



Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

Guide to the Integrated Assignment – MRS Accredited Centres

*A comprehensive guide to the Integrated Assignment element of
assessment for MRS Accredited Centres*

Effective from June 2020 Assessment

The Market Research Society (MRS) is the UK professional body for research, insight and analytics. We recognise 5,000 individual members and over 500 accredited Company Partners in over 50 countries who are committed to delivering outstanding insight. As the regulator, we promote the highest professional standards throughout the sector via the MRS Code of Conduct.

NEW - Guide to the Integrated Assignment – MRS Accredited Centres
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INTRODUCTION

Overview of the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice

The role of market and social research is vital in informing and driving effective decision making within both the business and public sectors.

The MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice (Advanced Certificate) is designed for those who have just entered or are seeking to enter the research profession, working in the areas of commercial market and/or social research. The overall aim of the qualification is to enable candidates to develop a clear practical understanding of the principles underpinning all stages in the research process, and to develop the skills required to enable them to design and carry out key research tasks. As such, it enables candidates to select appropriate approaches and tools based on a clear understanding of the research problem and the objectives of any associated programme of research.

The Advanced Certificate is a single-unit qualification which follows the research process from problem definition through to interpreting and reporting on results. The qualification comprises 2 elements, each divided into a number of topic areas:

Element 1 (The Research Context) contains two topic areas, focusing on the setting in which research takes place and the preparation needed to underpin the research process. The learning outcomes in this section inform and guide each stage of the development of a research project.

Element 2 (The Research Project) contains three topic areas, focusing on the stages involved in planning and carrying out the research project based on the understanding of the context. Understanding of the research setting, and the ethical principles underpinning research, are woven into each of the topic areas in Element 2.

In order to reflect the inter-dependence of the various stages in the research process, the assessment of the qualification follows an integrated approach. All candidates must successfully complete 2 components of assessment:

A coursework element (the Integrated Assignment, or IA): This requires candidates to prepare a brief & proposal for a research project. To successfully pass the IA candidates are required to integrate knowledge from across the syllabus, from problem definition to reporting.

A written examination: All questions in the examination require candidates to demonstrate how they might apply their learning in practical situations. In order to be successful, candidates must demonstrate that they can integrate and apply knowledge from different areas of the syllabus in order to address the given problems. In each examination round, all elements of the syllabus will be assessed through the range of questions.

The document provides:

- guidance for accredited centres on how to develop Integrated Assignment tasks, based on the published specifications;
- guidance on how centres might support candidates in the formative elements of the assignment;
- guidance for tutors on the internal summative assessment of Integrated Assignments.

AIM & STRUCTURE

Aim of the Integrated Assignment

The aim of the Integrated Assignment (IA) is to allow candidates to demonstrate the extent to which they have developed a range of market and/or social research skills. To this end, they must complete an assignment which integrates learning objectives from the three elements of the Advanced Certificate syllabus, from problem definition to reporting, providing clear justification for their choices.

The Advanced Certificate syllabus focuses on all stages of the research process, from problem identification to reporting research results. The IA requires candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet learning outcomes at all stages in the research process.

There are two IA submission rounds per year: **January & June**.

Candidates are required to demonstrate the depth of understanding which underpins the choices they make in the design of the proposed research project.

All choices made regarding the various elements of the proposed research should be supported by clearly-explained rationale.

The use of *Proprietary Methods* – that is, a company's own branded research product - is not forbidden within the IA. However, the aim of the IA is for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the syllabus and therefore the use of a propriety method or solution must be handled with care. Candidates who use their own company's *Proprietary Methods* as part of their solution to the research problem **need to ensure** that the underlying methodology associated with it is clearly explained and that a suitable rationale or justification is given as to why this method has been chosen over other non-proprietary methods. Failure to explain the method involved and failure to justify adequately its use in the given context could result in the assignment failing to reach the pass criteria.

Format of the Integrated Assignment

The IA must be in the format of a **Research Brief and Proposal**.

The Brief and the Proposal must address a practical research problem. All assignments **must** contain a Brief, indicating the client's requirements, in order that the extent to which, the research set out in a proposal addresses the client's stated needs' can be assessed. While it may be based around a research scenario provided by a centre, the brief **must** be written by candidates. Both the Brief and the Proposal are assessed.

IAs that do not include a brief will be graded as 'non-compliant' as they will not comply with the assessment criteria and therefore cannot be assessed within the qualification framework.

Centres are responsible for ensuring candidates receive written guidance on completing the assignment which both matches the format requirements and meets the detailed content specifications. Centres must also ensure that the scope of the research problem selected can be sufficiently addressed within the parameters of a 3,500 – 4,000 word count.

Submission of IAs completed as a 'Group Task' and written up individually are **not** permissible, owing to the difficulty of verifying that the work is that of the individual candidate.

Selecting a Research Problem for the Integrated Assignment

Centres can set a research scenario from which their candidates can develop their brief. Guidance on setting a research scenario is available on [Page 13](#). In all cases, the scenario should provide a clear indication of the proposed timings and budget for the project being discussed, and to identify how resources will be allocated across a project.

Alternatively, candidates can select their own research problem on which to base their Brief and Proposal. The IA can be based on a fictional or 'real life' research problem. Candidates who select a 'real life' problem on which to base their IA will be required, as will the centre, to confirm (via a signed form) that - although based on a real life problem - the Brief & Proposal they have submitted is an original piece of work by them, that it is not a re-drafted or re-written version of an existing client brief and/or a proposal prepared* for a client.

MRS reserves the right to go back to a Centre and/or an individual for clarification if there is concern that this guidance has not been adhered to.

Compulsory anonymisation of client/companies/product is required – any naming of real-life companies or organisations would deem the IA to be non-compliant.

The IA is for assessment purposes and not real-world purposes. Anonymisation can be done simply by assigning a letter, e.g. Company K or government department responsible for food safety issues.

It is recognised that proposals often reference internal company information summarised in a brief, any such information used in the proposal should also be outlined in the brief. Other desk research within an IA must not be invented. The source of the information, which should be in the public domain, should be attributed/referenced.

*Proposals written to secure business will usually concentrate on selling the proposed solution. However, to secure a pass grade or above in the Integrated Assignment, candidates are required to demonstrate their familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of different methodologies, supported by critical evaluation.

Structure of the Integrated Assignment

It is recommended that the IA is divided into clear sections to ensure all the required assessment criteria are covered in the assignment. Guidance for each section is given on [Pages 7-12](#). At each stage, candidates must ensure that they describe what they propose to do and why they propose to do it, critically evaluating the choices they have made within the proposal.

The sections in the assignment correlate with the requirements of assessment, therefore if a section is omitted by the candidate this could result in the assignment not meeting the pass criteria.

If candidates identify any potential limitations with any of the choices they have made, they need to indicate how they would address those limitations.

Word Count: Assignments must include a total word count at the end of the assignment. As a rough guide, we recommend allocating the word count across the sections in the following way:
Section 1: Brief – up to 750 words
Sections 2 – 6: The research proposed - up to 3,000 words
Section 7: Time to Completion and Budgets – up to 250 words.

Please note: This suggested allocation is for guidance only. Candidates will not be penalised if the word count is allocated differently.

Section 1: The Brief

Candidates should:

- 1) **Identify a research problem** which they are interested in or which has relevance to them, their current job and/or their current employer. Candidates may like to discuss their choice of problem with their centre. If the candidate has been presented with a research scenario, they may choose an aspect of the scenario which is of interest or relevance and develop/adapt it into a brief, in consultation with the centre.
- 2) **Carry out some background research** relevant to the problem they have decided to research. If this is a problem the candidate is investigating for someone else, they need to discuss the issues with them to clarify any points that are not clearly understood.
- 3) **Clarify:**
 - the resources – time, money, people - they have to spend on the research project
 - the information the client needs and what the client intends to do with the information gained as a result of the research project.
- 4) **Write out a formal brief** on behalf of their 'client' expressing the relevant information gained in 2) above.

We recommend that the brief is completed in no more than **750 words**.

The Proposal

*Please note: The proposal is a **plan** for research. Candidates are not actually required to undertake the research which they propose. They are submitting a proposal in response to the brief in the hope that it will be accepted by a client and they will get the contract.)*

Section 2: The Proposal: Background and Objectives

Candidates should:

- 1) **Prepare to write the background to the proposal** by revising the background information they gathered for Section 1.
- 2) **Carry out some further background research** so that they can show that they understand the problems facing their potential 'client' and that they understand the character and dynamics of her/his marketplace and the products and services in it.
- 3) **Decide on the specific objectives** which the research is going to achieve. For example, if they have decided to research the training needs in their department, they may wish to identify needs within a particular area (e.g. IT training).
- 4) **Make sure** that:
 - they have defined very clear boundaries for the research project.
 - the research objectives are clearly linked to the research problem.
 - the scale of the project is a) in line with the resources available – time, money, people
 - the proposed research can be written up in sufficient depth and detail within the IA word limit of 3,500-4,000. Tutor input and feedback will be key here.

Write out the **first two sections of their proposal**: Background & Objectives

Section 3: The Proposal: Research Design and Sampling Plan

Candidates should:

- 1) **Consider which type of research design** is most suitable for the research problem. What type of data are they going to collect? What categories of research are they going to carry out? Why is this design suitable in delivering the information required? Why is that type of data or type of research relevant/appropriate to the research problem and the research objectives?
- 2) **Specify:**
 - the sampling method which is most appropriate for the research problem they have defined.
 - the population of interest and whether a sampling frame will be used
 - how the sample size is decided and indicate the relationship between the sample size and the population of interest.
- 3) **Describe** how the sample members will be selected.
- 4) **Present a clear rationale** for all of the choices made in relation to sampling – the sampling method, the population of interest and the sample size.
- 5) **Review the suitability** of the choices made in relation to the research problem, the ethical and legal framework in which research operates and the resources available for the project.
- 6) **Write up their proposals** for:
 - The research design
 - The sampling plan

Section 4: The Proposal: Data Collection

Candidates should:

- 1) **Determine** whether they are **collecting qualitative and/or quantitative data**. They will need to focus here on specific data collection techniques and not be tempted to use all the techniques available but select those which are most appropriate to their research brief and their sample. They must give reasons why the method/s they choose are appropriate.
- 2) **Specify clearly how they will collect their data**. They do not need to design, for example a whole questionnaire or interview guide. However, they should provide examples of:
 - the types of questions which will be asked;
 - the topics which will be covered;
 - other information about the respondents which will be required to solve the research problem.
- 3) **Review the suitability of the choices made** in relation to the research problem, the ethical and legal framework in which research operates and the resources available for the project. It is important that candidates demonstrate a practical understanding of research practice including how resources – people, time and money – are allocated.
- 4) **Write up their proposal for data collection**, remembering to include information about:
 - The types of questions/topics to be covered
 - The data collection techniques they propose to use

Section 5: The Proposal: Data Analysis

Candidates should:

- 1) **Decide how they are going to analyse the data** and how they are going to transform data into information and insight with which to address the research objectives. The link to the research objectives and the client's problem must be clear.
- 2) **Identify specific data analysis procedures and** that are appropriate to
 - the type of data,
 - the sample
 - the research problem
 - the client's information needs

This may include, for example, the types of tests that will be applied to quantitative data or the techniques that will be used to analyse qualitative data. As with all decisions made in the proposal, the rationale for the choice of procedures and/or techniques should be clear.

- 3) **Review the suitability of the choices made** in relation to the research problem, the ethical and legal framework in which research operates and the resources available for the project. It is important that candidates demonstrate a practical understanding of research practice including how resources – people, time and money – are allocated.

Write up their recommendations for the data analysis procedures and techniques to be used in this research project.

Section 6: The Proposal: Reporting and/or Presenting Findings

Candidates should:

- 1) **Describe** how they plan to report and/or present findings to the client, giving a clear rationale for the approach they suggest.
- 2) **Specify:**
 - The frequency of reporting (e.g. will there be only a final report, or also interim reports)
 - The format(s) that reporting or presentation of findings will take

This section of the proposal should make clear how the selected approach to reporting and presentation of findings is appropriate to the research objectives, the client's needs and the data collected.

- 3) **Review the suitability of the choices made** in relation to the research problem, the ethical and legal framework in which research operates and the resources available for the project. It is important that candidates demonstrate a practical understanding of research practice including how resources – people, time and money – are allocated.
- 4) **Write up their plans for reporting and/or presenting findings** of this research project.

Section 7: The Proposal: Time to Completion and Budgets

Please note: When their assignment is assessed, costs will not be judged specifically on how realistic they are. Rather, they will be assessed on the comprehensive budget list the candidate draws up and how accurately it reflects the tasks they propose.

Candidates should:

- 1) **Review the time required to complete the research.** Remember to check the brief for completion dates.
- 2) **Identify the tasks** in the research project **which need to be costed** (e.g. fieldwork, travel time, incentives, analysis, reporting etc.).
- 3) **Allocate a budget for the key elements of** the research project. For example, a cost for research design and planning; a cost for fieldwork; a cost for data analysis; and a cost for reporting. Allocating a cost to a task should show that the candidate understands the time required for a task to be completed - and who will be involved in that task - and so will demonstrate that the candidate has a practical understanding of research practice.

Please note: If the candidate does not have access to information on the cost of market or social research, they can try various approaches to identifying likely costs. For example, they could:

Look at the jobs and news articles on websites such as Research Live (www.Research-Live.com). This will give them some insight into the salaries of research personnel. More web addresses can be found in the **Recommended Reading & Reading Sources**.

- 4) Prepare a **time schedule of project tasks or areas** indicating which project team member will be responsible for carrying out each task/area. Apart from the name/job title of the team member the candidate will need to provide **brief** details of the team members' expertise and experience dealing with the kind of research proposed.

Guidance on setting a Research Scenario

Centres may set a scenario for candidates to base their Integrated Assignment (IA) on. The inclusion of an independently prepared brief is part of the IA Assessment Requirements. Centres must therefore ensure that they supply their candidates with a research scenario which balances the amount of information given with the requirement for candidates to design a brief which incorporates a significant element of their own work. The scenario should therefore be a research problem from which candidates can devise their own brief and proposal.

It is not permissible for centres to issue their candidates with a brief which they simply cut and paste into their assignment. There must be demonstrable personal input from the candidate into the development of the brief and proposal.

Each candidate is required to submit an individual IA which provides evidence of his/her own ability to analyse and describe the selected research process. Centres must confirm that the Integrated Assignment submitted by the candidate is the individual's own interpretation of the set scenario.

The scenario set should not exceed 350 words and should not be so complex that a candidate is unable to adequately produce a recommended 750-word brief from it.

When producing or selecting a research scenario it is important to remember the following key points:

Set a scenario rather than a brief:

- Not in the format of a research brief
- Scope for candidate to develop/adapt into a brief
- With some secondary research
- In their own words

Provide information on:

- Background
- The business problem and its context
- Action to be taken/how findings to be used

Length:

- Maximum of 350 words (not including admin guidance to candidates)

Research objectives:

- Balance – not too broad nor too specific
- Allow enough scope for candidates to formulate the objectives in their own words

Budget, timings, outputs:

- Give at least some information about these

Language:

- Keep it simple
- Make it crystal clear – transparent, unambiguous and avoid complex terminology or shorthand notes

If adapting a real scenario:

- De-brand it
- Remove 'proprietary' methods
- Give guidance on creating a personal solution to the scenario, e.g. focussing on a particular element of it

Example of a Research Scenario

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

Luton is one of only nine cities in the UK with a tramway system. Bedford Passenger Transport (BPT) operates the system which was opened in 1975. The trams link all the key areas in the city centre including an interchange with national and suburban rail services with extra trams run in the peak commuter period.

BPT has been criticised by Bedfordshire County Council for not doing enough to encourage car travellers to make greater use of the tramway system. BPT has no perception why car travellers refuse to transfer to trams. The company therefore wants to understand attitudes towards the service with existing customers, before embarking on a marketing campaign to attract new customers, emphasising route coverage and frequency of the service. The research should also consider factors such as passenger safety, availability of timetables, comfort and cleanliness of the trams, driver/conductor behaviour and availability of parking at rail and tram stops.

The Managing Director of BPT has her own questions:

- How do current passengers segment in terms of behaviour and attitudes?
- What is the purpose of their travel (work, pleasure or other)?
- What other travel options do they have?
- What is the advantage/disadvantage of the tram compared with these?
- How do customers regard the company?

Timings are as follows:

3 rd November 2020	Proposal Deadlines
17 th November 2020	Go ahead given
9 th February 2021	PowerPoint presentation to be delivered to the Board of BPT

The budget available for this research is £40,000.

Ethically robust research

All research proposed within an IA must comply with the ethical and legal framework of the country or countries covered within the IA.

Research programmes set out in the Brief & Proposal must be ethically robust and must as a minimum adhere to the rules set out within the **MRS Code of Conduct*, and where relevant should follow MRS guidelines for research practice.

IAs must identify any international or national legal, ethical and regulatory issues in relation to research proposed and set out how these issues will affect data collection, analysis, research outputs and how findings are used and reported. Omission of this or IAs in conflict with current international and national legal, ethical and regulatory issues. for research and data practice will be graded as a Fail.

Where appropriate *MRS Code of Conduct** rules and/or guidelines should be referred to explicitly. Where ethical and legal considerations are included, candidates must demonstrate understanding of the ethical and legal requirements and why any identified issues are relevant to the context of any given Brief & Proposal. This might include broad ethical concepts such as informed consent and avoiding participants harm, as well as specific issues relating to research.

**Please Note:* The MRS Code of Conduct does not take precedence over national law. Candidates undertaking an IA based on international research should take its provisions as a minimum requirement and fulfil any other responsibilities set down in law or by nationally agreed standards.

For example, these might include the following:

Research Design

- Children or young people as research participants
- The purpose of research and/or client details to be withheld
- Use of verbatims, transcripts or recordings, generated by a project, and/or by clients after a project is concluded

Sampling

- Use of samples from a very small population or, for employee research, from a sample of participants in a small organization
- Use of client customer databases
- Use of customer databases
- Use of contact details trawled from online sources
- Use of data gathered from social media sites

Method of Data Collection

- Use of unsolicited emails or texts
- Use of cookies on participants' devices in introductions or invitations to online research
- Recontacting of participants
- Use of incentives
- Observers during data collection

Data Processing and Analysis

- Identification of participants
- Use of verbatims and recordings
- Use of social media data

Outputs and Reporting

- Generation and use of research outputs for media reporting
- Data transfer
- Data Security
- Data destruction and retention

Integrated Assignment length, layout & language

Length

- The assignment should be between a **min 3,500 and max 4,000 words** (excluding appendices).
- All words within the main body of the text, including those within tables are included within the word count. Text within the title page, contents page or header and footer is not included in the word count.
- IAs that exceed the 4,000 word limit will be classified as 'non-compliant' as they do not comply with the assessment criteria and cannot be assessed within the qualifications framework.
- IAs that are below the 3,500 word limit are unlikely to contain sufficient information to adequately meet the pass criteria.
- Candidates **must** include a combined word count for both the Brief & Proposal at the end of the assignment. MRS reserves the right to request an electronic version of the assignment to verify a stated word count.
- A maximum of 2 single-sided pages of appendices is permitted. Appendices are not to be used for further substantiating text and should only be used for a Glossary and/or Bibliography, for example. Appendices should not be used to extend the word limit.

Layout

- MRS Qualifications strongly recommends that candidates produce their Integrated Assignment in Word format. This format best allows candidates to provide full explanation and justification of their rationale. This does not preclude the inclusion of charts, data tables, pictures etc.
- The Integrated Assignment should be printed on A4 paper, with a one-inch margin around the text.
- The Integrated Assignment should be secured with a staple in the top left-hand corner. Candidates must **not** bind their Integrated Assignment by any other means.
- Each section within the assignment should be clear and easy to read, by:
 - using headings and bullet points effectively.
 - avoiding over-brief note form.
 - ensuring that the use of English is clear, accurate and appropriate to a client audience.

Language

- The language used in all assessed components of the MRS Advanced Certificate is English. The language of the Integrated Assignment should be appropriate to both the task and the professional nature of the qualification.
- It is the responsibility of the Centre to ensure that all candidates have an appropriate level of language competence in English to allow them to undertake and complete the assessed components of the qualification. Please refer to ***Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines*** for comprehensive information.

ADMINISTRATION & ASSESSMENT

Submission of Integrated Assignment for Assessment

Candidates must submit their Integrated Assignment to their centre co-ordinator by the specified deadline. Two copies should be submitted, one of which should be retained by the centre.

The centre co-ordinator is required to submit 1 copy of the assessed Integrated Assignment, each including a completed Integrated Assignment Coversheet and Assessment Feedback Sheet to MRS by the published submission deadline.

Confidentiality

Candidates assessed Integrated Assignments are retained, in secure storage, at MRS for three years following the date of submission. From time to time MRS uses candidate IA Submissions for training & standardisation purposes. IAs selected for Training & Standardisation purposes are anonymised before use.

Compulsory anonymisation of client/product is required – any naming of real-life companies or organisations would deem the IA to be non-compliant.

Non-Compliant Integrated Assignments

Integrated Assignments submitted to MRS will be classified as Non-Compliant, if they:

- Do not include the correct and current versions of the Integrated Assignment Coversheet and Integrated Assignment Assessor Feedback Form
- Do not include fully completed Integrated Assignment Coversheet and Integrated Assignment Assessor Feedback Form, including signed declarations where requested.
- Are in excess of the maximum 4,000 word limit
- Do not display the word count at the end of the assignment
- Have not been anonymised to avoid identification of real-life client, company or product

Providing support for candidates

Centres are encouraged to arrange a system of support to enable candidates to complete the Integrated Assignment. The type of support offered may vary from centre to centre. However, examples of the types of support systems on offer might include:

- a system of individualised tutorials;
- the provision by tutors of written/verbal feedback on draft sections of individual assignments;
- group discussions of the approaches chosen.

It is recommended that Tutors/Assessors build an ethics review submission into the support programme, getting candidates to submit an ethical and legal issues review for their project at a very early stage. The aim here is to enable candidates to identify where they will/might encounter ethical and/or legal issues and to plan how to handle them within the overall research design/plan. This should avoid ethics and/or legal issues being a bolt-on or afterthought and to ensure it becomes an integral part of the research process. For guidance on the relevant issues, see page 16.

Any feedback provided by the tutor team should be constructive in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in initial drafts, but not so detailed that the final draft is a result of tutor, rather than candidate, effort. Feedback should be linked to the published Assessment Specifications and related Learning Outcomes.

To ensure that the Integrated Assignment is the work of the candidate, centres must restrict the number of times written and/or verbal feedback is given to a candidate on their draft Integrated Assignment up to a maximum of **two** times. It is recommended that the final Integrated Assignment is submitted for assessment within six weeks of receiving final feedback.

Each centre is encouraged to include in the assignment guidelines an indication of the amount and type of support which candidates will receive towards the completion of the Integrated Assignment.

Assessment

The Integrated Assignment is internally assessed by the centre and externally moderated by MRS. As a result, each centre is responsible for the assessment of its candidates' assignments.

Identifying the Centre's assessor(s)

Each centre should identify the member(s) of the team who will be responsible for the internal assessment of integrated assignments. Centres should identify two assessors for each Integrated Assignment (lead/2nd marker) to allow for an element of double marking. A random sample of Integrated Assignments (approx. 10%) from each assessor must be double marked, in order to ensure standardisation of assessment.

All assessed Integrated Assignments submitted to MRS from accredited centres are subject to moderation and further scrutiny by the MRS Senior Assessment team, all grades submitted to MRS are therefore provisional until sign off at the Awards Meeting. Candidates should therefore not be informed of the grade awarded for their IA by internal assessors.

Each assessor is required to assess, ideally, a minimum of four assignments within an assessment round. This is to ensure that MRS has a sufficient sample to select from for moderation. It is important that MRS Qualifications can moderate/compare each assessor in order to maintain and monitor standards of assessment for the Advanced Certificate.

Internal assessors should have a level of experience which enables them to assess the candidates' performance over the full range of the syllabus, and to assess the candidates' work against the learning outcomes specified in the specifications and assessment criteria. Centres should inform the MRS of the name(s) of their nominated internal assessors.

Standardisation of Assessment

In order to ensure that assessment criteria are applied uniformly across the range of centres, all internal assessors are required to have attended IA Assessor Training hosted by MRS prior to the assessment of candidate IAs. Assessors are required to attend refresher training as and when requested by MRS.

Administration of internal assessment

All centres should ensure that course leaders, administrators, internal assessors and candidates understand and follow the administrative requirements of the IA. These include:

- the completion by the candidate of an 'Integrated Assignment Coversheet' including a signature as a declaration of authenticity. Candidates are required to submit 2 hard copies of their assignment (one of which should be retained by the centre). Each copy should be accompanied by a completed 'Integrated Assignment Coversheet'
- the completion by the internal assessor of an Integrated Assignment Assessor Feedback Form' for each IA which s/he has assessed. This completed form should be attached to the assignment before the assignment is despatched to MRS for moderation.
- the completion of an IA despatch form by the person responsible for sending the centre's IAs to MRS.

Full details of administrative procedures, plus sample copies of all of the forms mentioned above, can be found in the '**Advanced Certificate Admin Handbook**'.

Content Specifications and Assessment Criteria

The following grid outlines the expected content of an integrated assignment, and how the specified content maps against the learning outcomes of the qualification.

Content Specifications	Learning Outcomes
<p>The assignment should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a brief, outlining the business problem and the research problem a proposal for a programme of research to meet the needs of the brief identification of any relevant ethical and legal requirements linked to the proposed researched, and a description of how these will be addressed. a clear rationale for the choices made at each stage in the proposal 	4, 5, 8
<i>The Brief should:</i>	
<p>a) describe the context for the research b) outline the business problem to be addressed c) identify any parameters for the research, such as timescale, resources available, or reporting requirements</p>	1, 2, 4
<i>The Proposal should:</i>	
a) discuss and define the problem to be researched, and define appropriate research objectives	2, 3, 5, 7, 8
b) identify an appropriate research design to address the research objectives	7, 8, 9, 10, 11
c) outline a plan for sampling which is appropriate to the research objectives and research design	7, 8, 15, 16, 17
d) describe the data collection methods chosen to address the stated objectives and chosen sample	7, 8, 11, 12, 13
e) describe the data collection tool(s) most appropriate to their stated collection methods	7, 8, 13, 14
f) outline a plan for analysing the data in a way that is appropriate to the data collected, the sample and the research objectives	7, 8, 18, 19
g) describe how findings will be reported and/or presented, taking into account client needs, the data collected and the research objectives,	7, 8, 20, 21, 22
h) describe how resources (people, time and money) will be allocated across the project	6, 7, 8

Guidance on the general assessment criteria for each grade can be found in the following Integrated Assignment Grade Descriptors.

Pass requirements

Candidates are given a grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail) for the IA.

Integrated Assignments which fail to meet pass criteria may be re-submitted for assessment when appropriate improvements have been made a maximum of one time. If the IA fails to meet the pass criteria on second submission, the third submission must be a new IA topic.

Integrated Assignment: Grade Descriptors

The following descriptors define the assessment criteria that an assignment needs to meet to achieve a Pass grade. They also define how higher grades (Merit; Distinction) are achieved. The descriptors also highlight the key features of a Fail grade.

	Pass	Merit	Distinction	Fail
Structure & Language	The assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> structure is appropriate to the task format organisation of information is appropriate to the task format language is appropriate to a task written for a professional context language puts little or no strain on the reader respects the word limit 			The assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> structure and organisation of information put strain on the reader is written in language which is inaccurate or inappropriate to the topic language puts inappropriate strain on the reader
Content	The assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets the information requirements of the specification demonstrates an adequate overall awareness of the links between the various research processes described. identifies all international and national key legal, ethical and regulatory issues and outlines how these can be addressed provides an appropriate rationale for most of the choices made. 	The assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets or exceeds the information requirements of the specification demonstrates a clear awareness of the links between various research processes described. demonstrates a clear awareness of all relevant potential international and national legal, ethical and regulatory issues relating to the research project and identifies how these can be addressed provides clear and appropriate justification for the choices made. 	The assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets or exceeds the information requirements of the specification demonstrates a high level of awareness of the links between the various research processes described. demonstrates a high level of awareness of all potentially relevant international and national legal, ethical and regulatory issues relating to the research project and plans how to best to manage these issues. provides clear and appropriate justification for the choices made and, where appropriate, with evaluation of those choices. 	The assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to meet a number of the information requirements of the specification. fails to demonstrate an awareness of the links between the research processes described. fails to identify relevant key international and national legal, ethical and regulatory issues. is in conflict with current legislation, regulation and/or ethics advice for research and data practice fails to explain why the selected research methods have been chosen

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