

Guidance for Administrators of BJCP Examinations

Background Information

As of April 1, 2012 examinees only receive a BJCP ID after taking the BJCP Beer Judging Exam. Passing the BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Exam (the online exam) does not make one a member of the BJCP and does not grant an individual a BJCP ID. After passing the Beer Judge Entrance Exam, one is considered a Provisional Judge until he or she passes the Beer Judging Exam. Failing the Beer Judging Exam means that person becomes an Apprentice judge, with two years to pass the Beer Judging Exam.

The vast majority of BJCP examinations given are expected to be Beer Judging Exams (the tasting exam). This exam is the gating exam to becoming a BJCP judge. Only after developing sufficient experience (beer judging experience points) and exhibiting sufficient beer judging skills (via their score on the Beer Judging Exam) is a judge qualified to sit for the Beer Written Proficiency Exam (the essay exam).

The BJCP does NOT consider a BJCP exam the sole property of the organization that originally scheduled the exam site, and the BJCP does not require that an examinee take a training class (particularly a third-party paid class) in order to sit for an exam. It is particularly disappointing to see sites not fill all the allotted seats for their site when there are many people complaining that they cannot find a place to take a BJCP exam.

The local administrator needs to make an effort to advertise the availability of seats for potential examinees beyond the sponsoring organization. Most significant metropolitan areas seem to have multiple homebrew clubs as well as a number of potential examinees that belong to no homebrew club. Administrators that repeatedly give exams with unused seats in higher population areas may be denied future exam registration.

The BJCP does not have a centralized solution for notifying potential examinees about the availability of exam seats, other than posting on the BJCP Forum or using something like the BJCP Facebook page. Exam administrators are encouraged to select a method for notifying potential examinees, even if it means creating a temporary email distribution list. Social media or other modern tools may be effective for quick notifications.

Planning for your BJCP exam

Please read the Exam Procedures well in advance of the exam date. It is located in the Exam Administrator Resources section of the BJCP website, and the actual document is here:

http://www.bjcp.org/forms/Exam_Administration_Procedures.pdf.

If there are people traveling for your exam, consider scheduling the exam start time for late morning or early afternoon to allow out-of-town folks to arrive and leave on the same day as the exam. Keep seasonal weather conditions in mind when setting the date and time of your exam, particularly when

adverse road conditions may be present. That will also help reduce the early morning calls to you from examinees that are “sick” the day of the exam.

Before exam day, collect all the contact information for all your potential examinees and proctors. That will make completing the participant information spreadsheet easier. Allowing examinees to verify their information once entered into the spreadsheet will provide an additional validation step. The Exam Directors expect the information to be supplied in the spreadsheet for automatic processing into the BJCP database. Handwritten information is not acceptable and is frequently not legible.

If you have any questions or concerns about your exam or the procedures contact the Exam Director assigned to your site. There are multiple BJCP Exam Directors, and one of them will be assigned responsibility for the site several months before the exam date. Collectively, all the Exam Directors can be reached via email to exam_director@bjcp.org. The email address for each of the individual Exam Directors can be found on the BJCP website under <http://www.bjcp.org/officers.php>

Consider discussing your potential exam beers/meads with your assigned Exam Director well before exam day. They may have suggestions to you help improve the quality of your exam. There are guidelines for beer style selection in the Exam Procedures which should be reviewed prior to the exam.

For existing BJCP judges, teaching or taking a preapproved exam preparation class can earn continuing education credits. The details are handled by the BJCP Continuing Education Directorate (see <http://www.bjcp.org/cep/index.php>) and are not handled by the Exam Directorate.

For tasting classes the BJCP offers a Beer Characteristics Kit that is used to spike various flavors/aromas into beers. The details on distribution are handled by the BJCP Continuing Education Directorate (see <http://www.bjcp.org/cep/index.php>) and are not handled by the Exam Directorate.

Collecting Payments for the Exam

The local exam administrator is the individual that pays the BJCP the exam fees. Participants should pay the administrator directly; the administrator will then pay the BJCP via the online system following the instructions outlined in the Exam Procedures. The BJCP does NOT accept payment by check.

The fees for BJCP Examinations are:

- The fee for the BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination is US\$10.
- The fees for the BJCP Beer Judging Examination are US\$40 for first-time takers and US\$15 for subsequent retakes.
- The fee for the BJCP Beer Judge Written Proficiency Examination is US\$25.
- The fee for the BJCP Mead Judge Examination is US\$50 for non-BJCP members and US\$30 for existing BJCP judges.

Seventy percent of the above fees must be remitted to the BJCP; the online payment system automatically calculates this amount for you. The remaining thirty percent can be used for expenses related to holding the exam. Consider offering gas money to out-of-town proctors if you don't use the full amount of the administrative holdback.

If there are expected to be expenses beyond what would be covered by the thirty percent holdback, above, prior approval by the Exam Director is required. If approved by the Exam Director, the receipts will need to be sent to the BJCP Treasurer for reimbursement.

Most administrators require a deposit or the entire exam fee well in advance of the exam date as insurance that the examinees will show up and sit for the exam. However, since the exam fees are relatively inexpensive for many people, the deposit may not always garner the desired response. Experience by some administrators indicates that a larger deposit (higher than the exam fee) that is refunded only if the examinee sits for the exam may be more effective.

Managing Seat Limits

There are hard limits on the number of seats at a given BJCP exam site. Registering examinees for a given exam site is the responsibility of the site exam administrator, not the BJCP. So exam administrators will likely see a strong demand for seats after the exam date is posted on the BJCP Exam Calendar. Some say the musical chairs game of managing the seats vs. potential examinees is like herding cats. At most sites, the available seats are claimed over a year before the exam date.

A minimum of six participants are required when offering the beer exams, and five are required for the mead exam. If a local exam administrator goes ahead and gives an exam with fewer than the minimum number of examinees without prior approval from the Exam Director, the Exam Director may withhold the non-judging experience and the GMSR credits normally allocated to the administrator. In addition, the BJCP reserves the right to delay the start of grading of the set for three to six months so that it can be combined (for grading purposes) with a set from another site.

Once the allotted exam seats have been filled, the exam administrator will likely continue to get requests for seats. Exam administrators should keep a first-come, first-serve waiting list of interested examinees should there be a cancellation prior to the exam date. Some exam sites have experienced a drop-out rate of greater than 50%, so don't ignore this instruction.

First-time exam takers are notorious for waiting as long as possible before taking the online BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination – the mandatory precondition for taking the Beer Judging Exam¹. It is recommended that exam administrators set a firm deadline well in advance of the tasting exam warning that all that have not passed the online by that date will be replaced by someone on the administrator's wait list of people wanting to take a Beer Judging Exam.

The problem is what to do if your wait list is thin or sketchy and you have a few dropouts a week or two before the exam date. Phil Farrell's suggestion:

First-time examinees are understandably apprehensive prior to the exam. I will now offer an alternate or two a contingency seat or a "free practice exam" in return for showing up with priority seating for the next time I offer the exam. People are not 100% reliable and even with deposits and classes, a seat will go empty without a moment notice. For tasting exams, I always

¹ Exams written by those who were not qualified when they wrote the exam are not graded and their fees are not refunded.

have to plan for extra beer to account for spills and refills anyway, so one or two extra mouths to feed is not an issue. If they are to be a spare and 12 show up, they get to do a real live practice in exam conditions for free. They get a copy of their exam and I will do a free practice critique of their exam, a sort of straw grading so they know where they stand. I get the peace of mind that 12 people get to take the exam without empty seats. I wouldn't do this to someone who was trying to improve their score as they would be less likely to want to or need to practice.

Phil's approach can be applied to any of the BJCP exam types as a way to ensure that all the available seats are filled.

Mead and Beer Tasting Exams

Both the Beer Judging Exam and the Mead Exam require that National or Master rank proctors complete scoresheets for the exam beers/meads. The quality of the proctors' scoresheets is very important in the exam grading process. The BJCP requires that all proctors be BJCP National rank or higher unless explicit **advance approval** is given by the BJCP Exam Director to use other proctors – the list of preapproved proctors is available at <http://www.bjcp.org/apps/reports/proctors.php>. The BJCP strongly suggests that at least one of the proctors be Master rank or higher.

The BJCP requires at least two proctors for every tasting type examination and will give judging points to as many as three proctors for a given exam. The exam administrator is not considered a proctor because he or she prepared the exam beers (or meads) and therefore is not an unbiased judge.

Contingency planning can avoid having an exam with only one proctor available. Some suggestions include:

1. To avoid not having at least two proctors, when possible, schedule three proctors just in case one can't make it at the last minute.
2. Identify an experienced judge on the preapproved proctor list as a replacement to cover if one of your planned proctors cannot make it. Contact the judge a week before the exam to make sure he or she is still okay with proctoring, if necessary. If you hear that one of your planned proctors is not going to be able to make the exam, contact your substitute in time for him or her to proctor.

Prior to exam day, work with your assigned Exam Director to determine the beers (or meads) for tasting exams if you need additional guidance beyond what is given in the Exam Procedures.

All exams beers/meads need to be processed consistently. Inconsistent servings of beers/meads can result in divergent scoring and inconsistent exam results. Since there can be bottle to bottle (or can to can) variations, all bottles should be blended in a pitcher (or other large vessel) that can hold all the beer/mead to be served to the proctors and examinees before being poured into glasses. For large exam sites, it may be necessary to serve the beers/meads from a keg in order to maintain consistency.

For large exam sites, it may be necessary to enlist the assistance of proctors or other helpers to help serve the beers/meads to the examinees on schedule.

Mead and Beer Written Proficiency Exams

The rules for who is eligible to sit for the BJCP Beer Written Proficiency Exam are described at <http://www.bjcp.org/examschproc.php>; administrators should verify that everyone who sits for the exam is qualified. The Exam Directors strictly follow the established rules and are extremely reluctant to grant waivers to the qualification rules. Beer Written Proficiency exams written by examinees who were unqualified at the time of the exam will NOT be graded and the fees will not be refunded.

Note that there are no prerequisites for taking the Mead Exam; i.e., one does not need to be a BJCP judge before taking that examination.