Summary of Syllabus Changes

Effective June 2020 Assessment Round

MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

The syllabus review in 2018/19 enabled MRS Qualifications in consultation with Key Stakeholders (accredited centres, assessment team, employer representatives and syllabus experts) to update and refine the Advanced Certificate Syllabus, including the learning outcomes to ensure a focus on planning, designing and delivering research and insight. It also enabled the fine tuning of some aspects of the content.

The syllabus is written in neutral language without reference to specific methodology, technologies or techniques; this is to enable the syllabus to be expansive and to prevent the syllabus from becoming quickly out of date in the ever-evolving research and insight sector. This approach also enables MRS (in the examination) and candidates (in the integrated assignment) to incorporate new and emerging technologies, techniques and methodologies where appropriate.

The IA element of assessment is an ideal opportunity for candidates, where appropriate, to include or reference emerging technologies, techniques and methodologies. The important point is that candidates are applying appropriately, and adequately address, the research problems they select for their assessment, whether established or new, and are able to justify their choices supported with suitable rationales.

The first Assessment against the new Syllabus is in June 2020. The changes are summarised below.

Syllabus changes

The key changes to the content and structure of the syllabus are:

- The number of learning outcomes has been reduced to 22 from 36.

- As before, the syllabus is divided into two sections. However, the aims of each section have been refined:

    - The Research Context: Refers to the setting in which research takes place and the ethical principles that underpin the research process. The learning outcomes in this section inform and guide each stage of the development of a research project.

    - The Research Project: The learning outcomes in this section reflect the specific skills and understanding required to develop each stage of a research project.

- The term 'Level Descriptor' – has been renamed to 'Grade Descriptor'. This is to avoid confusing with national qualification levels.

    - **Exam** Grade Descriptors - changes are minimal – primarily wording changes for consistency and updates to Ethical, Legal & Regulatory Requirements (particularly GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018).

    - **IA** Content Specifications - updated to integrate some of the information that was originally in the Assessment Criteria grid. The new *'Content Specifications & Assessment Criteria'* grid now clearly sets out the information that needs to be in the assignment. Please note that there are no additional requirements, the wording is now more appropriate.

    - **IA** Grade Descriptors – updated to contain the assessment criteria i.e. what is required to get a pass, merit or distinction. There are also updates to Ethical, Legal & Regulatory Requirements.

    - **IA** and **Exam** Grade Descriptors - amended wording, where applicable, to ensure consistency between both forms of mandatory assessment.

    - **IA** and **Exam** Grade Descriptors - "grids" have been rearranged to focus on successful achievement i.e. first Pass, Merit, Distinction, with Fail last.

- The indicative content remains largely the same – content has been moved to be in line with the revised learning outcomes

- Additional guidance has been included to help candidates, learning providers and mentors to make better use of the indicative content outlined in the syllabus.

Assessment changes
- The IA Content Specifications (pg. 18) have been updated to reflect the revised learning outcomes.

- A new section has been added to the IA Content Specification: Identify how resources (people, time and money) will be allocated across the project. This is also reflected in the learning outcomes listed in the assessment criteria: *Successful candidates should demonstrate their practical understanding of research practice: describing how resources (people, time and money) will be allocated*

- Integrated Assignments which fail to meet pass criteria may be re-submitted for assessment when appropriate improvements have been made a maximum of one time only. If the IA fails to meet the pass criteria on second submission, the third submission must be a new IA topic. This is a new requirement and reflects the low success rate for candidates which repeatedly re-edit and re-submit integrated assignments which are allocated a fail grade.

Recommended Support Materials
- Core Text – The production of a new 5th edition of the core text is currently being discussed.

- Other Texts – Some new texts and resources have been added