



**WSET**  
WINE & SPIRIT  
EDUCATION TRUST

# WSET® Level 2 Award in Sake

# Specification

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Issue 1, 2024

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Design by Ricky Wong

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# Introduction

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

The main part of the document is a detailed statement of the Learning Outcomes of the Level 2 Award in Sake. 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 Sake

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### Qualification aims

In order to study the WSET Level 2 Award in Sake, no prior knowledge is required. It is suitable both for beginners and for those who already have a professional or general interest in sake. It is suitable wherever a good level of sake 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 sake and wish to broaden their knowledge.

Successful candidates will be able to describe and compare the characteristics of the different styles of sake produced in Japan and give information on their methods of production. They will be able to interpret key sake labelling terms and give basic guidance on appropriate selection and service. They will understand the principles of sake tasting and evaluation.

### Qualification structure

#### Learning Outcomes

In order to meet the qualification aims there are three Learning Outcomes.

Learning Outcome	Description
<b>Learning Outcome 1</b>	Understand the key production processes that are used to make sake and how they can affect the style of a sake.
<b>Learning Outcome 2</b>	Understand the categories, grades and speciality styles of sake and the key production choices required to make them.
<b>Learning Outcome 3</b>	Understand how to store and serve sake, and the key considerations when pairing food and sake.

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## Enrolment

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

Please refer to Section 1 of 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 Sake is 26 hours. This is made up of 15 GLH (of which 1 hour is for the exam) and 11 hours of private study.

## Recommended progression routes

The WSET Level 2 Award in Sake, or an equivalent level of knowledge, is recommended for entry to the WSET Level 3 Award in Sake.

# 2

## Learning Outcomes

### Learning Outcome 1

Understand the key production processes that are used to make sake and how they can affect the style of a sake.

#### Assessment Criteria

1. Identify the common and optional ingredients used to make sake.
2. Describe the rice used to make sake and how it is grown.
3. Describe how and why steamed white rice is made.
4. State the role of *kōji* in sake production and describe how it is made.
5. Describe the approaches to alcoholic fermentation and their impact on style.
6. Describe the post-fermentation options in the production of sake and their impact on style.

#### Ranges

##### Range 1: Sake ingredients

Category	Description
Common to all sake	Steamed white rice, <i>kōji</i> , water, yeast
Optional for any sake	<i>Jōzō</i> alcohol, lactic acid
Optional for basic sake ( <i>futsū-shu</i> )	Glucose, acids, amino acids

##### Range 2: Rice

Category	Description
Types of rice	<i>Japonica</i> , short-grained, non-sticky Table rice, sake-specific rice
Sake-specific rice	Characteristics, varieties ( <i>Yamada-nishiki</i> , <i>Gohyakuman-goku</i> , <i>Miyama-nishiki</i> )
Parts of the rice grain	Husk, bran, germ, endosperm, <i>shinpaku</i> , starch, other components (proteins)
Growing rice	Stages in the rice-growing year

**Range 3: Making steamed white rice**

Category	Description
<b>Polishing</b>	Rice polishing (white rice), polishing ratio ( <i>seimai-buai</i> )
<b>Processing polished rice</b>	Washing, soaking, steaming (batch, continuous)
<b>Aims</b>	Remove correct proportion of the rice grain for the style of sake, achieve correct level of moisture, gelatinise starch granules

**Range 4: Making *kōji***

Category	Description
<b>Requirements</b>	Steamed white rice, <i>kōji</i> mould, warmth, humidity
<b><i>Kōji</i> mould contributions</b>	Enzymes – convert starch to glucose (amylases), convert proteins to amino acids and peptides Other – colour
<b>Approaches to <i>kōji</i>-making</b>	Making <i>kōji</i> by hand, making <i>kōji</i> by machine (fully machine-made, partially machine-made)
<b>Styles of <i>kōji</i></b>	<i>Sō-haze</i> , <i>tsuki-haze</i>
<b>Phases of the <i>kōji</i>-making process</b>	Cooling the rice, establishing the mould growth, managing the mould growth, stopping the mould growth
<b>Aims</b>	Create <i>kōji</i> with the correct amount and distribution of enzymes for the style of sake

**Range 5: Alcoholic fermentation**

Category	Description
<b>Water</b>	Mineral content, iron
<b>Yeast</b>	Needs, outputs
<b>Strains of sake yeast</b>	Reliable fermenters (number 7), early <i>ginjō</i> yeast (number 9), later <i>ginjō</i> yeast (number 1801)
<b>Creating <i>ginjō</i> aromas</b>	Level of nutrients, polishing ratio, style of <i>kōji</i> , fermentation temperature, yeast strain
<b>Parallel fermentation</b>	Definition, achieving balance, avoiding spoilage
<b>Fermentation starter (<i>shubo/moto</i>)</b>	Aim, ingredients, added lactic acid, lactic acid bacteria <i>Sokujō-moto</i> , <i>kimoto</i> and <i>yamahai</i>
<b>Main fermentation</b>	Ingredients, three-addition method, duration, temperature, final abv, ending the fermentation



**Range 6: Post-fermentation options**

Category	Description
<b>Additions</b>	<i>Jōzō</i> alcohol Glucose, acid, amino acids ( <i>futsū-shu</i> only) Reason for additions, timing of additions
<b>Adjusting clarity</b>	Filtration ( <i>yabuta</i> filtration, <i>fune</i> filtration, <i>fukuro</i> or <i>shizuku</i> filtration), sedimentation
<b>Adjusting colour</b>	Charcoal fining, not charcoal-fined ( <i>muroka</i> )
<b>Adjusting stability</b>	Pasteurisation (in bulk, in-bottle)
<b>Storage at the brewery</b>	In bulk, in-bottle
<b>Adjusting alcohol</b>	Dilute with water, undiluted ( <i>genshu</i> )

## Learning Outcome 2

Understand the categories, grades and speciality styles of sake and the key production choices required to make them.

**Assessment Criteria**

1. State the two categories of sake.
2. State the eight grades of premium sake and their legal definitions.
3. List the principal speciality styles of sake.
4. For fruity *ginjō* styles, rich *junmai* styles and the principal speciality styles, state the key production choices that create these styles of sake.
5. Identify a select number of Japanese labelling terms that commonly appear on sake labels.

**Ranges****Range 1: Categories of sake**

Category	Description
<b>Categories of sake</b>	Basic sake ( <i>futsū-shu</i> ), premium sake

**Range 2: Grades of premium sake**

Category	Description
<b>Grades of premium sake</b>	<i>Honjōzō</i> , <i>ginjō</i> , <i>daiginjō</i> <i>Junmai</i> , <i>junmai ginjō</i> , <i>junmai daiginjō</i> <i>Tokubetsu honjōzō</i> , <i>tokubetsu junmai</i>

**Range 3: Speciality styles of sake**

Category	Description
<b>Speciality styles of sake</b>	<i>Nigori-zake</i> , <i>nama-zake</i> , sparkling sake, <i>koshu</i>

**Range 4: Key production choices**

Category	Description
<b>Delicate, dry, fruity <i>ginjō</i> styles</b>	Type of rice, polishing ratio, soaking and steaming, style of <i>kōji</i> , type of yeast, fermentation management
<b>Rich <i>junmai</i> styles</b>	Type of rice, polishing ratio, soaking and steaming, style of <i>kōji</i> , type of yeast, fermentation management
<b><i>Nigori-zake</i></b>	Use of filters with large holes
<b><i>Nama-zake</i></b>	Unpasteurised ( <i>nama-zake</i> ) Pasteurised once ( <i>nama-chozō</i> , <i>nama-zume</i> )
<b>Sparkling sake</b>	Carbonated, bottle-fermented
<b><i>Koshu</i></b>	Typically aged at brewery for at least two years, size of vessel, storage temperature

**Range 5: Japanese labelling terms**

Term	<i>Kanji</i>
<b><i>Nihon-shu</i></b>	日本酒
<b><i>Sei-shu</i></b>	清酒
<b><i>Honjōzō</i></b>	本醸造
<b><i>Junmai</i></b>	純米
<b><i>Tokubetsu</i></b>	特別
<b><i>Ginjō</i></b>	吟醸
<b><i>Daiginjō</i></b>	大吟醸
<b><i>Nama-zake</i></b>	生酒

## Learning Outcome 3

Understand how to store and serve sake, and the key considerations when pairing food and sake.

### Assessment Criteria

1. Identify the ideal conditions for storing sake.
2. Identify common faults and how they can affect the aromas and flavours of sake.
3. State the correct procedures for serving sake.
4. Identify the key considerations when making a sake and food pairing recommendation.

### Ranges

Category	Description
<b>Ideal storage conditions</b>	Keep it cool, store the bottle upright, avoid bright light, drink it young
<b>Faults</b>	Oxidation, out of condition (unpasteurised sake), light damage, microbial spoilage
<b>Serving sake</b>	Serving temperatures (very chilled, chilled, room temperature, warm), warming sake (hot water bath, microwave), drinking vessels (wine glasses, <i>o-choko</i> , <i>kiki-choko</i> , <i>masu</i> ), service vessels ( <i>tokkuri</i> , <i>katakuchi</i> )
<b>Pairing food and sake</b>	Personal preference, flavour intensity, sweetness

# 3

## Recommended Tasting Samples

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### Tasting calibration

- *Futsū-shu* or *honjōzō*
- *Daiginjō*
- Rich *junmai*
- Off-dry or dry sake
- Sweet sake

### Polishing ratio

- Two sakes that show *ginjō* and non-*ginjō* polishing ratios

### Yeast strains and fermentation

- A sake made using *kimoto* or *yamahai*
- Three sakes, ideally from the same brewery, made using yeast numbers 7, 9 and 1801 with similar polishing ratios

### *Genshu*

- A high-alcohol (over 17% abv) *genshu*

### Speciality styles of sake

- *Nigori-zake*
- Sparkling sake
- *Nama-zake*
- *Koshu*

## *Tokubetsu*

- Two *tokubetsu* sakes that show the diversity of styles that can be labelled using this term

## Storage and service of sake

- A *ginjō* and non-*ginjō* sake to serve chilled, warm and with food

# 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 Sake 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 Sake 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 (*Sake: 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	25
Learning Outcome 2	20
Learning Outcome 3	5
<b>Total number of questions</b>	<b>50</b>

# 5

## Exam Regulations

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### 1 Entry requirements

#### 1.1 Eligibility

**1.1.1** Candidates applying to sit the WSET Level 2 Award in Sake 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 Sake 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 Sake 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
<b>Fail unclassified</b>	Mark of 44% or below
<b>Fail</b>	Mark of between 45% and 54%
<b>Pass</b>	Mark of between 55% and 69%
<b>Pass with merit</b>	Mark of between 70% and 84%
<b>Pass with distinction</b>	Mark of 85% or more

WSET reserves the right to make changes to the 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 official photo ID.
- The exam is to be completed in the time specified.
- 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: 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 that 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](mailto: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

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The WSET has a range of qualifications that cover wine, spirits and beer as well as sake. 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](http://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](mailto: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/>



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## A world of knowledge

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**Issue 1**