Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

EXAMINATION ANSWER GUIDE

29th January 2014
10.00am – 12.30pm

Instructions given to Candidates

- Time allowed 2 hours 30 minutes
- Candidates must answer questions A, B, & C in Section 1
- Candidates must answer TWO questions from the six in Section 2
- All answers must be written in your Examination Answer booklet

Important Note: The requirement is for candidates to complete questions A, B & C in Section 1 and two questions from six in Section 2, failure to do this by either selecting more or less questions than the requirement may result in the paper being marked as non-compliant. Recommended times are detailed in each section to assist candidates in completing all the questions in the time available.

Instructions for Examiners

The following Answer Guide is not intended to provide a comprehensive guide to all possible points in response to exam questions.

Examiners should give credit for any points not included in the Answer Guides but which are credible responses to the question asked.

Examiners should note that the aim of many of the questions is to test the candidate's ability to apply knowledge to given contexts. However, candidates may fail to make full reference to the context in some cases. In these cases, examiners are required to assess the extent to which the information given meets the needs of the context. The following guidance has been produced for examiners:

- Credit should be given for information which is relevant to the question, even if it does not make overt reference to the context
- Some credit should be given for information which has some relevance to the context but which needs to be more focused to be fully effective
- Credit should not be given for information which is not relevant to the context.

The research problems contained in this material are fictional, any similarity to any real-life organization, company or business is entirely unintended.

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MRS Advanced Certificate Examination Answer Guide
29th January 2013

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

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

Read the following case study and answer ALL 3 questions below.

WorkLink is a national government agency responsible for providing careers advice and guidance for young people. As part of its work, the agency employs a network of careers guidance specialists who work directly with schools and youth organisations. These guidance specialists organise careers fairs and hold seminars with teachers, youth leaders and young people aged between 14 and 18. However, not all schools and youth organisations have been able to benefit from this service because of the limited number of specialists available. In particular, the guidance specialists are concerned that young people living in remote or rural areas may have less access to support than those living in more urban areas.

WorkLink is now looking to replace this system with an interactive website. They hope that this will make the service more affordable and more widely accessible. Before making such a significant change, *WorkLink* needs to understand the potential benefits and limitations of a move to online delivery of these services. It has commissioned a research agency to carry out an extensive study with teachers, youth leaders and young people in the 14-18 age group.

Before embarking on a national programme of research, the research agency intends to conduct an initial study in two areas of the country: one urban area and one rural area. The research agency hopes that information gathered during this initial study will help inform the national study. Education authorities and youth groups in these two areas have given permission for research to be conducted through their organisations.

Question A

Outline the benefits that might be gained from conducting the initial study in one rural and one urban area prior to roll-out of the full national study. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one third of total)

In order to pass, candidates are expected to identify a minimum of two benefits which might be gained from conducting this limited study. Stronger answers might identify a wider range of benefits and/or provide clear and useful illustration which demonstrates depth of understanding.

Potential benefits include:

- *the opportunity to identify issues/ areas which can be included in the wider study*
- *the chance to pilot the data collection instruments (e.g. questionnaire)*
- *the opportunity to generate hypotheses which can be tested at the next stage*
- *the chance to identify possible problems and how to overcome them – e.g. unforeseen issues which prevent the groups participating; bad times to conduct the research etc.*
- *establish vocabulary appropriate for the target population*
- *opportunity to develop a more close-ended questionnaire for the wider study, resulting in greater cost-efficiency for the quantitative stage*

Question B

The agency is undecided about which type of research to conduct first within the initial study. Outline the benefits of conducting:

(i) a qualitative phase first, followed by a quantitative phase
(ii) a quantitative phase first, followed by a qualitative phase

Which approach would you recommend and why?

(Weighting: one third of total)

Candidates are expected to identify the possible benefits of each approach to this specific context. They are also expected to recommend an approach for this context, with a clear justification. In order to pass, candidates are expected to identify a total of at least three benefits across the two approaches, and to provide a convincing recommendation. Weaker answers may discuss the phasing of research with little or no reference to the context, and may fail to provide a recommendation.

Benefits of (i) include:

- *can identify issues which need to be investigated in the quantitative phase to see how prevalent they are*
- *can avoid omitting key issues*
- *can help inform the language used in the quantitative phase – how do the target audiences talk about the issues?*

Benefits of (ii) include:

- *can help identify patterns of behaviour which can be explored in more depth in qualitative phase*
- *easier to draw a qualitative sample from those who have given consent to recontact*
- *could identify specific segments of the student population to aid prioritising in the qualitative stage*

Question C

The research agency intends to conduct quantitative fieldwork through a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews. The data gathered during the quantitative phase of the pilot study needs to be valid, reliable and ethically robust.

Design a sampling plan to show how teachers and youth group leaders will be represented appropriately in the sample. The plan should outline:

- the sampling approach you have chosen
- the sample sources or sampling frames you intend to use
- how the sample is recruited

Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one third of total)

This question requires candidates to devise a sampling plan for the teachers and youth leaders only (NB not the young people themselves). Candidates are required to provide 3 elements, each with a clear justification. The question also asks for these plans to be ethically robust. Stronger answers are likely to identify relevant ethical issues with suggestions on how these might be addressed. Weaker answers may fail to identify any ethical issues.

Sampling approach

- *Candidates should identify whether their sample is based on quotas, or if they are using random sampling;*
- *If quotas, which quotas should be included and why?*
- *If random, how will they go about this and why?*

Stronger answers will note the need to include samples both from schools/groups which have used the existing service and those which haven't.

Sample sources / frames

- *The careers service advisors may have contact lists which could provide some of the sample of existing users. (Problems of such lists e.g. time since service used, ethical issues of contacting and appropriateness to sampling approach should be highlighted.)*
- *Participating schools and organizations may be able to provide lists of relevant staff*
- *Frames from schools and organizations may not identify which individuals have had contact with this careers service in the past – need to check*
- *Do groups/ schools have the right to share these lists? Are there any data protection issues which will affect the identification of the sample?*

Recruiting the sample

Authorities may have agreed to participate but there is a need to check with individuals that they might be contacted – need to negotiate with participating schools, authorities on how this is done

- *How will first contact be made? Again, there is a need to ensure that any frame is being used with due regard to data protection legislation*
- *Will the research be incentivised? Need to ensure that the incentive is suitable for teachers and youth workers, and that it is ok with employers to incentivise the participants*

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

This section accounts for two-thirds of the total marks.

Answer any TWO questions from the SIX in this section. Give a full answer to each of the questions you choose.

Question 1

GymFitness is a small company which produces compact, portable fitness equipment. Next month, it will be exhibiting its products at a national fitness trade fair before launching a major promotional campaign. It intends to use the exhibition as an opportunity to gather information to help shape its marketing message. All visitors to the *GymFitness* stand will be invited to trial some of the company's equipment and then participate in a structured interview conducted by market research interviewers. The interviews will be administered online via tablet computers.

Below is an extract of the questionnaire which a junior executive in the company's marketing & research department has prepared using online survey software.

1. Which of the following best describes you?
a) Fitness instructor
b) Fitness retailer
c) Fitness enthusiast

2. Which of the GymFitness products did you test today?
a) The YogaBox products
b) The CardioBox products
c) The SportsBox products

3. If you tested the YogaBox products, how many of the items in the box did you use?
a) All 5 of them
b) Between 2 and 4
c) Only 1

4. Can you name the items you used? Which was the easiest item to remember?

5. What was your opinion of the items you used? Please answer yes or no.
a) They were easy to use
b) They were comfortable to use
c) *I feel they would help me to improve my performance if I were to use them regularly.*

a) Identify at least one weakness for each question within this extract from the online questionnaire, explaining how each weakness might affect the quality of the data gathered.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

This section of the question asks candidates to identify a range of weaknesses in the questions and to demonstrate their understanding of the possible impact on data quality.

Candidates are expected to identify at least one potential problem with each question, and to link this with data quality. Stronger answers are likely to identify a wider range of issues, and may make suggestions for improvement. They may also provide comment on the overall structure of the questionnaire in relation to the context – i.e. how relevant it is to the different groups of respondents who might visit the exhibition stand. Weaker answers are likely to identify only a limited range of weaknesses and may fail to relate these to the context in which the questionnaire is being administered. They may fail to make relevant links between question structure and data quality.

Possible weaknesses and related impacts include:
Question 1:

- *Very limited range from which to choose, and no 'other option'. Could mean that this question is answered incorrectly or not answered at all*
- *No clear definition of what a 'fitness enthusiast' is: this could cover a wide range (including those in the first two categories). Could mean that this category acts as a generic and undefined 'other' category*
- *Assumes that those that visit the stand are interested in fitness, which may not be the case. Need to include options for those not interested in fitness in addition to 'other'*

Question 2:

- *Question assumes that each person will choose only one – what happens if they have tested more than one? Could mean that the questionnaire fails to capture reactions to all products tested, or that data is biased (e.g. they may choose the one they liked best/least), or the last one they tested, etc*

Question 3:

- *The wording in the question suggests that no routing is being used in the questionnaire; this means that the interviewer will have to find the relevant questions to ask those who answered b) or c) to Q2. This could lead to errors or abandoned questionnaires if this is too time consuming*

Question 4:

- *This is a yes/no question when presumably the company needs to know which items were used. However, there doesn't seem to be a place for this information to be recorded. Could mean that the company won't know which products are most popular*
- *Putting question 4 after question 2 will impact on the level of recall as the respondent will have only just heard all the 3 brand names from the equipment used*

Question 5:

- *This question seems to be trying to gauge the visitors' reactions to the equipment. However:*
  - o *There is a mismatch in the wording – an open question with a yes/no answer*

- *There is no scale to show the extent to which the items were liked/not liked*
- *There aren't enough items to generate a full understanding of what the users' reactions are*
- *Last option very long and complex*
- *The resultant data is likely to be meaningless as the question is unlikely to capture visitor reactions accurately*

Additional issues:

- *Generally – this is an online survey being administered by an interviewer so routing will be programmed. There are no instructions or coding instructions for each question e.g. Q1 Single code only / answer one option only. Read out to respondents / do not prompt and code closest to answer etc*
- *The extract of the questionnaire focuses on opinion of those items tested. The aim of the survey is to help its marketing messaging. More advanced answers might highlight this and the fact that more questions should be asked which focus on the concept in general, benefits and opinions rather than just reactions to the product*

b) Outline the steps the marketing & research team should take to ensure that the questionnaire provides valid and reliable data to inform the marketing campaign. Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Candidates are expected to demonstrate a practical understanding of how questionnaires can be checked. At pass level, candidates should identify a minimum of 2 well-justified steps, or 3 steps with more limited justification. Stronger candidates may identify the variety of interested parties who may be consulted prior to the questionnaire going 'live'.

Steps which could be taken include the following:

- *Check against the information requirements captured in brief/proposal to see if the questions deliver the evidence required*
- *Check against MRS Code of Conduct and guidelines for questionnaire design to ensure that the questions adhere to these guidelines (e.g. the need to provide options which reflect the respondent's opinion)*
- *Check against tried and tested question formats*
- *Test individual questions and answer formats as you go - possibly with a colleague*
- *Check with the client/sales dept for their reactions*
- *Check with the field department / those responsible for data collection to ensure ease of administration / time allocation/reviewing the routing/instructions etc*
- *Check the layout for ease of use*
- *Pilot the questionnaire on colleagues and with a limited sample from the target market if possible*
- *Test with dummy data*
- *Check with DP department or those responsible for processing to ensure coding is appropriate/feasible*
- *Collate and review all feedback and make the necessary changes*
- *Check questionnaire will work with the range of respondent types who will be asked to complete the survey at the trade fair*

Question 2

A food company is launching a new line of 'healthy' snacks, endorsed by a celebrity chef. The company's research team needs to carry out research to inform the design of the packaging and plans to do this by using group discussions. However, the team has not yet decided on the most appropriate method of data collection.

a) Outline the benefits of using each of the following methods for this project. Which approach would you recommend, and why?

(i) Face-to-face group discussions
(ii) Online group discussions

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

At the Pass level candidates are expected to identify a minimum of two benefits for each approach. Answers should demonstrate that candidates understand the implications of using this approach in this context. Stronger answers may give a wider range of well-argued benefits related to the context and provide a recommendation supported by clear justification. Weaker answers are likely to discuss the generic benefits of each, without relating the points made to the given context.

Face to face group discussions: Possible benefits include:

- *Good if want to get respondents to pick up the packaging, touch it, handle it.*
- *Good if you want real time, face to face interaction useful if want to spark off a discussion, generate a range of ideas for changes to the design*
- *Good for getting a better sense of immediate reactions both verbally and physically.*
- *If new ideas are generated by the group, they can be discussed and explored in full at the time*
- *Can get respondents to do projective/enabling techniques, could get them to design their own pack in sub-groups or as individuals. (You can get respondents to do projective and enabling techniques online but they would have to be managed differently)*
- *Gives opportunity to read non-verbal communication such as body language*
- *Avoids some of the difficulties of online moderation e.g. lengthier time spent in clarifying points for respondents – therefore face to face may be quicker and easier for the moderator to respond verbally*

Online group discussion: Possible benefits include:

- *Can be easier for respondents to take part – can manage their time/contribution.*
- *Allows respondents to participate in the group from any location*
- *Can be easier for the moderator to manage. (requires qualification i.e. why might it be easier as there are additional difficulties to consider such as the moderator trying to move the group on while a respondent types an answer which may require the whole group to back-track)*
- *Lessens the impact of dominant, verbal respondents*
- *Ensures every respondent has the opportunity to discuss every topic/question*
- *Aesthetic tastes are very personal – remote groups may be better at allowing individual tastes to come out*
- *Can be a more cost effective approach*

- *Better answers may ask whether these are synchronous or asynchronous groups? This would have quite a big impact on how the discussion was managed and level of detail that could be discussed*
- *Online groups – can get a more individual response more easily through only showing the respondents each other's comments once they have commented – certain software can allow for this. Showing pack designs and getting individual comments first*

b) The research team has decided to use projective and/or enabling techniques to obtain respondents' ideas about the sort of person the new range of snacks would appeal to. For the method you chose for Part a) describe three techniques that would be appropriate for this research project, giving a clear rationale for each of your choices.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

In order to pass this section, candidates must identify three techniques and provide an appropriate description and rationale for at least two of these. Stronger answers may make clear links between the context and the use of the techniques. Weaker answers are likely to provide more generic description.

Some possible techniques include:

- *Word association*
- *Picture association*
- *Sentence completion*
- *Collage*
- *Projective questioning*
- *Personalisation of the brand*

Question 3

A large hotel chain with more than 3,000 employees across the country has commissioned your research agency to run a new on-line staff satisfaction survey. Using a structured questionnaire with a small number of open questions, the survey will gather information about the individual's role in the organisation, their access to training, the support they receive from their manager and how their work has changed in the past year. The employer will use the results of this survey to identify the range of support needed for different staff groups and in different geographical areas. The HR Director responsible for the project is anxious that the results of the survey are robust enough to support the decisions which the organisation needs to make.

a) Outline a data analysis plan for the project, describing the steps you will take to ensure that the data provides the robust results which the HR Director needs. Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Candidates are required to provide an outline plan for the analysis of a large survey data set. The plan should follow a logical sequence, and demonstrate that the candidates understand the steps required to go from raw data to usable results. Each step should be supported by a clear justification. Stronger candidates are likely to give a clearly-structured plan, and to focus on the link between client needs and results. Weaker answers may fail to use the cues in the scenario for the types of results needed, and to give a set of generic steps in an analysis process.

Steps may include:

1. Preparation:

- *confirm the information requirements with client: what exactly do they need to know? This will dictate the analysis techniques to be used*
- *check language to ensure internal terminology is correctly used within the questionnaire*
- *check that the questionnaire has been piloted and that routing works appropriately*
- *check that all questions are appropriately coded and agree how a code frame will be generated for the open questions*
- *agree how non-responses or other missing values will be dealt with*

2. Analysis

- *ensure that data set is checked/cleaned and any errors identified*
- *prepare data set for analysis: e.g. deal with non-response and missing values*
- *specify the cross tabulations needed in order to provide the information needed by the company (e.g. they need to know which groups in which area need most support)*
- *specify the range of statistical tests to be run once tables have been produced. Candidates may suggest relevant tests based on information in context*
- *Identify and deal with any ethical issues e.g. ensure in cross analysis that respondent's identify can't be known – especially if passing data tabulations to the client. Will the client want a copy of the data tabulations?*

3. Interpretation:

- *Check the results of analysis to confirm that they make sense*
- *Review the results to identify patterns which address the client's information needs*
- *Check for data which contradicts or offers alternatives to the pattern(s) identified*

- *Select the key findings which address client information needs, whilst noting information which may need to be reported alongside these findings*
- *Ascertain whether data will be fed back at a local level? If so does weighting need to be applied by department etc?*

b) 60% of the staff have responded to the survey. However, although many managers and business services staff have responded, the largest staff group – cleaning staff- are under-represented. The HR Director is worried that this will mean that the results of the survey are not representative.

Describe the steps you will take during the analysis process to address the issue of low representation of the cleaning staff so that the results you provide are ethically robust and meet the client's needs. Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

This part of the question requires candidates to identify and explain how they will deal with lack of appropriate representation within the sample. At the Pass level candidates are expected to identify a minimum of two steps.

Activities might include:

- *Weighting the responses from cleaning staff to ensure their views are fairly represented – better candidates will highlight the problems of weighting where the small sample of cleaners who did respond may not be representative of the views of the whole group*
- *Segment the results between different employee groups to clearly identify the views and to enable the HR Director to see different employee groups views in context*
- *Review the results in detail for the cleaning staff to determine if further research may need to be conducted with this group*
- *Consider how additional data could be collected and included in the analysis so that the cleaning staff are better represented*

Question 4

A city council is concerned about increasing traffic congestion and rising pollution levels in the city centre. One possible solution to these problems is to introduce a city-centre cycle hire scheme. Although the scheme would be expensive to establish, the council proposes to cover the costs with the revenue raised through the hire fees. However, in a time of cuts to budgets, there is considerable opposition to the introduction of a scheme which is seen to be expensive. Before going ahead, the council needs to have confidence that the cycle-hire scheme would address the needs that have been identified.

a) Outline briefly why market research would be useful to the city council. Describe the programme of market research that you would recommend, giving reasons for the recommendations you make.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

This question requires candidates to identify and discuss the usefulness of market research to the type of business problem described. In order to pass, candidates should identify at least two potential benefits, each with convincing illustration, and should set out a suitable programme/list of suggestions for research.

Stronger answers may identify a wider range of benefits relevant to this particular business problem and an appropriate and comprehensive programme. Weaker answers are likely to identify more generic benefits of research, may fail to make clear connections with the research problem under discussion and may not set out an appropriate programme or describe a programme in sufficient detail.

Possible benefits of market research centred around gathering information:

- *To gauge the acceptability of the scheme to the population*
- *To identify possible challenges/problems which have not been anticipated*
- *To gauge if access to cycles would encourage people to change their transport options*
- *To inform processes such as price setting (what would be acceptable?); placing of hire facilities; design of promotional messages and product design (e.g. child seats) etc.*
- *To provide 'timely' information on a topic – particularly if primary research is being conducted.*
- *To test if original hypothesis is valid (i.e. providing city-centre cycle hire scheme to ease traffic congestion and rising pollution levels) – introducing the scheme may have the opposite effect if it appeals only to people who currently walk or use public transport by increasing the number of people on the roads thereby slowing the traffic down and increasing pollution levels as a result.)*

The research programme may include some or all of the following:

- *Secondary research (e.g. published reports on similar projects, local authority plans) to identify:*
  - *the impact of similar schemes in other cities*
  - *traffic reports to assess where there are specific traffic issues e.g. accident hotspots*
  - *factors which are seen as important to success, or which act as barriers*
  - *any potential issues within the city which might constrain this development (e.g. planning restrictions; cycle-friendly routes; city layout etc)*

- *Primary research*
    - *Focus groups with influencers and pressure groups to identify where support and barriers lie*
    - *Quantitative survey of wider population in the city*
    - *Observation to help identify possible areas to target with the cycle scheme*
    - *Observation, such as reviewing traffic CCTV recordings, to identify possible dangers to cyclists for which the city council might be held responsible*
    - *Research with experts in the field such as government transport depts., planning experts to identify key considerations/challenges (e.g. legal issues, planning issues, regulatory issues)*
    - *gauge best way to communicate the scheme if acceptable*
    - *provide information to inform decision making process and use it to inform, educate and persuade those who have doubts (assuming the results shows the scheme would address the identified needs)*

b) The city council has decided to commission a research programme, and has asked you to devise a brief for circulation to 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)

This section of the question requires candidates to demonstrate understanding of the importance of the brief in guiding the research project. In order to pass, candidates need to demonstrate that they are aware of the information which a brief should contain and how it should be structured, along with some justification for their suggestions. Weaker answers are likely to provide a list of the information to be included, with little or limited rationale. Stronger answers are likely to provide greater depth of rationale. Very strong answers may also identify possible options for information to be included, with rationale for how those options might be selected.

The answer should touch on the following issues:

- *Background information: what does the agency need to know about the proposed scheme and reasons for its possible introduction?*
- *Business problem: what does the agency need to know about the business problem facing the city council?*
- *Research problem: what are the objectives for the research agency*
- *Suggested methodology: are there any recommendations for how the problem should be approached?*
- *Timing*
- *Budget (budget at their discretion – many clients choose not to divulge it at this early stage).*
- *Any reporting requirements?*
- *Contact names*
- *How results will be used?*
- *Details for core agency team members (including their skills and relevant experience for handling the project*

Question 5

Your organisation has carried out a primary research project for a new client and you have been asked to write the final report.

a) Outline the steps you would take to maximise the usefulness of the report to the client, explaining why each step is important.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Examiners should note that this section accounts for two-thirds of the marks allocated in this question. Candidates are expected to provide at least 3 steps as evidence that they understand not only how to produce the 'finished product' (i.e. write a report) but also how to ensure that it is of maximum benefit to the client. Weaker candidates are likely to provide a list of steps for report writing, without considering the usefulness of each step to the client. Stronger candidates are likely to look for ways to add value (particularly as this is a new client).

Some candidates may write a structure for a report rather than steps taken to maximise the usefulness of the report. This obviously doesn't directly answer the question but some of the points made can be relevant to the answer required and should receive credit.

Possible steps could include:

- *go back to original brief and proposal to find out what was originally asked, and what was promised in terms of deliverables*
- *make sure that you are fully aware of the business objectives and the decisions which need to be made as a result of the research*
- *if you are not the principal contact with the client, talk with the person who is, to find out if needs/requirements have changed during the life of the project*
- *check that you understand the relevance of each part of the research project to the problem and research objectives, and that you have identified any limitations*
- *talk through the findings that are emerging with the client to see if they can provide further insight that you could explore in the data*
- *if relevant, check if any external events could have influenced the data that would be worth examining and commenting on (e.g. if your client received some bad publicity while the interviewing was in progress that may have influenced the views of those respondents who were interviewed after the bad news became known)*
- *do you know the limits of the research – i.e. what you can say for sure based on this data, and what the information doesn't tell you?*
- *do a 'common-sense' check – are the recommendations you suggest practicable?*
- *check who the report is going to – are all their needs from the research being met?*

b) Outline the checks you would make to ensure the MRS Code of Conduct and ethical practice have been adhered to in writing up your report. Explain why each check is important.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

Although there may be fewer points to make in this section, candidates need to be aware of respondents' rights and researchers' responsibilities and how these have been incorporated into the project. Candidates should identify a minimum of two justified checks in order to meet pass level for this section.

Checks they could make include:

- *Check how respondents were briefed before presenting findings, and ensure any assurances made to respondents are honoured*
    - *Research data including recorded data can only be used for the purpose for which it was collected*
    - *Can't use direct, attributable verbatim quotes unless respondents have agreed that these can be used*
    - *Can't provide personal details of respondents unless prior agreement has been obtained*
    - *Respondents have to have given permission to be re-contacted for any follow-up research that the client may wish to conduct as a result of this research*
- *Check that all conclusions presented are supported by the findings, and that facts are clearly differentiated from interpretation*
    - *Check that the report makes clear which data is being used to support interpretation*
    - *Check that verbatims are reflective of the research as a whole*
    - *Check that graphs of respondent responses include the sample size, and that statistically significant differences are made clear*
- *Check that data tables include sufficient technical information to enable reasonable interpretation of the validity of the results*
- *In the case of a qualitative report that it accurately reflects the findings of the research in addition to the practitioners' interpretations and conclusions*
- *Check that information regarding sample source(s) and possible bias is provided*
- *Check that they have not incorporated data from other clients' surveys (unless agreed with those clients)*
- *Check that Item B.43 in the Code of Conduct has been addressed if the research project involves Mystery Shopping as staff must have been informed about the mystery shopping exercise and the level of reporting that will be undertaken*
- *Check that the client is aware that were they to publish any incorrect or misleading reporting then the agency would be obliged to 'correct', in an appropriate forum, the relevant technical details of the project that were inaccurately reported (item B.61 in the Code of Conduct)*

Question 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)

At pass level, candidates are expected to identify a minimum of two advantages and two limitations. Candidates are expected to provide clear examples for the points they make.

Advantages	***Limitations***
• *Cost effective – the research needed might have been done already* • *Accessible – wide range of sources available so a range of material can be gathered* • *Not necessary to employ an agency – sources can be searched by non-researchers* • *Information gathered might indicate a range of possibilities not considered previously*	• *Needs some expertise to ensure that appropriate sources are consulted* • *Need to be aware of possible bias (e.g. who commissioned the research?)* • *Need to be aware of scope of research – how representative, reliable and valid is the information?* • *The data may be out of date* • *Some sources may be time consuming or difficult to track down* • *May be difficult to make an accurate synthesis of all the data* • *Will not give the depth, breadth and insight that primary research would.* • *If recommending social media as a secondary source need to ensure ethical practice when using such information*

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, ensuring that data is gathered in an ethically-robust way. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Candidates are expected to provide a brief plan, with clear stages outlined. The plan should be convincing in that it should provide:

- *Logical progression*
- *Clear rationale for each stage included*

At pass level, candidates are expected to provide a plan with a range of stages and some rationale. Stronger answers may provide greater depth of rationale for suggestions and relate this convincingly to the context of a small business. They may also highlight how, if social media sources are used, data is gathered with due regard to ethics. Weaker answers may focus on data *gathering without giving due consideration to the other stages, such as preparing to carry out the research or deciding how to analyse it. There may be no reflection on how to draw data from social media in an ethical manner.*

Steps may include some or all of the following:

- *Identify the market accurately – in order to select type of info required e.g. re. geography (local business)*
- *Specify the type of information needed and why needed i.e. what decisions will be made on the basis of the information*
- *Identify key competitors – in order to identify possible sources (e.g. competitors' websites)*
- *Draw up list of sources and the type of info sought on each*
- *Identify internet and non-internet sources e.g. finding out which magazines and websites operate in this area (floral/weddings/social functions); possible visits to appropriate social media sites to gauge the types of discussions carried out; existing reports/data sets available for purchase or via subscription*
- *Allocate the research activity – will one person be responsible for data gathering or will this be split between different people?*
- *Decide how to record the information – categories of information; recording opinions/attitudes expressed in the information etc*
- *Plan on how to collate the data gathered – identify how to prioritise the different types of data gathered*
- *How will it be presented/communicated?*
- *Action planning – what will be done as a result of the info? How does this relate to the research objectives?*