



The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas

Introductory Sommelier Course and Exam Syllabus

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT:

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

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

INTRODUCTORY SOMMELIER COURSE MISSION:

The Introductory Sommelier Course and Exam is an introduction to the Court of Master Sommeliers and the Sommelier profession. We endeavor to provide accessible and inclusive education and welcome all who want to learn about wine and the beverage industry.

INTRODUCTORY SOMMELIER COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Introductory Sommelier Course and Examination, offered both in-person and online, introduces students to the Court of Master Sommeliers, the Court of Master Sommeliers Tasting Method, the Court of Master Sommeliers Service Standards, and is taught exclusively by Master Sommeliers. The Introductory Course is a two-day, fast-paced, and intensive review of the world's wine-producing regions, elements of wine service, and tasting exercises.

PREREQUISITES:

- No previous experience or courses are required.
- Students must be 21 years or older.

WHO IS THE INTRODUCTORY SOMMELIER COURSE AND EXAM FOR?

Servers, bartenders, support staff, entry-level retail or distribution in the beverage and hospitality sector. This course is open to all interested in wine and the sommelier profession and desire to expand their knowledge.

TEXTS AND RESOURCES:

- **The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas Introductory Sommelier Course Workbook**
 - PDF Copy of the workbook upon registration
 - A student may purchase a physical copy through Amazon to be received prior to the course at the following link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1733571906>.
 - Purchasing a hard copy of the workbook is optional. The workbook purchase cost will not be deducted from your course fee.
- **GuildSomm.com**
 - A one-month trial membership is included as an educational resource upon registration
- **Other resources**
 - There are many excellent and comprehensive resources, however, the Introductory Sommelier Course Workbook narrows and focuses the scope of this course and should be the primary resource in preparing for the examination.
 - **Kevin Zraly Windows on the World Complete Wine Course: Revised & Updated / 35th Edition | ISBN: 1454942177** [Amazon Link](#)

SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR CLASS:

- A copy of the Introductory Sommelier Workbook in printed or digital form on a device.
- If using the digital version, a student must print the [Tasting Journal](#) to use in class to record notes on the wines being tasted.
- Notepad or notebook to take notes.
- Pen
- #2 pencil for taking the exam

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY:

The in-person Introductory Sommelier Course and Examination takes place from 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM over two days. Students must attend both days of the in-person course to receive credit for taking the course. Punctuality is key to get the most out of the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Day 1:

- **7:45 AM:** Check-in.
 - Photo ID is required.
- **8:00 AM:** Course begins
- **12:30-1:30 PM:** Lunch Break (not provided by the CMS-A)
 - You will have one hour for lunch. You may pack lunch or do an online search to see if there are any preferable dining options available in close proximity to the venue.
- **6:00 PM:** End of Day 1

Day 2:

- **7:45 AM:** Check-in.
 - Check-in is required both days of the course.
- **8:00 AM:** Day 2 Begins
- **12:30-1:30 PM:** Lunch Break (not provided by the CMS-A)
 - You will have one hour for lunch. You may pack lunch or do an online search to see if there are any preferable dining options available in close proximity to the venue.
- **4:00 PM:** Introductory Sommelier Examination
- **5:30 PM:** Results Reception

CMS-A CANCELLATION 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 website schedule. We cannot hold funds for future programs that have not been confirmed/posted to our schedule. 	

CELL PHONES, COMPUTERS, AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

Once the class has begun, use of all electronic devices should be limited to class-related tasks such as note-taking and the viewing of class-related resources. If special accommodations are necessary or particular circumstances require you to take a phone call or check text messages, please be respectful of those around you and step out of the room. Additionally, attendees are NOT permitted to record the lectures or take photographs.

**Be aware there will not be room on the classroom table for a laptop; smaller devices are welcome. During the exam, all electronics must be put away and out of sight, including smartwatches.

FOOD AND DRINK:

Food and drinks are permitted in class as long as they do not distract others from learning. Please clean up after yourself when you leave class.

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 Introductory Sommelier Course and Exam:

- **Business Casual Appearance:** Students are asked to dress in a manner that reflects their personal understanding of *business casual* attire, combining a comfortable yet professional appearance that is also suitable for sitting for long periods.
 - **Suggested attire:** Any combination of workplace-appropriate pants, dress, suit, blazer, shirt, blouse, and shoes that allows comfort and the ability to focus during the course.
 - **Hygiene:** No excessive perfumes or odors are permitted out of respect for other students who may have allergies and sensitivities. Odors may also interfere with the ability of other students and your own to assess wines.

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>

COURSE ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATION:

THE INTRODUCTORY SOMMELIER EXAM:

The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas Introductory Sommelier Exam is a closed book exam consisting of 70 multiple-choice questions, with four answer options per question. A student must complete the exam in 45 minutes. Students will be given a Scantron answer sheet and instructions on properly filling it out.

Examination questions are based on the published learning objectives, The Introductory Sommelier Course Guide, and the study resources such as the Introductory Sommelier Course Workbook. These materials contain the information required to answer all questions.

PASSING GRADE:

- A student must achieve 60% to pass the exam or answer 42 out of the 70 questions correctly.
- Each correct answer is worth one point.
- Students who pass the Introductory Sommelier Course Exam will receive a certificate, a lapel pin and are eligible to take the Certified Sommelier Exam.

SCORES AND FEEDBACK:

- In-person students will receive their results after the exam at the end of course reception.
- Within one week of the exam date, students will receive their numerical score with feedback on the categories of questions that need improvement.
- Online students receive their scores and feedback immediately after completing the online exam.

RETAKE POLICY:

- Students who score less than 60% are eligible to retake the Introductory Sommelier Examination online for a fee of \$125. Students must wait at least 14 days from their last attempt before retaking. To register to retake, contact info@mastersommeliers.org
- The CMS-A no longer requires that students take the Certified Sommelier Examination within three years of the Introductory Sommelier Examination. We encourage students to move to the next level when best prepared.

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 examiner can adjudicate a candidate with a prior or existing relationship.
- 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.