



Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

NEW - Full Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines

Effective From January 2014 Assessment

With members in more than 60 countries, MRS is the world's leading authority on research and business intelligence.

NEW - MRS Advanced Certificate Full Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines
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1. Introduction

This document contains full details of the syllabus and assessment specifications for the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice (MRS Advanced Certificate). In addition to this document, The Market Research Society (MRS) publishes an *MRS Advanced Certificate Admin Handbook*, which is intended to provide support for centres and tutors which provide training towards the qualification.

2. The Structure & Aims of the MRS Advanced Certificate

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 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.

2.1 Entry requirements

The MRS Advanced Certificate is designed for those taking on the role of Research Executive. In line with the general industry requirements in the UK for people taking on this role, candidates entering for the MRS Advanced Certificate are normally expected to be studying for or to hold a first degree (or equivalent). Candidates who do not meet standard qualifications requirements may enter for the MRS Advanced Certificate, providing that they can demonstrate an appropriate level of general education and/or professional experience. Full details of entry requirements are contained in the ***MRS Advanced Certificate Admin Handbook***.

2.2 Pass requirements

Examination

Candidates are given an overall band grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail). The overall grade is an aggregate of grades allocated over the three questions attempted in the exam.

In order to achieve a *Pass* grade overall candidates:

- must achieve a minimum of a Pass grade in Section 1
- will normally need to achieve a minimum of a Pass grade in each of the two questions required by Section 2.

When deciding grades, the examiners, moderators and Chief Examiner use the Examination Level Descriptors for guidance.

Integrated Assignment (IA)

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

Overall Result

No overall grade is awarded for the MRS Advanced Certificate. The Results Notification and Certificate (if applicable) give the level of achievement in each component.

Fail/Referred Candidates

A candidate who has failed to meet the pass criteria for both components of assessment is described as Fail.

Candidates who fail to achieve the **Pass** criteria in one component only will have their grade for that component **Referred**. They will retain the grade achieved for the remaining component. In these circumstances, candidates need only re-sit/re-submit the component in which they were referred.

- In order to be considered for the award, Referred candidates must retake the component in which they were not successful.
- In order to be considered for the award, Fail candidates must retake both components of assessment.
- Candidates may take each of the two components of assessment (Examination and Integrated Assignment) three times within a three-year registration period. Candidates who are unsuccessful on the third attempt must wait until the end of their initial three-year registration period before re-registering for assessment.
- Candidates who have been successful in one component but who have been unsuccessful three times in the second component are required to retake both components of assessment in any subsequent registration period.

2.3 Research skills being developed

The qualification seeks to enable candidates to develop a wide range of research skills. These include the abilities to:

- understand, define and evaluate research objectives for given research problems
- design appropriate research solutions to identified problems, based on a clear understanding of a range of research approaches and techniques
- select appropriate techniques for the collection and analysis of the data necessary to inform effective decision-making
- provide recommendations to support the decision-making process, based on a clear understanding of the information gathered during the research process
- analyse and evaluate choices made at each stage in the process

2.4 Links to National Occupational Standards

The MRS Advanced Certificate is specifically designed to develop the skills needed to enable people to commission, design and/or implement market and/or commercial social research projects. The learning outcomes of the qualification link closely with a range of the UK's National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Marketing. The NOS to which the MRS Advanced Certificate link most directly include:

- CFAM 1.2.1 Define the need for market research
- CFAM 1.2.2 Design market research projects
- CFAM 1.2.3 Implement programmes to collect market research data
- CFAM 1.2.4 Collect market research data
- CFAM 1.2.5 Analyse market research data
- CFAM 1.3.1 Evaluate and interpret findings and identify connections in complex data
- CFAM 4.1.1 Develop an understanding of the client
- CFAM 6.1.8 Fulfill the legal, regulatory and ethical requirements impacting upon your marketing activity

Of the remaining NOS, those which link across a number of outcomes include:

- CFAM 1.1.1 Map organisations within their current and future marketing environment
- CFAM 1.1.2 Obtain feedback from existing customers, suppliers and others
- CFAM 1.1.3 Establish and understand potential market segments
- CFAM 5.3.2 Use technology to achieve marketing aims
- CFAM 7.2.2 Decide whether to buy in marketing/marketing communications services from an external supplier
- CFAM 7.2.4 Brief and work with third-party suppliers of marketing/marketing communications services
- CFAM 8.1.3 Allocate and monitor work within marketing

2.5 Overview of the structure of the qualification

The MRS Advanced Certificate is a single-unit qualification, comprising 3 elements which follow the research process from problem definition to reporting on research results. The structure is 'horizontal' thus allowing for an integrated approach and for themes such as ethics and critical appraisal, fundamental to every aspect of research, to run through all three elements.

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 three elements of the syllabus will be assessed through the range of questions.

The following sections provide:

- **Table 1:** an overview of the title, relevance and weighting of each element within the qualification. 'Weighting' indicates the approximate recommendations of division of study time between the various elements. These weightings are not reflected in the overall assessment.
- **Table 2:** the links between the various elements of the qualification and NOS.

Table 1: Syllabus outline

Element No & Name	Outline	Weighting
1. The Research Context	<p>This element introduces candidates to the role of commercial market and social research in effective decision making within business and public sector organisations and seeks to ensure that candidates have a clear understanding of the key ethical and legal underpinnings of effective research. It provides a framework for identifying information needs and for developing a research brief. It also helps candidates understand the structure of the research profession and the roles within it.</p> <p>It also seeks to introduce candidates to different types of research, to the concept of research design and the range of research designs available and the information gathered in research, in particular on attitudes and behaviour.</p>	25%
2. Developing a Research Project	<p>This element is designed to help candidates understand what is involved in primary and secondary research. It provides guidance on the use of secondary research and the selection of secondary sources of data. It introduces key approaches to qualitative and quantitative research and a range of techniques for gathering qualitative and quantitative data. The aim of this element is to enable candidates to select and/or evaluate the appropriateness of techniques for given research contexts, and to plan for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.</p> <p>This element is also designed to help candidates understand and apply key principles in sampling, within both quantitative and qualitative research. The overall aim is to enable candidates to develop appropriate sampling plans for given research problems.</p> <p>This element also looks at the principles and process of designing data collection tools for quantitative and qualitative research. The aim is to ensure that candidates recognise clearly the information needs of a given research context, and to enable them to prepare appropriate data collection tools – e.g. topic guide or structured questions and response formats – to allow the information to be collected.</p> <p>It also seeks to enable candidates to develop a research proposal in response a research brief.</p>	50%
3. Analysing Data and Using Research Findings	<p>This element looks at approaches and techniques for the analysis of secondary and primary data (qualitative and quantitative). The aim of the element is to enable candidates to make clear links between research objectives and data analysis choices, and to select and/or evaluate approaches and techniques for the analysis of data in given research contexts.</p> <p>It is designed to encourage candidates to review research projects from the end user’s perspective, and to identify reporting priorities accordingly, It aims to enable candidates to make clear links between the original business problem, research objectives and findings. It also aims to enable candidates to select and/or evaluate approaches to the reporting and/or presentation of research findings so that those findings can be made actionable.</p>	25%

Table 2: Links to National Occupational Standards

The following grid outlines the where the various elements of the syllabus link to the NOS. The centre column identifies NOS which are linked strongly to the element (i.e. half or more of the outcomes of effective performance and/or knowledge and understanding requirements are fulfilled within the element). The third column identifies those NOS which have less-strong links to the element (i.e. some, but fewer than half, of the outcomes and/or knowledge & understanding requirements can be mapped to the learning outcomes of the element).

Advanced Cert Syllabus Element	NOS (Strong link)	NOS (Weak link)
1. Introduction to market & social research	1.2.1 1.2.2 4.1.1 6.1.8	1.1.1 7.2.2
2. Developing a research project	1.2.1 1.2.3 1.2.4	1.1.2 7.2.2 1.3.3 5.3.2 7.2.4 8.1.3
3. Analysing data and using research findings	1.2.3 1.2.5 1.3.3 6.1.8	1.3.3

3. Learning Outcomes

The focus of the MRS Advanced Certificate is on the development of understanding of both key principles and 'real world' research practice, and on the application of this understanding to research problems. Underpinning the qualification is the understanding that the elements of the research process are interdependent and that, although each element of the syllabus identifies a distinct area or stage within that process, 'real world' tasks will invariably require candidates to combine understanding drawn from two or more of these elements.

The learning outcomes for the qualification cover the 3 elements outlined below.

Element 1 - The Research Context (25%)

Successful candidates will be able to:

1. Discuss the use of research in marketing and/or social contexts
2. Evaluate the usefulness of research to a given setting
3. Define the problem or issue to be researched within a given context
4. Identify the type of information which is needed
5. Define the research aims and objectives for a given research problem
6. Design and/or evaluate a research brief for a given research problem
7. Evaluate the research design options available for a given research context
8. Select a research design appropriate for a given research context
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the link between the proposed research and research constraints (i.e. time and budget; human resource)
10. Apply the principles relevant to legislation and ethical codes, including the MRS Code of Conduct, to each stage of a given research project

Element 2 - Developing a Research Project (50%)

Successful candidates will be able to:

1. Discuss the uses/application of primary and secondary data
2. Select and/or evaluate the quality and usefulness of a range of sources of secondary data
3. Identify a range of key principles involved in gathering and recording data
4. Discuss the strengths and limitations of a range of data collection methods for gathering data on opinions, attitudes and behaviour
5. Select and/or evaluate the suitability of data collection methods for researching a given problem
6. Identify suitable sample sources or sampling frames for a given population
7. Evaluate the suitability of a sample source or sampling frame for a given project
8. Evaluate the suitability of sampling approaches and techniques for given research problems
9. Identify potential sources of error in given research plans
10. Devise and/or evaluate a sampling plan for a given research problem, ensuring ethically-robust practice
11. Demonstrate an understanding of the link between sample approach, sample size and research constraints (time and budget).
12. Discuss the key principles and stages involved in designing ethically robust and effective questionnaires or interview/topic guides
13. Design and/or evaluate interview/topic guides or questionnaires for given research projects, including the application of ethical principles
14. Describe appropriate and ethical practice of those involved in data collection
15. Design and/or evaluate an ethically robust research proposal/plan for a given research brief
16. Demonstrate an understanding of the tasks involved in planning, setting up and managing an ethically robust research project

Element 3 - Analysing Data and Using Research Findings (25%)

Successful candidates will be able to:

1. Discuss the links between research objectives, data gathering and analysis in primary and secondary research
2. Discuss a range of approaches applicable to the analysis of quantitative and/or qualitative data
3. Select and/or evaluate the suitability of an approach to the analysis of data to address given research objectives
4. Develop an ethically robust analysis plan and/or an analysis framework for a given research context
5. Select and/or evaluate the suitability of a range of statistics and/or statistical tests for quantitative data in a given research context
6. Describe appropriate and ethical practice of those involved in data analysis
7. Discuss the links between research findings and the problem being researched within a given research context
8. Discuss key issues in the presentation of findings relating to the given research context
9. Select and/or evaluate a plan for providing the findings of a given research project to a client/end user, ensuring that the findings are shared in an ethically-robust manner
10. Discuss ways of making research findings optimally useful to the client or end user, ensuring ethically robust practice

4. Approach to Delivery

Some of the learning outcomes contained within the syllabus for this unit are achievable as discrete elements. However, for the most part, they depend on the candidate being able to analyse research problems from a variety of perspectives and to make links between different elements within the syllabus. As a result, tutors who deliver this syllabus are expected to recognise and to impart the integrated nature of the research process and, by extension, these learning outcomes.

To achieve this integrated approach, tutors are encouraged to include in their programme of tuition the analysis of research problems and the development of possible approaches to addressing those problems. Candidates should, at all times, be encouraged to provide clear rationale for their suggestions and to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the approaches they choose. This type of task is essential in helping participants to develop the analytical and practical skills which will enable them to become more effective practitioners.

The following table provides guidance for suggested content for courses and programmes leading to the completion of the MRS Advanced Certificate. This is not an exhaustive list of the items to be included in any programme of learning, but indicates items which can be considered as core topics.

5. Syllabus & Indicative Content

Guidance on realising the syllabus. The following provides guidance on core elements which may be covered in order to enable candidates to achieve the learning outcomes. The figures shown next to the titles indicates how much time might be devoted to each element over a programme. These do NOT indicate weighting within the elements of assessment.

Element 1: The Research Context (25%)

	Learning outcomes	Indicative content
<p><i>Topic 1</i></p> <p>Introduction to Market Research</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the use of research in marketing and/or social contexts 2. Evaluate the usefulness of research to a given setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of market and social research – similarities and differences • How research is used to inform decision making • What research 'measures' – e.g. attitudes, behaviour • Overview of the research process • The roles of the research supplier and the research user (e.g. agency and client roles in the research process) • Who works in the research industry and what they do
<p><i>Topic 2</i></p> <p>Defining the research problem</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Define the problem or issue to be researched within a given context 4. Identify the type of information which is needed 5. Define the research aims and objectives for a given research problem 6. Design and/or evaluate a research brief for a given research problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing business and/or social contexts to identify problems to be researched • Defining and refining the research problem • Definitions of, and differences between, primary and secondary information • Definitions of, and differences between, qualitative and quantitative information • Definition and use of insight • How to identify and form research aims and objectives • The links between the research objectives and the business/social problem • The role of the brief in the research process • How to create an effective brief
<p><i>Topic 3</i></p> <p>Starting a research project</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Evaluate the research design options available for a given research context 8. Select a research design appropriate for a given research context 9. Demonstrate an understanding of the link between the proposed research and research constraints (i.e. time and budget; human resource) 10. Apply the principles relevant to legislation and ethical codes, including the MRS Code of Conduct, to each stage of a given research project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of a research design • Validity in the context of research design • Research designs available to researchers, including: cross-sectional; longitudinal; experimental & case-study approaches • The principles governing the selection of a research design for a given research problem • Estimating cost and time requirements • The role of each of the research team within the project • Ethical and legislative principles underpinning good research practice • Key principles of professional codes, including the MRS Code of Conduct • Key principles of data protection and freedom of information, as they relate to the practice of research • How to ensure ethical practice

Element 2: Developing a Research Project (50%)

	Learning outcomes	Indicative content
<p><i>Topic 1</i></p> <p>Methods of primary and secondary data collection</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the uses/application of primary and secondary data 2. Select and/or evaluate the quality and usefulness of a range of sources of secondary data 3. Identify a range of key principles involved in gathering and recording data 4. Discuss the strengths and limitations of a range of data collection methods for gathering data on opinions, attitudes and behaviour 5. Select and/or evaluate the suitability of data collection methods for researching a given problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key principles, features, uses and strengths and limitations of sources of secondary data • Key principles, features, uses and strengths and limitations of a range of methods for qualitative primary data collection including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-depth interviews ○ Group discussions or focus groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Collaborative and deliberative methods including workshops, panels and juries Online interviewing and online discussions. • Key principles, features, uses and strengths and limitations of a range of methods for quantitative primary data collection including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Observation methods (e.g. mystery customer research; electronic records etc) ○ Interviewing methods (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, & online) ○ Self-completion methods (e.g. postal and electronic) • Key principles, features, uses and strengths and limitations of social media in collecting data
<p><i>Topic 2</i></p> <p>Selecting an appropriate sample</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Identify suitable sample sources or sampling frames for a given population 7. Evaluate the suitability of a sample source or sampling frame for a given project 8. Evaluate the suitability of sampling approaches and techniques for given research problems 9. Identify potential sources of error in given research plans 10. Devise and/or evaluate a sampling plan for a given research problem, ensuring ethically-robust practice 11. Demonstrate an understanding of the link between sample approach, sample size and research constraints (time and budget). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of sampling in qualitative and quantitative research • Defining the population of interest • When to use a census or a sample • The principles of generalizing from a sample to a population • Where to find your sample • Key principles, features, uses and strengths and limitations of a range of sampling methods for quantitative data collection including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Random, semi-random and non-random sampling techniques • Key principles, features, uses and strengths and limitations of a range of sampling methods for qualitative data collection including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purposeful, quota, convenience and snowball sampling • Sampling and non-sampling error • Elements of an effective sampling plan, including definition of the population, choice of method, choice of sampling frame or sample source and recommended sample size • Ethical and MRS Code of Conduct issues including sample sources • The implications of time and budget constraints on the choice of sampling plan • The implications of the choice of sampling plan on data/research quality.

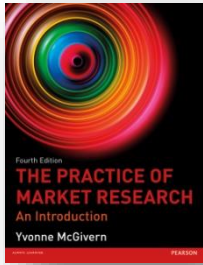
<p><i>Topic 3</i></p> <p>Preparing data collection tools</p>	<p>12. Discuss the key principles and stages involved in designing ethically robust and effective questionnaires or interview/topic guides</p> <p>13. Design and/or evaluate interview/topic guides or questionnaires for given research projects, including the application of ethical principles</p> <p>14. Describe appropriate and ethical practice of those involved in data collection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concepts of opinions, attitudes, and behaviour and the connections between them • Identifying and exploring the concepts to be researched in a given project • The role, strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative methods in gathering data on opinions, attitudes, and behaviour • Translating research objectives and information needs into questions • The uses, strengths and limitations of projective and elicitation techniques. • Validity and reliability in question and questionnaire design • Elements in effective questionnaire design, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selecting response formats (including the use, strengths and limitations of scales for researching attitudes) ○ Wording questions and responses ○ Checking validity and reliability of questions. ○ Deciding on question order and layout ○ Ensuring suitability for method of data collection and mode of administration ○ Interviewer/respondent instructions ○ Pilot testing and revising • Elements in effective interview/topic guide design, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designing appropriate stages for the interview/ discussion ○ The use of projection/elicitation techniques and materials ○ Interviewer/moderator instructions ○ Issues relating to recording qualitative data • Ethical, legal and MRS Code of Conduct issues including responsibilities regarding the collection, recording and storage of data
<p><i>Topic 4</i></p> <p>Preparing a research proposal</p>	<p>15. Design and/or evaluate an ethically robust research proposal/plan for a given research brief</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the proposal in the research process • The relationship between the research proposal and the research brief • The contents of research proposal • The proposal writing process • How to evaluate the quality of a proposal
<p><i>Topic 5</i></p> <p>Planning and managing a research project</p>	<p>16. Demonstrate an understanding of the tasks involved in planning, setting up and managing an ethically robust research project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stages involved in setting up and running a project • The range of roles involved in setting up and running a quantitative project (e.g. researcher; fieldwork team; data processing team) • The range of roles involved in setting up and running a qualitative project (e.g. interviewer; moderator) • Planning the data collection process (e.g. selecting & briefing the fieldwork team or interviewers/moderators) • Ethical and MRS Code of Conduct issues including responsibilities to the respondent or research participant • Use of incentives

Element 3: Analysing Data and Using Research Findings (25%)

	Learning Outcomes	Indicative content
<i>Topic 1</i> Analysing data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the links between research objectives, data gathering and analysis in primary and secondary research 2. Discuss a range of approaches applicable to the analysis of quantitative and/or qualitative data 3. Select and/or evaluate the suitability of an approach to the analysis of data to address given research objectives 4. Develop an ethically robust analysis plan and/or an analysis framework for a given research context 5. Select and/or evaluate the suitability of a range of statistics and/or statistical tests for quantitative data in a given research context 6. Describe appropriate and ethical practice of those involved in data analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The links between research objectives, data gathering and analysis in primary and secondary research • Key principles and approaches in the analysis of data, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Storing and retrieving secondary and in-house data, including the use of databases ◦ The principles and processes of data mining ◦ The principles and processes of data fusion • Key principles and processes in the analysis of qualitative data, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The role of note taking, recording and transcribing ◦ Deductive, inductive and iterative approaches to analysis ◦ Pulling together the findings ◦ Verifying the findings • Key principles, processes and techniques in the analysis of quantitative data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Editing, coding and data input ◦ Cleaning the dataset (including dealing with non-response and missing values) ◦ Specifying the output from a dataset ◦ Univariate analysis techniques (frequencies, proportions, percentages, summary and descriptive statistics – measures of central tendency: mean, mode, median; measures of dispersion: range, variance, standard deviation) ◦ Bivariate analysis techniques (cross tabulations, filtering, weighting the data) ◦ Hypothesis testing and inferential statistics (including confidence intervals and significance testing). • The roles of technology in the data analysis process • Ethical, legal and MRS Code of Conduct issues including responsibilities regarding the accurate and appropriate use of data in the analysis process
<i>Topic 2</i> Communicating the findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Discuss the links between research findings and the problem being researched within a given research context 8. Discuss key issues in the presentation of findings relating to the given research context 9. Select and/or evaluate a plan for providing the findings of a given research project to a client/end user, ensuring that the findings are shared in an ethically-robust manner 10. Discuss ways of making research findings optimally useful to the client or end user, ensuring ethically robust practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at research findings from the research user/client's perspective, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ the links between the business problem, the research objectives and the research findings ◦ identifying key findings in relation to the business problem and the research problem ◦ identifying actionable recommendations • How to provide usable 'deliverables' at the end of a project, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ designing and delivering a presentation of key findings which adds value for the end user/client ◦ planning and writing a research report which adds value for the end user/client ◦ identifying how to help the client action or implement findings • Ethical issues, including MRS Code of Conduct requirements, in reporting research findings

6. Recommended Support Materials

Core Text:



The Practice of Market Research

An Introduction – 4th Edition, Pearson Education

[Yvonne McGivern](#)

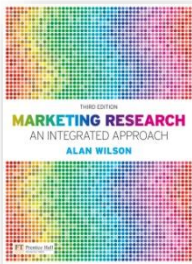
May 2013, Paperback, 608 pages

ISBN13: 9780273773115

ISBN10: 0273773119

£45.99

Other textbooks which you might find useful are:



Marketing Research

An Integrated Approach – 3rd Edition, Pearson Education

[Alan Wilson](#)

Sep 2011, Paperback with CD-Rom, 432 pages

ISBN13: 9780273718703

ISBN10: 0273718703

£47.99

The Wilson textbook provides a useful introduction to the use of secondary data, with a focus on customer databases. It also contains a useful selection of practical case studies.



Marketing Research

Tools and Techniques- 3rd Edition, Oxford University Press

[Nigel Bradley](#)

March 2013, Paperback, 552 pages

ISBN: 978-0-19-965509-0

£39.99

In addition to the recommended text, we advise candidates to read as widely as possible to become better informed about the research industry and its practices. The various resources listed below are intended to give an indication of the great range of research information which is available, both via the Internet and in published form. Dipping into this reading list will help you gain the depth of insight which will support the development of your research skills.

The texts below provide useful additions to the recommended textbook:



The International Handbook of Market Research Techniques

2nd Edition, Kogan Page

[Robin Birn](#)

August 2002

ISBN 0-7494-3865-7

£34.95

A major text for all levels of marketing professionals and market researchers.

Individual MRS Members and employees of MRS Company Partners: claim a 20% discount on this book, and other Kogan Page publications.



Marketing Research

7th Edition, McGraw Hill

[Peter Chisnall](#)

Nov 2004, Paperback, 496 pages

ISBN13: 9780273694748

ISBN10: 027369474X

£37.99



The Marketing Research Process

5th Edition, Pearson Education

[Len Tiu Wright](#), [Margaret Crimp](#)

Feb 2000, Paperback, 496 pages

ISBN13: 9780130117533

ISBN10: 0130117536

£56.99



Qualitative Market Research: Principle & Practice

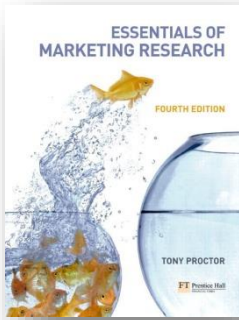
Sage Publications

[Edited by Gill Ereaut, Mike Imms and Martin Callingham](#)

2002, 7 Volume Set, Hardcover, 1112 Pages

ISBN: 9780761972723

£245.00



Essentials of Marketing Research
4th Edition, Pearson Education

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Additional materials

Codes, guidelines & legislation

In order to support the focus on ethics and professionalism in this unit, candidates should familiarise themselves with codes, guidelines and legislation which affect research carried out internationally, as well as those which affect research practices in the candidate's own country.

The following websites provide useful information about guidelines and regulations governing research.

MRS

http://www.mrs.org.uk/standards#other_standards

ESOMAR

<http://www.esomar.org/knowledge-and-standards/codes-and-guidelines.php>

Social Research Association

http://the-sra.org.uk/sra_resources/research-ethics/ethics-guidelines/

Research Buyer's Guide

<http://www.theresearchbuyersguide.com/>

The International Journal of Market Research (WARC)

Quarterly journal providing reports on a wide range of current and developing practice.

Impact Magazine (MRS)

Quarterly Magazine – Impact - Gain from insight and strategy studies to global trends, and with sections on technology, science and the law

Research Live

Understand the critical research trends, hear from the influential players and listen to the fiercest debates with access to Research-Live.com

7. Elements of Assessment

Candidates are required to complete 2 assessed components. These are:

- an internally assessed integrated assignment. This component is externally moderated.
- an externally-marked written examination - 2^{1/2} hours (150 minutes).

8. Integrated Assignment Specifications and Guidelines

Please refer to ***A Guide to the Integrated Assignment*** for comprehensive information.

The aim of the Integrated Assignment 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 Integrated Assignment requires candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet learning outcomes at all stages in the research process.

Integrated Assignment submissions are provided twice per year in **January & June**.

8.1 Format of Integrated Assignment

The Integrated Assignment must be in the form of a Brief and Proposal.

Centres can either provide a selection of research problems/scenarios from which their candidates can choose or candidates can select their own research problem on which to base their brief & proposal (be it fictional or based on 'real life').

Candidates who select a 'real life' scenario 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 has not been adhered to.

8.2 Assignment length, layout & language

- The assignment should be between **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 as 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 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.
- 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.
- Sections within the assignment should be clearly indicated with headings.
- 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.
- The language used in all assessed components of the MRS Advanced Certificate is English. The language of their assignment should be appropriate to both the task and the professional nature of the qualification.

Candidates whose first language is not English

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.

The English requirement for this course is Cambridge English: Advanced Proficiency 175 with no less than 162 in each component or equivalent. All candidates must have a good command of written and spoken English.

8.3 Content Specifications & 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	Relevant learning outcomes
Candidates should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief outlining the research problem • Design a programme of research to meet the needs of the brief 	1.6 2.15 2.16 1.10
Within this task, candidates should:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a clearly-defined research problem and identify appropriate research objectives 	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline an appropriate research design, providing a rationale for their choice(s) 	1.7 1.8 1.9 1.10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and describe a sampling plan which is appropriate to the research objectives and design, giving reasons for their choices 	2.6 2.7 2.8 2.9 2.10 2.11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and describe the data collection methods most appropriate to their stated objectives and chosen sample, giving reasons for their choices 	2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 (NB 2.2 and 2.3 relevant if a phase of secondary research is included in the proposal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design/select and describe the data collection tool(s) most appropriate to their stated collection methods, giving reasons for their choices 	2.3 2.12 2.13 2.14 2.16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a form of analysis appropriate to the data collected, the sample and the research objectives, giving reasons for their choices 	3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4 3.5 3.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select an approach to the reporting and/or presentation of findings which is appropriate to the client needs, the data collected and the research objectives, giving reasons for their choices 	3.7 3.8 3.9 3.10

8.4 Assessment Criteria for the Integrated Assignment

At PASS level, the candidate can	At DISTINCTION level
<p>1. present an assignment which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. written in a style which is generally accurate, clearly ordered and does not impose unnecessary strain on the reader b. uses terminology appropriately 	<p>The candidate meets the criteria specified opposite AND can</p> <p>5. Provide evidence of being outstanding in a minimum of two of the following areas:</p>
<p>2. demonstrate their understanding of the research problem by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing a clear discussion and definition of the problem to be researched b. defining the research objectives for the project c. selecting a suitable research design for achieving the research objectives d. identifying any relevant ethical and/or legal requirements which need to be met within the project e. providing a clear rationale for the choices they make in relation to the proposed research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. depth of understanding of the research problem b. depth of understanding of the ethical and/or legal issues relating to the proposed research and how these should be addressed c. depth of rationale for the choices made at the various stages in the research process d. understanding of any particular strengths and limitations of the chosen approach
<p>3. demonstrate their practical understanding of research practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing an appropriate plan for identifying and drawing a sample for the project b. identifying appropriate techniques and resources for gathering the required data c. providing a clear plan for the analysis of the data d. demonstrating how the planned research meets relevant ethical and/or legal requirements e. providing a clear rationale for the choices they make in relation to the proposed research 	
<p>4. demonstrate their understanding of the client's needs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. identifying the extent to which the proposed research is likely to meet the client's objectives b. describing how findings and recommendations will be reported back to the client c. demonstrating how the proposed research will meet the constraints of time and cost and be completed with available human resources d. providing a clear rationale for the choices they make in relation to their communication with the client 	

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

8.5 Pass requirements

Candidates are given a band 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 two times.

8.6 Integrated Assignment: Level Descriptors

	Fail	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Structure	<p>The assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> structure and organisation of information put strain on the reader language puts considerable strain on the reader 	<p>The assignment:</p> <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 respects the word limit 		
Content	<p>The assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to meet a significant number of the relevant assessment criteria. fails to demonstrate an awareness of the links between the research processes described. fails to identify all or most key ethical and/or legal issues. does not identify key areas of strength and weakness within the content 	<p>The assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets most of the relevant assessment criteria. demonstrates an adequate overall awareness of the links between the various research processes described. identifies all or most key ethical and/or legal issues and outlines how these can be addressed provides an appropriate rationale for most of the choices made. 	<p>The assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets all of the relevant assessment criteria. demonstrates a clear awareness of the links between various research processes described. demonstrates a clear awareness of all or most potential ethical and/or legal issues relating to the research projects and identifies how these can be addressed provides clear and appropriate justification for the choices made. 	<p>The assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets or exceeds all of the relevant assessment criteria. demonstrates a high level of awareness of the links between the various research processes described. demonstrates a high level of awareness of all potential ethical and/or legal 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.

9. Examination Specifications and Guidelines

Please refer to **A Guide to the Examination** for comprehensive information.

The examination requires candidates to demonstrate the extent to which they can apply the knowledge and skills developed while studying for the qualification to a range of market and/or social research scenarios and tasks.

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

9.1 Mode of assessment

Candidates are required to complete the examination which is set and marked externally.

9.2 Format of the examination

The 2¹/₂ hours (150 minutes) examination is held twice per year in **January & June**. The dates of examinations are published on the MRS website, usually one year in advance.

- Section 1: Compulsory Section (one question in three parts based on a case study)
- Section 2: Option Section (candidates must complete two out of six questions)

The requirement is for candidates to complete all of the questions in Section 1 and two questions from six in Section 2. If candidates answer more than two questions in Section 2, only the first two answers are marked, candidates who answer fewer questions than the requirement may be marked as non-compliant.

9.3 Section 1: Compulsory Question

This section contains a short case study with 3 associated questions, all of which the candidate must answer. The aim of this type of question is to assess the candidate's ability to apply their knowledge of market research to a concrete situation and to offer clear and convincing solutions.

Section 1 questions normally follow the following format:

- A short case study, usually containing the following types of information:
 - Background information & secondary data;
 - Specification of the client's needs or problem;
 - Definition of the task for the researcher.
- There are three questions associated with the case study. Candidates must answer all three. The normal format for the questions is as follows:
 - One question requiring candidates to demonstrate their understanding of research methodology, make informed methodological choices and justify those choices.
 - One question requiring candidates to analyse an aspect of the market research process.
 - One question requiring candidates to apply their knowledge to an aspect of the market research process to produce an MR 'item'.

9.4 Section 2: Option Questions

This section contains 6 questions. Candidates must answer **two** out of six.

Section 2 questions are drawn from across the syllabus. The questions usually provide a short description of a research context or problem and between 1 and 3 associated tasks. These tasks normally ask candidates to demonstrate:

- their knowledge of the given topic (e.g. through a descriptive element in the question);
- their understanding of the given topic (e.g. through analysis or evaluation);
- their ability to relate their knowledge and understanding to the practical application of market research principles.

9.5 Assessment weighting

Candidates must answer 3 questions – the compulsory question in Section 1 and two questions from Section 2 - all three questions are equally weighted in their contribution towards the final result.

Exam questions should be allocated one of the following grades:

- Distinction
- Merit
- Pass
- Fail

Where questions are subdivided into 2 or 3 tasks, the weighting for each task within the question will be clearly indicated. The weighting of the task and the grades awarded for each task determines the grade awarded to the exam question.

9.6 Pass requirements

Candidates are given an overall grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail). The overall grade is an aggregate of grades allocated over the three questions attempted in the exam.

Points are allocated to each question grade, as follows:

Distinction	3 points
Merit	2 points
Pass	1 point
Fail	0 points

In order to achieve an overall Pass grade candidates are expected to achieve a minimum of a Pass grade in each of the three questions. Candidates who pass only 2 questions, are expected to achieve a grade of merit or distinction in one of the pass questions in order pass overall. A candidate who achieves 1 distinction and 2 fails will not pass.

Grades based on point allocation:

- **FAIL** = 0 – 2 points
- **PASS** = 3 – 4 points
- **MERIT** = 5 – 6 points
- **DISTINCTION** = 7 - 9 points

When deciding grades, the examiners, moderators and Chief Examiner use the Examination Level Descriptors for guidance.

9.7 Examination: Level Descriptors

The document should be read alongside the **Examiner Answer Guide** for each examination question. The answer guide provides guidance on the core information required by each question.

	Fail	Pass	Merit	Distinction
Task achievement	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to recognise and/or address the key issues raised by the question demonstrates a significant lack of awareness or understanding of key issues 	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognises and addresses the key issues raised by the question demonstrates a satisfactory level of awareness and understanding of the key issues 	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognises and addresses the key issues raised by the question demonstrates a good level of awareness and understanding of the key issues 	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognises and addresses the key issues raised by the question demonstrates an excellent level of awareness and understanding of the key issues
Content	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to cover many of the core information points identified in the answer guide fails to provide adequate rationale, where appropriate, for the points made fails to identify all key ethical and/or legal issues 	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> covers many of the core information points identified in the answer guide provides adequate rationale, where appropriate, for the points made provides some appropriate examples to illustrate points made identifies all key ethical and/or legal issues and outlines how these can be addressed 	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> covers most of the core information points identified in the answer guide provides convincing rationale, where appropriate, for the points made provides a range of appropriate examples to illustrate points made demonstrates a good level of knowledge and/or understanding in either the range or depth of the points made demonstrates a clear awareness of all potential ethical and/or legal issues and identifies how these can be addressed 	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> covers the core information points identified in the answer guide and may exceed these points provides fully convincing rationale, where appropriate, for the points made makes good use of examples to illustrate points made demonstrates a high level of knowledge and/or understanding in the range and depth of the points made demonstrates a high level of awareness of all potential ethical and/or legal issues and plans how to best to manage these issues.
Structure & language	<p>The answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is written in language which is inaccurate or inappropriate to the topic. puts inappropriate strain on the reader. 	<p>At PASS level and above, the answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is written in language that is generally accurate, easy to read and appropriate to the topic. is generally clearly structured. puts little or no strain on the reader. 		

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