



## **BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT**

### **INTERIM VISIT (Short Course Provider)**

**PROVIDER:** WSET School London

**ADDRESS:** International Wine and Spirit Centre  
39-45 Bermondsey Street  
London  
SE1 3XF

**HEAD OF PROVIDER:** Mr James Gore

**DATE OF VISIT:** 25 July 2017

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:** Continued accreditation 19 October 2017

## **PART A - INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Background to the provider**

WSET School London (the Provider) is a department of The Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET), which is a registered charity. The Provider offers a range of qualification courses in wines and spirits for professionals in the drinks industry and for the general public. The teaching materials, syllabuses and examinations it uses are developed by two other departments of the overall WSET charity.

WSET was established as a charity in 1969 offering a limited range of courses and qualifications. Since that time its suite of qualifications has been expanded to include a variety of qualifications from Level 1 to Level 4 in the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). This includes recent additions, in 2014 and 2016, of qualifications in sake, which is a Japanese rice wine.

WSET School London, which BAC accredits, opened in November 1969 and is the flagship provider of WSET courses. It offers the complete range of WSET qualifications, and is a testing ground for WSET developments

The aim of WSET and, therefore also of the Provider, is the promotion, provision and development of high quality education and training in wines and spirits, in the United Kingdom (UK) and elsewhere, for those who are engaged in the wine and spirit trade. The Provider fulfils this aim through its teaching activities in London, where its courses are also open to, and some designed for, members of the general public.

WSET has a number of departments, each with its own head, operating under an overall Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The charity's activities are overseen by a Board of Trustees. WSET is directed by a Principal, assisted by a team of programme managers. A number of functions, including information technology, human resources marketing and finance are undertaken centrally for the entire charity. The Principal of the Provider, who was appointed in November 2016, reports to the CEO through the UK Business Development Director

The qualifications and examinations used by the Provider are developed by WSET Awards, another department of the WSET charity. This also approves other programme providers in the UK and in 71 other countries. WSET Awards and the majority of its qualifications are regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). The Global Education department formulates textbooks, online courses and other teaching materials for use by approved programme providers and oversees the translation of the materials and examinations into 18 languages other than English.

The Provider occupies a substantial proportion of WSET's premises near London Bridge station in Southwark, London.

### **2. Brief description of the current provision**

The Provider offers courses at WSET's Southwark premises throughout the year, except for a brief period of closure at Christmas. Courses are offered relating to the full range of WSET qualifications, except for a Level 4 wine educators' course, which is also delivered at the WSET premises but under the auspices of the Global Education department, which is not accredited by BAC.

Courses offered include the WSET Levels 1 to 3 Award in Wines, WSET Levels 1 to 3 Award in Spirits, WSET Levels 1 and 3 Award in Sake, WSET Level 1 Introduction to Sommellerie, WSET Level 3 Novice to Professional Course in Wines and WSET Level 4 Diploma in Wines and Spirits.

All classroom courses at the Provider are delivered in English and vary in duration from one day to 24 months, with set start dates. Classroom teaching is supported by online resources developed by WSET. The Provider also

offers a limited range of courses through online and distance learning using WSET materials and supported by a tutor from the school. The proportion of total teaching of the Provider delivered through these online courses is approximately 15 per cent. In addition, the Provider offers occasional bespoke courses in London and elsewhere and a programme of tutored tastings.

The Provider delivered 4135 courses in the academic year 2016 to 2017 to participants from a wide range of countries. Diploma participants account for a very small minority of total enrolment. British participants account for approximately one third of total enrolment, with Chinese, Italian, French and Spanish participants each constituting 10 to 15 per cent. The majority of participants are therefore non-native speakers of English. There are equal proportions of male and female participants.

The number of participants enrolled at the time of the inspection was 153, with a very large majority on the Diploma course. This reflects the low number of shorter courses running during the summer period.

### **3. Inspection visit process**

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector over half a day. The inspector undertook a tour of the premises, met with the Principal and scrutinised a various materials and documents. The Provider had prepared very thoroughly for the inspection.

### **4. Inspection history**

Full accreditation inspection	13-14 June 2011
Interim visit:	3 July 2012
Reaccreditation inspection	30 September – 1 October 2015

## **PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE**

*The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the provider*

### **1. Significant changes since the last inspection**

The name of the Provider has recently changed to WSET School London.

A reorganisation of departments within the charity took place in November 2016. The Research and Development departments were reconfigured into Global Education. Global Education has responsibility for the development of textbooks, teaching materials and online courses, the translation of examinations and materials and the operation of the small course leading to Level 4 certification for wine educators. Responsibility for online courses globally was transferred from the Provider to Global Education. The Provider continues to offer online courses to its own participants, as one of a number of approved providers. Participants registering for online courses through the School, receive learning support from the School's staff and sit examinations at its premises. The wine educators' course was also transferred from the School to Global Education. Global Education and WSET Awards now stand alongside WSET School London as the three academic departments of WSET.

During the reorganisation, the Principal at the time of the 2015 inspection became head of Global Education, and the new Principal was promoted internally from the position of Programme Manager. The new Principal initially joined WSET as a member of the WSET Awards team before transferring to the School.

Significant work has been undertaken on marketing materials. The website has been redesigned and a new professionally produced high quality prospectus was introduced in June 2017.

New courses in Sake have been devised by WSET Awards and introduced by the Provider. These are the WSET Level 1 course in Sake and WSET Level 3 course in Sake.

### **2. Response to action points in last report**

*19.3 The provider must include reference to the BAC within the complaints procedure.*

Reference is made to the role of BAC as a last resort within the Provider's complaints procedure. This is communicated through the joining instructions, which are provided to participants before their course starts. BAC is also referred to in the complaints procedure available on the Provider's website.

### **3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report**

*Use student feedback to set challenging targets for continuous improvement.*

Written participant feedback is invited for courses of all durations. Feedback for each course is reviewed by the relevant programme manager and then presented to the Principal. Immediate action is taken where appropriate. Feedback is then collated and analysed by student services staff, with numerical and graphical presentations of data. It is subsequently reviewed. General points emerging from feedback, during the course of an academic year, are reviewed by all educators as part of an annual professional development day.

*Establish a system whereby students systematically receive information about the outcomes of their feedback.*

A system whereby students systematically receive details of the response to their feedback is not applicable given that students are on very short courses. Consideration is being given to how to manage feedback on longer diploma courses.

*Bring key decisions taken as a result of self-evaluation together into a central action plan with clear responsibilities and timelines, to ensure effective monitoring.*

Action plans are formulated addressing issues arising in participant feedback and in staff appraisals. The action plans are clearly structured using a helpful format, with clear indications of responsibilities, time scales and deadlines for action. Some elements of the action plan are colour-coded so that it is clear which actions have been completed, which are in progress and which remain to be actioned.

*Implement the systematic procedure for regular teaching observations.*

The Principal has made a number of changes to procedures for teaching observations. All educators will be observed by the Principal at least once prior to their annual appraisals, using a standardised and well-designed observation form. Outcomes will be discussed confidentially in the annual appraisal.

The Principal is introducing observations for each level taught. These will highlight and focus on the different skills required for teaching at different levels. This will enable targeted professional development to take place to improve teaching skills.

A scheme for peer observation is also in place for which revised documentation has been introduced. The observed and observing educators review the observations in a short face-to-face review. The written outcomes of peer observations are shared with other colleagues at the time and general issues are taken up for discussion and action at the annual professional development day. This develops collegiality and mutual support.

The combination of hierarchical and peer observation promotes professional development of educators and is an example of very good practice.

#### 4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

##### 4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> The School has produced a new, greatly improved prospectus.  All courses are taught in English and the prospectus makes it clear that a good level is required. A clearer indication of the level of English required for courses would be helpful. A formal assessment of English language level may be appropriate for the Diploma course.  The website has also been revised and is visually attractive and straightforward to navigate.  Terms such as day release and block release to describe course arrangements are unlikely to be clearly understood by prospective participants. This is particularly the case as the majority are not native speakers of English.  Improved procedures that have been introduced to collect and analyse student feedback will enable the School more readily to address issues arising. Examples are available to demonstrate that participants' views and interests are taken seriously. However oral feedback is not systematically elicited from participants on short courses in order to provide complementary and more extensive input than written feedback.  There is no established representative consultative committee of participants on the Diploma course to provide feedback and receive responses. This would promote the improvement of quality and enhance the engagement of participants in their course.				

##### 4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> The Principal demonstrates a very clear focus on improving the quality of the course experience of participants. He is also considering ways to improve success rates in certain examinations. The Provider is increasingly aware of the importance of the level of English of participants and of enhancing the skills of educators in working with classes that have a majority of non-native English speakers.  The Principal is considering providing extracts of textbooks on the website to give an indication of the level of English required. This would be very beneficial.  The revised arrangements for classroom observation by the Principal and peers will promote professional development and improvement of teaching quality.				

#### 4.3 Participant Welfare (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> None				

#### 4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> The premises are well appointed and very attractive. The reception area has recently been refurbished and provides a welcoming entrance to WSET's premises.				

**PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>
A clear focus by the Principal on the learning of students, the quality of provision and improvement.
High quality marketing materials and website.
Very good methods for obtaining and evaluating student feedback and using it to make improvements. This enhances the student learning experience and indicates to them that their views are valued.
Classroom observation arrangements involving both the Principal and peers. This leads to improvement in quality of practice and reinforces mutual support.
Teaching materials of high quality.
Excellent classroom facilities.
Premises are well adapted to students, staff and visitors with physical disabilities.

<b>ACTIONS REQUIRED</b>	<b>Priority H/M/L</b>
None	

<b>RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b>
The Provider is recommended to put in place more detailed feedback system for its diploma courses including responding to participants on the outcomes of their feedback.
The Provider is strongly recommended to provide clearer indications of the level of English required for courses, using established and recognised grades or descriptors. This would enable students to better judge their suitability for the courses.
Consideration should be given to introducing specific English language testing or requirements for acceptance on the Diploma course. This would ensure participants are able to cope with the linguistic demands of the course.
The Provider is recommended to revise the terms used to describe duration of and teaching arrangements on courses. This would make them more readily understood by prospective participants.
The Provider is recommended to consider eliciting oral feedback from participants in short courses through short review discussions. This would provide complementary and more extensive input than written feedback.
It is recommended that the Provider considers establishing a representative consultative committee of participants on the Diploma course to provide feedback and receive responses. This would promote the improvement of quality and enhance the engagement of participants in their course.



The Provider should consider arranging professional development activities to increase the awareness and skills of educators relating to language issues in their teaching. This would increase the likelihood of students succeeding in their courses.

<b>COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS</b>	
<b>Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Further comments, if applicable</b>	