



24 March 2026

Reference Letter: The International Wine Education Centre

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great enthusiasm that we provide this reference in support of the International Wine Education Centre (IWEC) for the WSET Excellence in Education Award.

Since 2016, IWEC has been a committed partner to the Pinotage Youth Development Academy (PYDA), playing a transformative role in equipping young people from disadvantaged communities with skills and opportunities in the wine industry. Their support has extended beyond funding, reflecting a genuine investment in education, empowerment, and long-term career development.

Over the past decade, the IWEC has sourced funding for the WSET Level 2 qualification for PYDA students; approximately 350 have benefitted. This impact reaches far beyond the individual, positively affecting an estimated 350 households across South Africa. Through this initiative, IWEC has created meaningful pathways into employment, contributing to economic participation within underserved communities.

The WSET qualification has proven to be a powerful catalyst for employment and career progression. Graduates have successfully entered the wine and hospitality industries, with several advancing to WSET Level 3 and accessing broader, even global, opportunities. This progression highlights both the quality of the programme and the confidence it instils in students pursuing long-term careers in the industry.

IWEC has demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusion and access by removing financial and systemic barriers. Their support includes not only exam funding but also lectures and academic preparation, ensuring students are equipped to succeed. This practical and sustained approach has significantly strengthened employability outcomes.

What distinguishes IWEC is their depth of engagement and consistency. Their nearly decade-long partnership with PYDA reflects a long-term commitment to youth development and building a more inclusive wine industry. They continue to invest in future cohorts, demonstrating ongoing dedication to meaningful change.



We are incredibly grateful for IWECC's continued support and can confidently vouch for their impact, integrity, and commitment to education. We strongly believe they are highly deserving of the WSET Excellence in Education Award.

Yours sincerely,

Emmalene Ravell-Arries
Programmes Manager
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Pinotage Youth Development Academy:

“The WSET Level 2 qualification significantly improves employability and access to opportunities within the wine and hospitality industry. While it does not guarantee employment for all graduates, the majority of alumni report that it strengthened their job prospects, helped them secure roles, and supported their career progression.”

Rita Rank, Programme Leader

Lukhanyo: I am pleased to confirm that I passed the WSET Level 2 qualification with Distinction. The qualification has been very helpful and has contributed to me securing employment in the wine industry. I am currently employed on a fixed-term contract. Thank you for the opportunity and support provided by PYDA.

Okuhle: I am currently employed at Alto as a hospitality assistant. I am on a fixed-term contract and have been working for the company since 11 July.

Claudia: Yes, WSET Level 2 comes in handy when you need to speak about certain wine-making processes, for example Cap Classique, or when someone asks in the tasting room what the difference is between Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. The qualification is very useful in these situations. This qualification also brings a certain level of respect among colleagues and guests because it is not an easy exam and requires commitment and discipline, which you can leverage in your tasting room or any workspace that demands such expertise. Plus, the blue pin looks iconic when you wear it. It lifts your spirits and makes you walk with pride, knowing that you have achieved something you once thought you were incapable of.

Masivuye: Yes, it helped a lot as I was able to secure a permanent position with the company where I was first placed in 2024, and I am still working there.

Emihle: Yes, WSET Level 2 helped a lot. It was easy for me to get employed because after graduation I was instantly employed and I am still working at Asara Wine Estate. It also helped me become independent. I now have my own house, which I was able to secure after graduation through getting a job and building a better future for myself and my family.

Ayabonga: Yes I can definitely attest that passing WSET 2 has had a positive impact in my life as I am now headed towards the end of a contract I signed in December 2025. As a Wine Advisor at Morgenster Estate.

Unam: Yes, there is clear evidence. I now understand wines much better, which makes it easier for me to explain them to guests. I am currently working at Asara Wine Farm as a Wine Ambassador.

Asa: Absolutely. WSET Level 2 has been a game-changer for me. I landed a role as a Wine Steward at Ken Forrester shortly after completing the course. The qualification opened doors and gave me the knowledge and confidence to stand out in interviews. After a year, I was able to explore growth opportunities elsewhere.

Matthew: My WSET Level 2 gives me an advantage over other candidates. Even though I started as a runner, management trusts me to serve tables because of my wine knowledge. Another 2025 graduate, who also started as a runner, later became a Wine Advisor. WSET Level 2 helps me understand wine in depth, so I can provide detailed explanations to guests and perform at a higher level.

Zinzi: WSET has helped me tremendously in my career and continues to be a learning tool I return to for more knowledge. Sometimes you don't even realise how much you know until a guest asks a random question and WSET just kicks in naturally. You start speaking about wine as if you've known it for years. In our tasting room, most guests are international, and it's fascinating when they mention regions or wines you've never experienced. Yet, thanks to the knowledge from the WSET course, I can confidently share insights. It's also a real confidence booster knowing that colleagues trust my opinions on wine-related questions, even down to details like the correct serving temperature. Tokara, on a Contract.

Lusindiso: When I graduated from PYDA, I did not have WSET Level 2, and as a result, it was difficult to secure permanent employment in the wine industry. However, after the academy supported me in obtaining WSET Level 2, I was able to secure a permanent position as a Tasting Room Assistant at Cavalli Wine and Stud Farm.