



Beer Judge Certification Program

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BJCP Exam Program Description

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CHANGE LOG

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Introduction

Initially the description of the BJCP Exam Program was in the BJCP Study Guide. When the BJCP Mead Exam was created the description was replicated into the BJCP Mead Exam Study Guide and the BJCP Exam Study Guide was renamed the BJCP Beer Exam Study Guide. Over time, the descriptions diverged. This document is the result of removing the descriptions from the study guides and consolidating all the information in a single place.

The BJCP

The most complete and current information about the BJCP can be found on the BJCP web site (<http://www.bjcp.org>). The Member Resources section contains a wealth of information about the organization's background, history and evolution.

BJCP Background

The Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) is a non-profit organization that encourages the advancement of education of people who are concerned with the evaluation of beer and related fermented products. The BJCP certifies Beer and Mead judges, and ranks beer judges through an exam and monitoring process.

The program was created in 1985 through the joint efforts of the Home Wine and Beer Trade Association (HWBTA) and the American Homebrewers Association (AHA). Since 1995, the BJCP has operated independently of either founding organization, governed only by its membership of participating judges.

In 1985, some 30 people took the BJCP beer exam and became BJCP judges. Since that first exam, over 200 judges have joined the ranks annually. In 2013, nearly 1100 BJCP exams were given. At this time (March 2014), there are about 4,900 judges active in the BJCP and a total membership of over 7800.

The purpose of the BJCP is to:

1. Encourage knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the world's diverse beer, mead, and cider styles,
2. Promote, recognize, and advance beer, mead and cider tasting, evaluation, and communication skills, and
3. Develop standardized tools, methods, and processes for the structured evaluation, ranking, and feedback of beer, mead, and cider.

The BJCP Exams

The BJCP has examinations for both beer judges and for mead judges.

The BJCP Beer Exams

Prior to April 2012, the BJCP beer exam was comprised of two parts: essay and tasting, which were completed in a three hour time period. The essay portion was worth 70 percent of the final score and was designed to determine an individual's overall knowledge of beer and his or her ability to clearly express the information in writing. The tasting portion of the exam was worth 30 percent of the final score, and each candidate was asked to judge four beers as he or she would at a competition. To score well on the tasting portion, the prospective judge must accurately score the beer and describe all significant aspects of it, as well as comment on style characteristics. That examination system that existed prior to April 1, 2012 is now called the BJCP Legacy Beer Examination.

Beginning in 2009, the BJCP experienced a rapid growth in the number of prospective judges taking the exam, and this continued through 2011 with over 750 exams being administered annually. This growth produced a large number of essay exams, which were manually graded by volunteer National and Master judges. This is a very labor-intensive and time-consuming process, and even though new graders were constantly being recruited, the backlog of exams forced the BJCP to limit both the number of exam sites and the number of examinees at each site. This was not a sustainable situation, so beginning in April 2012, the BJCP revised the exam system to better meet the needs of the current and future membership. The key addition was a web-based entrance exam, which is electronically graded and serves the purpose of establishing the readiness of a prospective judge to take a proctored tasting exam.

The revised BJCP beer exam now consists of three parts:

- 1) The **BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination** – a web-based entrance exam, which is pass/fail with multiple choice, true-false and multiple answer questions. This entrance exam must be passed to enable a prospective judge to register for the tasting exam.
- 2) The **BJCP Beer Judging Examination** – a proctored beer judging exam, in which the prospective judge must evaluate six beers rather than the four beers that were judged in the legacy BJCP exam. This judging exam qualifies a judge for only the Apprentice, Recognized, and Certified judging ranks, using the same criteria that were previously used for the legacy combined essay/tasting exam. The tasting exam has the same format as exams administered prior to April 2012, but with six beers to be evaluated in a 90 minute time period.
- 3) The **BJCP Beer Judge Written Proficiency Examination** – a written proficiency exam, which is available to judges who have scored at least 80% on the tasting exam and have accumulated at least ten judging experience points. The BJCP Beer Judge Written Proficiency Examination is closed book and consists of two sections. The first section

tests familiarity with the BJCP and the judging process, consists of 20 true/false questions about judging and the organization. Correct answers earn no points, but each incorrect answer results in a 0.5 point deduction from the overall exam score. On the second section there are five essay questions. These questions are drawn from the same set of questions that was used for the essay portion of the BJCP Legacy Beer Examination. The questions in section two are each worth 20 percent of the total exam score.

A comprehensive exam score is calculated based on a 50/50 weighting of the judging and written exams. This score, combined with experience points and Grand Master Service Requirements, can qualify the judge for the National, Master and Grand Master judging ranks.

The web-based BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination and BJCP Beer Judge Written Proficiency Examination cover the same topics that were the basis for the BJCP Legacy Beer Examination, including:

- Technical aspects of brewing, ingredients, brewing process and possible faults.
- World beer styles, including characteristics, history, ingredients and brewing techniques.
- The purpose of the BJCP and the criteria for the judging ranks.
- Judging procedures and ethics, taken from the BJCP Judge Procedures Manual.

The primary reference that defines any aspects of the beer styles appearing in the written exam is the BJCP Style Guidelines. In preparing for the exam, a prospective judge should acquire a broad understanding of beer styles, know different brewing methods, and understand how brewing methods correlate with style and flavor. Brewing processes should be understood to the point where one can intelligently discuss various techniques and ingredients and how they may have affected the beer being sampled. Frequent tasting of commercial beers will help the judge gain further understanding of style differences.

In the remainder of this document, the following abbreviated names are sometimes used:

- The Beer Entrance Exam - **BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination**
- The New Beer Tasting Exam - **BJCP Beer Judging Examination**
- The Legacy Beer Exam - **BJCP Legacy Beer Examination**
- The New Beer Essay Exam - **BJCP Beer Judge Written Proficiency Examination**

The BJCP Mead Exam

The BJCP Board approved a proposal to create a Mead Judge Certification in March 2006. A committee was organized to work on the project, with subcommittees of experts in the mead and cider domains. The question pool was finalized and field-tested in 2007, with the exam format determined in early 2008. A pilot mead judge exam was given in August 2008 in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Results of that pilot test were then used to adjust the program, and to determine what information was most needed by examinees and graders.

The BJCP Mead Exam is a written and practical judging exam covering important knowledge necessary to properly evaluate mead. Subjects include mead styles, characteristics of mead, mead ingredients, troubleshooting faults, and controlling the mead-making process.

The exam consists of seven essay questions in a two-hour session followed by judging three meads in a 45-minute session. The time allotted to the written and tasting sections cannot be combined. No partial retakes of the mead exam are allowed; the entire test must be taken. While section scores are recorded by the BJCP, passing is based on total performance on a single exam.

The Mead exam is jointly sponsored with the Mead Makers International (MMI, formerly the International Mead Association). Members of the MMI helped with the exam questions and study materials.

Determining BJCP Judge Rank

Judges vary widely in their skill and experience. As a result, the BJCP recognizes various levels of accomplishment. An individual's level of certification is determined by two factors: exam score and experience points earned through AHA/BJCP Sanctioned Competition Program events. The different levels and the criteria for achieving them are outlined below. Complete details are provided at <http://www.bjcp.org/membergd.php>.

Impact of the Beer Exam Changes

The introduction of the changes to the BJCP Beer Exam program on April 1, 2012 does not result in any change to the rank or exam scores for any BJCP judge that was already a BJCP judge as a result of taking the Legacy Beer Exam prior to April 1, 2012. For judges that entered the program by passing the Legacy Beer Exam, the method of advancement does not change and the method of determining their composite exam score will not change automatically.

Judges Entering the BJCP with the Beer Entrance Exam

For judges that entered the BJCP by taking their first BJCP exam on or after April 1, 2012, they start the path to becoming a BJCP judge by passing the Beer Entrance Exam. For these members, once they take the New Beer Tasting Exam, their BJCP judge rank will be determined by their score on the New Beer Tasting Exam and their experience points. In the table below, their composite exam score is just their score on the New Tasting Exam.

Judges Entering the BJCP with Passing the Beer Legacy Exam

For BJCP judges that entered the BJCP by passing the Legacy Beer Exam and that have a rank of Recognized or higher, they do not have to take the Beer Entrance Exam unless their score on the essay portion of the Legacy Beer Exam is less than 60%. Their existing essay and tasting scores are retained and continue to be used to determine their BJCP judge rank. They continue to determine their BJCP Judge rank using their composite Legacy Beer Exam score that combines the essay and tasting scores in a 70/30 ratio. Their existing BJCP Judge rank is retained.

Impact of the New Beer Exams on Advancing BJCP Judge Rank

As of April 1, 2012 only the Beer Entrance Exam, the New Beer Tasting Exam and the New Beer Essay Exam are offered. The Legacy Beer Exam will never be offered again, no exceptions.

For judges that initially took the Legacy Beer Exam, their composite score continues to be determined using their highest essay and tasting scores from the Legacy Beer Exam combined in a 70/30 ratio. Once they take either the New Beer Essay Exam or the New Beer Tasting Exam with a score improvement over their score on the equivalent portion of the Legacy Beer Exam then their composite score will be determined by combining their essay and taste scores in a 50/50 ratio. The new 50/50 ratio will apply even if only one of their two scores is improved.

New participants enter the program by first taking the Beer Entrance Exam. After passing the Beer Entrance Exam, a participant is considered a Provisional Judge. They may remain a Provisional Judge for up to one year during which time they need to pass the New Beer Tasting Exam or they cease to be a Provisional Judge. Once they pass the New Beer Tasting Exam, their tasting score on that exam is used to determine their BJCP rank. However, they cannot advance beyond the BJCP rank of Certified without taking the New Beer Essay Exam.

Pre-existing, non-Apprentice Judges

Pre-existing non-Apprentice judges are those that have a BJCP rank of Recognized or higher as a result of taking the Legacy Beer Exam prior to April 1, 2012. These judges do not have to take the BJCP Entrance Examination unless their essay score on the Legacy Beer Exam is less than 60%. Their existing judging and tasting scores are retained.

The introduction of the new examinations does not trigger an automatic re-weighting of existing scores to calculate a new total score. Triggering a recalculation of a new total score, for any individual judge, only happens when they retake one component of the new examinations, and only then if the retake score is greater than or equal to the score for that component on the Legacy Beer Exam.

These judges advance in rank based on the combination of their highest essay and highest tasting scores just as with the legacy examination. The scores are weighted at 70/30 until they retake either the New Beer Tasting Exam or the New Beer Essay Exam. If the retake score is at least as high as the previous highest score on that component of the exam, the weighting changes to 50/50. Otherwise, the weighting remains at 70/30 until at least one of the component scores based on either their score on the New Beer Tasting Exam or the New Beer Essay Exam at least equals their equivalent score on the equivalent part of the Legacy Beer Exam.

Recognized judges who have passed either the essay portion of the Legacy Beer Exam or the Beer Entrance Exam can also advance to Certified by scoring 70 or higher on the New Beer Tasting Exam, and by having sufficient experience points.

Pre-existing Active Apprentice Judges

Apprentice Judge is not a permanent BJCP rank. Apprentice status will have a two-year lifetime. Apprentice Judges must pass the New Beer Tasting Exam within two years or they will have to start over as new entrants to the program.

Active BJCP Apprentice Judges that have both essay and tasting scores under 60% under the Legacy Beer Exam will first need to pass the Beer Entrance Exam and then the New Beer Tasting Exam, just like new entrants to the program. However, special cases for Active BJCP Apprentice Judges exist for those that may have scored a 60% or higher on either the essay or the tasting portion of the Legacy Beer Exam.

Active BJCP Apprentice Judges who scored less than 60% on the tasting portion of the Legacy Beer Exam and with a minimum of 60% in the essay portion of the Legacy Beer Exam must pass the New Beer Tasting Exam to advance. These judges do not have to take the Beer Entrance Exam.

Active BJCP Apprentice Judges who scored at least 60% on the tasting portion of the Legacy Beer Exam but have an essay score below 60% under the Legacy Beer Exam must pass the Beer Entrance Exam to advance to Recognized. These judges will not need to take the New Beer Tasting Exam to advance but when they pass the Beer Entrance Exam they must notify the BJCP Exam Director (exam_director@bjcp.org) in order to be promoted from the Apprentice rank – this promotion is not automatic. For promotions higher than Recognized, the New Beer Tasting Exam must be taken.

Pre-existing Inactive Apprentice Judges

BJCP Apprentice Judges that were not listed as “active” members in the BJCP database on April 1, 2012 as a result of taking the Legacy Beer Exam prior to April 1, 2012 are treated as new entrants into the program and must first pass the Beer Entrance Exam and then pass the New Beer Tasting Exam to advance.

Advancing from Recognized to Certified Judge

Recognized judges who have passed either the essay portion of the Legacy Beer Exam or the Beer Entrance Exam can also advance to Certified by scoring 70 or higher on the New Beer Tasting Exam, and by having sufficient experience points.

Advancing to Become a National or Higher Ranked Judge

No member can achieve the rank of BJCP National Judge or higher without taking either the New Beer Essay Exam or the essay portion of the Legacy Beer Exam.

Judge Requirements

BJCP Judge Rank	Minimum Composite Score	Must take New Essay or Legacy Essay	Minimum Experience Points¹	GMSR Required²
<i>Apprentice³</i>	<60	No	0	No
<i>Recognized</i>	60	No	0	No
<i>Certified</i>	70	No	5	No
<i>National</i>	80	Yes	20	No
<i>Master</i>	90	Yes	40	No
<i>Grand Master</i>	90	Yes	100	Yes
<i>Additional Grand Master levels</i>	90	Yes	100 additional for each additional level	Yes ⁴

Table 1 - Judge Requirements

In addition to the above BJCP ranks that are the result of taking the BJCP exams, the following special ranks exist that are not associated with scores from taking the BJCP Beer Exams.

- **HONORARY MASTER** – is temporarily bestowed on judges who serve as operatives of the program (Regional Director, Exam Director, Program Administrator, etc.) at their discretion for the duration of their service if they have not already earned at least the Master rank. The rank may also be awarded, in special cases, to judges who have demonstrated Master Judge proficiency but who have not necessarily taken the exam. This status is determined by the BJCP Board of Directors.
- **HONORARY GRAND MASTER** – Created in 2005, this is a permanent rank bestowed upon individuals by the BJCP Board of Directors for extraordinarily long and meritorious service involving significant, meaningful and continuous work for the BJCP program. Individuals receiving this rank are authorized to wear and use the Grand Master pin and rank.

A person who has not taken a BJCP exam but who judges in competitions is generally referred to as a **Non-BJCP Judge**. This is not an official BJCP rank, but this description is used on the BJCP scoresheets. The term “Novice” is no longer used.

A **Provisional Judge** is someone who has taken the BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination, but has not passed the BJCP Beer Judging Examination. This person is not a BJCP judge. The

¹ At least 50% of the experience points must be judging experience points.

² See <http://www.bjcp.org/gmsr.php>

³ The Apprentice rank is not a permanent BJCP rank. Apprentice status has a two-year lifetime to allow an Apprentice to advance to Recognized rank or higher by passing the appropriate examinations.

⁴ Each additional Grand Master level requires an additional GMSR.

Provisional rank is not permanent, and Provisional judges have one year to pass the New Beer Tasting Exam.

Advancing in the BJCP

Because both beer exam scores and experience points determine the level of recognition achieved in the BJCP, a judge should strive to meet both types of criteria on an ongoing basis. A judge may wish to retake either or both portions of the exam order to achieve the higher score necessary to advance to the next level. A judge will become inactive if no experience points are recorded for two years. This policy encourages judges to maintain their skills and assures competition organizers that they are using experienced judges with up-to-date knowledge of beer styles and judging practices. When promoted to a new rank, the judge receives a handsome certificate and a wallet-size card showing the date of award and level of recognition.

A Mead Judge who has not taken the BJCP Beer Judge exam cannot advance in the BJCP without first taking the Beer exam. Mead Judges can earn experience points as any other judge does, and these points can apply to future advancement in the program after the Beer exam has been taken. The experience points will serve as a measure of experience and may be of use to competition organizers nonetheless.

Experience Points

The BJCP awards experience points to judges and staff who participate in AHA/BJCP Sanctioned Competition Program events or in BJCP exams. The point award varies depending on the size of the event and the job an individual performs. There are two groups of experience points: Judging points and Non-Judging points.

Individuals earn Judging points for actually judging in a registered competition, including Best-of-Show (BOS) judging. Individuals earn Non-Judging points for serving (or assisting) as a competition organizer, a steward, an administrator (or assistant) for a BJCP exam, or participating in a Continuing Education Program. While competition organizers may use their discretion in deciding to whom and how many Staff points they allocate, Judge points must be earned by the individual receiving them and cannot be allocated.

A judge will be placed on an inactive list if no experience points are recorded for two years. This policy encourages judges to maintain their skills and assures competition organizers that they are using experienced judges with up-to-date knowledge of beer styles and judging practices.

As of 2006, the AHA and BJCP have merged the separate competition programs into a single unified program: the AHA/BJCP Sanctioned Competition Program. All past BJCP or AHA events will continue to be recognized. The point award schedule for the program is as follows:

BJCP Experience Point Award Schedule

Program Participants are individuals who perform an active role in a BJCP-sanctioned competition. Important categories of program participants are organizers, judges, best-of-show

judges, stewards and staff. Each has different rules that govern the awarding of experience points.

Organizers are the only program participants to receive Organizer points, which are non-judging points that are allocated based on the total number of competition entries as shown in Table 1. Any other program participant is eligible to receive any combination of Judge, Best-of-Show Judge, Steward, or Staff points in a single competition, except as noted. However, the total points (judging plus non-judging points) awarded to any program participant may not exceed (but may equal) the points designated for the Organizer of the competition.

Judges earn points at a rate of 0.5 judging points per session, but the following limitations apply:

- Judges earn a *minimum* of 1.0 point per *competition*.
- Judges earn a *maximum* of 1.5 points per *day*.

The total number of judging points a judge may earn in a competition is limited by the organizer points, and is shown in Table 1.

Best-of-Show (BOS) Judges are eligible to receive a 0.5 judging point bonus if they judge in any BOS panel in a competition. The BOS bonus is in addition to any other judging and non-judging points earned in the competition, and may only be awarded to a single judge once per competition. BOS points may only be awarded if a competition has at least 30 entries in at least five beer and/or three mead/cider categories.

The number of judges eligible to receive the BOS bonus is correlated to the number of entries in each BOS panel as follows:

- 5-14 entries, including beer = 3 BOS Judges
- 3-14 meads and/or ciders (only) = 3 BOS Judges
- 15 or more entries of any type or combination = 5 BOS Judges

This limitation applies to each individual BOS panel. Competitions may seat separate homebrew, commercial and mead and/or cider BOS panels, if desired.

A best-of-show judge receives the BOS bonus if the judge judges at least one other flight. If the judge only judges in a BOS panel, the 1.0 point competition minimum is earned.

Stewards receive 0.5 non-judging points per day with a maximum of 1.0 point per competition. Participants may not earn both Judge and Steward points in a single competition. Steward points are awarded separately from Staff points and do not come from the Staff point pool shown in Table 1. A program participant may earn both Steward and Staff points.

Staff Points are non-judging points awarded by the Organizer to one or more program participants in minimum increments of 0.5 points. The sum of all staff points awarded to all program participants may not exceed the Table 1 Staff point maximum.

Note: *In order to maintain competition integrity, staff members with access to entry data should refrain from judging as they may be able to associate entry numbers or entry descriptions with an entrant's identity.*

# of Entries	Organizer	Staff*	Judge
1 – 49	2.0	1	1.5
50 – 99	2.5	2	2.0
100 – 149	3.0	3	2.5
150 – 199	3.5	4	3.0
200 – 299	4.0	5	3.5
300 – 399	4.5	6	4.0
400 – 499	5.0	7	4.5
500 – 599	6.0 Max	8	5.5 Max
		+1 staff point for each additional 100 entries	

Table 2 - Maximum Points Earned

***Note:** The Staff point numbers represent the total points which can be awarded to all staff members collectively. No single person can receive more total points than the Organizer. For each 100 entries over 500 one additional staff point may be awarded. Organizer points are capped at 6, regardless of competition size.

DEFINITIONS

COMPETITION — An event held in a single geographical area where beer and possibly other fermented beverages are formally evaluated against a set of pre-defined style guidelines or category descriptions for the purpose of constructive feedback and acknowledgment of excellence. A competition is comprised of one or more sessions spanning one or more days.

DAY — A calendar date when judging is held. Competitions may take place on one or more days, and the days do not have to be contiguous.

SESSION — An uninterrupted time period when at least one panel of judges sits to judge one or more flights of entries.

FLIGHT — A single grouping of entries that are combined for the purposes of judging, that are evaluated by a single panel of judges, and that result in a ranked ordering for purposes of determining awards. In large competitions, a single category may be divided into multiple flights with the overall winner determined in a Mini-BOS round.

MINI-BOS ROUND — A subsequent flight within a session during which judges compare the leading entries of two or more separate flights in order to determine overall class or category winners. This shall not qualify as a separate session for the purpose of awarding points.

BEST OF SHOW (BOS) PANEL — A single session awarding top honors for a competition from at least five beer category winners or three mead and/or cider winners.

ORGANIZER — The single program participant who completes and signs the application to register or sanction a competition and who in all ways assumes responsibility for the direction of that competition.

JUDGE — Any program participant who evaluates entries, completes scoresheets, and determines the final score and rank of entries in a flight.

BOS JUDGE — A program participant who evaluates entries and selects a winner during a BOS panel.

MEAD JUDGE — A person who has taken the mead exam and scored 60% or higher. This person may also be a beer judge although taking the beer exam is not a requirement.

STEWARD — A program participant who assists judges, obtains entries and supplies, handles paperwork, and manages the competition logistics at a judging table.

STAFF — Program participants who, under the direction of the Organizer, perform an active role in support of the competition other than as a Judge, Steward, or BOS Judge. These duties include, but are not limited to, Assistant Organizer, Head Steward, Registrar, Cellarmaster, Table Captain, Data Entry, Head Judge, Lunch Caterer, and Committee member. Direct participation is required to earn Staff points; passive participation by individuals who provide websites, software, materials, or other indirect services are not eligible to receive points.

Exam Administration

Exam administrators must be approved by a BJCP Exam Director. The administrator receives two *non-judging* experience points and ten GMSR credits per exam, regardless of the number of exam takers. This system was revised in 2005 as part of the implementation of new [GMSR rules](#). The administrator may not proctor the tasting exam, unless the administrator has no knowledge of the exam beers being served. One person may not receive both administrator and proctor points for the same judging exam, but it is possible to earn administrator points for the written proficiency exam and proctoring points for the judging exam.

A minimum of two proctors is required for holding the **BJCP Beer Judging Examination**. Additional details about who can serve as a proctor for the New Beer Tasting Exam are available at <http://www.bjcp.org/examschproc.php>.

The exam administrator is responsible for making a copy of all examinations before sending the originals to the Exam Director. These copies should be retained until the exam administrator has heard from the Exam Director that the originals have been properly received. Once the Exam Director has received the originals, the exam administrator should provide a copy of each examinee's individual exam to them, each examinee should only receive a copy of their individual exam, nothing else. This is the only copy that will be made available to the examinees; the BJCP will not be returning the originals after the grading process has completed. The returning of the exams in this manner is a provisional policy—the Exam Directors will be monitoring the rate of protested examination results and if the rate increases, it may be necessary

to revoke the policy of returning exams due to the increased grading load imposed by protested results.

To schedule an exam, please complete a copy of the Exam Data Administration Form (EDAF) from http://www.bjcp.org/forms/exam_data_admin.doc or http://www.bjcp.org/forms/exam_data_admin.pdf and include it as an attachment to an e-mail message to exam_director@bjcp.org.

A list of scheduled exams can always be found on the BJCP web site in the Exam Center. The approved exam schedule is on the web at <http://www.bjcp.org/exams.php>.

BJCP Administration

The Beer Judge Certification Program is governed by a Committee consisting of seven elected representatives of seven regions of North America. This board manages BJCP policy and bylaws. Communication with BJCP members is handled by the Communication Director, who also handles outside communications. He may be reached by e-mail at communication_director@bjcp.org.

Complete contact information for all BJCP officers and directors can be found on the BJCP website in the Administration Center at <http://www.bjcp.org/officers.php>.