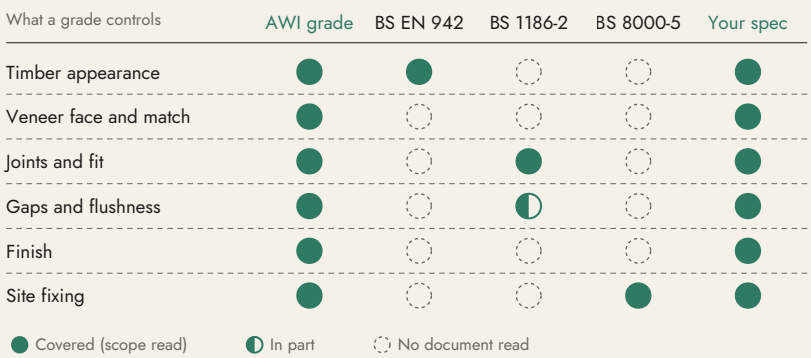
Joinery *quality grades* in UK terms

What AWI Premium, Custom and Economy control, which British documents cover each part, where there is no equivalence, and how to write a quality level that can be priced and checked.

AT A GLANCE

What changes between grades	Premium	Custom	Economy
Control over materials, workmanship and manufacture	The highest degree	A high degree	The minimum degree
Where the AWS says each is used	Where the highest quality is required	Most high-quality architectural woodwork	Woodwork not in public view, such as mechanical and utility rooms
Grain on flush doors and drawer fronts	Runs and matches vertically, sequenced across a cabinet, well matched across an elevation	Runs and matches vertically in each cabinet; compatible colour across a room	Either way; a mismatch is allowed
Face veneer, exposed faces, transparent finish	ANSI/HPVA HP-1 Grade AA	Grade A	Grade B
Interior faces, transparent finish	Same species and cut as the outside	Same species as the outside	Laminate or veneer, maker's option
Solid timber in flat panels of stile and rail doors	Not permitted	Edge-glued, within width and thickness limits	As Custom
Backs and cover caps	Backs required; caps required	Backs required; caps required	Backs only if exposed; caps not required
Gaps and flushness at joints	Tightest limits	Middle limits	Widest limits
If no grade is stated		This one (ANSI/AWI 0641-2019)	

Paraphrased from ANSI/AWI 0641-2019 (3.4) and the AWS 1st edition (2009, Section 10, 1.1). US documents: no value is reproduced and none has UK status. HP-1 is the US hardwood plywood standard.



What an AWI grade controls, and what four British documents and your own specification cover (scopes read; schematic). Original chart by Make Bespoke Studio.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

QUALITY LEVEL

Joinery quality level [A / B / C] for [area] as set out in the project joinery quality schedule, revision [ ], agreed with [partner workshop] before tender. For each item and zone (exposed, semi-exposed, concealed) the schedule states timber species and appearance class, veneer and match, joint construction, gaps and flushness in millimetres and how measured, finish system and sheen, hardware and installation. Where this specification and the schedule differ, [ ] governs.

TIMBER AND WORKMANSHIP REFERENCES

Timber for exposed faces to BS EN 942 class [J10]; workmanship to BS 1186-2; wood trim to BS 1186-3; fixing on site to BS 8000-5, each in the edition current at tender, which the tenderer is to state. These documents do not set gap, flushness, veneer or finish limits: those are in the schedule.

IF WRITTEN TO AWI

Casework to ANSI/AWI 0641-2019, aesthetic grade [Custom], structural performance duty level [3]. [Partner workshop] to state in writing, clause by clause, any requirement it cannot meet or measure, before tender. AWI references are a design-team choice and are not UK requirements.

CONTROL SAMPLE AND ACCEPTANCE

A control sample of [item] at quality level [A] is to be approved by [ ] before production. Work is accepted against the approved sample and the quality schedule; gaps and flushness are measured with [ ] at [ ] points per [ ] mm of joint.

TERMS USED

Aesthetic grade

In the AWI casework standard, Premium, Custom or Economy: the degree of control over the materials, workmanship and manufacture of the surfaces that are exposed or semi-exposed after installation.

Duty level

In the AWI casework standard, a structural performance level from 1 to 4, found by laboratory tests of the joinery, materials and components; the product takes the lowest tested value. Level 3 is the default.

Appearance class (BS EN 942)

A class from J2 (highest) to J50 for the appearance quality of timber in joinery; the number relates to the largest knot allowed on visible faces. Classes were read only in a 2005 trade bulletin on the 1996 edition.

Quality schedule

A project document that states, for each item and zone, the species, class, match, construction, gaps, finish and installation required. It is not a standard.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- ANSI/AWI 0641-2019 Architectural Wood Casework: 3.3 and 3.4; US. Read 5 Nov 2026.
- Architectural Woodwork Standards, 1st edition (2009): Sections 3 and 10; grade rules not in the free copy.
- BS EN 942:2007 Timber in joinery. General requirements: BSI listing only.
- BS 1186-2:1988 and BS 1186-3:1990; BS 8000-5:1990: BSI listings only; confirm current editions.
- SATRA, The testing of storage furniture: BS 6222-2, EN 16121:2023.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/joinery-quality-grades. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.