysis	analyse, compare
Evaluation	evaluate, conclude

	Command Verbs used in Theory Examinations
Knowledge	define, describe, identify, name, comment on, give examples, outline
Comprehension	explain (how and why),
Application	explain (how and why), give reasons
Analysis	compare
Evaluation	assess, evaluate

The following sections show how different command verbs can be used in example examination questions and gives guidance on how you could answer those questions. The subject of sedimentation has been used to illustrate how one section of the D1 book could be used in different types of questions.

The examples given show the approach to be taken when answering questions containing command verbs. They provide guidance on how to answer and do not necessarily define a 'Pass' or any other grade.

KNOWLEDGE

Define: To specify meaning

To define, you will have to set out the meaning of a word or phrase.

Q. Define what is meant by sedimentation.

Sedimentation is a form of clarification. It is also sometimes called 'settling'. Suspended solids in must or wine are left to fall over time with gravity.

Another way of asking the same question would be 'What is sedimentation?'

Describe: To set out characteristics

To describe something, you will need to set out the characteristics of the subject. For example, you may be asked to write a detailed description of a process. The higher the level of relevant detail, such as correct temperatures, in the answer, the higher the grade achieved.

Q. Describe the process of sedimentation.

Sedimentation is a form of clarification. The must is commonly chilled to around 4°C (39°F) in tank. The solids then fall to the bottom of the tank leaving a clear juice. This takes between 12–24 hours depending on the size of the tank used. The clear juice is transferred to the fermentation tank, leaving the sediment of solids at the bottom of the sedimentation tank.

Comment on: To state facts and give details on a given subject.

These types of questions will combine definition and description of what sedimentation is along with identification of what it is used for. Examples may also be required.

Q. Comment on the process of sedimentation.

Sedimentation is a form of clarification. It is also sometimes called 'settling'. Suspended solids in must or wine are left to fall over time with gravity.

The must is commonly chilled to around 4°C (39°F) in tank. The solids then fall to the bottom of the tank leaving a clear juice. This takes between 12–24 hours depending on the size of the tank used. The clear juice is transferred to the fermentation tank, leaving the sediment of solids at the bottom of the sedimentation tank.

Sedimentation can be used to clarify wines as well as must.

Sedimentation is the cheapest method in terms of equipment required and is the most traditional way to clarify must or wine. It is also a batch process, which, again, costs in labour and time. For these reasons, it is most commonly used for small-volume production of premium wines.

COMPREHENSION

Explain: To give reasons (explain why) or to describe something so that it can be understood (explain how).

Depending on the wording for the question, an 'explain why' question will often require a description of what is done, how it is done and reasons why it is done in that way. An 'explain how' question will often require a detailed description of what is done and how it is done or how it works. There needs to be a clear connection between the description and the reasoning (the 'why' or 'how'), this can be done by using connecting words or phrases such as *because.... therefore.... as a result...*

Q. Explain why the must is chilled during sedimentation.

*Sedimentation is a form of clarification. It is also sometimes called 'settling'. Suspended solids in the must are left to fall over time with gravity. The must is commonly chilled to 4°C (39°F). This is **because** at low temperatures the rate of oxidation is reduced, **therefore** the must retains its freshness and **as a result** will retain its primary fruit characteristics.*

Another way of asking the same question would be 'Why is the must chilled during sedimentation?'

Q. Explain how the process of sedimentation is used to clarify must.

*The must is commonly chilled to around 4°C (39°F) in tank. **As a result**, the risk of oxidation and the threat of spoilage organisms ruining the must is reduced. Over time, any solids in the must fall to the*

bottom of the tank **because** of gravity. This leaves a clear juice at the top of the tank, but a sediment at the bottom. The clear juice is transferred to the fermentation tank, in a process called racking, leaving the sediment of solids at the bottom of the sedimentation tank. The solids at the bottom of the tank may be filtered by cross flow or depth filters **because** this would extract additional clear juice.

This answer describes the process of sedimentation in a way that the reader can understand why or how every step is taking place. Another way of asking the same question would be 'How is the process of sedimentation used to clarify must?'.

APPLICATION

Apply: To use relevant knowledge in a new context.

'Apply' is a command verb that is unlikely to appear in an examination paper as the context needs to be clear for a student to answer the question. If a question asked, 'Apply knowledge of winemaking.' it would be very difficult to know what was required, where to start and where to finish. Application questions are more likely to be questions where 'how' and 'why' are used in the question; the questions will focus on the ability to make connections between options and product in a given context. The skill of application may also be tested in evaluation questions.

For the question below, you would need to apply knowledge of natural wine production aims to the sedimentation process and give reasons why the option would be used. Where applicable, you could give examples to support the reasons given.

Q. Explain why sedimentation is often the preferred clarification method of some natural wine producers.

Producers of natural wines favour small-scale, artisan, traditional methods and reject modern interventions. The overall aim of the natural winemaker is 'nothing added, nothing removed'. However, if a wine has high levels of solids in the juice prior to fermentation there may be a negative impact on quality due to high levels of reductive sulfur compounds giving rotten egg aromas. Therefore, natural winemakers may still need to clarify juice prior to fermentation.

(The first paragraph defines natural winemaking and explains why a natural winemaker may choose to undertake clarification.)

Sedimentation is a form of clarification. Suspended solids in juice or wine are left to fall over time with gravity. This is also sometimes called 'settling' as the sediment will settle naturally at the bottom of the vessel. Sedimentation doesn't require the addition of chemicals or the use of modern specialist equipment. Other than chilling of the juice, sedimentation requires minimum intervention by the winemaker. It is the most traditional method of clarification used and suits those seeking to replicate winemaking of the past.

Sedimentation also suits the small production volumes that are made by many natural wine producers as it takes less time for small, short vessels than large, tall vessels.

(The second paragraph defines sedimentation, explains the process and makes connections to reasons why it would be suitable for natural winemaking by using words and phrases such as 'natural', 'traditional', 'minimum intervention' and 'small production' which connect sedimentation to the aims of natural wine production.)

A natural winemaker would choose sedimentation because it is a traditional and natural process that requires minimum intervention without requiring anything to be added and it can be used for small volume production typical of natural wine production.

(The final paragraph concludes the answer by setting out the reasons why sedimentation would be the preferred choice of a natural winemaker.)

Application questions can be substantial, they test knowledge, comprehension and application and, possibly, evaluation. Application questions requiring a shorter answer will also be used. These questions could direct students to focus on the reasons why only.

Q. Identify and explain four reasons why a natural winemaker would choose sedimentation as a method of clarification.

A natural winemaker would choose sedimentation for the following reasons:

- 1. It is traditional method used for winemaking in the past therefore suits the natural wine ethos.*
- 2. It is a natural process which requires minimum intervention because it uses gravity to clarify wines.*
- 3. It does not require anything to be added to aid clarification which therefore suits the general ethos of natural wine production 'nothing added, nothing removed'.*
- 4. It is quicker when used on small tanks and therefore is suitable for the small volume production typical of natural wine production.*

ANALYSIS

Compare: To identify similarities and differences.

To compare, you will be required to analyse what is the same and what is different about two or more subjects or processes. You will need to write about the similarities and differences between the subjects of the question. Connecting words or phrases such as *however... although... yet... nevertheless... in contrast...* may help you to demonstrate that you are making a comparison.

There need not be an even number of similarities and differences between the subjects or processes.

Q. Compare two different methods used to clarify juice prior to fermentation.

Identify them – *Two methods used to clarify juice are sedimentation and centrifugation.*

(As this question allows you to choose what methods of clarification you compare, you will first need to make clear what methods you have chosen.)

Describe what they have in common – *Both methods are used in white wine production to remove suspended solids in juice prior to fermentation and will require the juice to be protected from oxygen during the clarification process.*

Describe and explain how they are different – *Each uses a different method to clear the must of solids. Sedimentation relies on gravity to allow the solids to fall to the bottom of the tank. The clear juice will then be racked into a new vessel. **In contrast** centrifugation uses a machine that comprises a rapidly rotating container which uses centrifugal force to separate the solids from the liquids.*

*Sedimentation is a cheaper process because it does not require additional specialist equipment or the purchase of additives, **whereas**, a centrifuge is expensive to buy.*

*Sedimentation is a time-consuming batch process which works most effectively in small tanks therefore it is best suited to small volume production. **In contrast** centrifugation is a continuous process suited to the processing of large volumes of must quickly for high volume production.*

*The methods used to minimise the must's exposure to oxygen may differ for each method. To minimise oxidation during sedimentation the juice will be chilled to around 4°C. **Although** centrifugation increases the must's exposure to oxygen, the flushing of the machine with inert gas will minimise the risk.*

Analysis questions may be substantial: they can test knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis.

Questions requiring shorter answers will also be used. These questions may direct you to focus on a limited number of differentiating or contrasting factors.

Examine: To break something down and consider each part in detail.

'Examine' may be used in the D6 Independent Research Assignment, but not in the D1, D2, D3, D4 or D5 examinations. In D6, to 'examine' means to give a detailed account of the various aspects relevant to the topic in question. The student should highlight, where possible, how the various issues within the topic are linked to each other.

EVALUATION

Evaluate: To judge the quality, importance, amount or value of something.

To evaluate, you will need to consider the advantages and disadvantages or strengths and weaknesses of something. The 'something' that requires evaluation may be a process, a choice or an objective, amongst other things. Often, questions will be set within a context and you will need to base your evaluation on that particular context – hence, evaluation questions are also often application questions. It is also important that you explain why a particular factor or characteristic may be an advantage or disadvantage in that context. If the evaluation is set within a context, you should reach a judgement based on your evaluation.

Answers to evaluation questions have multiple parts. A useful technique for answering these questions is set out in the graphic below:



Q. Evaluate the use of sedimentation as a method of clarification for high volume production of inexpensive white wines.

Describe (define/describe what it is you are evaluating) – Sedimentation is when the suspended solids in must or wine are left to fall over time with gravity. The must is commonly chilled to around 4°C (39°F) in a tank. The solids then fall to the bottom of the tank leaving behind a clear juice: this will take between 12–24 hours depending on the size of the tank used. The clear juice is transferred to the fermentation tank, leaving the sediment of solids at the bottom of the sedimentation tank.

Explain (explain why it is done) – The aim of sedimentation is to reduce the amount of suspended solids in the must. These solids include particles of grape skin, stem, and pips. If the amount of solids is too high it will cause problems during fermentation, such as increased production of hydrogen sulfide (aromas of rotten eggs).

Advantages (what are the advantages of sedimentation?)

- Gravity is free **therefore** there are no additional costs for clarifying agents.
- Sedimentation uses standard equipment **therefore** it does not require additional investment in specialist equipment which would add additional cost to production.

Disadvantages (what are the disadvantages of sedimentation?)

- *Sedimentation can be a slow process, especially in large, tall tanks. This would **therefore** slow down production and tie up tank space, both of which are undesirable in high volume production.*
- *Chilling tanks over a long period of time could also be costly in terms of energy. **As a result**, this would raise costs, which would be undesirable for production of inexpensive wines.*
- *Sedimentation is a batch process and requires the juice to be moved to another tank for fermentation. This, again, would slow down production, and potentially require more labour, compared to other methods of clarification that can be set up to work continuously. It is **therefore** costly in terms of time and money.*

Conclusion (judge the suitability of sedimentation as a clarification method for high-volume white wines and justify the opinion given)

*Overall, the disadvantages of sedimentation outweigh the advantages in high-volume wine production, and **therefore** this is not a particularly suitable method of clarification in this context.*

Evaluation questions are substantial: they test knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis and evaluation.

The term '**assess**' may sometimes be used for evaluation questions. Like 'evaluate', in these questions, you will also need to consider positive or negative arguments (advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses etc.) to provide a judgement based on the evidence.

Questions requiring shorter answers will also be used. These questions may direct students to focus on the advantages and/or disadvantages only.

Discuss: To construct an argument that considers and responds to an ample range of materials.

'Discuss' may be used in the D6 Independent Research Assignment, but not in the D1, D2, D3, D4 or D5 examinations. In D6, to 'discuss' means to make a broad argument about a set of arguments you have studied. 'Discuss' often involves a range of skills; you may need to describe or explain the content that you have found while researching (without plagiarising); you will need to select the most relevant information for your argument which requires judgement (and hence evaluation). Further, you should aim to provide a well-rounded argument, where necessary observing different viewpoints and/or using a range of differing examples to fully explore the topic.

CREATION

Creation involves the production of a new piece of work and is assessed in the D6 Independent Research Assignment. More guidance on D6 can be found in D6 Independent Research Assignment Guidelines, Submission Procedure and FAQs.

4. Planning and Structuring your Answer

The length of each Diploma examination has been set with thinking and planning time in mind. It is not expected that you open your exam paper, start writing in the first minute of the exam and don't stop until told that the exam time is over. You should take time to read the questions, highlight the key words and think about what is required to answer successfully.

Particularly for questions with significant weighting (and, hence, often requiring a longer answer), taking a few minutes to write a plan for your answer can be extremely useful. The plan should include brief notes of the key information that you will include in your answer in an organised structure.

Planning your answer can be beneficial for the following reasons:

- It encourages you to spend more time thinking about what the question is asking, which increases your chances of answering the question set.
- Organising the key points of your answer before you begin writing can result in an answer with a clearer structure. This makes the answer easier to mark and gives the impression of well-ordered, logical thought.
- Taking time to think about what you are going to include in your answer, and making a note of it, means that you are less likely to forget to include something relevant.

As stated above, your plan should have an organised structure that will help you cover all the key information required in an answer in a logical order. The structure of your plan should inform the structure of your answer and vice versa. The precise format of the plan is up to you; it could be a list, a grid or a mind map.

STRUCTURING YOUR ANSWER

The most suitable structure for the answer will depend on the question and, often, there may be a few structures that are appropriate. Below are some examples of structures that may work for different types of questions.

The Specification sets out the assessment criteria and range of content that can be examined and, therefore, it is a key source of structures that may work for various questions. Returning to the example D3 question on Sauternes and Jurançon, the Specification lists the following ranges for grape growing in D3, supplemented by the specific topics covered under each heading from D1:

- **considerations in vineyard establishment:** site selection, soil preparation,
- **planting materials:** cutting, layering, clonal selection, mass selection, new grape varieties (crossing and hybrids), choice of grape variety, clone and rootstocks, head grafting, vine age
- **managing nutrients and water:** managing soil health, nutrient management, water management
- **canopy management:** aims of canopy management, canopy management techniques
- **harvest:** choosing the date of harvest, harvesting options
- **managing hazards:** options for drought, excess of water, untimely rainfall, freeze, frosts, hail, sunburn, fire, smoke taint
- **managing pests and diseases:** options for phylloxera, nematodes, grape moths, spider mites, birds, mammals, fungal diseases, viruses and bacteria

Of course, not all of these factors will be relevant to every question. For example, in this particular question that requires the grape growing practices to be linked to style, the choice of grape varieties, yields and considerations around harvest would be most applicable. In contrast, information about managing pests would be less relevant. Similarly, you may not have knowledge about all of the factors above in the context of Sauternes and Jurançon. For example, the choice of clone for any of the permitted grape varieties could conceivably have an influence on the style of the wines. However, the Diploma eBooks contain no information about the clones used in Sauternes or Jurançon, and therefore you would not be expected to mention this in your answer.

Having lists such as the above in mind, can help you to select the relevant factors for your plan. A structure for an answer plan for this question could therefore look like the below. As your plans will only be for your reference, you can just write shorthand notes or keywords to remind you of the point you want to make; you could probably use less words than the example below. However, you can see how this plan has included notes on the influence on style to encourage these links to be made throughout the answer.

	Sauternes		Jurançon	
	Factor	Influence on Style	Factor	Influence on Style
Grape Growing				
Grape varieties	Semillon, SB, Muscadelle	Flavours/aromas, texture, sugar, susceptibility to botrytis, acidity	Petit Manseng, Gros Manseng	Flavours/aromas, sugar, susceptibility to botrytis, acidity
Yields	Low yields	Concentration	Low yields	Concentration
Harvest date and method	Hand harvest, selective	Botrytis flavours	Standard to late	Standard for dry wines, late harvest for sweet – sugars, flavours
Winemaking				
Fermentation vessel	A variety	Oak – better integration	Stainless steel/oak	Texture, integration
Malolactic conversion	(Not specified)		Does not occur.	Acidity, flavours
Maturation	Oak barrels	Texture, flavours	Old oak or steel	Texture, or primary flavours

To help understand the above, here is the information that the full answer could cover (though ideally written out in sentences):

	Sauternes		Jurançon	
	Factor	Influence on Style	Factor	Influence on Style
Grape Growing				
Grape varieties	<p>Semillon – prone to botrytis</p> <p>Not particularly aromatic, but botrytis and age enhance its flavours</p> <p>Waxy texture</p> <p>Sauvignon Blanc – high acidity</p> <p>Muscadelle – prone to botrytis, fairly aromatic</p>	<p>Suitable for production of sweet wines</p> <p>Botrytised Semillon contributes flavours of honey, peach and lemon. When aged, it further develops toasty notes</p> <p>Enhances texture</p> <p>Contributes acidity, helping to create balanced sweet wines</p> <p>Contributes floral and grapey notes to sweet wines</p>	<p>Petit Manseng – thick skins</p> <p>Retains high acidity well</p> <p>Gros Manseng – similar characteristics</p> <p>Less aromatic</p>	<p>Resistance to botrytis, suitable for late harvest style.</p> <p>Helps balance in sweet wines</p> <p>Helps to retain acidity in the wines regardless of the blend</p> <p>Higher proportion in the blend could give less expressive wines</p>
Yields	<p>Low yields, as little as between 10-25 hL/ha for sweet wines</p>	<p>Ensures high levels of sugar in the grapes, necessary for sweet wines</p>	<p>Yields</p> <p>Max 60hL/ha in dry wines.</p> <p>Max 40 hL/ha in sweet wines</p>	<p>Low yields help to give concentrated flavours and high levels of sugar</p>
Harvest date and method	<p>September to November.</p> <p>Harvesting by hand in tranches to select botrytis infected grapes.</p>	<p>Maximise botrytis character in the wines. Though often wines are made from a mixture of late harvest and botrytised fruit depending on year, location of vineyard etc.</p>	<p>Standard harvest time – October</p> <p>Late harvest – not before 2nd Nov for <i>Vendanges Tardives</i></p> <p>Hand harvesting in tranches.</p>	<p>Late harvesting concentrates the sugars in the grapes, suitable for sweet wine production. Hand harvest allows selection based on ripeness – helping to obtain the sugars necessary for sweet wines.</p> <p>Intense, ripe fruit flavour profile – lemon and mango.</p>

Winemaking				
Fermentation vessel	Stainless steel, concrete or oak vessels (<i>barrisques</i>).	Oak vessels may lead to a better integration of oak characteristics during maturation – i.e. more subtle oak characteristics in the wine	Oak vessels for high quality sweet wines. Stainless steel for dry wines.	Texture, better integration of oak characteristics gained during maturation. Primary dominant palate in dry wines.
Malolactic conversion	(Not specified)		Does not occur.	Retains high acidity and primary flavours.
Maturation	Maturation in oak, generally with a proportion new – 30-50% typical, but can be 100%. 18-36 months for the highest quality wines.	Toasty oak flavours, rounder texture. Complex range of flavours from grapes, botrytis, oak and gentle oxidation.	Old oak maturation 12-18 months typical for sweet wines. Dry wines may be lees aged in stainless steel.	Enhanced texture, roundness. No notable oak flavours. Enhanced texture. No notable oak flavours.

The Specification can also provide useful structures for business-related questions. For example, for a question on getting the product to the point of sale, you may want to consider relevant options from the below list, again, taken from the Specification:

- **importing and distributing options:** distributor, joint venture, use a broker, direct to seller
- **retail options:** supermarket, deep discounter, convenience, specialist wine retailers, hybrid, online retailer, global travel retailer, wine investment, monopoly retailer
- **HoReCa options:** bars (specialist, general), restaurants (non-destination, casual, fine dining)
- **direct to consumer:** cellar door, events, wine club, online
- **types of market:** free market, monopoly, three-tier system

Another structure that may work for some business-related questions is the **5Ps** of the marketing mix; product, price, people, place and promotion. When asked to evaluate an objective, **SWOT** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) may be an appropriate structure; for more detail on SWOT analysis, see the eBook for D2 Wine Business, section 8.3. In some cases, the structure to be used may be specified in the question.

WRITING YOUR ANSWER

Whether or not you choose to plan your answer as suggested above, you need to have a clear idea of how you are going to communicate your knowledge to the examiner. This is particularly important with longer answers.

Introductions and conclusions are not usually necessary for open-response questions. However, in some instances, it can be helpful to write a brief opening sentence or two to set the scene and explain what you will focus on in your answer.

Using the D3 example above:

Sauternes and Jurançon are both well-known for their sweet wines, though other styles of wine are also produced. Decisions made regarding grape growing and winemaking practices have a key influence on the styles of the final wines from both areas.

Likewise, a short concluding paragraph which summarises what you have addressed may also be worthwhile. In evaluation questions, this conclusion should include your judgement, based on the arguments raised in your answer.

Using the D3 example above:

As can be seen, grape growing factors such as grape variety, yields and harvesting decisions, as well as winemaking practices within fermentation and maturation, all have significant influences on the styles made in Sauternes and Jurançon.

Signposting can be a useful technique, particularly in long answers. By grouping points under subheadings or underlining key words you can make your answer more engaging and the examiner can see straight away that you have identified the key issues.

Note that the use of bullet points in isolation is rarely acceptable; the examiner will be looking for you to express yourself in full sentences, ordered into paragraphs. Aim to make one point per paragraph, with one short sentence communicating the core message and two or three further sentences to illustrate what you are saying.

5. Questions about Style, Quality and Price

Many of the assessment criteria in the Specification refer to the style, quality and price of wines. This section provides some explanation as to what WSET means by these terms.

STYLE

The style of a wine is generally a combination of its colour, structural characteristics, and aromas and flavours. It may help to imagine describing a wine in a sentence or two to a friend or family member. You would tend to pick out the main features that characterise the wine; this is a description of the style of the wine. An example is describing Chablis as a high-acid, dry white wine with low intensity apple and lemon flavours and no characteristics from oak.

It is generally unnecessary to provide a full SAT tasting note when describing style, and you should focus on the most remarkable aspects of the wine. For example, where present, high acidity or tannin levels are likely to be defining features of a wine, whereas medium body or medium alcohol are less likely to be worthy of remark. However, the SAT is a framework that may be useful when considering the key characteristics to mention.

The way that you describe the style of a wine may depend on the question that is being asked and what aspects of the wine(s) are relevant. For example, in a comparison between the styles of Chablis and Meursault, it may be relevant to talk about the body of the wines (even though you perhaps wouldn't naturally mention body when describing each individually). Similarly, if a question asks you to explain how the growing environment, grape growing or winemaking options influence the style of a wine, characteristics relevant to these factors should be highlighted, for example, the warmth of the climate may have an influence on the alcohol in the final wine, or the use of malolactic conversion may have an influence by lowering acidity, increasing body and/or introducing flavours, such as butter or cream, to the wine.

There is clearly overlap in the elements that make up style and that are considered during an assessment of quality (see below). For example, maturing a wine in new oak barrels will lead to a wine with flavours of vanilla and toast. By increasing the range of flavours, this may also enhance the complexity of a wine, and hence, influence quality. Where possible, be sure to keep in mind the focus of the question, and word your answer appropriately. However, it is noted that in some cases the differentiation between the effect on style and the effect on quality may be less easy to communicate. For example, lees ageing generally enhances the texture of a wine, which could be a relevant point in either a style- or quality-focused question.

QUALITY

The quality of the wines from various regions has been described throughout the Diploma eBooks using the SAT terms 'acceptable', 'good', 'very good' or 'outstanding'. To be clear and consistent, it is advised to use the same descriptions in your answers, though you will not be penalised for using different terms, in the context of theory questions, as long as your quality judgement is clear to the examiner. When asked about how certain factors influence the quality of wines, think about the same criteria for quality that you would when tasting wines. Any factors that influence parameters such as the balance of the wine and integration of its various elements, its complexity, the concentration or purity of the flavours, and the texture of the wine etc. may have implications for quality.

PRICE

The price of the wines from various regions has been described throughout the Diploma eBooks using the categories 'inexpensive', 'mid-priced', 'premium' and 'super-premium'. No precise price limits have been specified for these categories as what may be considered 'inexpensive' in one market, may not be the same as in another. So that you can envision the approximate price ranges that may be suitable in your market, we would suggest that the following descriptions of wines typically sit in each of the categories:

Inexpensive – generally simple, youthful wines that are not suitable for ageing. Typically, acceptable to good quality. Depending on market, generally found in supermarkets and deep discounters.

Mid-priced – wines with slightly more complexity, intensity, and character than those in Inexpensive category. May or may not be suitable for further ageing depending on style. Typically, good to very good quality, occasionally outstanding. Depending on market, often found in both supermarkets and specialist wine retailers.

Premium – wines with slightly more complexity, intensity, and character than those in mid-priced category. May or may not be suitable for further ageing depending on style. Typically, very good to outstanding in quality. Generally purchased through specialist retailers, wine investment companies or at fine-dining restaurants.

Super-premium – often the most iconic wines from a region, generally outstanding in quality. Generally purchased through wine investment companies, fine-dining restaurants or to selected customers on allocation.