



The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas

CERTIFIED SOMMELIER EXAM SYLLABUS

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT:

The purpose of this document is to communicate exam details, policies, and expectations of students and Master Sommeliers at the Certified Sommelier Exam.

Please see the “Certified Sommelier Exam Guide: What to Expect and How to Prepare for the Certified Sommelier Exam” for specific exam details and exam content.

EXAM DESCRIPTION:

The Certified Sommelier Examination is a one-day examination with three separate sections: Tasting, Theory and Business of the Sommelier, and a Hospitality and Service Practical.

PREREQUISITES:

- The Introductory Sommelier Course and Exam
- The Certified Sommelier Exam must be taken within three years of taking the Introductory Sommelier Course and Exam.
- If three years have elapsed, students are required to retake the Introductory Sommelier Examination in order to apply for the Certified Sommelier Examination.

WHO IS THIS EXAM FOR?

The Certified Sommelier Exam is recommended for those with a minimum of three years in the beverage and hospitality industry. The material tested on the Certified Sommelier Exam is much more advanced than the Introductory Sommelier Exam. It is strongly suggested to have at least one year of restaurant experience to be comfortable with service mechanics.

EXPECTED SKILLS SET OF A CERTIFIED SOMMELIER:

- Working theoretical knowledge of principal beverage alcohol.
- Proficiency in Tableside Service, including:
 - Still and sparkling wine bottle and glass pour service.
 - Food and Wine pairing sales and ability to articulate the pairing.
 - Cocktail, Beer, Aperitif, Digestif, and Fortified wine knowledge.
 - Benchmark Producer and Vintage basics for iconic wine regions.
- Deductive Tasting Method ability for core classic red and white grape varieties
- Basic financials and wine program management

POTENTIAL ROLES OF A CERTIFIED SOMMELIER:

- Restaurant: Lead Server, Captain, Assistant Floor Sommelier, Bartender, Manager
- Other: Winery Tasting Room, Lead Retail Floor Salesperson, Distributor Representative, Hotel F&B Leadership

PUNCTUALITY:

The Certified Sommelier Exam begins promptly at 8:15 am. Tardiness to any portion of the examination will forfeit a candidate's eligibility to pass the exam.

SCHEDULE:

- **8:00 AM – 6:00 PM**
 - **7:45 AM:** Check-in:
 - Photo ID and proof of vaccination, or negative COVID-19 PCR test required.
 - **8:00 AM:** Introduction
 - **8:15-8:45 AM:** Tasting Examination
 - **8:50-9:25 AM:** Theory Examination
 - **10:00 AM-4:00 PM:** Service Examination: times vary, you will receive your exam time upon completion of the Theory portion.
 - **5:00-6:00 PM:** Results Reception: time varies (examiners will announce on exam day).

CMS-A CANCELLATION, REFUND, AND TRANSFER POLICY:

Cancellation Policy	Notification of cancellation must be emailed to info@mastersommeliers.org . CMS is not responsible for cancellations that were emailed but never received.	
	Cancellation Date	Refund Policy
	30+ days prior to start date	All minus \$50 processing fee
	Less than 30 days prior to start date	No refund or transfer; If due to illness/medical reasons or death in the immediate family, a doctor’s note is required within 14 days after the start date for partial refund consideration.
Transfer Policy	Students are allowed ONE transfer per registration under the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transfer request must be emailed to info@mastersommeliers.org more than 30 days prior to start date.• The program you transfer to must be: (1) of the same type, (2) non-waitlisted, (3) posted on our Schedule. We cannot hold funds for future programs that have not been confirmed/posted to our schedule.	

CELL PHONES, COMPUTERS, AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

- No electronic devices, including cell phones, iPhones, tablets, smartphones, and smartwatches are allowed in examination rooms or on your person during the examination. Not following the electronic policy may result in expulsion from the examination.

FOOD AND DRINK:

- No external food or drinks are permitted during the exam at any time. There will be water provided for you.

CHEATING POLICY:

- Cheating will result in automatic expulsion from this program. The Ethics Committee will review the academic integrity issue and further disciplinary action can take place.

DRESS GUIDELINES:

On the path to making meaningful change with standards and guidelines that are transparent, inclusive, and equitable, The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas aims to be proactive leaders in the hospitality industry.

We value safety, self-authenticity, and functionality to perform the tasks of the sommelier

- Everyone in our community is valued as their authentic self.
- We do not assume binary gender standards.
- We do not identify any piece of clothing as being gender-specific.
- We understand that people with disabilities may need reasonable accommodations to these guidelines and we support flexibility in such accommodations.
- We honor religious and cultural dress and all hairstyles.
- **We do not award or deduct points on any exam based on appearance.**

Dress For the Certified Sommelier Exam:

- **Professional Appearance:** Candidates are encouraged to dress in a manner that reflects their personal understanding of professional hospitality. Your attire should prioritize the safety of the guest, your own safety, and the efficiency of service in a professional working environment.
 - Suggested attire: Any combination of safe, workplace-appropriate pants, dress, suit, blazer, shirt, blouse, and shoes that enable you to provide your guests with outstanding hospitality.
 - Hygiene: No excessive perfumes or odors that may interfere with a guest's food & beverage experience or inhibit your ability to assess wines.
 - Safety: Your attire should not inhibit your ability to perform the daily duties of a sommelier safely and should not restrict mobility. Per Department of Health guidelines, please avoid:
 - Large earrings/loose hair: there is potential for jewelry to snag on objects during service and potential for hair to land in guests' food or beverage.
 - Short skirts: can restrict mobility
 - Open-toed footwear: diminishes protection from heavy objects and increases the risk of slipping and tripping.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Inclusion is one of the core values of the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas. Our goal is to create educational opportunities accessible to all, and proactively plan courses free of physical and communicable barriers so all individuals may meaningfully participate in all lectures and activities. If you require a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in a course or exam, please do not hesitate to contact us ahead of time or let an adjudicating Master Sommelier know how we can be of help and service to you.

ADA ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY:

https://www.mastersommeliers.org/sites/default/files/AccommodationsPolicy_0.pdf

CMS-A ANTI-RACISM PLEDGE:

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas (CMS-A) seeks to promote diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in our organization and the greater beverage industry. To do so, we acknowledge that racism and inequity exist and are present globally, systemically, socially, and institutionally. Therefore, we are committed to uncovering our individual and collective biases within this organization. While prejudices may be unconscious or conscious, we must separate the intent of our internalized biases from their impact and recognize the harm they cause to the greater wine community and, specifically, our underrepresented communities.

We challenge ourselves to address any and all policies that reinforce inequities in recruitment, retention, inclusion opportunities, and a sense of belonging. This challenge and pledge begin with our internal work to develop an anti-racism lens with respect to our organizational culture. We know this will be long and hard work. Just as bearing the Master Sommelier title is a lifelong honor, so is our commitment to actively dismantle organizational structures and norms that perpetuating racism.

Therefore, we pledge to:

- Continually learn about and address our inherent biases to create a more equitable organization.
- Disrupt and dismantle systems that perpetuate racism, exclusion, or marginalization by rethinking and rebuilding long-standing institutional practices, culture, and dialogue.
- Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion and intertwine this goal with our organization's culture, core values, and mission.
- Create spaces, resources, dialogues, and time for our BIPOC, LGBTQ+, women, and minority communities to listen to them, honor their experiences, and create avenues for access and opportunity in society in addition to our members and students.
- Empower participation in our programs for underrepresented communities and people experiencing socioeconomic hardship through scholarship funding.

CMS-A CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

Please see the CMS-A Code of Ethics for more information...

https://www.mastersommeliers.org/sites/default/files/CMS-A%20Code%20Ethics%20and%20Professional%20Responsibility%20%28May%202021%29_0.pdf

CMS-A NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas does not discriminate based on race, gender, religion, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, national origin, citizenship, veterans' status, sexual orientation, gender perception, or in any other way prohibited by applicable federal, state, or local law. In addition, the Court does not tolerate the behavior of any member or candidate that is racist, discriminatory, harassing, or hostile towards an individual or group of individuals. Behavior deemed in violation of the Non-Discrimination Policy will result in corrective action, up to and including suspension or termination of membership, the right to participate in Court programs, or loss of credential. If you or anyone you know experiences or observes discriminatory or harassing behavior by a candidate, affiliate, or member of the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas, please contact Diversity@mastersommeliers.org or our **ethics reporting line** immediately.

ETHICS REPORTING LINE

<https://www.lighthouse-services.com/mastersommeliers/LHILandingPage.asp>

ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATION- THE CERTIFIED SOMMELIER EXAMINATION:

The Certified Sommelier Examination is a one-day test with three separate sections:

1. Deductive Tasting Examination
2. Theory Examination
3. Hospitality and Service Practical

PASSING SCORES:

- A student must achieve 60 percent or higher on EACH exam section to become a Certified Sommelier.
- All three portions must be passed at the same time or in the same sitting.
- Candidates who pass the Certified Sommelier Exam will receive a certificate and a lapel pin and are eligible to apply for the Advanced Sommelier Course.

FEEDBACK:

- Feedback on each section of the exam will be given to all candidates at the results reception.

RETAKE POLICY:

- Candidates must wait at least 90 days from their last attempt before retaking the Certified Sommelier Examination. We do not offer a discounted retake rate for the Certified Sommelier Examination.

CMS-A RECUSAL POLICY:

The CMS-A wants students to feel their most comfortable come exam time. Therefore, students are able to request that specific Master Sommelier examiners are recused from administering their exam.

To request recusal(s), log into your account at www.mastersommeliers.org, click on My Account in the upper right-hand corner of the page. Scroll down to the My Recusal Requests section of the page and use the Add Recusal Request button. Begin typing in the Master Sommelier's first name, then select their full name from the drop-down list. Please submit all recusal requests no later than two weeks prior to your exam.

CMS-A COMMITMENT TO EXAMINATION INTEGRITY:

The wine community, hospitality industry, and our guests, who trust in any of the Court of Master Sommeliers certifications, expect that every credential holder is a trustworthy and competent professional who maintains and adheres to the highest standards. To uphold this, absolute integrity is required of every candidate and Master Sommelier. All candidates, Master Sommeliers, and members of the community are expected to act with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any failure to uphold these values puts the integrity of the credential at risk and compromises the sommelier profession, our industry, and one's accomplishments throughout their career. Examination integrity requires taking thoughtful measures before, during, and after, ensuring all candidates complete the test on their own merit without any improper assistance or resources.

Our Commitment to Examination Integrity

Equitable Examination

- Examinations will be graded anonymously whenever possible.
- Candidates experience a level playing field in every step: from admittance to administration, to grading and delivering of results and feedback.
- Examination points are awarded and deducted based on pre-determined objective criteria that can be observed and measured. Various subject matter experts have developed and maintained these objective criteria and are reviewed frequently.
- Systems of grading ensure that no Master Sommelier can unduly affect the outcome of any examination for any size group of candidates. A consortium of objective and experienced MS oversees the entire process and finalizes all results.
- Candidate's Bill of Rights: Any candidate can request recusal from any examiner for any reason. No Master Sommelier can examine a candidate with whom they have a prior or existing relationship.

Accuracy, Transparency, and Clarity of Results

- Multiple examiners are involved to ensure the accuracy of a candidate's score. CMS-A may decide that examinations may be reviewed and audited by a new panel of examiners should it be deemed appropriate.
- Any examiner present at the exam is permitted to witness and audit the determination of final results.
- Results & feedback are shared with all candidates on strengths and areas for improvement. Specific scores are shared at the Introductory, Advanced, and MS examinations.

* Systems are in development to enable sharing scores for the Certified examination.

CANDIDATE BILL OF RIGHTS:

The diversity of individuals who will progress through the CMS-A programming to become Master Sommeliers correlates directly to the quality and safety of our examination environments and our actions within the community as a whole. To include the broadest possible range of qualified candidates, we must ensure a safe and equitable environment for our candidates at every CMS-A event. To give clear direction to our candidates and members, the CMS-A has created the following Candidates' Bill of Rights. This is our commitment to all candidates who participate in any portion of our programming, events, or activities.

If a candidate ever feels subjected to treatment that is not fair and equitable, we ask that they immediately report the behavior to Lighthouse Anonymous Reporting, at www.lighthouseservices.com/mastersommeliers, or to a Master Sommelier with whom the candidate feels comfortable communicating. All reports of conduct that contravene the Code of Ethics of the CMS-A will be reviewed by the Ethics and Professional Responsibility Committee and may be referred to an impartial third-party investigator.

The Ethics and Professional Responsibility Committee chair(s), in consultation with the chair and vice-chair of the board of directors, will determine at the point of referral whether the accusation is severe enough to warrant the immediate suspension of an individual from participation in CMS-A sponsored activities prior to a full investigation. In addition, CMS-A will ensure that anyone reporting misconduct will be protected from any retribution or retaliation as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

All candidates have the right to:

- A testing environment free from misconduct or bias, including but not limited to harassment or coercive behavior by examiners or other candidates.
- An examination based on their skill set and knowledge, free from bias.
- Respectful conduct by examiners, educators, and fellow candidates or students while involved in CMS-A programming.
- Impartial and unbiased examiners, free from unfair or prejudicial influence from previous examinations or outside actions of the candidate.
- Request mentorship from a Master Sommelier without fear of any expectation of reciprocity or quid pro quo.
- Engagement in a mentor-mentee relationship without fear of any expectation of reciprocity or quid pro quo.
- Receive feedback and results from an examination in a constructive, timely, respectful, accurate, and nonprejudicial manner.

- Request the recusal, without fear of retribution, of individual Master Sommeliers from directly examining them if there is a belief that the interaction in question will adversely affect their ability to perform at an examination. This information will be collected at the time of application, kept confidential, and accessible only to the executive director, director of operations, associate director of operations, education director, examination director, and the cochairs of the Ethics and Professional Responsibility Committee.
- Contact an approved representative of the CMS-A for a detailed explanation of their exam results.
- Timely and clear communication from the CMS-A regarding examination locations, times, and other logistical details.
- Voice their questions and concerns about the content and administration of examinations.
- A detailed explanation of examination standards and what is expected for success at each level.
- Freely report, anonymously or not, behavior or actions that are in violation of the Code of Ethics without fear of retaliation or retribution.

Reports can be made online to Lighthouse Anonymous Reporting, at www.lighthouse-services.com/mastersommeliers, or to a Master Sommelier with whom the candidate feels comfortable communicating.