HM Revenue & Customs

# English Whisky GI
# Verification Scheme checks

## 1. Mashing

| Serial No | Requirement | Check | Comments | Pass/Fail |
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| 1.1 | a) All grain used (both malted and un-malted) must be from a UK source/farm. | i) Verify the distillery's purchase records.<br><br>ii) Review assurances producers have received from maltsters that UK-sourced grain has been used.<br><br>iii) If the distillery produces its own grain, then check records, assurances, and invoices to make sure no other non-UK grain is added to this. | | |
| 1.2 | General requirements for all English Whiskies:<br><br>a) Mashing must take place in England.<br><br>b) All water used in English Whisky production must be sourced from English origin and local to the distillery. | i) Verify the facility address is in England.<br><br>i) Check postcode of source location and/or water rates bill. | | |

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| 1.3 | Specific requirements for Grain English Whiskies only:<br><br>a) The mash must contain malted UK cereals, with or without whole grains of other cereals.<br><br>b) Saccharification (conversion of starch to sugars) of the mash must take place by the enzymes contained in the malt, with or without the addition of natural enzymes. | i) Verify the distillery's mashing procedures and records of each mashing operation which must show that the mash is made from UK cereals (any can be used), with or without whole grains.<br><br>i) Verify that the distillery's mashing procedures and the records of each mashing operation which must show that no synthetic enzymes were used in the production of English Whisky. | | |
| 1.4 | Specific requirements for Malt English Whiskies only:<br><br>a) The mash must contain 100% malted barley from a UK source/farm.<br><br>b) Saccharification of the mash must take place solely by the enzymes contained in the malt. | i) Verify the distillery's mashing procedures and records of each mashing operation which must show that the mash is made from 100% malted barley from a UK source/farm.<br><br>i) Check mash bill to make sure that no additional enzymes or fermentable materials have been added. | | |

**2. Fermentation**

| Serial No | Requirement | Check | Comments | Pass/Fail |
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| 2.1 | a) All alcoholic products producers must have an APPA (Alcoholic Products Producer Approval) to produce alcoholic products on approved premises. | i) Check HMRC records to make sure the producer has an APPA approving them to produce alcoholic products and hold alcoholic products in duty suspension on their approved premises.<br><br>Check all details of the approval including the type of alcoholic product and the premises that the approval is held for. Make sure any conditions of the approval are complied with. | | |
| | b) Fermentation must take place in England.<br><br>The fermentation facility must be able to demonstrate that mash/wort intended for distillation as English Whisky has been sourced from a facility with HMRC assured processes. | i) Verify that fermentation takes place in England by checking that a fermentation vessel exists and is available for use.<br><br>ii) Check what controls are in place to monitor inward shipments/receipts. Request name and address of consignors. Confirm their processes have been verified (or application for verification received). | | |
| | c) Fermentation must take place only by the addition of yeast. | i) Check the process, production procedures and the records of material used to verify that fermentation is by the action of yeast only.<br><br>ii) Check that only approved processing aids (for example, anti-foams, water treatments for pH balance) are used and no flavourings are added. | | |
| | d) All water used in English Whisky production must be sourced from English origin and local to the distillery. | i) Check postcode of source location and/or water rates bill. | | |

**3. Distillation**

| Serial No | Requirement | Check | Comments | Pass/Fail |
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| 3.1 | General requirements for all English Whisky:<br><br>a) All alcoholic products producers must have an APPA (Alcoholic Products Producer Approval) to produce alcoholic products on approved premises. | i) Check HMRC records to make sure the producer has an APPA approving them to produce alcoholic products and hold alcoholic products in duty suspension on their approved premises.<br><br>Check all details of the approval including the type of alcoholic product and the premises that the approval is held for. Make sure any conditions of the approval are complied with.<br><br>ii) Where available, review existing HMRC Alcohol Duty return information as part of the verification risk assessment. Consider whether significant or unexplained fluctuations in reported production yield identify areas requiring further examination against the Product Specification. | | |
| | b) Distillation of English Whisky must take place in England. | i) Check address of distillery and business records and verify that distillation has taken place in England. | | |
| | c) Where spirit products other than English Whisky are produced or handled at the premises, the operator must have appropriate systems and controls to make sure that English Whisky production can be clearly identified and distinguished from other production, and that other production does not | i) Verify that the distillery's systems for production and its records and operational controls are adequate to make sure full and effective identification at all times of GI and non-GI spirit production processes, materials and outputs.<br><br>This includes full separation from the production and bottling processes for GI and non-GI products, and all necessary controls are in place to manage the risk of contamination at any stage in the production and bottling processes for English Whisky. | | |

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| | compromise compliance with, or verification against, the English Whisky Product Specification.<br><br>d) All English Whisky must be distilled before ageing.<br><br>e) The distillation facility must be able to demonstrate that the fermented liquid intended for distillation as English Whisky has been sourced from a facility with HMRC assured processes.<br><br>f) Distillation must be at an alcoholic strength by volume (ABV) of less than 94.8%.<br><br>g) All water used in English Whisky production must be sourced from English origin and local to the distillery. | i) Check all alcohol intended for filling as English Whisky has been distilled or will be distilled prior to filling.<br><br>i) Check what controls are in place to monitor inward shipments/receipts.<br><br>ii) Request name and address of consignors. Confirm their processes have been verified (or application for verification received).<br><br>i) Check distillery records to confirm distillation strength and visually check procedures.<br><br>i) Check postcode of source location and/or water rates bill. | | |
| 3.2 | Specific requirements for Malt English Whisky:<br><br>a) Malt English Whisky must be distilled at least twice. It may be distilled more than twice if desired. | i) Check distillery's distillation process and records. | | |

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| | b) At least one of those distillations must take place in a pot still with sufficient copper contact in the vapour path. (Note: this can be in conjunction with a column). | i) Check distillery's distillation process and records. Sufficient copper contact is defined within the product specification. Non-functional copper components are not taken into consideration. | | |
| | c) Malt English Whisky must use 100% malted barley mash. | i) Check distillery's distillation process and records. Spirits distilled in a pot still from anything other than 100% malt mash may only be used in grain whisky. | | |
| | d) Malt English Whisky must be batch distilled (not continuous distilled). | i) Check distillery's distillation process and records. | | |
| 3.3 | Specific requirements for Grain English Whisky:<br>a) Grain English Whisky must be distilled at least once and can be distilled in a pot still or column still. It may be batch distilled or continuous distilled. | i) Check distillery's distillation process and records.<br>ii) Spirits distilled in a column still (even if it is from 100% malt mash) can only be used in grain whisky.<br>iii) Spirits distilled in a pot still from anything other than 100% malt mash may only be used in grain whisky. | | |
| 3.4 | Filling and maturation<br>a) Filling of distilled spirit into casks may take place at the distillery, or the spirit may be dispatched by tanker to a maturation site and filled into cask there. | i) Where filling and/or maturation takes place at the distillery, the relevant checks specified under 'maturation' should be carried out. | | |

**4. Maturation**

| Serial No | Requirement | Check | Comments | Pass/Fail |
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| 4.1 | Warehouse:<br><br>a) The maturation facility must be approved by HMRC. This may include premises approved under the Alcoholic Products Producer Approval (APPA), an excise warehouse, or another permitted place.<br><br>b) Maturation must take place in England. English Whisky must not leave England in wooden casks and may only be transferred or exported in inert containers. | i) Check HMRC records to confirm that the maturation facility is appropriately approved (for example under an APPA, as an excise warehouse, or as another permitted place). A 'permitted place' is any place to which spirits are moved:<br>• for re-warehousing to another excise warehouse<br>• for temporary purposes and periods as allowed by HMRC<br>• for scientific research and testing<br>• including other premises where goods of the same class or description may be kept, under the Customs and Excise Acts<br>• including other premises permitted by HMRC (in line with relevant excise legislation).<br><br>i) Verify from systems and records that the new make spirit is decanted fully into casks and is stored at a location in England.<br><br>ii) Verify from systems and records that all English Whisky intended for export is transferred from casks to inert containers prior to removal from the tax warehouse. | | |

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| | c) The maturation facility must be able to demonstrate that spirit being matured as English Whisky was sourced from a distillery whose processes have been verified by HMRC. | i) Review the SDVS Look Up Service.<br><br>ii) Check what controls are in place to monitor inward shipments/receipts.<br><br>iii) Verify that the procedures and systems in use make sure that all new make spirit filled into casks or received by tanker to be casked for maturation as an English Whisky can be identified, and the records show that it has been produced in compliance with the GI requirements.<br><br>iv) Verify that the procedures and systems make sure that all spirit received in casks for further maturation can be identified and the records show that this whisky has been produced in compliance with the GI requirements. | | |
| 4.2 | Filling<br><br>a) Filling of distilled spirit into casks may take place at the distillery or the spirit may be dispatched by tanker to a maturation site and filled into casks there. | i) Check process and records. | | |

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| | b) Casks must be filled only with distilled spirit that will mature into English Whisky. | i) Check procedures to make sure that casks are drained of any previous contents before being filled. Check that there is an appropriate procedure in place for emptying casks.<br><br>ii) Check procedures to make sure that no substance is being added to the inside of the cask before it is filled.<br><br>Note: Some casks may have been previously used to store other alcoholic beverages, such as port or sherry, and this has some bearing on the future taste of the English Whisky. This is standard industry practice and is permitted. | | |
| | c) Only the following additions are allowed at this stage, and they are:<br><br>a. Water, which may be added to dilute the new make spirit down to cask strength. All water used in English Whisky production must be sourced from English origin. | i) Check that any water used to adjust the strength of the new make spirit prior to maturation is water of English origin (check postcode of source location and/or water rates bill). | | |

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| 4.3 | Cask<br><br>a) English Whisky must be matured in wooden casks such as, but not limited to, oak. New casks or casks previously used to store other alcoholic beverages (for example, Madeira, Sherry, Port, or Bourbon) can be used. | i) Check purchase records to make sure that casks are made from wood. All repairs to casks must be made of wood. Steel and plastic bungs are permitted. Traditional cooperage practices (such as charring and de-charring) are permitted.<br><br>ii) Confirm that casks have not been rendered inert by glazing, plastic liners, etc.<br><br>Processors should be informed of the need to make purchase records available when booking their verification visit. | | |
| | b) Where oak casks are not used, the type of wood used instead must be recorded. | i) Check ageing records to confirm that the wood type is recorded, if oak casks are not used. The product specification permits wood other than oak, however required front label disclosure where Malt English Whisky is matured in non-oak casks. | | |
| | c) The capacity of each cask must not exceed 700 litres at any time during the maturation process. | i) Check a sample of casks to identify their size. Check operator's purchase records to identify sizes of casks. | | |
| | d) English Whisky must not be exported in wooden casks. | i) Verify from the producers' systems and records that all English Whisky intended for export is transferred from cask into inert containers prior to removal for export. Check procedures and records, and visually check products destined for export. | | |

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| 4.4 | Ageing<br><br>a) English Whisky must be matured for a minimum of 3 years. | i) Check the record keeping process to understand how the ageing of a cask is logged. This involves verifying the systems and controls in place to make sure there is an accurate log of the whisky in the cask and effective tracking of the age of the spirit.<br><br>ii) Check that there are adequate measures in place to make sure the ageing process is not interrupted. However, note that:<br>• leaks or losses because of evaporation do not affect the age of the spirit remaining in the cask<br>• the contents of a cask may be re-racked into another empty cask for further ageing, but re-racking should normally take place immediately on emptying the previous cask, to avoid a break in maturation and make sure proper control of maturation periods<br>• topping up of casks with younger spirit is not permitted. | | |

**5. Bottling and labelling of the final product**

| Serial No | Requirement | Check | Comments | Pass/Fail |
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| 5.1 | Bulk Movements/Exports for products which will be sold as 'English Whisky':<br><br>a) Business or individuals must not move or export English Whisky outside of England in wooden casks and may only move or export it in inert containers. All processes up to the point of export (mashing, fermentation, distillation, and maturation) must be verified by HMRC according to the checks set out in this document. | i) Check that all production processes up to the point of export have been verified.<br><br>ii) Verify that English Whisky intended for export is transferred from wooden casks into inert containers prior to removal from England. | | |
| 5.2 | Bottling – Duty not paid<br><br>a) If English Whisky is to be held or received at the bottling location in wooden casks, the bottling location must be an excise warehouse or permitted place within England. | i) If the product is moved in wooden casks, verify that the bottling site is in England.<br><br>ii) If the product is moved before duty has been paid, check HMRC records to make sure the bottling site is an excise warehouse or permitted place. A 'permitted place' is any place to which spirits are moved:<br>• for re-warehousing to another excise warehouse<br>• for temporary purposes and periods as allowed by HMRC<br>• for scientific research and testing<br>• including other premises where goods of the same class or description may be kept, under the Customs and Excise Acts<br>• including other premises permitted by HMRC. | | |

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| | b) If English Whisky is received in inert containers, bottling must take place in an authorised tax warehouse or permitted place. This may take place outside of England. | i) If the product is moved before duty has been paid, check HMRC records to make sure the bottling site is an excise warehouse or permitted place. A 'permitted place' is any place to which spirits are moved:<br>• for re-warehousing to another excise warehouse<br>• for temporary purposes and periods as allowed by HMRC<br>• for scientific research and testing<br>• including other premises where goods of the same class or description may be kept, under the Customs and Excise Acts<br>• including other premises permitted by HMRC. | | |
| 5.3 | Bottling – Duty paid<br><br>a) If bottling location is not verified for Maturation, then English Whisky may only be held or received in inert containers. | i) Check that there is no English Whisky in any wooden casks. If so, it can no longer be described as English Whisky, as it has continued to mature outside of an SDVS verified facility/process.<br><br>ii) Check bottling procedures and controls in place. | | |
| 5.4 | General bottling requirements:<br><br>a) English Whisky may be bottled outside of England, but it must be shipped from England in inert containers and must not leave England in wooden casks. | i) Check that there is no English Whisky in any wooden casks. If so, it can no longer be described as English Whisky, as it has matured outside of England. | | |

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| | b) English Whisky received for bottling/labelling must have been produced in line with the requirements of the Product Specification. The bottling facility must be able to demonstrate that the whisky has been sourced from a maturation facility whose processes have been verified by HMRC. | i) Check controls in place and confirm processes have been verified. This also includes checking that details of all brands of English Whisky bottled by the bottler have been submitted to HMRC. | | |
| | c) English Whisky may be filtered prior to bottling to remove particles of wood which may have accumulated in the spirit during the maturation process. Note that filtering is permitted outside of England. | i) Check bottling procedures and that controls are in place. | | |
| 5.5 | Additions:<br><br>There are 2 permitted additions to English Whisky at this stage, (a) and (b) below:<br><br>a) Colour may be adjusted by the addition of plain caramel colouring (E150a) only. This addition must be carried out in England. | i) Make sure that the addition of the colouring agent complies with the declared production standards and, in particular, that only caramel colouring E150a is used. This addition must be carried out in England. | | |

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| | b) Water may be added to dilute the product to bottling strength, note:<br><br>• If bottling outside of England: any water added must be demineralised/purified to preserve the organoleptic characteristics of English Whisky.<br><br>• If bottling within England: only English water may be used. | i) If water is added outside of England, make sure that it is demineralised/purified water only, and that the alcoholic strength of the final product is not reduced below 40% ABV.<br><br>ii) If water is added within England, it must be of English origin. Check postcode of source location and/or water rates bill. | | |
| 5.6 | Strength:<br><br>a) English Whisky has a minimum alcoholic strength by volume (ABV) of 40%. | i) Check that procedures and systems are in place for accurate testing and recording of the ABV of each batch before bottling. Also verify from a sample of records that the minimum ABV of the bottled product is 40%. | | |
| 5.7 | a) Age of blends – Within each category, blenders can blend different ages of English Whisky. The overall age of the blend is the age of the youngest constituent whisky. | i) Check the production and record keeping process to make sure that the ages of each constituent whisky in the blend are recorded, and that the youngest of those ages is used to describe the blend.<br><br>ii) Check the declared ages of purchased and own whiskies to make sure they match what is entered in the production records.<br><br>iii) If the age of the blend is not stated, the minimum age is 3 years. | | |

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| 5.8 | Types of English Whisky:<br><br>There are 2 sub-categories of English Whisky ('Malt' and 'Grain'), and 2 sub-category pre-fixes ('Single' and 'Blended'):<br><br>a) Single Malt English Whisky – All the whisky in the product has been distilled at a single distillery. Must not be blended with any whisky other than Single Malt English Whisky from the same distillery.<br><br>b) Single Grain English Whisky – All the whisky in the product has been distilled at a single distillery. Must not be blended with any whisky other than Single Grain English Whisky from the same distillery.<br><br>c) Blended Malt English Whisky – a blend of 2 or more Single Malt English Whiskies distilled at more than one distillery. The term 'Vatted' can be used instead of 'Blended' when using malt whisky from more than one distillery site. | i) If the product is to be bottled as Single Malt, check procedures and records to make sure that all the whisky in the product is malt whisky and has been produced at a single distillery.<br><br>i) If the product is to be bottled as Single Grain, check procedures and records to make sure that all the whisky in the product is grain whisky and has been produced at a single distillery.<br><br>i) Check that the blender's record-keeping and tracking of English Whisky allows them to blend different whiskies that are consistent with the definitions set out on the left.<br><br>ii) Make sure that the blender has adequate control mechanisms to keep such blends separate so as not to interfere with each other.<br><br>iii) Check if the blender only blends their own whiskies, or whether they buy-in whiskies from other distilleries to blend. If they purchase whiskies, check purchase records to make sure that the whisky used in blend recipes match those bought by the blender. | | |

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| | d) Blended Grain English Whisky – English Whisky where the product has been made using whisky from more than one distillery site. | Processors should be informed of the need to make purchase records available when booking their verification visit.<br><br>i) Check that the blender's record keeping and tracking of English Whisky allows them to blend different whiskies that are consistent with the definitions set out to the left.<br><br>ii) Make sure that the blender has adequate control mechanisms to keep such blends separate so as not to interfere with each other.<br><br>iii) Check if the blender only blends their own whiskies, or whether they buy-in whiskies from other distilleries to blend. If they purchase whiskies, check purchase records to make sure that the whisky used in blend recipes match those bought by the blender.<br><br>Processors should be informed of the need to make purchase records available when booking their verification visit. | | |

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| 5.9 | General labelling requirements for products which are to be sold as 'English Whisky':<br><br>a) All English Whisky must be labelled as belonging to one of the two sub-categories ('Malt' or 'Grain') with the optional pre-fixes ('Single' or 'Blended'). This information must be stated on the front of the container of English Whisky and any individual packaging used for the transportation of the container or used for display or marketing purposes, unless, in both cases, the front of the container is clearly visible through that packaging or the packaging is non-product specific.<br><br>In the circumstances where the GI name is used, verification is applied for, but the product does not fall into a sub-category, it could be labelled simply as English Whisky.<br><br>b) The category description must be displayed on any individual container and displayed as prominently as any other description. | i) Check that the operator has reasonable control mechanisms to keep different blends of English Whisky separate, so as not to mix and incorrectly label a batch. The category names are:<br><br>a. Single Malt English Whisky<br>b. Single Grain English Whisky<br>c. Blended (or 'Vatted') Malt English Whisky<br>d. Blended Grain English Whisky<br>e. Malted Grain English Whisky (100% malted grain but includes varieties other than malted barley)<br>- If 100% of another malted grain has been used, the type of grain can be named instead.<br><br>i) Check the label templates for English Whiskies bottled by the operator for compliance. | | |

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| | c) The category description may be preceded by the name of a locality or region, but not interfered with in any other way, for example, with overlays or underlays of other words or pictures.<br><br>d) The name of a distillery may be used if the whole whisky was distilled at that distillery only.<br><br>e) The name of a locality or region may be used if:<br><br>a. all the whisky in that product was distilled in the region or locality named, or,<br><br>b. in the case of a blended whisky made up of whiskies from more than one region or locality, the name of the localities or regions may be used only if all the localities or regions in the blend are identified. | i) Check that all constituent parts of a whisky described as originating from a particular locality or region (or localities or regions), can be verified from movement or blending records.<br><br>ii) Check the label templates for English Whiskies bottled by the operator for compliance.<br><br>i) Check that all constituent parts of a single whisky originate from a single distillery – for example, by reviewing movement records.<br><br>ii) Check the label templates for English Whiskies bottled by the operator for compliance.<br><br>i) Check label templates for compliance. Only names which identify a specific locality or region may precede the category name (for example, 'Lake District Single Malt Whisky' is acceptable), provided that all the whisky contained in that product was distilled in that locality or region.<br><br>If the product contains whiskies from multiple localities or regions, then all the localities or regions must be identified on the label if any locality or region is to be used. | | |

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| | f) The word ‘pure’ must not be used in connection with the word ‘malt’.<br><br>g) The age of the whisky/maturation period must only be expressed in years.<br><br>h) The date of distillation may only be used if:<br>a. it is in the form of a calendar year, and<br>b. all the whisky in that product was distilled in that year, and,<br>c. the year of bottling or maturation period is stated in the same field of vision.<br><br>i) The label must not contain reference to any other number that could be misinterpreted to mean the age, maturation period, distillation date, or bottling year. | i) The word ‘pure’ is permitted on labels where it is used in relation to matters other than malt (for example, ‘pure water’).<br><br>i) Check label templates for compliance.<br><br>i) Check label templates for compliance.<br><br>i) Check label templates for compliance. | | |
| 5.10 | Specific labelling rules for Malt English Whisky:<br><br>a) For Malt English Whiskies (blended or single) where oak casks are not used, the type of wood used instead must be stated on the front of the label. | i) Review records to make sure that the type of wood used in the maturation casks for a given whisky is clearly recorded and maintained throughout the maturation period of the cask. | | |