



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

**EXAM PAPER**

**29<sup>th</sup> June 2011  
10.00am – 12.30pm**

**Instructions for 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.

**This Exam Paper must not be removed from the exam room. At the end of the exam please hand this paper back to the Invigilator.**

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.

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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. This section accounts for one-third of the total marks.**

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

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Central University, based in the south of England, has gained an excellent reputation for its postgraduate courses. As a result, in recent years the University has attracted a large number of international postgraduate students. The fees paid by these students make an important contribution to the University's annual budgeted income. To support the recruitment of international students, the University has established a small department to promote its courses overseas and to liaise with education institutions in key countries.

However, this year there has been a noticeable reduction in the number of applications from international students. The University authorities are unsure if this is because of the global economic downturn, or if there are other factors causing this reduction. They have decided to conduct research to investigate how studying at Central University is now perceived by potential students and by key groups of opinion formers, such as education bodies and major employers. It has commissioned quantitative research to be carried out in the 3 countries which have, until now, represented the largest international markets for the University (China, Russia and Brazil).

Your research agency, which has offices in each of the target countries, has won the contract for the project. The agency proposes to carry out a phase of desk research in order to inform the development of a questionnaire. It will then conduct a telephone survey using CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviewing), with each office taking responsibility for carrying out the fieldwork in its own country. The results will then be fed back to the agency's central office in London for analysis. The University has given a deadline of 3 months for the completion and reporting of the research.

### **Question A**

What types of secondary data could be useful to inform the development of the questionnaire? Identify at least three types of useful data, describe where each might be found, and explain why each is important.

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

### **Question B**

Describe the benefits of conducting the fieldwork separately in each of the countries concerned as is proposed, versus the benefits of conducting all the telephone interviews centrally from the UK.

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

### **Question C**

Describe the main issues involved in sampling and recruiting from each of the populations of interest for this project, the potential students and the opinion formers. Illustrate your answer with examples.

**(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

A major UK travel company operates a number of call centres in the UK to support its holiday booking activities. The company would like its call operators to gather quantitative information from callers who have just purchased a holiday, to establish their satisfaction with the service they have received. This is to be done at the end of the call. The travel company has engaged your research agency to advise them.

- a) Outline the strengths and limitations of the approach the company wishes to take. Give reasons for the points you make.

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

- b) The company has instructed operators to ask each customer a set of structured questions about their level of satisfaction with the telephone booking service they have just used. You have been asked to provide advice for the design of these questions. Outline the information which should be included in this advice, giving reasons for the suggestions you make.

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

### Question 2

Five years ago, a Government organisation responsible for health promotion conducted a major research study to investigate attitudes to healthy eating among young people aged 18-24 years. The study involved both quantitative and qualitative primary studies among students at five universities across the UK. The quantitative research took the form of a self-completion pen and paper questionnaire. The qualitative research comprised a series of traditional, face-to-face group discussions. The organisation now wishes to carry out further research to investigate if and how young people's attitudes have changed.

- a) The Government organisation is aware that developments in communication technologies mean that there are other ways of collecting data than those they used in the original study. Identify two methods of data collection which might replace the self-completion pen and paper survey and one method which might replace the face-to-face group discussions. Outline briefly the advantages and limitations of using each of the methods you have identified.

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

- b) The organisation is interested in examining the current attitudes of the original sample of 18-24 year olds. A re-contact question was included in the original survey and the organisation has asked the research agency who conducted it to re-interview all those who agreed to be re-contacted. Identify the issues that might be encountered in conducting this re-contact survey. Would you recommend that the client goes ahead with it or not? Give a rationale for your recommendation.

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

### **Question 3**

You have been asked to run an introductory seminar on data editing for new recruits to the quantitative team in your organisation. The training manager is keen to ensure that the recruits understand the importance of effective data editing for data which has been gathered by either paper-and-pen and or computer-based methods.

- a) What is 'data editing' and how can it be carried out effectively? Describe the data editing process, illustrating your answer with examples.

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

- b) You need to ensure that the new recruits can deal effectively with 'missing data'. Explain what is meant by the term 'missing data', how it occurs and how it can be dealt with. Illustrate your answer with examples.

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

### **Question 4**

Your organisation has been asked to carry out a programme of qualitative research for a company that produces battery-powered scooters for transport around city centres. The company wants to know if and how the public's perceptions of its brand have been affected by environmental concerns and increases in fuel prices.

- a) Identify 3 methods of primary data collection by which the information the company requires could be gathered. Outline the strengths and limitations of each approach you suggest.

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

- b) Choose one of the approaches that you have identified. Describe the steps you would take – from the research design stage onwards - to ensure that it produces the type of information that the company needs.

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

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### Question 5

Owing to cuts in funding, a local council is considering closing a number of public amenities such as libraries, leisure facilities and children's play areas. However, they are keen to understand what the likely impact of closure will be on communities using these facilities. Your research agency has proposed a project which uses quota sampling, based on age, gender, employment status and residence, and face-to-face interviews conducted in the street. Although the authority is impressed by the proposal, they are concerned that the costs are too high. They have asked your agency to consider making the following changes to the proposed research in order to reduce costs.

- a) Reduce the sample size **(Weighting: one-third of total mark)**
- b) Reduce the number of quota controls in the sample **(Weighting: one-third of total mark)**
- c) Shorten the questionnaire **(Weighting: one-third of total mark)**

What is the possible impact of each of the above changes on the usefulness of this quantitative survey? Identify the issues which the client needs to understand before any cost-cutting measures are taken. Illustrate your answer with examples.

### Question 6

You are an Insight Manager for a leading confectionery manufacturer. A new member of the marketing team has prepared a research brief. You feel that the research objectives within the brief are unclear, and you have been asked to provide some feedback for the team member before he amends the brief and sends it to the research agency.

- a) Describe the potential problems which can arise at different stages in the research process when research objectives are not clearly defined. Illustrate your answer with examples. **(Weighting: one-half of total)**
  
- b) What steps would you expect the research agency to take to ensure that the research objectives set out in the brief fully address your research needs? Give reasons for the steps you expect, and illustrate your answer with examples. **(Weighting: one-half of total)**

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