

BJCP Exam Structure

Details about the requirements needed to take each component of the BJCP exam for Beer Judges. Mead and Cider Judge Exams do not affect this structure. All exams referred to in this document are Beer exams.

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1. Definitions

BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination (*entrance exam*): a web-based examination of beer styles, ingredients, beer characteristics, brewing processes, and the BJCP program. Think of it as the online qualifier for the Judging Exam.

BJCP Beer Judging Examination (*judging exam*): a tasting examination that consists of completing scoresheets for the six examination beers. Taking this exam is the event that triggers membership in the BJCP, and is what causes a BJCP ID to be created.

BJCP Beer Judge Written Proficiency Examination (*written exam*): a revised version of the traditional BJCP essay examination, required to advance to National or higher ranks.

BJCP Legacy Beer Examination (*legacy exam*): the examination used prior to April 1, 2012 that consisted of an *essay portion* and a *tasting portion* where the portions were combined in a 70/30 ratio to determine a total (*composite*) examination score.

Provisional Judge: someone who has passed the Entrance Exam, but not yet taken the Judging Exam. A Provisional Judge is not yet a BJCP member, and does not have a BJCP ID. *Provisional* is not a BJCP judge rank.

Apprentice Judge: someone who has taken, but not passed, the Judging Exam. *Apprentice* is a judge rank, and an Apprentice Judge has a BJCP ID and is a BJCP member, although not yet with full membership rights.

Active Status: a BJCP judge who stays current in the program, generally by participating in BJCP events at least every two years (see the *BJCP Member Guide* for full details). Status is different than Rank; a BJCP member has both a rank and a status.

Affiliated Status: an Apprentice judge who does not meet the requirements in full membership within two years, regardless of activity level. See [Section 6: Affiliated BJCP Judges](#) for details.

Full member: an Active BJCP judge who has passed one of the initial judging exams; a beer judge is a full member if they have a rank of Recognized or higher.

2. Starting Points

If you have never taken a BJCP beer examination, see [Section 4: Taking the Web-based Entrance Exam](#).

If you are a *BJCP Provisional Judge*, see [Section 5: Judging Exam](#).

If you are a *BJCP Apprentice Judge*:

If you are Active Status, see [Section 7: Active BJCP Apprentice Judges](#).

If you are Affiliated Status, see [Section 6: Affiliated BJCP Judges](#).

If you are already a ranked BJCP judge, there are several different paths depending on your existing scores and rank; see [Section 3: Existing, Non-Apprentice BJCP Judges](#).

3. Existing, Non-Apprentice BJCP Judges

The exam structure has been carefully designed to be as compatible as possible with the legacy exam while being as fair as possible to current BJCP judges and to those entering the program. The minimum requirements for the basic judging levels are summarized in the Table 1 and are the basis for the criteria used to determine the required written and judging exam scores for current and new judges who wish to advance in the program. There are additional experience point requirements that are outlined in the BJCP Program Guide (generally, half the experience points required for any level must be judging points).

| Exam Segment | Recognized | Certified | National | Master |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Entrance Exam or essay portion of Legacy Exam | Pass the Entrance Exam or 60% on essay portion of Legacy Exam | | | |
| Judging Exam or tasting portion of Legacy Exam | 60% on Judging Exam | 70% on Judging Exam | 80% on either tasting portion of Legacy Exam or Judging Exam | 80% on either tasting portion of Legacy Exam or Judging Exam |
| Written Exam or composite score of Legacy Exam | | Sufficiently high score to yield a comprehensive score of 70% | Sufficiently high score to yield a comprehensive score of 80% | Sufficiently high score to yield a comprehensive score of 90% |

Table 1. Minimum Exam Score Criteria to Achieve a New Rank

The differences between the current and legacy exam structures may result in some existing judges having a rank without quite meeting the criteria in the above table. However, all judges as of April 1, 2012 were grandfathered into their current rank since Table 1 only applies to those needing a higher exam score to qualify for a promotion. Otherwise, their existing judging and tasting scores are retained and they continue on their current trajectories to the next judging level by earning experience points.

1. *Recognized* judges who need a higher exam score to advance to the *Certified* rank have different paths, depending on their scores on prior exams:
 - a) *Recognized* judges who scored at least 60% on the essay portion of the legacy exam do not have to take the **Entrance Exam**. As with new members, these judges may advance to the *Certified* rank by scoring at least 70% on the **Judging Exam**. Their previous scores on the

tasting exam will not be applied since the six-beer entrance exam presents a more rigorous challenge than judging four beers in the tasting portion of the legacy exam.

- b) *Recognized* judges who scored below 60% on the essay portion of the exam must first pass the **Entrance Exam** and then score at least 70% on the **Judging Exam**, regardless of their score on the tasting portion of the legacy exam.
 - c) *Recognized* judges who passed the **Entrance Exam** and scored less than 70% on the **Judging Exam** can retake the Judging Exam again; a score of 70% or higher will meet the exam score requirement for the *Certified* rank.
 - d) *Recognized* judges who have at least ten judging points and achieved a score of at least 80% on the tasting portion of the **Legacy Exam** are permitted to take the **Written Exam**.
2. *Certified* judges who need a higher exam score to qualify for the *National* rank must have at least ten judging points and a minimum score of 80% on either the **Judging Exam** or the tasting portion of the **Legacy Exam** to gain approval to take the **Written Exam**.
 3. Judges who are already *National* rank or qualified for the *National* rank under the legacy exam system can take either the **Judging Exam** or the **Written Exam** at any time regardless of their previous examination scores.

When a composite exam score needs to be calculated for rank advancement (as shown in Table 1), the weighting of exam segments depends on which exams were taken. Under the legacy exam program, essay and tasting portions were weighted 70/30. Under the current exam program, written and judging exams are weighted 50/50. In both cases, the highest exam score for each specific type of test are used in the composite score calculation.

Judges who entered the program under the legacy system continue to have their scores weighted at 70/30; reweighting under the 50/50 system is not automatic. However, if a judge in this situation subsequently takes either the Judging Exam or the Written Exam, the composite score can be reweighted under the 50/50 system if the exam score on a current type of exam is equal to or greater than a previous score on the corresponding portion of the legacy exam (i.e., the Judging Exam score is compared against the Tasting Portion score, and the Written Exam score is compared against the Essay Portion score). The reweighting will only occur if it results in an improvement in composite score; a reduction in judge rank or decrease in total score will not happen.

The rationale for this rule is that judges have to demonstrate evidence of improvement or at least parity to benefit from the reweighting of their component exam scores.

4. Taking the Web-based Entrance Exam

The web-based Entrance Exam is the online qualifier for the Judging Exam. A prospective BJCP beer judge must pass this Entrance Exam as the first step to gaining certification. The examinee must present a valid, unexpired certificate or certificate ID from the Entrance Exam in order to sit for the Judging Exam.

The fee for the entrance exam is US\$10, paid by credit card through a secure server. The portal for this exam is: <http://bjcp.coursewebs.com>.

The exam consists of 200 questions in a mixture of true-false, multiple-choice-single-answer, and multiple-choice-multiple-answer format. You are allowed 60 minutes to complete this test. The exam is graded automatically after it is submitted. Scoring is pass/fail; no numerical score will be provided, although major areas with below passing proficiency will be identified in the examination summary.

Those who fail are not in the BJCP program but can retake the **Entrance Exam** after at least a one day wait. They must pay an additional US\$10 fee each time they retake the exam. There is also a three-for-two option (three exams for the price of two).

Those that pass this exam are *Provisional* judges – this is not a BJCP rank, no BJCP ID is assigned, and those who pass are not yet BJCP members! *Provisional* status simply means that you have a valid certificate from the entrance exam and are permitted to sit for the judging exam. The certificate is good for one year from the date of the entrance exam. If you do not take a judging exam this one year period, you must pass the entrance exam again.

Provisional judges should see Section 5: Judging Exam for details on taking the **Judging Exam**.

5. Judging Exam

The **Judging Exam** is the primary tool for evaluating practical skills of new judges, and has replaced the tasting portion of the legacy exam. It consists of completing scoresheets for six beers served at 15 minute intervals – a total of 90 minutes is allowed for this examination. The fee is US\$40 for the first time takers of this examination; it is US\$15 for retakes.

For existing BJCP judges who are full members of the program, their BJCP ID is sufficient to allow them to take the **Judging Exam**. For *Provisional* judges, a copy of the email message or the certificate acknowledging passing the **Entrance Exam** is required. **Judging Exams** taken by ineligible participants will not be graded and the exam fee will not be returned.

Those taking the **Judging Exam** cannot become full members of the BJCP until their exam score is determined, although a BJCP ID may be issued. These judges should mark their scoresheets with the *Rank Pending* box until notified of their rank; this indicates a judge who has taken the exam but not yet received their score.

For *Provisional* judges, the score on the **Judging Exam** determines their rank. Those scoring less than 60% will be *Apprentice* judges; those scoring at least 60% will be *Recognized* judges; and those scoring at least 70% and with five or more experience points (at least 2.5 from judging) will be *Certified* judges. Note that *Apprentice* judges are time-limited in their rank; they must qualify for a full member rank per the terms described in Section 7: Active BJCP Apprentice Judges.

If the score on the **Judging Exam** represents an improvement over prior scores, a change in composite score and/or a change in rank may occur. The rules and conditions for these improvements are described in Section 3: Existing, Non-Apprentice BJCP Judges. If the judging/tasting score is not an improvement, there will be no change in composite score or rank.

A minimum of six participants are required to schedule the **Judging Exam**. The Exam Director is allowed to grant waivers to this requirement, but this case is expected to be rare.

Grading tasting examinations requires high quality proctor score sheets. To ensure this, the proctors must come from a pre-approved proctor list drawn from the pool of Active *National* and *Master* judges found on the BJCP web site at <http://www.bjcp.org/apps/reports/proctors.php>. If the administrator for an exam site is not able to obtain proctors from this list, they **MUST** contact the Exam Director at least two weeks prior to the exam to get advance approval to use alternative proctors. In special cases, such as when the exam is in a remote location or there are a large number of examinees, the Exam Director may grant stipends to facilitate the travel of experienced proctors to the exam location per the *Exam Proctor Reimbursement Policy*.

The BJCP Exam Director (exam_director@bjcp.org) can grant waivers from the proctor rules but such exceptions are expected to be rare. The use of a proctor with less than *National* rank, including the use of

judges with minimum tasting score of 80 and more than 10 judging experience points requires pre-approval by the Exam Director. We further desire that at least one proctor be a *Master* judge (or higher) or a judge with a minimum tasting score of 90 and with at least 20 judging experience points. If one or more of the proctors is a *Master* judge, then a third proctor can be used that only has a *Certified* rank.

6. Affiliated BJCP Judges

Active *Apprentice* judges who do not pass the **Judging Exam** within two years have their status changed from *Active* to *Affiliated*. Affiliated judges are effectively a special type of Inactive judges who cannot become Active again without restarting the exam process. Judges with the Affiliated status are known to the BJCP, have BJCP IDs, maintain any experience points, may continue to judge and accrue experience points, but are not considered full members.

On April 1, 2014, all Active Apprentice judges who had been members on April 1, 2012 but who had not passed the Judging Exam were reclassified as Affiliated, along with all Inactive Apprentice judges.

Judges with an *Affiliated* status start the path to full membership in the same way as new members; they must pass the **Entrance Exam** and then pass the **Judging Exam** following the rules described in Section 4: Taking the Web-based Entrance Exam and Section 5: Judging Exam.

7. Active BJCP Apprentice Judges

Apprentice is not a permanent BJCP judge rank; it is given to those who fail the **Judging Exam**, and has a two-year lifetime. *Apprentice* judges must retake and pass the **Judging Exam** within two years or their status changes from *Active* to *Affiliated*. It is not necessary for Active Apprentice judges to retake the **Entrance Exam** in order to take the **Judging Exam**. Those Active Apprentice judges who pass the **Judging Exam** become full members in the BJCP, and are assigned a rank per the rules described in Section 5: Judging Exam.

Since all Apprentice judges under the legacy system have either become full members or been converted to Affiliated status, the only Apprentice judges currently in the system are those who have failed the **Judging Exam**.

8. Written Exam

The **Written Exam** is required for anyone wishing to advance to the *National* rank or higher. This test consists of 20 true-false questions and five essay questions. This examination must be completed in 90 minutes. The fee for taking this examination is US\$25.

To qualify for this examination, judges must have *National* or higher rank OR must have scored at least 80% on either the **Judging Exam** or the tasting portion of the **Legacy Exam** and must have a minimum of 10 judging experience points. There will be no exception to these requirements. Exams submitted to the BJCP for grading that were written by participants not meeting these requirements at the time of the exam will not be graded and the fee will not be refunded.

A minimum of six participants are required to schedule the **Written Exam**, but the Exam Director may grant a waiver in special circumstances. Quarterly geographically-dispersed Written Exams are offered as of 3Q2014, and can allow individuals to take the exam if the minimum participant requirement cannot be met. **Written Exams** are scheduled separately from **Judging Exams** although the **Written** and **Judging Exam** may be given sequentially at the same site with a short break between the examinations; however, each is treated as a separate examination for grading purposes and for monthly exam site quotas.

The true-false questions cover the BJCP program and judging levels, the judging process, and judging ethics. Since everyone taking this examination is an experienced judge, the material covered in the true-false question should be well ingrained. Each incorrect or omitted answer will result in a half-point reduction to the total score on this examination. There is no total score increase for correct answers but there is a penalty for each wrong answer – we expect every advanced BJCP judge to know this material.

The essay portion of the **Written Exam** consists of five questions with each comprising 20% of the total score. Of the five questions, two are style-related, one is a recipe question, and two are technical questions related to ingredients or brewing process. The penalty resulting from incorrect or omitted answers to the true-false questions will be subtracted from the combined score on the five essay questions.

The full pool of true-false and essay questions on which the **Written Exam** is based may be found in the BJCP Beer Exam Study Guide.

For judges with no previous scores from the **Legacy Exam**, a comprehensive exam score is computed using a 50/50 weighting of the judging and written components. This composite exam score determines whether the judge qualifies for the *National* or *Master* ranks, as described in the BJCP Guide (Section II.A of the BJCP Beer Exam Study Guide).

For judges who have previously taken the **Legacy Exam**, the rules for determining the comprehensive exam score are described in Section 3: Existing, Non-Apprentice BJCP Judges.

9. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I'm an existing BJCP judge. Do I have to take the online Entrance Exam?

A: No Active BJCP judge needs to take the Entrance Exam, except in the rare case described in the next question. Affiliated judges need to start over by first taking the Entrance Exam, then taking the Judging Exam.

Q: I'm a *Recognized* judge. How do I advance to *Certified*?

A: You have several alternatives, depending on your current exam scores. You can take the Written Exam if you have a tasting/judging score (old or new exam) of 80% or higher, and at least 10 judging experience points. Otherwise, you have to take the Judging Exam. If you score at least 70% on the new tasting exam (and have the necessary experience points), you will be promoted to *Certified* – just as with new judges entering the program. One caveat: you must have passed the essay portion of the legacy exam. If you have not already passed the essay portion of the legacy exam, you will also have to pass the Entrance Exam before you can be promoted. Finally, if you take either the new written or judging (tasting) exams and score higher than the section scores on your old exam, your overall score may improve because it will be reweighted at 50/50 from the old 70/30.

Q: I'm a BJCP judge. Can I sign up for the Judging Exam?

A: Yes, if you scored at least 60% on the essay portion of the legacy exam, then you can sign up directly without having to pass the Entrance Exam.

Q: How do I qualify for the Written Exam?

A: Be an existing *National* judge, or have an 80% or higher on your judging/tasting exam (old or new) with at least 10 judging experience points.

Q: Why did you change the exam?

A: To reduce the workload on the grading program given the unprecedented demand, and to better focus on the need for practical judging skills in *Certified* and below judges. Since less than 20% of the BJCP population advances to *National* or higher, the need for the full exam was reconsidered.

Q: Why did you increase the number of beers in the Judging Exam?

A: Since this will be the only exam given to most judges, we wanted to get a better sample of your work. It demonstrates the type of skills we expect you to use in competitions.

Q: Why did you reduce the number of questions on the Written Proficiency Exam?

A: Since we no longer use the exam to screen lower-ranked judges, we are able to focus more closely on depth of knowledge demonstrated on the written questions. Written questions allow us to hear the examinee's voice, and experienced graders can tell fairly quickly whether the examinee knows the material.

Q: Will you remove the exam site quotas?

A: We have raised the quotas once, and are also more flexible in scheduling exams in under-represented areas. We do plan on regular evaluations of the process with an eye towards continuous improvement. If we can handle the grading of additional exams, we will continue to raise the quotas.

Q: Why don't you publish the online question pool?

A: Since testing is anonymous, unsupervised and online, we are concerned about people being able to quickly look up published answers to questions. Using a private question pool allows us to maintain the integrity of the exam. It also allows us to make changes frequently without having to republish the list.

Q: What's the difference between a Provisional Judge, an Apprentice Judge, a Rank Pending judge, and an Affiliated Judge?

A: These terms represent different stages of progression. A *Provisional Judge* is a non-BJCP person who has passed the online **Entrance Exam**. They are not a member of the BJCP, but are qualified to take the **Judging Exam**. An *Apprentice Judge* is an active BJCP judge who has taken the Judging Exam, but not passed it. *Apprentice* is a time-limited BJCP rank to encourage the judge to pass the exam. An *Apprentice judge* is a member of the BJCP, but does not have full member privileges (e.g., cannot vote). A *Rank Pending* judge is just that; a judge whose rank is pending. *Rank Pending* is not a BJCP rank; it is a term used on scoresheets to identify someone who has taken the exam but not yet received results. An *Affiliated* judge is an *Apprentice Judge* who did not become a full member by passing the **Judging Exam**. *Affiliated* is a status, not a rank. It means that the person is no longer considered a BJCP member, but retains their ID in case they subsequently pass the **Entrance Exam** and the **Judging Exam**. An *Affiliated* judge should check the Non-BJCP checkbox on the scoresheet.