



Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice Examination

June 14th 2006
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 result.

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.*

You belong to a long-established community association for people living in your neighbourhood. The annual membership fee is £20 per year. The main aim of the association is to ensure that local facilities are appropriate for the needs of the community. It is run by a committee of volunteers from the neighbourhood who organise a range of activities, including:

- meetings held once a month which members can attend
- a monthly newsletter, sent out by post to all members
- social events and activities throughout the year to raise funds for community projects. These are open to members and non-members.

Although the population in the neighbourhood has increased in the past two years, membership of the association has fallen in the same period from 586 to 272. The meetings and events are now poorly attended.

Your next-door neighbour is the chairperson of the association committee. She has asked for your advice in designing and conducting research to find out why membership and attendance have fallen, so that the association can take action to stop the decline and/or increase membership and attendance.

The association has limited funds and cannot employ a research agency. However, the Chairperson says that committee members would be happy to help with data collection. She assures you that the association is able to use its membership database to contact people for research purposes.

- a) You believe that a programme of desk research to find out about other community organisations might be a good place to start. Outline the types of information that you think would be helpful to the association and describe the ways in which that information might be gathered.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

- b) The committee would like to find out more about the views and behaviour of both members and non-members living in the neighbourhood. One committee member has suggested running group discussions with each type of resident. Another believes that a telephone survey is a better approach. Describe the strengths and limitations of each approach in getting the sort of information the association needs.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

- c) The committee has decided to conduct six group discussions but would like guidance. Identify at least three issues which the committee should consider before the group discussions begin to ensure that the discussions meet the needs of the project. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

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 six listed below. Give a full answer to each of the questions you choose.*

1. A group of trainee researchers have joined your organisation. You have been asked to run a training session for them on sampling in quantitative research, and to provide a written guidance document for some trainees who cannot attend the session. Prepare a document which gives the trainees guidance on each of the areas below. Illustrate the points you make with practical examples.
 - a) Why we conduct research among samples.

(Weighting: one-third of total)
 - b) The key characteristics of random (probability) sampling, and why this approach might be used.

(Weighting: one-third of total)
 - c) The key characteristics of quota sampling, and why this approach might be used.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

 2. Well-designed questionnaires should lead to data which are both valid and reliable.
 - a) Describe what is meant by (i) validity and (ii) reliability in the context of questionnaire design. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-third of total)
 - b) You have been commissioned to develop a questionnaire for a client. Outline the steps you would take to ensure that the questionnaire delivers valid and reliable data. Provide clear justification for each step you suggest.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

 3. A furniture retailer is considering a self-completion survey of customers who receive its mail-order catalogue, to discover what they think of the range of products on offer. The company is unsure whether the survey should be conducted by post or online.
 - a) Outline the benefits and limitations of each approach which the company is considering for this research. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: 50% of total)
 - b) The company has decided to use an online survey. Outline the steps which they could take to maximise response rates. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: 50% of total)
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4. A major mobile phone company is interested in measuring the attitudes towards the mobile phone market among people aged over 50. However, the marketing director is unsure if quantitative research can provide a true measurement of the attitudes held by this group of consumers.

a) Identify and discuss the difficulties which researchers can face when trying to measure attitudes.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

b) Describe the steps which the company's researchers could take to ensure that the planned quantitative study produces accurate and reliable data on the attitudes of the target group. Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

5. You are a market researcher working for a major charity. One of your colleagues in the marketing department is about to commission research for the first time. He has asked for your help in both preparing a brief to be sent out to research agencies and in assessing the resultant proposals. Outline the guidance you would give to your colleague to help him with the following tasks. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

a) Devising a sound and comprehensive brief.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

b) Evaluating the proposals that are submitted in response to the brief.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

6. HRW General Stores own a small chain of independent supermarkets in the north of the country. Although business is generally good, the owners are concerned that sales of some types of goods (e.g. fresh fruit and vegetables) are falling. They feel that poor store layout could be to blame, and would like to re-organise the departments to help maximise sales.

The company has recently installed closed-circuit television in each supermarket, and would like to use the equipment to observe how customers are shopping.

a) Outline at least two benefits and two limitations of using this type of observation to address HRW's problem. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: 50% of total)

b) Identify one further approach to data collection which the company could use, and outline its benefits and limitations in relation to this project.

(Weighting: 50% of total)