



Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice

13th June 2007
10.00am – 12.30pm

EXAMINATION PAPER

Instructions for Candidates

Time allowed 2 hrs 30 minutes

Answer ALL questions in Section 1

Answer TWO questions from Section 2

Section 1 accounts for one third of the final result.

Section 2 accounts for two thirds of the final results.

All answers must be written in your Examination Answer booklet.

Section 1: Compulsory question (Recommended time: 50 minutes)

This section tests problem identification and problem solving using a number of skills. The answers in this section account for one-third of the total marks.

Read the following case study and answer ALL the questions below.

New Waves is a small chain of hair salons owned by brothers Jon and Evan Williams. The business began with the first salon, opened 12 years ago, and has grown considerably in the past 6 years. The brothers now own 4 salons, one of which is also a training academy for hairdressers. Business is good, and the brothers are keen to expand further.

As Chief Artistic Director, Jon Williams is keen to establish *New Wave* as a business at the cutting edge of hair design. He feels that the current image of the business is too staid and mainstream, and he would like to expand by opening a high-profile 'hair creation studio'. The new studio would specialise in innovative hair design techniques and, he feels, would attract high-profile customers. Evan, however, feels that the most appropriate route for expansion is via the *New Waves Hair Academy*. In his opinion, opening a group of new salons, each staffed by Academy graduates, would build the *New Wave* name quickly and would establish it as a business which takes its social responsibilities as employers seriously.

Until this point, the brothers have found it easy to agree on business decisions. For the past 4 years, they have employed a marketing company, *Silk*, to market their business, but have never felt the need to commission market research to test their business ideas. Now, however, they cannot agree on a way forward. They have contacted *Silk* for advice. As the research expert in the agency, you have been given the task of advising the Williams brothers.

- a)** How could market research help the Williams' brothers solve their business problem? Discuss the possible benefits and limitations of undertaking market research to help identify the best way of expanding the *New Waves* business. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-third of total mark)

- b)** The brothers have decided that they would like to commission some research, and have asked you to devise a brief for circulation to a number of research agencies. Outline the information which should be included in the brief to ensure that the research agencies understand what is required in the project. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one-third of total mark)

- c)** The brothers have received proposals from three different research agencies, and now need help to decide which one they should commission. Outline the guidance you would give to help the Williams brothers evaluate the proposals. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one-third of total mark)

Section 2: Optional Questions (Recommended time: 100 minutes)

The answers in this section account for two-thirds of the total marks.

Answer any TWO questions from the following six. Give a full answer to each of the questions you choose.

1. A local authority has commissioned a satisfaction survey of local residents using amenities such as public parks, leisure facilities and children's play areas. Your research agency has proposed a project which uses quota sampling, based on age, gender, employment status and residence, and face-to-face interviews conducted in the street. Although the authority is impressed by the proposal, they are concerned that the costs are too high. They have asked your agency to consider making the following changes to the proposed research in order to reduce costs.

- a) Reduce the sample size **(Weighting: one-third of total mark)**
- b) Reduce the number of quota controls in the sample **(Weighting: one-third of total mark)**
- c) Shorten the questionnaire **(Weighting: one-third of total mark)**

What is the possible impact of each of these changes on the usefulness of this quantitative survey? Identify the issues which the client needs to understand before any cost-cutting measures are taken. Illustrate your answer with examples.

2. A number of key principles underpin the MRS Code of Conduct to ensure that research is carried out in an ethical manner.

a) Describe briefly what is meant by each of the concepts below in the context of the research process.

- i) informed consent
- ii) anonymity and confidentiality
- iii) accurate reporting

(Weighting: 50% of total)

b) You have conducted research among the employees at a local hospital to find out their views about the effectiveness of new policies designed to promote equality of opportunity at work. You are now writing the report, based on a series of individual interviews with 15 staff members. Outline the steps you would take to ensure that your report meets the ethical and professional standards set by the MRS Code of Conduct.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

3. A chocolate manufacturer is about to launch a new product: a low-fat chocolate which tastes rich and creamy, but which is very low in calories. The company is carrying out a series of focus groups with consumers to help create an identity for the new product, including a name, packaging and marketing images.

a) Describe at least three projective techniques which moderators could use in the focus groups to gather the information which the company needs. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

b) The focus groups will be carried out by a team of 3 moderators, each working in a different area of the country. Each moderator will conduct 3 focus groups. Describe and give a rationale for the steps you would take to ensure consistency of approach across the 9 groups.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

4. The research organisation you work for has won a contract to track customer satisfaction over time for a small but expanding chain of clothing shops.

a) Identify a range of approaches which could be taken to gathering this continuous data. Illustrate your suggestions with examples.

(Weighting: one third of total)

b) Discuss the strengths and limitations of each approach you have identified. Which approach would you recommend, and why?

(Weighting: two thirds of total)

5. You are preparing a report on a research project which has made use of the following analysis techniques. You are sure that your client will ask you to explain the basic principles of each technique:

- i. correlation
- ii. weighting
- iii. inferential statistical tests

a) Describe each technique and describe how each might be used. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

b) Your client has asked you to identify drawbacks to using the techniques above. Select one of the techniques and describe the limitations of using it in analysing data for a research project. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

6. A close friend is interested in setting up a small business, creating floral displays for weddings and other social functions. She feels that she doesn't have the financial resources to carry out primary research into the market for her product. However, you feel that a programme of secondary research is needed before she launches her business.

a) What are the potential benefits and limitations of a programme of secondary research in this context? Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

b) Your friend needs to understand her market better and has asked you to set up a programme of secondary research. Outline the steps you will take to set up the programme, giving reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)



The Market Research Society
15 Northburgh Street
London
EC1V0JR

Tel: +44 (0)20 7490 4911

Fax: +44 (0)20 7490 0608

www.mrs.org.uk

profdevelopment@mrs.org.uk

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