COFFEE QUALITY INSTITUTE®

Guidelines for Q Graders Participating in Evaluations of Q Coffees

v2.0 June 2022

This document is to be used by Q Graders when assigned to grade a coffee sample in CQI's Q Coffee System. ICPs will contact Q Graders when a coffee sample is available to grade.

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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. CQI continuously monitors Q Graders that have participated in the Q Coffee System and reviews these evaluations. CQI also keeps track of all certified Q Graders in each country including their certificate expiration date. It is the responsibility of a Q Grader to keep their certification current if they wish to remain active in the Q Coffee System.

Expected timeframes

- If receiving green coffee, prepare roasted samples no less than 8 hours and no more than 24 hours prior to cupping.
- Within two days of receiving the sample, the coffee must be evaluated.
- Within 24 hours following the evaluation, the Q Grader must enter the scores in the CQI database and provide a copy of the cupping form and green grading form (if applicable) to the ICP Coordinator.

Required space, equipment and materials when performing an off-site evaluation

For cupping

- Room shall be well ventilated and without the presence of foreign odors or distractions such as continuous noise.
- Table space to set up cupping
- Commercial grinder
- Ability to heat water to approx. 93°C - 96°C (199.4°F - 205°F). Equivalent water temperature shall be calculated based on venue higher location's elevation when applicable.
- The water supply shall be clean and odor free, but not distilled or softened. Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) shall range from 75 ppm and not exceed 250 ppm. If this is not possible, bottled water, meeting the same TDS range, must be used.
- Uniform cupping bowls/vessels: minimum of 10 cups per sample to be analyzed – all bowls/vessels must be the exact same kind, make, size, model, and material
- Cupping spoons
- 2L water pitcher or kettle to pour water during the cupping
- Scales
- Computer/laptop with internet access
- SCA / CQI Cupping forms – most up to date version – ICP Coordinator can provide via email upon request

For roasting

- Professional sample roaster
- Colorimeter
- Reference SCA/CQI roasting standards for cupping

If green grading

- Moisture meter
- Black mat for green grading
- SCA/CQI Green Coffee Defect Handbook
- SCA/CQI Green Grading Form – ICP Coordinator can provide this via email upon request

Q Grading Protocols

- For Arabica, Q Graders must follow the SCA Protocols for green grading, roasting and cupping. https://sca.coffee/research/coffee-standards/.
- For Robusta, Q Graders must follow the CQI Robusta Standards and Protocols for green grading, roasting and cupping. CQI Fine Robusta
- In preparation for roasting Q Grading samples, the roast master must calibrate the roaster with a sample batch so that target color and time are met before roasting for a Q Graded coffee.

Roasting the sample

If you are receiving the sample as green coffee, prepare roasted samples no less than 8 hours and no more than 24 hours prior to cupping.

Before cupping, please note the following

- Cupping form needs to be completed, legible, and in accordance with Q program Policy
- When inputting your results in the database, the requirements below are mandatory. Please keep this in mind when completing your cupping form.
    - Include at least three descriptors for fragrance / aroma and flavor
    - Notes should be included for fragrance / aroma, flavor, aftertaste, acidity, body, uniformity and overall.

Results reporting in the database. Please complete within 24 hours after your evaluation has been completed.

- After you have completed the evaluation, results are recorded via the Q System Database
- Please make sure that your log in is active here https://database.coffeeinstitute.org/login . If you need assistance accessing your account, please contact info@coffeeinstitute.org for assistance.
- After logging in, you will see the sample that has been assigned to you under “Current Grading Assignments”.
- To add your scores, click on the sample number and simply choose the scores from the bar at the top of each section.

- Please note that if there is not a defect present, you must choose N/A from the dropdown menu in the defect section at the bottom of the page.
- Additional descriptors can be added in the notes section.

After you have completed your results in the database, be sure to double check that your information is accurate before submitting. After you have submitted your results, no changes can be made. Evaluating coffees in the Q Coffee System results in a score and data which impacts the producer. It is the responsibility of all Q Graders to ensure their evaluation and input of that data is accurate and represents the coffee evaluated.

REMEMBER to submit your cupping forms and / or green grading forms to ICP Coordinator within 24 hours following your evaluation!!!

Policy for Q Graders out of calibration

Please note the following from the Q GRADER CALIBRATION AND RECERTIFICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES for Q Graders who are found out of calibration. For the full document, please refer to the Q Program Guidebook in the FILES section of the database. CQI is responsible for communicating this to the Q Grader.

Q Grader Out of Calibration While License is Current

The following policies only apply to Q Arabica / Q Robusta Graders whose licenses are currently active and are participating in evaluations of Q coffees. While participating in an evaluation through the Q Coffee System, if a Q Grader is out of calibration, the ICP will notify CQI and CQI in turn will notify the Q Grader.

CQI's policy is as follows

When a Q Arabica / Q Robusta Grader is out of calibration, the Q Grader is notified formally by CQI. The Q Grader will continue to hold an active license but must participate in the next calibration and pass before being able to grade any further samples through the Q Coffee System.

Policy for Q Graders who fail to respond or submit scores

Please note that this policy only applies if samples are sent to Q Graders to evaluate individually, off-site. If a Q Grader accepts the responsibility to grade a sample, and the sample is assigned to the Q Grader in the CQI database, then the assigned Q Grader is responsible for grading the sample and providing the ICP with the required forms within the expected timeframe.

If the assigned Q Grader fails to respond or complete their full assignment, the ICP would place the Q Grader on a "do not contact" list for future sample evaluation assignments.