

D6 Independent Research Assignment Guidelines, Submission Procedure and Frequently Asked Questions

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D6 Independent Research Assignment Guidelines

D6 requires students to research a specified wine-related subject and submit an assignment of 3,000 words. Two titles will be released each academic year on August 1, one for submission by January 31 and the other for submission by July 31 in the same academic year. Within these deadlines, students are free to write the assignments whenever they choose. It is up to individual candidates to manage their own time and workload with guidance from their Approved Programme Provider (APP).

The Independent Research Assignment assesses the candidate's ability to carry out research beyond the WSET published learning materials and evaluate current trends and options in the wine industry. The subject matter of each assignment may lie outside the scope of the Specifications of the other Units.

Research is a key element to this Unit. Students will be required to identify and use multiple sources of information to create an assignment that addresses the instructions as set out in the brief.

If you have limited experience of research from your previous studies it may be helpful to consider the following four-step approach:

1. Preparation
2. Preliminary research
3. Analysis
4. Secondary research

Preparation

Preparation involves reading the assignment brief carefully to identify the core issues you are being instructed to research. Then, before consulting any sources, write down what you know about the subject. Thinking in very broad terms about the issue can help you gather your thoughts and structure your approach.

Preliminary research

Preliminary research involves working out which sources to consult to build up your knowledge of the subject. You could choose to gather information from wine industry magazines/journals, books, the Internet and any other sources that you think might be relevant.

You should be selective when deciding what source material to consult for your assignment. Technical journal articles or other academic works are likely to be more authoritative than consumer magazines, for example, although which sources are most appropriate for a particular topic will depend on the brief. You should always aim to use a range of sources of different types to widen the scope of your research.

Your sources must be credible. When quoting or relying on someone else's work in support of an argument, you should satisfy yourself of the author's reputation: can they be considered a reliable source for the information or analysis they are providing? For example, Wikipedia is not widely

accepted as an authoritative source of academic information and should therefore be used appropriately.

Analysis

Analysis involves evaluating the data that you have gathered from various sources and identifying key themes.

You should ask yourself whether you have enough information to cover the topic identified in the assignment brief comprehensively. When you come to write your assignment, you will need to present different points of view to demonstrate to the examiners that you have researched the topic fully. By this stage, you will also have started to form your own opinions, so consider what evidence in your research supports your views and what undermines them.

Secondary research

Secondary research involves filling in any gaps that you have identified.

PERSONAL COMMENTARY/OPINION

In addition to assessing your ability to research a topic independently, D6 may also require candidates to express personal commentary or opinion on their findings. This involves evaluating the issues objectively and reaching an informed conclusion.

The examiners do not just expect you to summarise opinions of others; they are looking for evidence of your own critical thinking. This means you have to present a well-reasoned argument as to which perspective is, in your opinion, more valid. You must be able to show a broad understanding of the topic giving reasons to support your position. You should also aim to present evidence as to why the opposing points of view may be incorrect or unsound.

How to write your Independent Research Assignment

If this is the first time you have had to produce a piece of work of this length, you could consider tackling the assignment in three phases:

1. Plan and write a first draft;
2. Review your first draft, editing content as necessary;
3. Proofread the final version, checking for misspellings and other errors.

Plan and First Draft

The first step is to make a detailed plan of what you intend to cover. Having collated all the data from your research, formed your opinions and decided what to include, think about how to order the information in a logical way. You should then write the first draft of your assignment without worrying about the word count. Most candidates find that they write over 3,000 words at this stage.

Review of First Draft

After you have completed your first draft you should put it to one side for a few days before re-reading it. This will make it easier to sense-check what you have written and identify what can or should be removed. As you read each paragraph, consider the point you are trying to make and ask yourself whether it can be made more effectively. A common error is using too many linking words,

adjectives and adverbs. These can often be edited out without changing the meaning of what you are saying. Usually, this process will be sufficient to bring the word count down to the 3,000 limit.

Proofreading the Final Version

This is a vital final check to ensure that your assignment is presentable to the examiner. Proofread your work carefully to eliminate any spelling mistakes or typographical errors. Check that you have appended your bibliography and that this lists all the sources you have consulted.

Guidelines:

Word count

The stipulated word count of 3,000 words has a tolerance of +/-10%. This means the research assignment **MUST** be at least 2,700 words in length and no more than 3,300 words.

Your references, bibliography and any appendices to your assignment are excluded from this word count. In text citations are included. Note, however, it is unacceptable to use footnotes and appendices to make points that should have been included in the body of the assignment.

Spelling, Grammar and Clear Presentation

A proportion of the marks available for the assignment is allocated to spelling, grammar and presentation (which includes referencing and use of the bibliography) so you should take particular care with these elements of the assignment. Mistakes can be picked up with proofreading or using computer spellcheck functions so you should always review your work prior to submission.

Clear presentation is essential; you can use different text styles, bold type or underlining, etc. to format your assignment and make it easier to read.

References

You must include references in your assignment. This means that every source you quote, summarise or rely on to make a point must be cited in full. This shows the examiner that you have researched the topic fully and enables verification of your source material. It also helps the reader to distinguish between your thoughts and those of others and so can avoid accusations of plagiarism.

The 'Harvard system' is one of the most well-recognised referencing systems and the examiners would recommend using it as there are numerous detailed guides available online. If you have a particular preference for a different referencing system, then it is permissible to use that.

The Harvard system uses in-text citations and consists of the author's last name, year of publication and a page number if relevant, presented within brackets.

Examples:

- (Barrie and Richards, 2025)
- (Robinson *et al*, 2015, p105)
- (Low, 2025)

If you mention the authors name in the text, you are not required to repeat the author's name in the bracketed citation. **In text citations should be included in your word count.**

Bibliography

You must include a bibliography as an appendix to your assignment. Your bibliography should contain a list of all the works you have referenced, quoted or relied on within the body of your assignment.

The works you have consulted should be listed alphabetically by author surname and should include the full title, edition, publisher and date of publication. Web resources should be cited with the full URL and the date when you last accessed the relevant page.

Your references should meet the following basic criteria:

- For web sources, you should include the full URL which will take the reader directly to the relevant page. You should also include the date when you last accessed the link.
- For books and journals or magazines, you should include the author's name, the publication and article title and the relevant page numbers.
- For unwritten sources (e.g. interviews, podcasts, seminars etc.), you should include as much detail as possible to enable the examiner to follow up as necessary.

Examples:

- Barrie, S and Richards, P. (2025). *'Fake Wine: A Laughing Matter?'*. [Podcast]. 2 May 2025. Available at Apple Podcasts. (Accessed 23 May 2025).
- Bloggs, J. (2025). Interview by Jane Doe [in person], 15 June.
- Low, S. (2025). *Argentina: A vinous powerhouse in South America*. Available at: <https://www.decanter.com/wine-news/argentina-a-vinous-powerhouse-in-south-america-561681/> (accessed 30 July 2025).
- Robinson, J. *et al.* (2015) *The Oxford Companion to Wine* (4th Edition) [Oxford University Press].

Footnotes and Appendices

Footnotes are a useful tool for including author's notes or additional information that may otherwise disrupt the flow of the main text. Their content does not form part of the permitted word count.

Where more than a sentence of text appears in a footnote the examiner will consider whether the point being made should have been included in the body of the assignment. If so, it will be disregarded by the examiner and you will not gain marks for that observation.

Appendices are acceptable if you wish to include material that is unsuitable for the main body of text. Material that is vital to your argument should be included in the main body rather than as an appendix.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

WSET encourages the responsible use of generative AI. Generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini) can be used to support the development of your research assignment. However, AI tools cannot replace human critical thinking or the development of evidence-based arguments and subject knowledge that forms the basis of your research. It is important that candidates understand the opportunities, limitations and ethical questions associated with the use of these tools. These include:

- Privacy and data considerations

- Potential for bias and stereotyping
- Inaccuracy and misinterpretation of information
- Plagiarism
- Ethical issues

Using generative AI to generate content that is presented as the author's own is not acceptable. Candidates are responsible for safeguarding their work from plagiarism, ensuring clear differentiation of their own work from any text or material derived from AI tools.

Where generative AI has been used to provide information, **you must provide a reference**. For example, if using the Harvard system of referencing you should credit the creator of the AI tool as the author, using both an in-text citation and a reference list entry. If a shareable URL is available, please include it in the reference list entry.

Example:

OpenAI ChatGPT (2025), ChatGPT response to Jane Doe. 10 June. Available at:
<https://chat.openai.com/share/xyz>

Collusion and Plagiarism

The D6 Independent Research Assignment must be entirely your own work. This means you should not collaborate with other students or your teachers to produce it. Presenting a piece of work as your own when it is in fact the work of a group is considered collusion.

Plagiarism is claiming another person's thoughts or work as one's own. Copying or paraphrasing material from a fellow student is plagiarism. Take care not to share your notes or research findings with other students if you suspect they may copy them. You may find it difficult to prove that you were the originator of the work and where it is unclear which piece of work is the copy and which the original, both candidates will be penalised.

Quoting directly from a source without using quotation marks or otherwise using information in your assignment (copying or paraphrasing) without referencing the source also constitutes plagiarism. For this reason, you must make sure that every source you have consulted and relied on in the preparation of your assignment is correctly referenced throughout the text and listed in your bibliography.

Penalties for plagiarism and collusion, as with other forms of cheating, include an automatic fail grade for D6. You may also be disqualified from future WSET examinations.

Increasingly, upon the release of the D6 briefs, individuals not connected to WSET have been producing podcasts or other material addressing the topic set in the brief. Whilst these may prove useful, students should be aware that many other students can end up referencing the same source. Finding unique examples and using a wide variety of sources will make your work stand out from other candidates.

Students are reminded that educators and subject specialists at their APP have been through a registration process with WSET to ensure that they have the necessary qualifications and experience to teach the WSET Level 4 Diploma in Wines. WSET does not authorise any individuals to offer private tuition or workshops and any student who uses this type of service does so at their own risk.

D6 Independent Research Assignment Submission Procedure

1. All submissions must be made via your Approved Programme Provider (APP) in advance of the published deadlines. Your APP may require submission ahead of the published date for administrative purposes. Submissions should not be made direct to WSET as they will not be accepted.
2. All submissions must be accompanied by a completed Independent Research Assignment cover sheet.
3. In addition to the submission to your APP, you are also required to email a digital copy of your assignment to **level4diploma@wsetglobal.com**. The digital copy should be saved as a PDF document. If for any reason you are unable to convert your document into a PDF please notify us at level4diploma@wsetglobal.com
4. Please fasten the pages of your assignment together with a staple or foldback clip with the cover sheet as the first page. Do not use a ringbinder or other folder as these will not be returned by WSET.
5. Please ensure you write your candidate number on the cover sheet. You should also write your candidate number on each page of the assignment. You should NOT include your name anywhere in the assignment itself.
6. Please ensure that you sign the declaration box – if unsigned your assignment may not be marked, resulting in a fail grade.
7. Please remember to include the total word count on the cover sheet – if you do not your assignment may not be marked, resulting in a fail grade.
8. **PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR ASSIGNMENT – neither the original nor the cover sheet will be returned to you.**

If you have any further questions, please contact your APP

D6 Independent Research Assignment Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When will the briefs be published?

A: The two briefs will be published at the start of each academic year on 1 August.

Q: When can I submit my research project?

A: There are two submission deadlines each academic year, one for each title. These titles are not interchangeable. The deadlines are 31 January and 31 July. Students must register with their Approved Programme Provider (APP) in advance of the submission dates. Students are advised to check with their APP as some APPs may set an earlier submission date for administrative purposes.

Q: Can I choose which deadline to submit my assignment?

A: No, one title will be for the January submission and the other for July.

Q: If I submit an assignment and receive a fail grade can I resubmit the same title at the next submission date?

A: No

Q: What happens if I accidentally submit the July assignment title in January?

A: Your assignment will be returned to you ungraded. You will forfeit your examination fee and will have to reregister and resubmit for the July submission date.

Q: When can I expect to get the results for my Independent Research Assignment?

A: These are issued to your Approved Programme Provider approximately 12 weeks after WSET's deadline for submission.

Q: Why am I required to submit a digital copy of the assignment?

A: WSET reserves the right to use software to check for plagiarism or AI generated content.