



## **Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice**

**24<sup>th</sup> June 2009  
10.00am –12.30pm**

### **EXAM 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.

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

MRS is the world's largest association for people and organisations that provide or use market, social and opinion research, business intelligence and customer insight.

MRS is the awarding body for market and social research qualifications in the UK. It offers a range of government-approved qualifications suitable for different interests and levels of experience

MRS Advanced Certificate Exam Paper  
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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 answers in this section account for one-third of the total marks.**

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

SUN APARTMENTS is a holiday company with ten holiday complexes across the UK. Each complex is by the sea and has 250 apartments which provide self-catering holiday accommodation for holidaymakers. The apartments can sleep between 4 and 6 people, and each is equipped with a small kitchen and a shower room. In addition to the accommodation, each holiday complex has 2 swimming pools and 2 gyms, children's play areas and other facilities including shops, bars and restaurants. The complexes are open throughout the year, and holidaymakers can book for a weekend, a week or for a two week-period.

Over recent years, there has been a slow but steady decline in the numbers of people choosing to stay in a SUN APARTMENTS complex. However, with the economic downturn leading to more British people staying in the UK for their holidays, SUN APARTMENTS' owners feel that they now have an opportunity to attract and keep new customers. They are willing to invest in new facilities and attractions for next year's season but are unsure what types of improvements would bring most benefit to the company and for how long. They have never commissioned market research before, but have contacted your research agency to find out if and how you might help them.

- a)** What types of secondary data could be useful in addressing SUN APARTMENTS' business problem? Identify at least three types of useful secondary data, describe where each might be found and explain why each is important.

**(Weighting: one-third of total)**

- b)** You advise that SUN APARTMENTS needs to understand what motivates people to decide to holiday in one of their complexes, and what encourages them to return. They also need to identify why people have chosen not to holiday at a SUN APARTMENTS complex. Identify three methods of data collection which might be used to address these needs, and evaluate their usefulness. Identify which option or combination of options you would recommend. Give reasons for your recommendations.

**(Weighting: one-third of total)**

- c)** SUN APARTMENTS' owners are happy to accept your recommendations for data collection. Devise a sampling plan for the project, giving reasons for the suggestions you include.

**(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.** You have been asked to deliver a training session entitled 'An introduction to quantitative data analysis' as part of the graduate training scheme in your research agency. The aim of the session is to help the trainees understand some key techniques in data analysis, and how these are applied in practice. You have decided to focus on the three following techniques:

- i. weighting
- ii. correlation
- iii. multivariate analysis

**a)** Describe each technique and explain why each might be used in analysing quantitative data. Illustrate your answer with examples.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

**b)** The trainees need to understand that each technique has its limitations. Select two of the techniques and describe the limitations of using them in analysing data for a research project. Illustrate your answer with examples.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

**2.** You are a researcher working for a public-sector (i.e. government funded) organisation. You recently sent out a detailed research brief for a new project. You have received proposals from three agencies and now need to identify the most appropriate for the project.

**a)** Identify the key issues you would need to consider when deciding which proposal to choose, and describe why each issue is important.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

**b)** What steps could you take to ensure that the chosen research project really meets the needs of your organisation before, during and at the reporting stage of the project? Illustrate your answer with examples.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

**3. Individual interviews are an important data collection tool for both qualitative and quantitative research projects.**

- a)** Describe the key differences between individual interviews undertaken for qualitative research studies and those undertaken for quantitative research studies. Illustrate your answer with examples.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

- b)** You are lead researcher on a qualitative study designed to explore the impact of debt on an individual's wellbeing. You and your team of 4 qualitative researchers are about to conduct an extensive series of individual interviews across England. Describe the steps you would take, with rationale to ensure that valuable and consistent insight is gathered from the study.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

**4. Your organisation has carried out some research 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 are adhered to in the writing up of your report. Explain why each check is important.

**(Weighting: one-third of total)**

**5.** Your research agency has been asked to carry out some research on behalf of a supermarket chain. The company wants to monitor whether the current economic downturn will lead to a sustained long-term change in customers' spending habits. Three different approaches to the research have been proposed:

**a)** Discuss the strengths and limitations of each of the approaches for this research problem shown below.

- i) a repeated study, using semi-structured questionnaires repeated 4 times over 12 months with the same sample

**(Weighting: one-quarter of total)**

- ii) a repeated study, but using structured questionnaires repeated twice over 12 months with a larger sample

**(Weighting: one-quarter of total)**

- iii) a longitudinal study, requiring a panel of respondents to keep a spending diary and engage in regular group discussions over the course of 12 months

**(Weighting: one-quarter of total)**

**b)** State which option you would recommend, giving reasons for why this option is more appropriate for the client than the others, and how you would minimise or eliminate the limitations you have identified. Alternatively, outline another approach for addressing the client's brief, with reasons for your choice.

**(Weighting: one-quarter of total)**

**6.** You are planning a quantitative research project for a new client. The client has heard that errors can occur in research, and is keen to find out how you will prevent these.

**a)** Describe what is meant by non-sampling error. Identify where it might occur in the research process and describe the possible effects that non-sampling error might have on a research project. Illustrate your answer with examples.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

**b)** Describe the practical steps you might take to prevent the errors you have identified occurring.

**(Weighting: one-half of total)**

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