

Q GRADER CALIBRATION AND RECERTIFICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES v4.5 March 2019

A Q Grader License is valid for a thirty-six (36) month period, **to be tracked from date of the student's initial Q Exams, and not from the completion date of any retakes if applicable**. A Q Grader maintains a valid license at the end of the thirty-six (36) month period by successfully passing the Calibration Testing described below. *This document is applicable for both Q Arabica and Q Robusta Graders.*

Allotted Timeframes for Q Calibration and Q Recertification

CQI's Q Program is consistently being evaluated and improved for quality assurance purposes. The allotted timeframes outlined below are meant to maintain the highest quality and experience for all attendees. It is the responsibility of Q Graders to understand and comply with all policies and procedures laid forth by CQI.

1. Q Grader Calibration course must be completed within 1 year from certificate expiration (6 months before, and 6 months after, the date of the Q certificate expiration). Unless written consent is given by CQI, Q Graders may not participate in a Q Grader Calibration earlier or later than the allowed timeframe.
 - Q Graders failing a Calibration test may **retake one (1) time** in order to renew their Q Grader license.
 - Q Graders failing the **Calibration Test will retake the entire set of calibration cupping tests once**. If they do not pass the retake of cupping tests, they are required to complete the Recertification Test described below.
 - **For example:** Q Grader original certification date was on January 1st, 2016. This individual is qualified to attend a Q Calibration Course from July 1st, 2018 through June 1st, 2019. After June 1st, 2019, the Q Recertification Policy applies.
2. Q graders who have lapsed to calibrate within 5 years of their original certification date **MUST** then take a **FULL Q Course** and **are not eligible for Q Recertification**.
 - **For example:** Q Grader original certification date was on January 1st, 2016 and was eligible for Q Calibration between July 1st, 2018 through June 1st, 2019 however did not take the opportunity to calibrate. On January 1st, 2021, this individual would no longer qualify for Q Recertification and **MUST** then take a **FULL Q Course**.
3. Q Graders who attended Q Calibration, failed the retake or missed the retake window, have 6 years from the original date of their certification to attend a Q Recertification Course. After this period, the Q Grader **MUST** take a **FULL Q Course** again and **is no longer eligible for Q Recertification**.
 - **Example #1:** Q grader original certification date was on January 1st, 2016. Q Grader took their Q Calibration on September 22nd, 2018 and needed to retake a test. Q Grader fails their retake before March 2nd, 2019. This Q Grader is eligible for Q Recertification up until January 1st, 2022. After that date, Q Grader **must** take a **FULL Q Course** again.
 - **Example #2:** Q grader original certification date was on January 1st, 2016. Q Grader took their Q Calibration on September 22nd, 2018 and needed to retake a test. Q Grader was



unable to participate in a retake during the allotted timeframe. This Q Grader is eligible for Q Recertification up until January 1st, 2022. After that date, Q Grader **must** take the FULL Q Course again.

4. Q Graders failing the Calibration Test will retake the entire set of calibration cupping tests once. The Calibration Retake must be completed within the six (6) months following the initial Calibration Test attempt. If they do not pass the retake of cupping tests, they are required to complete the Recertification Test described below.
 - **For Example:** Q Grader original certification date was on January 1st, 2016. This individual attended a Q Calibration on September 22nd, 2018 and failed the test (2 out of 3 cuppings). Then, this individual attended another Q Calibration test on December 1, 2018 and failed again in the December course, they are now only eligible for Q Recertification.
 - **For Example:** Q grader original certification date was January 1st 2016. Individual attempted a Calibration in September 2018 - and failed two cupping sessions in that calibration. That individual has until March 2019 for Calibration Retake (September 2018 + 6 months).
5. Q Graders failing all three cupping sessions during a Calibration Test may **NOT** participate in a Calibration Retake; they must, instead, participate in a Recertification Test.

Q Calibration Testing Details

Calibration Testing is required for those Q Graders whose licenses are about to expire or have already expired (within the allowed 6-month window, unless previously approved in writing by CQI).

Q Grader Licenses will be reinstated and reissued for all Q Graders who pass the Calibration Testing. A Q Grader Calibration course must be completed within 1 year from certificate expiration (6 months before, and 6 months after, the date of the Q certificate expiration). Unless written consent is given by CQI, Q Graders may not participate in a Q Grader Calibration earlier or later than the allowed timeframe. **Q Graders who do not pass the Calibration, or the retake of that calibration, will be required to take a Recertification Testing. Please refer to the above section for allotted timeframes.**

Calibration is necessary first and foremost as an update to all the improvements that CQI frequently does to its Q Program. Additionally, when Q Graders are not cupping frequently, and their taste sensitivity and attribute scoring become out of alignment for the quality of coffees they are presented compared to fellow cuppers, calibration is necessary.

A calibration activity reestablishes the parameters of how to identify various quality levels in coffee, ranging from outstanding to very good (specialty grade), and down to commercial grade coffees. The activity will consist of three tasting sessions after one reference cupping and brief presentation.

During the Calibration Testing, the results of all cuppers are entered into an Excel document to assess their capacity for rating coffee attributes compared to the other cuppers, similar to the method in which they were evaluated in their Q Grader Testing – however, the allowed deviation is tighter, as the Cuppers are now considered as more experienced. The spreadsheet indicates if the cupper is in calibration or not, based on the quality of each of the coffees on the table.

At the same time during this calibration session, Q Graders will also review the cupping



protocols/standards for a Q evaluation, including: the rule of silent work, objective evaluation of varying grades of coffees, identification of defects, repeat coffees, or lower grade coffees; cupping protocols, green grading standards, and roasting/quaker tests according to SCA or CQI Protocols.

Q Grader Calibration Testing Requirements

1. Calibration Testing is a one-day (1-day) exercise conducted by a certified Q Grader Instructor in which coffees are cupped in three (3) separate cupping sessions of six (6) samples each (cupping session)
 - One (1) of the sessions must contain an international mixture of Washed Milds, mainly from Central America and South America. These coffees will vary in quality.
 - One (1) of the sessions must contain coffees from Africa or Asia. These coffees will vary in quality.
 - One (1) of the sessions must contain an international mixture of Natural processed coffees. These coffees will vary in quality.
2. Cupping and scoring protocols:
 - The coffees are to be cupped according to the SCA Cupping Protocol and the scores recorded on the SCA or CQI Cupping Form.
 - The cupping data for each Q Grader is entered on the Calibration Testing Score Sheet, which automatically calculates the Q Graders' pass/fail scores in regards to group Calibration.
 - The Q Graders must receive a passing score of 86 or higher, and report defects accurately on two (2) of the three (3) cupping sessions, as well as show the proper use of the cupping form at all times, in order to renew their Q license.
 - (NOTE: a valid Q Grader license is required to continue Q Grading coffees for an established In-Country-Partner (ICP).
3. Q Graders failing a Calibration test may **retake one (1) time** in order to renew their Q Grader license. If a Q Grader fails all three Cupping Sessions during their Calibration attempt – the Q Grader must re-certify and can not participate in a Calibration Retake.
4. Q Graders failing the **Calibration Test will retake the entire set of calibration cupping tests once**. If they do not pass the retake of cupping tests, they are required to complete the Recertification Test described below.

Q Grader Recertification Testing Details

Those Q Graders who take the Calibration Testing and one Retake and do not pass are required to take the Recertification Testing. Please refer to the section titled, “**Allotted Timeframes for Q Calibration and Q Recertification**” for an in-depth explanation of permitted timeframes.

1. The Q Grader Recertification Course (if organized as a stand-alone course) is a two-day (2 day) program consisting of the following tests:



- ✓ Sensory Skills Test (same as Q Arabica / Q Robusta Grader course).
 - ✓ Cupping Skills Test – three cupping skills tests
 - ✓ Washed Milds (mandatory)
 - ✓ Africa or Asia
 - ✓ Naturals
 - ✓ Triangulation Skills Test – three triangulation tests, which correlate to the cupping exams administered.
 - ✓ Olfactory Skills Test – Parts A, B, C, D (same as Q Arabica/Q Robusta Grader course).
 - ✓ Matching Pairs Skills Test (same as Q Arabica/Q Robusta Grader course).
2. A credentialed Q Arabica/Q Robusta Instructor must administer the course and the tests must be given in exactly the same manner as the original Q Grader course.
 3. A Q Recertification Candidate (student) may take these exams within the context of a full Q Arabica/Q Robusta course. The instructor must consult with the Recertification student about the schedule of events for the testing week and arrange for proper tracking through the database.
 4. To successfully complete the Recertification Course, the Q Grader must pass ALL of the tests. The retake policy for these exams follows the Full Q Exams policy. Please refer to the Q Grader Retake Policy.
 5. Q Graders who fail to complete Recertification Course retakes as detailed in the Q Grader Retake Policy must retake the complete Q Course if they wish to reinstate their Q Grader license.

NOTE: A Recertification candidate may be incorporated into a full Q Grader Course if there less than 6 students to create a stand-alone Recertification course. The instructor must create a separate course online for the Recertification Candidate and deliver the relevant exams necessary for that student during the larger course.

Q Grader Out of Calibration While License is Current

The following policies only apply to those Q Arabica/Q Robusta Graders whose licenses are currently active and are participating in evaluations of Q coffees. If you have been notified that you are out of calibration at least twice, you will need to participate in a calibration session to maintain active Q Grader status.

CQI's policy is as follows:

1. The first time the Q Arabica/Q Robusta Grader is out of calibration, the ICP informs the Q Grader and CQI. The Q Grader is notified of being out of Calibration formally and the information is kept for historical purposes.
2. The second time the Q Grader is out of calibration, the Grader is informed that his license is suspended, and the Grader is removed from the Certified Q Grader list. To reactivate his license,





the Grader can participate in a Q Calibration Testing to reinstate his license. If the candidate fails the Calibration Test, they must take the Recertification Test (no Calibration Retake allowed) before they can be certified to evaluate coffees for the Q Coffee System.

The Q Coffee System

The core of CQI's Q Coffee System is built on the cupping skills of the Q Grader. The objective and standardized evaluation of the Q Grader is essential to maintain the integrity of the Q Coffee System, whether it be an official Q Grading evaluation, a preliminary assessment provided by a Q Grader, or simply an evaluation to provide feedback to the owner of the coffee.

CQI continuously monitors Q Graders that have participated in the Q Coffee System and reviews these evaluations. CQI also keeps track of all Licensed Q Graders in each country, and their "License" issue date. It is the responsibility of all Q Graders to keep their license current if they wish to remain active in the Q Coffee System.

