



Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

EXAMINATION PAPER

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.

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MRS Advanced Certificate Examination Paper
29th January 2014
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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.

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)

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)

Please Turn over for Question C

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

- 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)

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)

- 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)

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)

- 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)



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