

# Sommelier Education Guide — English PDF Version

## SOMMELIER EDUCATION GUIDE - PART I

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### THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE OF SOMMELIER EDUCATION

Today's Sommelier has more educational pathways available than ever before. Internationally recognised qualifications, professional Sommelier programmes, specialised regional courses, academic wine studies and beverage-specific certifications have created a diverse and increasingly complex ecosystem.

These organisations do not all serve the same purpose. Some focus exclusively on professional Sommelier training; others provide broader wine education; and some specialise in a particular country, region, beverage category or area of hospitality.

This guide does not rank programmes or attempt to identify a single “best” qualification. Instead, it offers an overview of ten leading organisations that are particularly relevant to wine and Sommelier professionals, followed by additional influential educational paths.

The aim is simple: to help both aspiring and established wine professionals understand the landscape clearly before choosing the educational route that best aligns with their ambitions.

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## LEADING ORGANISATIONS (A-Z)

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### ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA SOMMELIER (AIS)

**Founded:** 1965

**Headquarters:** Milan, Italy

**Website:** [aisitalia.it](https://aisitalia.it)

**Main focus:** Sommelier training, Italian wine culture, tasting, service and gastronomy

**Key programme:** Three-level AIS Sommelier Course

**Relevant for:** Sommeliers, hospitality professionals, lovers of Italian wine

**About:** Founded on 7 July 1965 in Milan, AIS has grown into one of Italy's major wine organisations. Its comprehensive programme covers tasting, service, food pairing, Italian wine regions and wine culture, supported by a nationwide network.

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### ASSOCIATION DE LA SOMMELLERIE INTERNATIONALE (ASI)

**Founded:** 1969

**Headquarters:** Paris, France

**Website:** [asi.info](https://asi.info)

**Main focus:** International development of the Sommelier profession

**Programmes:** ASI Diplomas, international Sommelier education, Best Sommelier competitions, national association network

**Relevant for:** Professional Sommeliers seeking international engagement

**About:** Established in Reims in June 1969, ASI is an international professional association rather than a traditional wine school. It promotes the Sommelier profession, harmonises standards, educates consumers and coordinates global competitions.

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## □ □WEINAKADEMIE ÖSTERREICH (AUSTRIAN WINE ACADEMY)

**Founded:** 1991

**Headquarters:** Rust, Burgenland, Austria

**Website:** [weinakademie.at](http://weinakademie.at)

**Main focus:** Professional wine education and international qualifications

**Programmes:** Weinakademiker, WSET Diploma, professional seminars

**Relevant for:** Sommeliers, wine professionals, merchants, producers, advanced enthusiasts

**About:** Founded in 1991, the Austrian Wine Academy is one of Europe's leading centres for professional wine education. Programmes range from introductory courses to the advanced Weinakademiker qualification. The academy is based at the historic Seehof in Rust, with an additional office in Krems.

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## □ □COURT OF MASTER SOMMELIERS (CMS)

**Founded:** 1977

**Headquarters:** London, United Kingdom

**Websites:** [courtofmastersommeliers.org](http://courtofmastersommeliers.org) | [mastersommeliers.org](http://mastersommeliers.org)

**Main focus:** Professional Sommelier education, beverage service, hospitality, examinations

**Programmes:** Introductory Sommelier, Certified Sommelier, Advanced Sommelier, Master Sommelier Diploma

**Structure:** CMS-Europe and CMS-Americas

**Relevant for:** Restaurant Sommeliers and hospitality professionals

**About:** Created to raise beverage service standards in hotels and restaurants. The first Master Sommelier exam was held in 1969; the organisation was formally established in 1977. CMS now operates internationally across Europe, the Americas, Oceania and Asia. CMS-Americas was founded in 1987.

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## □ □GUILDSOMM INTERNATIONAL

**Founded:** 2009

**Headquarters:** Kansas City, Missouri, USA

**Website:** [guildsomm.com](http://guildsomm.com)

**Main focus:** Professional Sommelier education, study resources and community

**Resources:** Study guides, certification materials, maps, articles, podcasts

**Relevant for:** Working Sommeliers seeking advanced self-directed study

**About:** GuildSomm provides extensive educational content, technical resources, detailed maps, analysis, podcasts and a global professional community.

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## 🏛️ INSTITUTE OF MASTERS OF WINE (IMW)

**Founded:** 1955

**Headquarters:** London, United Kingdom

**Website:** [mastersofwine.org](https://mastersofwine.org)

**Main focus:** Advanced wine expertise and the Master of Wine qualification

**Key programme:** Master of Wine Study Programme

**Relevant for:** Highly experienced wine professionals

**About:** IMW oversees the prestigious Master of Wine qualification. The programme combines advanced theory, analytical tasting and independent research. It is an elite wine qualification distinct from Sommelier certification.

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## 🌐 INTERNATIONAL SOMMELIER GUILD (ISG)

**Founded:** 1982

**Headquarters:** North America / International

**Website:** [internationalsommelier.com](https://internationalsommelier.com)

**Main focus:** Structured wine, Sommelier, beverage and hospitality education

**Programmes:** ISG Sommelier certification pathway

**Relevant for:** Aspiring and working Sommeliers, hospitality professionals

**About:** Founded in 1982, ISG has grown into an international education and credentialing organisation covering wine, Sommelier studies, beverage knowledge, hospitality and wine business.

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## 🏛️ SOCIETY OF WINE EDUCATORS (SWE)

**Founded:** 1977

**Headquarters:** Washington, D.C., USA

**Website:** [societyofwineeducators.org](https://societyofwineeducators.org)

**Main focus:** Wine and spirits education and professional certification

**Programmes:** CSW, CWE, CSS, CSE

**Relevant for:** Wine professionals, educators, trainers

**About:** SWE is a nonprofit organisation offering structured self-study certification programmes with online and in-person examinations.

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## □ WINE & SPIRIT EDUCATION TRUST (WSET)

**Founded:** 1969

**Headquarters:** London, United Kingdom

**Website:** wsetglobal.com

**Main focus:** Structured wine, spirits and sake education

**Programmes:** WSET Awards in Wines, Spirits, Sake - including Level 4 Diploma

**Relevant for:** Sommeliers, hospitality professionals, retailers, importers, educators

**About:** Founded in 1969 to serve the UK wine and spirits trade, WSET is now one of the world's most recognised providers of wine, spirits and sake education.

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## □ WINE SCHOLAR GUILD (WSG)

**Founded:** 2005

**Headquarters:** International / USA

**Website:** winescholarguild.com

**Main focus:** Specialist regional wine education

**Programmes:** French Wine Scholar, Italian Wine Scholar, Spanish Wine Scholar

**Relevant for:** Wine professionals seeking deep regional expertise

**About:** Founded by Julien Camus in 2005, WSG specialises in country-specific wine programmes covering France, Italy, Spain and other regions.

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## ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL PATHS

**Le Cordon Bleu** - Culinary arts, hospitality, wine and beverage management

**North American Sommelier Association** - Sommelier education in North America

**Sake Sommelier Association** - Sake education and certification

**Sommelier-Union Deutschland / Deutsches Weininstitut** - German wine education

**UC Davis Continuing Education** - Wine science, viticulture, enology

**Union de la Sommellerie Française** - Professional development, standards, competitions

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## NEXT IN THE SERIES

This guide outlines the global landscape of Sommelier education - from international certification bodies to specialist regional programmes. In Part II, leaders of these organisations will share their perspectives: how their institutions were built, how they evolve and how they prepare the next generation of Sommeliers.

Interview questions have been sent to all organisations featured in this guide. Their responses will be published in Part II.

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- ✿ Post a Sommelier position
- ✿ Find a Sommelier job: [Sommelier-Jobs.com](https://sommelier-jobs.com)
- ✿ Create job alert