

MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

Preparing for the Exam: Section 2 Q3- Answer Guide & Sample Answers

This answer guide was developed to provide support for examiners in marking the **Section 2 Question 3**. It is not intended as a 'model answer' or a completely exhaustive list of all points which could be made. Instead, it summarises a range of points which candidates may be expected to include in answers.

The key to an effective answer is to provide information which is both relevant and clearly justified. If, when writing your practice answer, you have made points which are not included in this summary, don't worry. Examiners are briefed and trained to take into consideration all relevant points in their marking.

Similarly, don't worry if you have not included all the points mentioned in the answer guide. Again, the examiners will be looking for a range of points in which your rationale is clear. Credit will be given for all relevant points which you have made.

In Section 2 there is a recommended time of 100 minutes and answers account for two-thirds of the total marks.

Candidates are required to answer any TWO questions from the six, giving a full answer to each of the questions you choose.

Section 2

QUESTION 3: ANSWER GUIDE

3. Personal interviewers, who are prepared to conduct interviews in respondents' homes, are becoming increasingly difficult to recruit.
- a) Discuss the benefits and limitations of in-home face-to-face data collection. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Candidates might begin by defining their understanding of in-home face-to-face interviewing. They are expected to identify at least two benefits and two limitations which apply specifically to in-home interviewing. Mention may also be made of more general benefits which in-home shares with all F2F interviewing methods:

BENEFITS: Apply particularly to In Home

- *Easier to conduct interviews for more complex studies –*
 - *Interviews can be much longer than in street, hall, etc.*
 - *Complex questions and techniques can be used.*
 - *Very complex stimulus material can be used involving respondent in sorting and ranking prompt cards, concepts, etc*
- *Can target respondents geographically e.g. use electoral register, random sampling techniques such as Random Route, ACORN or similar.*
- *Can ensure all respondents live in particular area - important for e.g. retail research, TV ad awareness*
- *More relaxed environment for sensitive issues.*
- *Access to other information e.g. What's in the fridge? What brands and sizes of cereal packs in store cupboard?*
- *Can interview more than 1 member of family more easily.*
- *Respondent can use test product in more 'natural' environment.*
- *Interviewer can show identity card and leave a Thank You leaflet to help reassure respondent of bona fide nature of research.*
- *Can pre-arrange appointments to ensure adequate time available to complete the interview and maximise quality information.*

Apply to all F2F

- *Stimulus material can be used.*
- *Can build rapport with respondent so can achieve and maintain cooperation so to increase data quality.*
- *Response rates can be higher (higher than in-street, too).*

LIMITATIONS

- *Interviewers may feel insecure about approaching people in their own homes – concern about safety issues*
- *Timing can be an issue – many interviews need to take place in the evening and at weekends when people are more likely to be at home.*
- *In certain places, the response rates may not be very high. Members of the public may be wary of allowing interviewers into their homes.*
- *In some areas, there may be a high percentage of people for whom English is not a first language – this means that either interviewers need to be bilingual (and briefed accordingly) or that there may be restrictions on the sample being selected.*

- *More difficult to assess quality of fieldwork (e.g. interviewer bias) as little/no supervision possible at the time of interview.*
- *Environment within the home may not be conducive (e.g. interview conducted in same room as television set which is kept on to keep children 'pre-occupied', or finding somewhere suitable within the home where interviewer can get out and use interview-related materials, and where others in the household will not try to join in, may be difficult).*
- *Limited access to certain types of households e.g. blocks of flats/gated properties, those with entry phones, leading to possible skewing of the sample.*

- b) An electrical goods company wants to test consumer reactions to a new type of vacuum cleaner which is ready to go into production. Identify two possible alternative methodologies which may be used in preference to in-home interviewing for this project. Describe the benefits and limitations of each in gathering the information which is required.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

In this section, candidates are required to identify and provide an evaluation of two suitable alternatives, giving reasons why they might be used in preference to in-home interviews. Weak answers may simply list the benefits of the different methodologies rather than focusing on the needs of the context. Strong answers are likely to provide clear justification of their choice in comparison with in-home interviewing.

Possible alternatives may include:

	Benefits	Limitations
Hall test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a secure environment for interviewers and respondents • If the area is chosen carefully, can achieve an appropriate range of sample • Can choose to have cordoned-off area which gives individuals a chance to try out equipment • Can achieve a relatively large number of interviews on one day • Can liaise across Halls and refine individual quotas if necessary to ensure achieved balanced sample overall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lose the benefit of trying in a home environment – don't know how respondents will feel about it in their own homes (e.g. will it pick up dog hair? will it cope with nooks and crannies?) • Depending on which features might be 'new', respondents might not get the opportunity to try them all out • Respondents may be short on time - more likely to cut this type of test short • Need to be able to cater for respondents' children • Need sufficient interviewers present for required number of interviews to be conducted • Need sufficient space for each individual interview to take place • Need several prototypes available at each Hall • If limited to certain days of the week, or certain locations may only get certain limited/types of individuals in that location, with possibility of skewed samples as a result • Limited opportunity to test and fully assess the product
Panel recruited online for home trial of cleaner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure environment for respondent • Panel can be selected to reflect the sample which the company needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be more time consuming than straightforward in-home • Miss out on immediate reactions – e.g. reactions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If cleaner is delivered to respondents' homes, time is available for them to try it out – more likely to get a full response</i> 	<p><i>when using (in hall test) or reactions in family environment (in-home)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not all respondents have access to the internet</i> • <i>Respondents may not have technological skills required to participate</i> • <i>Would need to arrange for items to be delivered and collected, and could therefore have this being done by someone who could go on and do a f2f interview at the same time (at delivery or collection stage)</i> • <i>Logistical issues of respondent being at home for delivery and collection</i> • <i>Asking respondents to keep the item in their home for a period of time, taking up space etc</i> • <i>Fieldwork would take longer to achieve than a central location solution</i> • <i>Fieldwork likely to be more expensive</i> • <i>Bigger incentive required than hall test would need</i>
<p>Focus groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Similar to hall tests but can also get group reactions to the product</i> • <i>Can get real-time reactions when the cleaner is used</i> • <i>More time available to fully test reactions to all aspects of the equipment.</i> • <i>Opportunity for the group to discuss, and share and generate new ideas</i> • <i>Clients can view (if appropriate code of conduct requirements met)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unless families are involved in the focus groups, may not get the whole range of reactions to the product</i> • <i>Cannot explore individual's perceptions as much as may wish</i> • <i>Individuals may not want to share some of their "cleaning" thoughts / issues in public</i> • <i>Clients may leave one group with the impression that they know all the answers</i> • <i>Possible recruitment biases depending upon method used to recruit participants (e.g. snowballing etc)</i> • <i>Location used for a group (e.g. holding the groups in real homes versus in a central viewing facility and whether or not this could influence perceptions about the vacuum</i>

		<p><i>cleaner)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Limited opportunity to test and fully assess the product</i>
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Section 2 – Q3

Sample answer 1: This sample answer was awarded a mark in the PASS band.

Question 3a

Benefits of in-home face-to-face data collection

- Build rapport with respondent – which will relax respondent
- Can prompt and probe on questions
- Show visual stimulus – can be shown on laptop or on flip charts etc. – or can ask the respondent to show interviewer publications/brochures etc. that they might have in the house
- Open questions can be asked

Limitations of in-house face-to-face data collection

- People can easily refuse and close door on them
- Interviewer bias to location if it is a probability sample where they can choose what locations, neighbourhoods to interview
- Rural and remote areas are less likely to be visited
- If the sample is Random Probability the interviewer has no choice of where they're going so could feel vulnerable if sent to deprived neighbourhood. Also affluent areas can sometimes be difficult to gain access due to gates/security measures Therefore with random probability it is more expensive and time consuming to get the required sample
- Quality control can be hard to monitor. Interviewer could make up questionnaires completed and not give phone number for back-checking.
- Interruptions can effect the data. Family member could need respondents attention, phone could ring, door bell could go. All these factors equal data that is not robust.

Question 3b

An alternative methodology which could be used to test consumer reaction could be in-store face-to-face.

It would make sense if the location would be in an electrical store or electrical department of a department store, and locate the interviewer and the product near the vacuum cleaner section of the store, therefore capturing people who have come to look for a new vacuum cleaner and set questions could be asked about their opinions of the prototype vacuum cleaner and their opinions on what they look for when buying a new vacuum cleaner.

Limitations of this method is the location. It could be hard to reach the quota as people might steer clear of that area of the shop to avoid being asked questions.

Other limitation would be the length of the interview or the amount of questions asked, as they could have their children with them tugging at their clothes wanting their attention and just general interruptions.

Car parking can also be a reason for respondents to refuse or cut short an interview as

more than likely they have driven into town and restricted on the time they have to spend.

The second possible alternative of a methodology that could be suggested is a focus group. A sample could be chosen that would be of the target audience for the client.

This qualitative methodology would be an exploratory way of finding opinions and emotions of the prototype vacuum cleaner.

This would be a good methodology as people would have made time to be there to talk about the product, and bouncing ideas around the room would open the discussion up.

Limitations of this method is the cost and how quick data could be fed back to the client. The cost would be quite high as the transcribing of group discussion would be time consuming therefore and increase cost to the client.

Another limitation could be that some respondents were not strong enough or confident enough to get their opinion heard which could be contrary to what the rest of the group thought therefore not everyone's true opinion was heard. And also there could be an overpowering member of the group that completely dominates the whole focus group and the interviewer might not have the skills to get other peoples' opinions.

Section 2 – Q3

Sample answer 2: This sample answer was awarded a mark in the **DISTINCTION band.**

Question 3a

In-home face-to-face data collection is becoming increasingly rare with the rise of internet and online data collection methods being more and more popular. However, face-to-face provides certain benefits that cannot be achieved by telephone, postal or online methods. These advantages include:

- The interviewer has the chance to build a rapport with the respondent. In this way, a trusting relationship can form, which can be easier when answering particularly sensitive questionnaire.
- In-home means that the respondent tends to feel more at ease and comfortable, therefore they are more willing to answer certain questions. I have learnt through conducting a study on money and financial loans that an in-home face-to-face interview means the respondent feels more comfortable in answering these questions in their own familiar surroundings.
- The interviewer can probe for further detail if needed for any given question. For example, if a question is open-ended or spontaneous, an interviewer can ask for a fuller answer if required or needed.
- Data collection is accurate and efficient as it is recorded down in front of the respondent as they are speaking.
- Drop-out rates or non-responses are eliminated as the respondent will not have the option of completing the interview at a later time or simply refusing to finish a questionnaire.
- Face-to-face interviews that are conducted in-home can be made longer than that of an online survey or if it was asked on the street. This means the questionnaire can look more in-depth and gain detailed answers to specific questions in order to answer more research objectives.
- Stimulus such as pictures can be taken for the interviewer's use.

However, there are also several limitations to in-home face-to-face interviewing, which include:

- It is more expensive and takes a longer amount of time to collect data as interviews need to be conducted by a restricted number of interviewers. Therefore, the interviewers will also need to be paid.
- There is the disadvantage of interviewer bias or effect as respondents may answer particularly sensitive or intimate questions dishonestly due to the preference of an interviewer. Therefore, data can be inaccurate or inconsistent.
- Data processing is more difficult as all answers will need to be coded manually rather than automatically as in online surveys.
- Respondents will need to be found and pre-notified of the interview. Therefore meeting quotas can be more difficult and finding a target population can take longer.
- Higher incentives may need to be provided to the respondents as the interviews are often longer and more detailed.
- Respondents may not be willing to allow an interviewer into their home, therefore data may be harder to collect.

There is a balance between the advantages and disadvantages of in-home face-to-face data collection but despite the highly populised online methodology, it is true to say

that the more traditional approach is still essential for certain market research projects.

Question 3b

There are several other approaches than in-home interviewing for this type of project and 2 possible alternative methodologies in particular are:

- 1) Online data collection
- 2) Qualitative focus group

An online survey would be particularly effective in this case and there are several benefits for this methodology:

- Stimulus/pictures of the new vacuum cleaner can be included to test consumer reactions.
- Online collection is cheap and time efficient so result could be turned around very quickly.
- Online is effective in innovative studies as questions can be fairly standardised and easy to answer.
- Sample can be easily obtained and quotas applied if necessary – panels can also be used.
- Routing and rotation of certain questions can be easily managed using this form of data collection.
- The data collected can be automatically coded, which is quicker and simpler when it comes to the data processing stage.
- Sample size/quotas can be monitored during fieldwork and adjusted accordingly.
- Unsuitable respondents can be automatically screened out during the recruitment section.

Limitations for this type of data collection are also apparent and include:

- Non-responses can occur and the drop out rates can also be high if the respondent suffers from interview fatigue or boredom.
- You cannot pre-identify the sample using this methodology and it is harder to be accurate with a specific target population.
- Respondents cannot be further probed if their answer is not clear and detailed enough.
- You may not have a sufficient list of emails/sample frame to use if the project is using random sampling.
- Certain groups may be excluded as they may not have internet access.
- Firewalls and email blocks may record the questionnaire as spam and you may be unable to reach these respondents.

The second methodology I have suggested is a qualitative focus group. This provides several benefits for this type of research, such as:

- You can fully gauge a consumer's initial response or reaction to the new ideas.
- Attitudes can be touched upon more easily and expanded in detail if necessary.
- Respondents can play off one another to provide ideas that may not have been thought of previously.
- Creative thinking and solutions can be applied using different techniques such as collage, role plays and personalisation of the brand or product (in this case a

vacuum cleaner).

- You can choose the type of people you need – it is easy to find a target population as the sample size will be relatively small.
- You can gain real insight as it is an open-ended, spontaneous and much more flexible method of data collection.
- It can also be structured to include all the key topics of discussions.
- The vacuum cleaner design/product could be brought to the group.

Again, there are disadvantages to use this method that could deem it unsuitable. These include:

- It can be hard to organise a focus group as a time and place that suits everyone may not be available.
- People may not want to voice their true opinions about the vacuum cleaner in front of other people and would prefer to answer questions in privacy on their own.
- Certain respondents can take over a discussion and undermine the opinions and attitudes of others.
- A qualified and suitable moderator who understands the project and research objectives needs to be found and paid for.
- It is an expensive option as incentives may need to be provided and it is a lengthy process with a long discussion time.
- Reactions and attitudes are subject to interpretation and the wrong assumptions may be made in the analysis stage.
- It may not answer all the questions or objectives you needed answering and the data processing and analysis is complicated in comparison to online.

Both methodologies would be a valid way of collecting data on consumer reactions to a new type of vacuum cleaner but both also have their limitations.