



Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

EXAMINATION PAPER

24th June 2015
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.

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.

NWLA is a district council, responsible for running public services in a remote and rural area of the country. The main centres of population in the area include a principal town, small villages and 5 outlying islands. The area's only hospital, secondary school and library are in the town. The council offices and the area's main shopping centre are also located there.

NWLA runs the public transport service for the area, which takes the form of a small fleet of buses. Privately owned ferries run between the islands and the mainland ferry terminal, 5 miles outside the town, and the buses serve as the main link between the town, the villages and the terminal.

With an increasing population of older people in the villages and islands, along with a growing number of school-age children, NWLA views public transport as essential for linking people with public services. An increase in tourism to the area in recent years has also highlighted the need for transport both for tourists and for the local people who work in the hotels and small businesses in the villages and islands.

In addition, NWLA is keen to promote travel by public transport to reduce pollution and congestion on the narrow roads in the area.

NWLA wishes to draw up a plan for how the transport service will run for the next five years, including for example, the routes to be served and the frequency of service on those routes. To devise an effective plan it needs robust evidence. NWLA has therefore decided to commission research among local residents.

NWLA has commissioned your agency to conduct the research.

Question A

NWLA wants to gather information from adults living in the area, via a survey, using structured questions. Identify at least 3 types of information which the survey should gather to help the local authority make its planning decisions. Give reasons for your suggestions.

(Weighting: one third of total)

Question B

NWLA needs to be sure that the survey sample is representative of the adults living in the area. Design a sampling plan for this stage of the research project. The plan should outline:

- the population of interest
- the sampling approach you recommend
- the sample sources or sampling frames you intend to use

Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one third of total)

Question C

NWLA also wants to gather the views of children living in the area and has suggested that the agency conduct 2 group discussions with students from the local school, aged between 11 and 16.

Outline the steps the research agency should take to ensure that they conduct research with the students in an ethical and professional manner.

(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

For each of the five stages of a research project, listed below, explain why each stage is important in delivering effective, ethically robust findings to the client. List the questions you need to consider at each of the stages.

1. Analysing the brief
2. Devising the sampling plan
3. Designing the data collection tools
4. Developing the analysis plan
5. Presenting the results

(Weighting: one-fifth of total for each of the 5 stages)

Question 2

Apprenticeships are promoted as an important route into a career for young people leaving school. The Government is aware that parents' attitudes are the biggest factor in helping young people make their choices. It is keen to find out about parents' attitudes to apprenticeships, particularly when compared with university education.

Your research agency has been commissioned to investigate parents' attitudes to apprenticeships.

- a)** What are the key issues which you need to consider when planning research into attitudes?

(Weighting: one-third of total)

- b)** You have been asked to prepare a questionnaire to collect data on these attitudes. Describe the steps you will take to ensure that the questionnaire measures the attitudes which you wish to explore. Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Question 3

A company has developed a range of aids to help people save energy in the kitchen. These include heat diffusers for cookers and special kitchen taps which regulate water flow. The company is carrying out a series of qualitative groups with homeowners to help create an identity for the new products, including a name, packaging and marketing images.

The groups will be carried out by a team of 3 moderators, each working in a different area of the country. Each moderator will conduct 3 groups. All of the groups will be digitally recorded.

a) Describe and give a rationale for the steps you would take to ensure consistency of approach across the 9 groups.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

b) As the lead researcher on this project, you are responsible for analysing and reporting on the data gathered during the groups. Describe at least three steps you would take to ensure that your analysis of the data provides valid and ethically-robust information for the client.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Question 4

A major retail chain is planning to redesign the layout of its flagship store. Your agency has been commissioned to conduct observation of the flow of customers through the current store layout using the company's CCTV system. The client plans to use the information from the research to inform the redesign.

a) Discuss the benefits and limitations of using this type of observation to address the client's business problem.

(Weighting: one half of total)

b) Outline the steps you would take to ensure that this observational research is undertaken in a professional and ethical manner at the following stages in the research process:

1. Before the research starts
2. During the research
3. Reporting the research results

Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Question 5

A major client is keen that their organisation understands how technology is changing the gathering of information for the purposes of market research. They are particularly interested in finding out how the internet is used for gathering primary data. You have been asked to give a presentation on this subject to the client's marketing team.

- a) Describe at least three different ways in which the internet can be used to gather primary data. For each example you give, outline the advantages and any limitations of gathering the data in this way.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

- b) Select one of the data-collection approaches you described in a). Describe the steps you would take to ensure that the data is collected in an ethical manner, with particular reference to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Question 6

You are an Insight Manager and are planning a quantitative research project. Your internal 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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