

# 2024-25

ACADEMIC YEAR

## DEVELOP

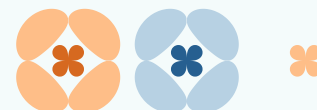
# WSET BURSARY IMPACT REPORT

THE DRINKS TRUST  
ALEXANDRA MILLER,  
DEVELOP PROGRAMME MANAGER



AUGUST 2024 - JULY 2025

# The WSET Bursary 2024-25



The WSET Bursary Fund represents a powerful collaboration between WSET's own funding and the generosity of our Drinks Trust donor partners. Thanks to the remarkable efforts of our fundraising team—and a record number of donors who participated—we are proud to share that the **WSET Bursary has supported 173 students in the 2024-25 academic year**, more students than ever before.

Support actively removes financial barriers and opens doors for both current and aspiring professionals across the UK drinks industry. The Drinks Trust are deeply grateful for the continued commitment to making education accessible and inclusive, with a special mention to the educators who go out of their way to ensure a smooth and enjoyable learning experience for DEVELOP students.

This year brought about **growing challenges for the drinks industry**, notably rising costs, declining consumer confidence, and significant changes to employment law. UKHospitality estimates that the on-trade lost 69,000 jobs in the period between October 2024 and May 2025, adding to the sense of volatility in the drinks industry. These pressures affect businesses and individuals—those currently working in the sector, as well as those looking to start a career within it.

The WSET Bursary, administered through DEVELOP by The Drinks Trust, supports individuals in the UK facing financial hardship by offering access to fully funded WSET courses. Eligible students are able to undertake paid-for training with their choice of WSET Approved Programme Provider (APP), as part of a regular class schedule, whilst benefitting from access to the wider suite of financial and wellbeing resources from The Drinks Trust. This initiative enables recipients to pursue qualifications **without financial burden, helping to prioritise education** and take meaningful steps forward in their careers.

**DEVELOP's mission is to alleviate hardship through vocational training** whilst supporting a sustainable and equitable talent pipeline for the industry. Many of the graduates from the programme have achieved huge career milestones following bursary support, running venues, starting businesses, working in production or sales, and even teaching about drinks categories themselves.

WSET Bursary **demand remains incredibly high** - indicative of the financial strains we see in the wider industry. DEVELOP aims to meet demand by increasing our fundraising efforts and expanding the programme. For the 2025-26 academic year, DEVELOP will add to the resources available to students, introduce a mentoring programme, and expand to include additional subjects (WSET Beer), donors, and educators.

## THE ANTI-POVERTY EQUATION

THE 3 KEY INTERVENTIONS ESSENTIAL TO ALLEVIATING POVERTY: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, WELLBEING SUPPORT AND **ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

## MEANS TESTING

ALL APPLICATIONS ARE MEANS TESTED AGAINST A MINIMUM INCOME CALCULATOR TO ENSURE THAT FUNDING IS REACHING THOSE MOST IN NEED

# Social mobility for the drinks industry

The WSET Bursary is managed by The Drinks Trust - The UK drinks industry charity - through the DEVELOP programme.

The WSET funding is available to individuals experiencing financial hardship, throughout the UK, who either work in industry or have ambitions to start a career in drinks.

*“The WSET courses have been incredibly valuable to me in building my knowledge and interest in wine and spirits and have later helped me to secure important career roles.”*

-JAMES ,  
WSET DEVELOP PRIZE  
WINNER 2025



173

Students received  
WSET funding

## Focus

Regional focus:  
Cornwall NEW 2024-25

## Details

Addressing regions of poor social mobility through a targeted regional approach

## Outcome

- **46% students from target regions**
- 100%+ Y/Y rise in applications from Cornwall

363

Applications made

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Gender, Ethnicity and Accessibility. We aim to challenge other barriers faced by students

- **>46% students from an ethnic minority**
- >50% students are female
- Introduced technical support for students by sourcing used laptops

87%

Applicants fit  
eligibility criteria

Career Engagement

Working closely with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), government contractors and employment advisors to provide a gateway into drinks and hospitality

- **30% new or returning to industry**
- **62% students looking for next career opportunity**
- Drinks and Hospitality is now the most popular industry preference for DWP's unemployed jobseekers

9

Funding streams  
make up the WSET  
Bursary Fund

Meet demand

Increase fundraising to match the rate of eligible applications and increase of supplier costs

- **19% more students Y/Y**
- **10 more Level 3 students Y/Y**
- 3 NEW donors
- +£100pp increased spend Y/Y

# THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



## WSET Funding summary

Income 2024-25

**£80,015**

2024 Q3 & Q4

**£23,515**

2025 Q1 & Q2

**£56,500**

SUPPLIERS

**47**

## EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN BY SUBJECT

		2024		2025	
LEVEL	WSET	OTHER DONORS	WSET	OTHER DONORS	TOTAL Students
WINE 1	15	-	13	10	38
WINE 2	20	-	12	12	44
WINE 3	10	-	2	5	17
SPIRITS 1	-	8	7	1	16
SPIRITS 2	6	18	-	13	37
SPIRITS 3	4	7	-	7	18
SAKE 1	-	-	2	-	2
SAKE 2	-	-	1	-	1
SAKE 3	-	-	-	-	-
Resit	-	1	1	-	2
TOTAL Students		88		85	173

## SINCE PROGRAMME LAUNCH (APRIL 2022)

- 550 WSET BURSARY STUDENTS
- £198,300 TOTAL WSET SPEND
- £400 AVERAGE PP



# THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



## WSET Funding summary

Eligibility % of applications

**87%**

% Suppliers providing charitable discount

**66%**

NEW Donors

**3**

Average Spend

**£463pp**

## MEETING DEMAND

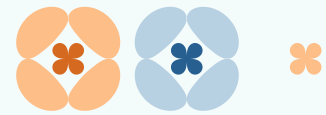
The primary goal of the WSET Bursary fund is to *meet demand*. Value of WSET applications received between 2024-25 totals over £175k - this is with little promotional or recruitment efforts - presenting a near £100k funding gap. This clearly illustrates that there is much more demand that could be met.

The DEVELOP WSET Bursary is funded by a collective of nine donors, and delivered by 47 suppliers. The Drinks Trust receive a charitable discount from 66% of the suppliers we work with, streamlining the costs of overheads and human resource, and creating efficiency through pooling the collective capacity of corporate ESG programmes.

## FUNDING SUPPLY VS DEMAND

SUBJECT	NUMBER OF STUDENTS FUNDED	APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	FUNDING DEMAND £
WINE 1	38	61	£11,675
WINE 2	44	115	£55,027
WINE 3	17	83	£64,989
SPIRITS 1	16	22	£4,210
SPIRITS 2	37	54	£23,490
SPIRITS 3	18	20	£17,400
SAKE 1	2	4	£765
SAKE 2	1	3	£1,305
SAKE 3	0	1	£770
TOTALS	173	363	£179,633

# Drinks Career Pathways & Business Support



The WSET Bursary forms part of the DEVELOP Programme - which is designed for both working and unemployed individuals, aiming to introduce new, and retain existing, talent. We have partnerships with Job Centres, DWP and local government working to encourage new aspiring drinks professionals. Applications referred by these partners are usually actively unemployed and often prioritise finding employment over achieving qualifications like WSET. DEVELOP's additional short-term training and workshops are available to create a pathway, bridging the gap between unemployment and WSET, by illuminating the abundance of drinks careers and retaining talent within the industry.

**In 2024-25 70% of students had industry experience and 70% of students were employed**

Economic uncertainty and declining consumer confidence negatively impacts learning and development budgets and, in turn, stagnates career progression. Though DEVELOP caters for the individual, the eligibility criteria helps businesses to comfortably identify team members that might qualify for support without having uncomfortable conversations around financial status - thereby supplementing extra learning and development opportunities for businesses. Where possible, we will take requests from APPs to assess groups to be taught on the same course.

**Individuals earning £26k.pa (before TRONC or tips) or less - regardless of employment status - will likely qualify for funding under DEVELOP criteria. Applicants are able to schedule courses to complement their working, personal, or job search schedules.**

THE THIRD MOST IMPACTFUL  
INTERVENTION FOR POSITIVE  
STAFF RETENTION IS TO  
PROVIDE ACCESS TO LEARNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT

WSET Bursary funding  
remains incredibly popular  
with applicants actively  
employed in drinks

WSET BURSARY REINFORCES  
DRINKS AS AN ASPIRATIONAL  
LONG-TERM CAREER

CREATING CAREER  
PATHWAYS & TACKLING  
FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

# We'd like to thank all our donors & educators for their generous support.



**WSET**



THE WORSHIPFUL  
COMPANY OF DISTILLERS

**HATCH MANSFIELD**



**MENTZENDORFF**  
*wine shippers since*  
**1858**



**Decanter**

**LIBERTY WINES**

## Acknowledgements

We are incredibly grateful for all of the support for the WSET Bursary Programme.

Without the generous donations of funds, time and expertise, none of the 173 WSET Bursary students reached this year would have had the opportunity to move away from financial vulnerability and launch their careers in drinks.

### Donors 2024-25

Wine & Spirits Education Trust (WSET)

The Worshipful Company of Distillers / Distillers Charity

The Champagne Academy

International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC)

Hatch Mansfield / Louis Jadot

Decanter

Mentzendorff

Hallgarten & Novum Wines

Liberty Wines

# Direct impact of your support



Jess came to DEVELOP to improve her wine knowledge. Since completing her qualifications, she has moved into a role within the Vineyard Team and even planted her own vines at home.

***“It’s an incredible opportunity to invest in your future [...] The support I received was incredible, it’s a fantastic way to make new connections in the industry, and the experience can open doors you didn’t even know existed”***

- Jess, WSET Bursary recipient and DEVELOP Student of the Year 2024



Filip started his DEVELOP journey studying mixology and moved on to WSET qualifications in both wine and spirits. After completing his WSET Awards, he has moved into a role as Bar Manager and applied for the Behind the Scenes experience with IWSC.

***“It was an incredibly insightful and inspiring experience [...] every part of the day deepened my appreciation for the drinks industry and motivated me even further in my career journey.”***

- Filip, WSET Bursary recipient and BTS IWSC student



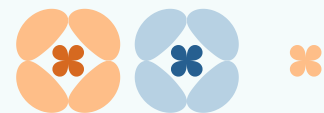
James has completed levels 1-3 in Spirits and 1 & 2 in Wine courses across three years through the WSET Bursary and has moved on to a front of house role at a top wine bar in Bristol, exercising his new-found skills from the DEVELOP programme on a daily basis.

Read James’ story [here](#)  
***“The support I’ve gained from The Drinks Trust has been invaluable to my learning and has opened up opportunities that I would not have had access to otherwise.”***

- James, WSET Bursary recipient and WSET DEVELOP Prize winner 2025



# WSET Bursary 2025-26



From DEVELOP and the WSET Bursary fund - and throughout all of TDT services - the aim remains 'to meet demand' and 'for the whole industry to be aware of support available through The Drinks Trust'.

**From Drinks Trust analysis, in 2025, 1 in 5 in the drinks industry will be impacted by financial hardship.**

Despite a record numbers of students this academic year, there is more work to do. DEVELOP was forced to disappoint over 100 eligible students as available funding failed to stretch to meet demand. Conversely, we are confident that the current scale of demand is a gross underestimation - in previous years, we have relied very little on promoting the WSET Bursary programme in order to spend funding.

2025-26 will focus on increased visibility and growth of the WSET Bursary throughout promotional efforts, increasing donations by forging new partnerships, and inviting additional educators into the programme.

This next academic year DEVELOP will meet demand of student needs introducing new subjects streams (WSET Beer), offering more specialist workshops (eg. Whisky and Cider tastings), launch a mentoring programme for onward progression, and launch our DEVELOP resources HUB for free additional learning materials available to all students.

We are thrilled to work with all our partners again in 2025-26, please get in contact if you have any questions about how you can share your skills, make a donation, or apply for a WSET course.

-The DEVELOP Team

