Viticulture and Oenology Careers
What are Viticulture and Oenology?

People who study viticulture and oenology generally have a career area in mind: wine. Many graduates aspire to make wine, or simply have a career in which they can connect with the land.

Viticulture refers to the practice and study of vine growing and grape cultivation and is a branch of horticultural science. It encompasses grape production (including biology, chemistry and soils), technical aspects of grape production and processing, and vineyard management and systems. Oenology is the general study of wine and winemaking.

Understanding the processes involved from the vineyard, through the production process to sales and commercial aspects, equips practitioners with a broad perspective and a range of practical and technical skills that are highly valued on both the domestic and international market.
Viticulture and oenology in New Zealand and the world

New Zealand has a thriving wine industry. The diverse soil types and relatively cool New Zealand climate produces a range of wine styles lauded for both taste and technically proficient production\(^1\). Consequently, New Zealand wines are sought after both domestically and internationally. The most popular export markets for New Zealand wines are the U.S., Canada, Britain and China, with continued growth projected.\(^2\)

Viticulturists and other specialist positions are currently on the skill shortage list for New Zealand (in the Canterbury, upper South Island and Otago/Southland regions). Graduates who wish to work in specialist positions often require experience, which can be gained by working in one of the many wine-related industries in New Zealand and around the world. Associated industries include brewing, distilling, and the production of niche products, such as organic wines, all of which are growth industries in New Zealand. Wine tourism is another growth industry where graduates can make their mark.

Skills and knowledge developed by studying viticulture and oenology

The types of skills gained by doing a degree in viticulture and oenology are highly valued by employers. The applied nature of the coursework at Lincoln University gives graduates a range of practical skills. Lincoln University degrees in viticulture and oenology integrate the technical aspects of grape growing and winemaking so that graduates have a working knowledge of the process from grape to the bottle and beyond. So, wherever graduates end up in the wine industry, their scientific knowledge across the spectrum of grape growing to the end product - wine, is what differentiates them. This, coupled with the experience that graduates gain from working in a commercial situation as part of course work, places Lincoln graduates in a good position to make their mark in the industry.

Although many of the skills gained during study are specific to wine and the wine production industry, they are applicable in other sectors. For example, the technical aspects of grape growing and vine management may be of use in other areas of horticulture such as forestry.

Employers generally require employees to have a professional attitude to work. This includes good communication (including the ability to communicate to groups as well as effective interpersonal and written communication), honesty, responsibility, self-motivation, initiative, time management and flexibility. The importance of using these skills cannot be underestimated, even in voluntary roles, as future job opportunities often arise from a good reputation and a varied network of contacts.

As a graduate promoting yourself to potential employers, it is worth noting and expanding on the skills you have that your degree at Lincoln University has enhanced. For example, highlight how the practical experience you gained throughout your degree will help you to be an effective employee from the get-go. If your degree had a technical focus, outline the ways in which this sets you apart from other job applicants.

Skills and knowledge valued in viticulture and oenology roles:

- Data collection, analysis and communication
- Use of biometric techniques
- Practical aspects of pest and disease management
- Good grasp of basic sciences and research
- Scientific assessment of crops and conditions (including soil testing)
- Collaborative approaches to problem solving
- Systematic thinking/decision making
- Critical/analytical thinking skills
- Knowledge of vine propagation
- Principles of wine science (including all steps in grape-to-wine processing)
- Knowledge of grape varieties and properties
- Knowledge of cellar techniques
- Wine processing/making/storing
- Industry-specific certification (e.g., Growsafe, first aid certificate, chemical handler certificate, forklift license, or Heavy Trade License as required)


\(^3\) http://skillshortages.immigration.govt.nz
Where can viticulture and oenology graduates find work?

Small wineries make up 80% of New Zealand’s total wine production. The remaining production comes from large, well-established vineyards, over half of which are located in Marlborough, Hawke’s Bay, and Otago. With a total of 2,040 vineyards in New Zealand, the pool of available employers is large, diverse, and spread New Zealand-wide. Internationally, New Zealand winemakers are highly sought after.

The wine industry works closely with allied industries (e.g., tech industries, rural support, mechanical and engineering firms, transport, bottling, commercial and business support) that support and enable growth in this sector. Allied industries offer positions where viticulture and oenology skills can be used alongside other skills such as commerce or management, research and development, or as entry level positions for exposure to the industry. Finding work in these allied industries can be the gateway to a long term career in wine. Graduates who consider starting roles in allied industries as part of career development are often well placed for their dream job further down the line.

Potential places of employment include:
- Vineyards/wineries (e.g., Pegasus Bay, Black Estate)
- Cellar door retail and hospitality (e.g., Wither Hills, Kim Crawford)
- Industry organisations (e.g., Horticulture New Zealand)
- Government departments (e.g., Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), NZ Trade and Enterprise (NZTE))
- Research organisations (e.g., Plant and Food Research)
- Tertiary education sector (e.g., Lincoln University)
- Vineyard consultancies (e.g., Vine Managers)
- Vineyard contracting (e.g., Irrigation Services)
- Vineyard management (e.g., Berakah Vineyard Management)
- Wine tourism (e.g., New Zealand Wine Tours)
- HR consultancies and recruitment (e.g., Wine Jobs Online)
- Wine publications/wine writing (e.g., WineNZ, NZ Winegrower, or columnist for a regional newspaper)

Viticulture and oenology job titles

People who have studied viticulture and oenology at Lincoln University can go on to a range of wine related jobs.

- Assistant Winemaker
- Buyer/Exporter
- Cellar Door Sales/Management
- Educator (from pruning tutor to university lecturer)
- Environmental/Sustainability Consultant
- Field Assistant
- Horticultural/Winery Tour Operator
- Information Technology (IT)
- Laboratory Manager or Technician
- Manager in Wine or Brewing
- Marketing Manager
- Owner/Operator of Winery/Vineyard
- Quality Control
- Research and Development
- Sales and Logistics
- Sommelier
- Vineyard Hand/Leading Hand
- Vineyard Manager
- Viticultural Contractor
- Viticultural Technician/Technical Officer
- Viticulturist (grape grower)
- Wine Representative/ Ambassador
- Wine Writer/Taster
- Winemaker

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Pay rate indications: full time equivalent (FTE) $NZ per annum

Most starting salaries for graduates of bachelor degrees fall between 40,000 - 55,000 per annum. Entry level jobs are stepping stones to roles with increased responsibilities and remuneration. Your employability is affected by all of your life experiences, be they employment related, or the transferable skills and competencies gained from community involvement, volunteer work, or previous work or study- all of which can grow competency, expand networks, and demonstrate enthusiasm to future employers.

Starting salaries for graduates are typically at the low end of the scale but can move quickly if employees show commitment and capability in their roles. Seasonal work demands flexibility and sometimes very long hours (up to 100 hours per week during the harvest in some roles⁶), the following pay rates reflect this situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>Indicative pay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cellar Hand</td>
<td>33,000 - 50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellar Door Sales</td>
<td>37,024 - 45,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viticulturist (entry level)</td>
<td>From 40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viticulturist (experienced)</td>
<td>80,000 - 100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vineyard Supervisor/Manager</td>
<td>80,000 - 100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viticultural Maintenance Technician</td>
<td>41,000 - 75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viticulture Technician</td>
<td>From 37,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Winemaker</td>
<td>From 59,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory Manager</td>
<td>From 60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/Accounts Manager</td>
<td>61,000 - 67,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winemaker (entry level)</td>
<td>From 70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Winemaker (experienced)</td>
<td>(up to) 150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Lecturer/Professor</td>
<td>74,000 – 120,000+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Viticulture and oenology tasks

The following lists outline tasks associated with Viticulture and Winemaking.

**Viticulture tasks**
- Pest and disease monitoring
- Yield prediction
- Grape maturity sampling
- Tractor/harvester operation
- Fungicide application
- Data collection and reporting
- Harvest logistics
- Canopy management
- Grower/winery liaison
- Pruning/trellising
- Staff management

**Winemaking tasks**
- Date of harvest
- Grape crushing/pressing
- Monitoring pumps and equipment
- Monitoring ferments
- Cap management
- Barrel topping
- Quality control
- Tasting
- Blending
- Management of staff
- Logistics

Job tasks are role-specific, so the above is an indication only. For more information on roles, registered Lincoln University students can search Lincoln CareerHub (including expired jobs) for job titles similar to those they are interested in. Job descriptions, including tasks and skills required, are often available.

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Industry bodies
Membership of an industry specific body enhances the professional status of students and employees. By joining a professional body, members can research career options, access training and events, and network and collaborate with industry colleagues at all levels.

Examples of viticulture and oenology industry bodies include:
- New Zealand Society for Viticulture and Oenology
  www.nzsvo.org.nz
- Horticulture New Zealand
  www.hortnz.org.nz
- Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture
  www.rnzih.org.nz
- New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science
  www.agscience.org.nz
- Irrigation New Zealand
  www.irrigationnz.co.nz
- New Zealand Society of Soil Sciences
  www.nzsss.science.org.nz
- New Zealand Winegrowers
  www.nzwine.com
- Fruit Wine and Cider Makers of New Zealand
  www.nzfruitwines.org.nz

Graduate Profiles

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Bachelor of Commerce and Management, Postgraduate Diploma in Viticulture and Oenology
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