



Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

EXAMINATION PAPER

**28th June 2017
10.00am – 12.30pm**

Instructions 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 below.

Every year, all 15 year-old school students across the country complete a 2-week Work Experience Programme towards the end of the school year. Each student spends two weeks working for an employer who has volunteered to offer a placement. The programme is intended to help the students make career and study choices and to prepare them for the world of work. However, the government is concerned that the programme is not achieving its aims. Recent news stories have highlighted complaints from the students and their parents about the range and quality of placements, and from employers about the support provided for them and for the students.

The government has commissioned your research agency to find out how the Work Experience Programme could be made more effective in achieving the above objectives. This research will involve gathering information from the students and employers along with parents and school staff.

Before commencing with a national programme of research, the agency intends to conduct an initial study at six schools in different regions of the country, using both qualitative and quantitative research. It hopes that information gathered during this initial study will help inform the national study. The schools involved have agreed to participate in the research.

Question A

Identify and explain benefits that might be gained from conducting this initial study prior to roll-out of the full national study. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one third of total)

Question B

The agency has decided to conduct the qualitative phase of the research first. It intends to hold qualitative group discussions with groups of students and groups of staff at each school, and to conduct telephone depth interviews with a number of parents and employers in each of the selected areas.

Design an outline sampling plan for this stage of the research. Your plan should include:

- the sampling criteria for the selection of participants from each group
- the sample sources or sampling frames you intend to use

Give reasons for your suggestions.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

Question C

Identify the ethical issues you need to consider when recruiting each of the groups in the sample. Describe how you will ensure ethically-robust recruitment of each group in the sample, giving reasons for your suggestions.

(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

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

- a) Outline the steps you would take when planning the report to ensure its usefulness to the client. Explain why each step is important.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

- b) Outline the checks you would make to ensure that the finished report adheres to the MRS Code of Conduct and ethical practice. Explain why each check is important.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Question 2

CfBS is a charity which campaigns for improved public services across the country. The Board of the charity has commissioned your agency to carry out research into the improvements citizens want to see in services. The results will be used to help **CfBS** target their campaigning activities. You are the client's key contact and they have requested information about how the data will be analysed.

- a) The Board members have heard of the following terms but want to understand them more fully. Describe what is meant by each term and outline its importance in the analysis of quantitative data. Illustrate your answer with examples.

- i) sampling error
- ii) confidence interval
- iii) significance testing

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

- b) The Board members stress that **CfBS** needs to have confidence in the results of the survey as major decisions may rest on the results. The charity needs to be sure that the results can be robustly defended if challenged. You inform the Board members that steps will be taken to minimise sampling error in the survey. Outline the steps you will take, giving reasons for each step you suggest.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

Question 3

You are a senior research executive in a small, full-service research agency. Until now, the agency has offered clients the option of having face-to-face survey interviews administered using paper and pen or computer-assisted technology. However, it has now decided to administer all face-to-face interviews using online surveys loaded onto tablet computers.

- a) Outline the benefits and limitations of the research agency's decision to conduct all interviews using online surveys administered on tablet computers. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

- b) You are working on a project for a mobile phone retailer, looking at the phone usage habits of young people aged 17 to 24. The interviews for this project will be conducted face-to-face in the town centre by interviewers using the agency's tablet computers. You are about to brief a new group of field interviewers before they start the data collection phase.

Outline the steps that the interviewers must take to ensure that the data is collected in a professional and ethically-robust manner, explaining why each step is important.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Question 4

A major healthcare company has designed three new 'lifestyle programmes' designed to help people reduce their risk of developing diabetes and heart disease. The company is planning a phased launch of the programmes, and the Chief Executive needs to decide which programme to launch first. The company's research manager has suggested that a programme of qualitative research, using focus groups, will help the company gather the information it needs.

The Chief Executive is more familiar with quantitative research. After discussion, the research manager has convinced the Chief Executive that qualitative research is an appropriate method given the circumstances. However, the Chief Executive now wants to know what steps can be taken during the qualitative research to ensure robust and valid results.

- a) Describe the steps the research manager could adopt during the qualitative research to help convince the Chief Executive that the planned qualitative research will provide valid and useful information to inform the company's decisions. Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

- b) Describe at least three projective techniques that moderators could use in the focus groups to gather the information that the Chief Executive needs. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Question 5

A group of your friends have had an idea for a new business. They would like to launch The Coffee Bus: an old bus remodelled as a mobile café. The Coffee Bus would provide the comfort of a traditional café with flexibility, allowing them to move their café around the town. Your friends would like to bid for business start-up funding and need to provide evidence of the viability of their idea. They have limited financial resources so you have suggested a programme of secondary research to help support their bid for funding.

- 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 friends are aware of the importance of having robust information to support their bid. They have asked you to set up a programme of secondary research which they will carry out under your supervision. Devise a plan for this research, outlining how you will set up the programme and how you will ensure that data is gathered in an ethically-robust way. Give clear rationale for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Question 6

Look at the following scenarios:

- i) Your client is a major high-street bank which has always taken pride in how well it knows its customers. Following the economic downturn, the bank is keen to find out how it might best develop its services to retain its existing personal banking (that is, non-business) customers. To gauge opinion on a range of initiatives it would like to conduct a quantitative survey among these existing customers.
- ii) Your client is the local government in a major city. In order to reduce environmental pollution it plans to introduce charges for motorists to drive into and through the city centre. To gauge opinion of the proposed charges it would like to conduct a quantitative survey among those who commute into and through the city centre by car and by public transport.

Choose **one** of the scenarios above and answer the following questions.

- a)** Identify and describe the sampling approach that you think is most appropriate for the scenario you have chosen. Give a rationale for your choice.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

- b)** In the research brief your client has suggested a maximum sample size of 300 for the project. You are now writing the proposal. Identify the advantage and the limitations of a sample size of 300 in the context of the scenario you chose in part a). Outline how you would overcome the limitations you have identified.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

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