

## **Introduction**

The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) is the leading voice and advocate for distilled spirits in the United States. Representing the leading producers and marketers of distilled spirits, DISCUS advocates on legislative, regulatory and public affairs issues impacting the distilled spirits sector at the local, state, federal and international levels; promotes the distilled spirits sector, raising awareness and opening markets in the United States and around the globe; and encourages responsible and moderate consumption of distilled spirits as part of a healthy adult lifestyle based on evidence-based research and policy. Through a partnership with WSET, DISCUS provides globally recognized education and qualifications in spirits for professionals and enthusiasts. DISCUS currently offers two qualifications, the policies and guidelines of which are outlined below.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

Distilled Spirits Council (DISCUS) is committed to providing high quality service and maintaining a fast and effective procedure to allow all students to bring forward any concern and issues and where there is a cause for our concern and immediate attention. It is important that if you feel dissatisfied with any matter relating to your enrolment in DISCUS provided courses you should have an effective means by which such matter can be aired or communicated and where appropriate, resolved.

DISCUS aims to provide the best possible solution to settle complaints as soon as possible, in an amicable manner which will benefit the interest of both parties; all complaints and appeals will be addressed to areas where improvement is identified and necessary. DISCUS will seek to handle issues and complaints and appeals in a manner which:

- Encourages most appropriate and possible solution
- Fair and Efficient
- Treats complaint with sincerity, seriousness, and most importantly with confidentiality
- To ensure that DISCUS will improve its practice as a result where this is relevant

This document is pertinent to all students who has some issues and who may wish to complain about any aspect of the institution including:

- Teaching and academic facilities
- Quality of teaching and supervision
- Academic services, such as wine tasting equipment, technically right wine samples with exception when faulty wines are shown as sample etc.
- Administrative services
- Admission Procedure
- The behavior of another student
- The behavior of a member of staff
- Examination results or level of grades

## **Guide to making a Complaint or Appeal**

*Why should I complain?*

There is always room for improvement. Therefore DISCUS encourages its students to inform the administrator as soon as possible if they feel dissatisfied about the services or they would recommend any suggestion for improvement of the quality of the services.

*To whom should I complain?*

You should contact the following email address to submit a complaint: [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org). All parties involved in administering the course (Nominated Educator, Examinations Officer and Invigilator) will be monitoring the inbox regularly.

*I don't want to put forward a formal complain because I am afraid that it might affect my assessment.*

DISCUS has made a commitment that under no circumstances that students will be penalized for raising a complaint. All staff involved in handling complaints are obliged to ensure that any complaints will not influence any assessment or the way the student will be treated after the procedure.

*Will the person I complain about find out?*

Individuals or any members of the institution which is subject of the complaint, is entitled to know who has raised an issue or a complaint about them, consequently the nature of the complaint. At some exceptional cases and with justifiable reasons, DISCUS will acknowledge the complaint to be anonymous for the initial stages of the procedure. However, DISCUS will normally wish to undertake confidential discussions in person with the complaint and with the subject of the complaint.

*How will the complaint be resolved?*

DISCUS will ensure that complaints will be acknowledged, dealt with and will have an appropriate and proportionate action by Senior Management within at least 30 days. Where a complaint remains unresolved following the initial handling of the case, the complaint is forwarded to WSET APP manager.

### **Stages of Procedure**

If your matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, you then can submit an appeal to [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org) outlining your concerns. You can expect a response or action taken in 30 days. If your issue is not dealt with to your satisfaction at this level, you can communicate in writing to have your matter dealt with by the WSET about APP DISCUS at [QA@wsetglobal.com](mailto:QA@wsetglobal.com).

### **Additional Notes:**

1. After a matter is resolved, the complaint and action taken is documented and action implemented to prevent future reoccurrence.
2. There are certain complaints which may need to be addressed externally by the examination bodies. We will make sure that we give you proper advice on how to communicate comments and complaints to your examination body.

### **Conflict of Interest**

As a regulated awarding organization, DISCUS is required to identify, monitor and manage actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest. This is essential to safeguard the integrity of DISCUS

qualifications and promote confidence in DISCUS processes. This policy applies to all DISCUS staff and to any individual acting on behalf of DISCUS.

### **Definition of conflict of interest**

A conflict of interest exists where an individual has interests or loyalties that could adversely influence their judgement, objectivity or loyalty to DISCUS when conducting activities associated with DISCUS qualifications.

These can arise in many different aspects of awarding organization activity, such as:

- An individual whose personal interests or loyalties conflict with their awarding organization involvement
- An individual who receives remuneration for services that conflict with their awarding organization involvement

Additional examples of conflict of interest connected with DISCUS as a WSET APP and students may include the following:

- Selection of appropriate invigilators for conducting the exams who are not related to the students who take the exam.
- The undertaking of any assessment of candidates by an individual who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment for any or all individuals concerned.
- The undertaking of any moderation of assessment of candidates by an individual who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment for any or all individuals concerned.
- The tutoring of candidates by any individual involved in the assessment process or processes of monitoring and/or conducting the exams
- The delivery of “coaching sessions” to examination candidates by any individual involved in the assessment, monitoring and/or conducting the exam processes.
- Other conflict of interest as defined with current Macedonian Laws and Regulations regarding the processes in education and examinations the students

Some of this conflict can be managed and therefore they are acceptable, but only through following the WSET procedures and recommendations.

### **Identification of Conflicts of Interest**

Any individual involved in the delivery of DISCUS qualifications or any student as a user of DISCUS services who becomes aware of a Conflict of Interest must immediately inform the Examination Officer through email at: [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org). Conflict of Interest declarations will be recorded by DISCUS and communicated to WSET.

### **Management of Conflicts of Interest**

In case of Conflict of Interest is reported, DISCUS is obligated to inform WSET and follow the recommendations of WSET on how to mitigate the newly created situation.

### **Privacy and Data Protection**

The Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. (DISCUS) believes in your right to privacy when using the Internet for provided services. We intend to adhere to the following policies aimed at protecting your privacy on our site.

We will explicitly ask you when we need information that personally identifies you or allows us to contact you (“Personal Information”). This information may be requested when registering for our services, purchasing our materials or at other times as special opportunities or events arise. When possible, we will provide you with the means to make sure that your Personal Information is correct and current.

If we obtain any Personal Information from you, we will not sell it to third parties. Personal details such as the email and birthday will be shared with WSET for registration of exams and certification. These details may be used internally as part of special merchandising and promotion programs and we may disclose non-personally identifiable compilations of information to third parties for marketing related purposes.

If we intend to share your Personal Information in a non-aggregated form with companies, we will provide you with instructions on how to decline this service. You may also stop the delivery of informational or promotional mail from us by following the instructions on the email delivering the information. If you provide Personal Information to any entity that is linked to a DISCUS affiliated site, you should consult their privacy statement for information on their policies in this regard. DISCUS is not responsible for the use of the information by those entities. We may disclose Personal Information if required to do so by law or in the good-faith belief that such action is necessary to (a) conform to the edicts of the law or comply with legal process served on us or our affiliates; (b) protect and defend our rights or property or those of our users, and (c) act as immediately necessary in order to protect the personal safety of our users or the public. If you have questions or concerns regarding this statement, you should first contact our site coordinator by email.

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

DISCUS recognizes that some students require special arrangements when it comes to our examinations, and this policy aims to explain what you are entitled to request. A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage through educational processes, including the assessment of knowledge. DISCUS seeks to secure equal opportunity to all candidates to follow the processes of education and examination in a way that puts them at no disadvantage, or advantage, over other candidates. Reasonable adjustments will not give unfair advantage over candidates for whom reasonable adjustments are not being made or affect the reliability and validity of the assessment outcomes.

A reasonable adjustment is unique to you and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors, which may include:

- the needs of the student;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the student and other students.

**An adjustment will not be approved if it:**

- involves unreasonable costs to DISCUS;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the course administration or examination.

**Provided Adjustments may include:**

- Changing standard assessment arrangements, for example allowing candidates extra time to complete the assessment activity
- Adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in large text format;
- Providing access facilitators during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or reader
- Re-organizing the assessment room, such as removal of visual stimuli for an autistic candidate.

Arrangements for the use of third parties (such as an interpreter or scribe) during the examination will normally be your responsibility however DISCUS will take reasonable steps to source suitable persons if you are not able to do so. For further information, please contact [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org).

**Applying for a reasonable adjustment**

Students who have special needs relating to the course administration or examination need to contact [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org) two (2) weeks prior to the course beginning or, for exam specific cases six (6) weeks prior the exam date. The Request for Reasonable Adjustment must be accompanied with evidence, which will be turned over to WSET and handled in accordance with their data privacy policies

**Special Considerations**

Special consideration will be given to candidates who have been temporarily disadvantaged as a result of illness, injury, or adverse circumstances at the time of the assessment. Special consideration will not give unfair advantage over candidates for whom special consideration is not being applied.

A candidate may be eligible for special consideration if:

- Performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the candidate. This may include recent personal illness, accident, bereavement or examination room conditions;
- Alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment proved inappropriate or inadequate;
- The application of special consideration would not mislead the user of the certificate as to the candidate's attainment.

Please note all assessment requirements of the WSET requirements must be met – no awards will be offered outside of these parameters.

**Applying for special consideration**

To be eligible for Special Consideration, please provide documentation outlining the Special Consideration being sought within 5 working days from the exam date to the Examination Officer at [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org). Any supporting evidence provided by the student will be handled in accordance with the WSET Data Privacy Policy.

## Malpractice and Maladministration

The aim of this policy is to protect the interests of DISCUS' students and safeguard the integrity of WSET qualifications by ensuring compliance with DISCUS Policies and Procedures. It provides a framework for the identification, reporting and management of any potential malpractice or maladministration and for the application of sanctions.

Non-compliance with DISCUS' Policies and Procedures generally falls into one of two followed categories:

- **Maladministration**, where non-compliance is accidental rather than intentional; and
- **Malpractice** where non-compliance is intentional or the result of negligence.

The boundaries between maladministration and malpractice are not clear-cut. Some incidents may fall into either category depending on the wider context. Some maladministration incidents may become malpractice e.g. through failure to implement corrective measures, repetition of the incident, or subsequent attempt at nondisclosure or misrepresentation. A malpractice incident may be deemed to be maladministration if there are extenuating circumstances. Whether a situation is maladministration or malpractice will be determined by WSET following an investigation

following an investigation. Malpractice or maladministration may include:

- Failure to adhere DISCUS Policies and Procedures;
- Failure to comply with the APP Code of Conduct;
- Failure to carry out course or assessment delivery in accordance with WSET requirements;
- Failure to adhere to DISCUS' candidate registration and certification procedures;
- Late student registrations;
- Fraudulent claim for certificates/fraudulent use of certificates/reproduction or forgery of certificates;
- Withholding of information from Wine Educator which is critical to maintaining the quality assurance;
- Insecure storage of assessment materials;
- Submission of false or inaccurate information to gain a qualification;
- Cheating, including the use of unauthorized devices or materials; ☒Disruptive behavior in an examination;
- Plagiarism of any nature by students;
- Impersonation (including forgery of signatures);
- Any action likely to lead to an adverse effect;
- Breach of confidentiality;
- Failure to a disclose Conflict of Interest;
- Issue of incorrect exam results/failure to issue results to students in a timely manner;
- Unauthorized reading/amendment/copying/distribution of exam papers;
- Failure to report changes in ownership/personnel/location/facilities;
- Denial of access to information, documentation, workforce, facilities;
- Failure to respond to DISCUS correspondence in a timely manner;

- Failure to return examination papers within the specified timeframe or to follow delivery and tracking regulations;
- Infringement of WSET copyright, trademarks, intellectual property rights and brand identity;
- Use of unqualified and/or unregistered educators or internal assessors;
- Misleading advertising/publicity

### **Responsibilities of the APP**

To report Malpractice, you should contact [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org). If necessary, DISCUS will receive assistance from WSET on how best to prevent, investigate and deal with allegations of malpractice or maladministration, by contacting WSET at [QA@wsetglobal.com](mailto:QA@wsetglobal.com).

DISCUS is committed to notifying WSET immediately with notice any noncompliance issues or if information is received from candidates or anyone else. Notification will be conducted via email to [QA@wsetglobal.com](mailto:QA@wsetglobal.com).

If the non-compliance incident occurs during a WSET examination, the Examinations Officer will notify WSET by submitting the Notification of Malpractice Form.

The DISCUS Examination Officer is responsible for ensuring that all staff involved in the delivery and/or administration of the WSET program run it in accordance with the rules, regulations and procedures set out in APP Handbook, and are aware of, and comply with, this policy. The Examination Officer agrees to co-operate fully with WSET in any investigation of alleged malpractice at the APP including the removal and / or suspension of staff from their WSET duties during such investigation.

Any candidate, educator, invigilator has the right to appeal any decision made against them using the DISCUS Complaints and Appeals Policy. All other notifications can be submitted through email and will include:

- A detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the suspicions and allegations;
- Details of any consequent actions or investigations;
- Any extenuating circumstances (e.g. medical reports);
- Details of any procedures followed for informing staff/students of consequences of malpractice and maladministration;
- Any unauthorized materials found during assessment;
- Written statements signed and dated by any individuals involved.

### **Management of non-compliance**

If malpractice or maladministration is identified, WSET will consider its impact and may apply sanctions accordingly. WSET will take all reasonable steps to ensure that students who are affected by malpractice or maladministration through no fault of their own are not disadvantaged. However, in some cases, it may be necessary to disallow or withhold results and/or certificates. Managing of non-compliance incidents include different forms of sanctions described in APP Handbook in tables named as Sanctions Applicable to APPs and Sanctions Applicable to Students.

Sanctions available to Students include the following:

- Written Warning - The student is issued with a written warning that if the offence is repeated within a set period of time then further specified sanctions will be applied.
- Exam Result Declared Null and Void - A student's exam result is disallowed. This may include invalidation and recall of a certificate already issued.
- Disqualification from a Qualification - The student is disqualified from participating in the concerned qualification with immediate effect and further excluded from participating in any further WSET qualifications for a period of 12 months. This includes access to WSET materials.
- Student Disqualification - The learner is disqualified from participating in any courses or assessments leading to WSET qualifications. This includes access to WSET materials.
- Disqualification from use of WSET certified logos and postnominals - Actions bringing WSET into disrepute may result in the student or graduate being barred from use of WSET postnominals and WSET certified logos.

### **Appeals**

Any individual that wishes to consider appealing against penalties or sanctions imposed by WSET should file an appeal with Quality Assurance following the WSET Complaint Policy.

### **Cancellation and Refunds**

Cancellations of confirmed places are accepted up to 30 days prior to the start of the course. An administration fee of \$50 will be deducted and the remainder of the course fee refunded to the payee.

Transfers of a confirmed booking either to another course or applicant can be made up to 14 days before the course start date upon payment of a \$50 admin fee plus the cost of any additional study materials which may be applicable. Transfers cannot be carried forward to the next academic year.

If a confirmed course booking is cancelled during the 30 days prior to the start of the course, or at any time after the start of the course, no refund or transfer of the course fees will be made.

Examination dates are fixed to the course onto which you book and any transfer to an alternative date will incur an administration fee of \$50. All transfer requests must be made in writing or by email to [education@distilledspirits.org](mailto:education@distilledspirits.org) at least 30 days before the original examination date.

If a student needs to take a res-it for any reason, the student will be charged an administrative fee of \$50.

Course fees will be refunded in full if DISCUS changes a course date or cancels a course if enrolments do not reach the required minimum numbers – notification will be made 14 days prior to the planned start date of the course.

### **Diversity & Equity Policy**

DISCUS is committed to upholding the principles of diversity and equality in all areas of its work, seeking to ensure that all participants and other stakeholders are treated fairly and equally at all times.

This policy applies to all DISCUS staff and to any individual acting on behalf of DISCUS.

DISCUS assures equality of opportunity for candidates by:

- Promoting open access to WSET;
- DISCUS will provide access to WSET courses, exams and materials without discrimination. WSET ensures that the format and content of all courses, exams and other WSET materials do not discriminate unlawfully against anyone on the grounds of disability, age, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation;
- Collating and monitoring data on candidate age, gender, ethnicity and access arrangements, which are reportable in a non-attributable format;
- Inviting feedback on diversity and inclusion issues from participants and other stakeholders;
- Working with relevant organizations as appropriate to develop measures to identify and encourage equal opportunities for all stakeholders, current or future; and
- Reviewing this policy regularly to ensure it continues to appropriately and adequately address these goals.