Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

EXAMPLAR EXAMINATION ANSWER GUIDE

NEW SYLLABUS – EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2014

10.00am – 12.30pm

Instructions given to Candidates

- Time allowed 2 hours 30 minutes
- Candidates must answer questions A, B, & C in Section 1
- Candidates must answer TWO questions from the six in Section 2
- All answers must be written in your Examination Answer booklet

Important Note: The requirement is for candidates to complete questions A, B & C in Section 1 and two questions from six in Section 2, failure to do this by either selecting more or less questions than the requirement may result in the paper being marked as non-compliant. Recommended times are detailed in each section to assist candidates in completing all the questions in the time available.

Instructions for Examiners

The following Answer Guide is not intended to provide a comprehensive guide to all possible points in response to exam questions.

Examiners should give credit for any points not included in the Answer Guides but which are credible responses to the question asked.

Examiners should note that the aim of many of the questions is to test the candidate's ability to apply knowledge to given contexts. However, candidates may fail to make full reference to the context in some cases. In these cases, examiners are required to assess the extent to which the information given meets the needs of the context. The following guidance has been produced for examiners:

- Credit should be given for information which is relevant to the question, even if it does not make overt reference to the context
- Some credit should be given for information which has some relevance to the context but which needs to be more focused to be fully effective
- Credit should not be given for information which is not relevant to the context.

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

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Section 1: Compulsory question (Recommended time: 50 minutes)

This section tests problem identification and problem solving using a number of skills. The section accounts for one-third of the total marks.

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

Step Forward is a national initiative to provide support for young, unemployed people aged 16-24. It brings together Government and voluntary sector organisations which offer a wide range of services and support for clients, such as career coaching, skills training and work experience placements.

Every year, the Government provides funding for a national conference which brings together representatives of the organisations working together under the *Step Forward* banner. The aim of the conference is to share good practice and to promote innovative ways to support the young people who use the services. The organisers hope that this will help representatives take new ideas back to their own organisations and therefore help to improve the services provided across the country. To support this aim, the organisers provide a year-round conference website which allows access to information and presentations from the past three conferences. In addition, each conference includes an exhibition of companies and organisations which provide relevant goods and services.

This year's conference is scheduled to take place in three months' time. However, the organisers have been informed that there may not be Government funding beyond this year unless they can provide evidence that the event achieves its aim of helping to improve the services offered to young people to help them get into work. Therefore, they have decided to commission your agency to research the effectiveness of the conference. The results will be needed before the conference takes place.

You are a research executive and you have been asked to prepare a proposal for the conference research project. You are about to meet your manager to discuss your ideas for a suitable proposal.

Question A

Using the internet, what secondary research would you undertake to find out whether recommendations from previous conferences have been implemented by the organisations delivering the *Step Forward* initiative? Outline briefly how you would approach this task, giving reasons for your suggestions. You should highlight any relevant ethical issues which you would need to consider, and how you would address these when undertaking this task.

(Weighting: one-quarter of total)

This question asks the candidate to identify a range of internet-based sources and how they might be used to gather secondary data. Candidates at Pass level should identify at least 3 possible steps they could take, along with some rationale for each, or 2 steps with detailed and convincing rationale. Credit should be given for demonstrating an understanding of the benefits/limitations of a secondary data approach

Possible steps include:

- Look at the conference website for evidence of use: e.g. is there a forum where people can post feedback/ideas? Is there evidence of increasing numbers attending the conference (which may give an indication of level of interest)
- *Search for press coverage of this and similar events- newspaper, magazine and journal websites*
- *Search exhibitors' sites to see if there is reference to the conference and its impact (e.g. do sites indicate increasing use of their services by local authorities?)*
- *Search local authority sites for coverage of the conference and reference to any changes which have resulted*
- Search blogs or social media accounts linked to the range of services covered by the conference: is there mention of the conference or action taken as a result?
- *Overarching ethical issues: Researchers must not gather and use any personal identifiable data found as a result of the search (e.g. naming individuals who have participated in a forum or via other social media)*

Question B

Devise an <u>outline</u> plan for a programme of primary research to address the organisers' need to understand how effective the conference is in helping the *Step Forward* organisations to improve their services. In your plan include the research design, the sampling plan and the method(s) of data collection. Give reasons for each of the choices you make.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

There are 3 key areas which candidates need to address in this question:

- *research design*
- *sampling plan*
- *data collection*

They should include a rationale for the points they make.

Examiners should note that this part of the question accounts for one-half of the total weighting for Section 1.

Research design:

Most candidates will probably suggest a cross-sectional research design - an ad hoc research programme. Any suggested design should be supported by an explanation of its suitability. If candidates mention the background/exploratory options they must also mention descriptive/conclusive option - the client's research objectives are unlikely to be achieved with exploratory research only.

- *Background/exploratory research - to help clarify and understand the key issues, the language used, the wider context - qualitative in-depth interviews with conference organisers, contributors to previous conferences, journalists specialising in youth employment features, perhaps influencers such as politicians or pressure groups focusing on youth employment; representatives from the department which funds the conference*

- *Main research – probably a quantitative survey in order to provide conclusive evidence about the effectiveness of the conference. Three populations may be surveyed:*

Sampling: Population

Candidates may identify three key populations, outlined below. Stronger candidates are likely to identify subgroups within each group (as suggested below). Weaker answers may fail to identify the full range of groups, or fail to demonstrate that they understand why the group should be included in the sample. Groups which could be included are:

- *(1) representatives who have attended the conference, including:*
    - *those who have contributed to conferences, to find out if they can identify any link between their attendance at the event and changes in the services offered – e.g. do they know of others who have taken up their ideas?*
    - *those who have not contributed – to find out if new ideas from conferences have been adopted or have influenced changes in their areas*
- *(2) representatives of organisations who have not attended the conference: are they aware of the conference? Can they see evidence of ideas being brought back into the workplace?*
- *(3) exhibitors, including:*
    - *organisations which exhibit at the conferences – to find out if they can identify any link between the conferences and the volume of work they do with those involved in Step Forward*
    - *organisations who work with Step Forward but who don't exhibit: do they attend? Can they see any links between their business and the conference?*

Candidates may identify the conference attendance database as a possible sample frame for researching attendees. They should also identify the need to work with organisers to identify a source of a possible sample of non-attendees.

Sampling: Approach
Candidates should identify how they would select the sample from each of the populations. They may opt for random sampling (using the database as a frame) or quota, and may vary the approach depending on the group being sampled. Whichever approach(es) chosen, clear and convincing rationale should be given for their selection. Stronger candidates may also identify sample size as a key factor. Additional credit should be given for appropriate justification of any sample size suggested.

Data collection methods:
If candidates mention the qual option they must also mention a quant option - the client's research objectives are unlikely to be achieved with a qual approach only. Each suggestion should be supported by a rationale:

- *Qualitative in depth interviews - to gain greater understanding of the issues involved and to help with questionnaire design*

- *Telephone survey - may be the most appropriate way of contacting the target population - busy organisations and probably geographically diverse. Ability to reach widely dispersed target population. Contact details likely to be easily available - from the database and from the organisation's website. Response rates likely to be reasonable. Good quality control possible - face to face briefings at central telephone research unit, monitoring of interviews etc*

- *Email survey/web-based may also be feasible - good for reaching widely dispersed sample, contact details available as above but response rates tend to be lower than for telephone survey. No control over who fills it in etc.*

Additional marks may be given if candidates consider how using DIFFERENT data collection methods (for different respondent categories) may have benefits/drawbacks. Also, additional marks may be given if candidates mention budget or time constraints.

Question C

How could the conference itself be used to provide additional research? Identify at least one suitable approach which could be used to gather data at the event. Discuss the benefits and limitations of your chosen approach. You should highlight any ethical issues which you would need to consider when using your chosen approach, and how these could be addressed.

(Weighting: one-quarter of total)

Candidates should identify at least one way in which the conference could be used to gather data, and provide an evaluation of the usefulness of each approach. They should also identify any ethical issues which they would need to consider when using each approach. Stronger answers are likely to provide a balanced evaluation of the gathering of data at the event, whilst weaker answers may fail to provide considerations of limitations. Weaker answers may also fail to identify the ethical issues involved in their chosen approach(es).

Approaches and limitations may include some/all of the following:

General Advantage: *would allow opportunity to gather early and fresh feedback on the event itself.*

Key limitation overall: *Attendees at the conference are likely to be biased towards those who are aware of its possibilities and are likely to be positively disposed to it, so the sample may not be representative of the wider target population for the event.*
Ethical issue: Client would need to be made aware of the limitations of this type of sample.

- *Conference provides a captive audience, many of whose members fall into the target population for the research and who might otherwise be difficult (and expensive) to contact but who may be prepared to give up some time to take part in research. If data collection not feasible could take names and ask if they mind being contacted for interview at later date.*
  Ethical issue: depending on venue, it may be necessary to inform the venue managers that research is being carried out on the premises.

- *Qualitative mini depth interviews (about 20-30 minutes) with key respondents/opinion formers – senior managers; journalists; contributors.*
  <u>Limitation</u>: May be difficult to encourage respondents to take part. Interviews may need to be pre-arranged. Suitable on-site venues/locations for interviews would be required.
  <u>Ethical issue</u>: A suitable on-site venue must allow the information to be gathered confidentially and in a way which maintains the anonymity of the respondent. Therefore a private area would be necessary. Need to ensure that data is recorded in line with MRS Code – e.g. permission sought to record verbatim responses; sign off sheet, showing informed consent to the interview.

- *Short (5-10 minutes) face to face quantitative interviews in the exhibition hall.*
  Ability to reach a reasonably large sample in a short space of time and cost effective.
  *<u>Limitation</u>**:** Some attendees may not be well disposed to being interviewed. Interviews may need to be pre-arranged in order to fit in with the schedule for the conference, bearing in mind that it contains workshop activities. Not all those present will belong to the target population. Sample achieved may not be representative of target population.*
  <u>Ethical issue</u>: Need for clear briefing of field force to ensure that data is collected and recorded in line with MRS Code.

- *Self-completion questionnaires on chairs in workshops and seminars/CAPI/CAWI Stations.*

Allows large numbers to be consulted and give a view if they wish to. Can be filled in later using respondent's own time and allowing for more considered opinion, and returned later rather on the day of the exhibition itself.

*<u>Limitation</u>**:** Questionnaires need to be short, well laid out etc to encourage audience to fill them in and return them. Response rate may be low. Not all members of the audience will belong to the target population. Sample achieved may not be representative of target population. No control over who fills them in. Many distractions - setting not conducive to data collection.*

<u>Ethical issues:</u> Questionnaires would need to provide enough information about how the data collected was going to be used.

- *Use of handheld devices to provide 'instant' feedback to questions posed after each paper.*
  <u>Limitation</u>: no ability to probe responses given or to capture information about the respondent)
  <u>Ethical issue</u>: Need to ensure that the questions being asked provide a full range of options, allowing participants to provide truthful answers. There can be a tendency to opt for Yes/No type questions, with no room for 'Don't know' or other responses.

- *Use of new technology to monitor and analyse 'blogs' and feedback reported via 'Twitter' (or other online social networking sites) by delegates.*
  <u>Limitation</u>: not necessarily representative of target population.
  <u>Ethical issues</u>: Need to ensure that personal data is not collected/used without consent; if the researcher wants to prompt interaction, needs to make sure that others know that s/he is there in research capacity.

Section 2: Optional Questions (Recommended time: 100 minutes)

This section accounts for two-thirds of the total marks.

Answer any TWO questions from the SIX in this section. Give a full answer to each of the questions you choose.

Question 1

Last year, a large retail company, with 5,000 employees in branches around the country launched its *Well At Work* initiative. *Well At Work* provides a range of confidential services to improve staff morale and wellbeing. This range includes services such as free health checks, free financial advice and support to stop smoking. The company wants to find out how staff view these services, how useful they are, and if they have helped improve staff satisfaction. They have asked all employees to complete an online research questionnaire which contains the following questions.

The company would like to know which staff groups, according to grade and geographic area, are making most use of the services. The HR Director has asked to look at the completed questionnaires so she can get a feel for the results for each area and staff group. You realise she may be misled by or she may misinterpret the raw data.

Question3:
Which geographic area do you work in? (Tick appropriate answer)
a)North b) Central c) South d) West e) East

Question 4:
What is your employee grade? (Tick appropriate answer)
a) Assistant b) Team Leader c) Group Manager

Question 5:
We would like to know if you have made use of the *Well At Work (WAW)* services listed below. Please indicate if you have used any of these services in the past 6 months. Circle the appropriate response for each area.

(Y = yes / N = no / X = rather not say)

a) WAW Health Check	Y / N / X
b) WAW Financial Advice Service	Y / N / X
c) WAW Smoking Cessation Plan	Y / N / X
d) WAW Mediation Advice	Y / N / X
e) WAW Return to Study Advice	Y / N / X

a) Identify at least two issues which should be taken into account when comparing the raw data for the different groups, stating why these issues are important.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

Candidates are expected to demonstrate a basic practical understanding of some of the key principles underpinning the preparation and analysis of quantitative data. At pass level, candidates should identify a minimum of two issues to consider, and provide some rationale for these. Stronger answers may provide a wider range of considerations and/or particularly clear rationale for their inclusion. Weaker answers may identify some basic issues but fail to provide an (accurate) explanation of their importance.

Issues may include some/all of the following:

- *Sample size: Does the sample for each group represent its proportion in the population as a whole?*
- *Absolute sample size and its statistical reliability*
- *What is being compared? Looking at the questionnaires, the HR Director may be noticing only limited comparisons (e.g. managers in different areas/ responses to one particular service). Need to be clear about what is being compared*
- *Missing/incomplete data: The HR Director has looked at the questionnaires but the data may not have been edited for analysis – e.g. some questionnaire responses may be incomplete*
- *How are 'rather not say' areas being interpreted? Does company need to know this? Or are they only counting definite yes/nos?*
- *Data privacy and the Code of Conduct (being able to identify an individual employee by their answers on geographic area and employee grade)*
- *Response Rates – how they may impact data interpretation (especially if it varies by geographic region)*
- *Questions maybe misunderstood by respondents. The company may be referring to its geographic regions but these may differ from standard regions therefore making it unclear which definition the respondent has used*

b) Describe at least two ways in which you might analyse the data in order to provide the company with the robust information they need. Giving reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Candidates are expected to demonstrate familiarity with a limited range of approaches to presenting/analysing data in order to provide required information. At pass level, candidates should identify a minimum of two techniques they could use to extract the required information from this data. Stronger answers may provide a wider range of suggestions and/or greater depth of rationale. Weaker answers may provide only generic descriptions of analysis, without linking these to the information requirements of the context.

Possible techniques include:

- *cross- tabulation*
- *percentages - for each geographical and/or staff group against each WAW service*
- *weighting – so that results for disparate sizes of groups can be compared*
- *analyse the different combinations of training received*

Question 2

A retailer of children's toys wants to learn what customers think of the range of products they offer in its online store. The retailer has decided to carry out a self-completion survey of its adult customers on its mailing list but they are unsure whether the survey should be conducted by post or online.

a) Outline the benefits and limitations of each approach which the retailer is considering for this research. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Candidates are expected to outline a minimum of two benefits and two limitations to each approach for this project. Stronger answers are likely to provide a wider range of ideas, and provide clear examples related to the context. Weaker answers may simply list generic advantages and disadvantages of each, with little or no reference to the context and limited exemplification.

	Benefits	***Limitations***
Postal	• *already has a mailing list, so clear sample frame to work from* • *know that the customers expect mail from them so may be more willing to respond* • *easy to administer – no complex setting up beyond the design of the questionnaire, and could be inserted in a brochure or normal mailing*	• *postal surveys are notorious for low response rates – perhaps incentives are needed* • *how up-to-date is mailing list? customers may have moved away etc* • *as with all postal surveys, can take time. Problematic if information is needed about current range of products* • *costs could increase if pictures/photos are required* • *costs may be higher than first expected when printing/envelope stuffing/ costs of return envelope are taken into account* • *do not know who completed the questionnaire (same limitation applies to online. If answer identifies this as limitation of both, an additional limitation of either post or online is required to pass)*
Online	• *if there is an email newsletter for customers, a link could be included in that* • *quick return and analysis of results – can get info on current product range almost immediately* • *customers may want to contribute because it's easy* • *pictures/photos of products can be shown* • *routeing through questionnaire is easy* • *can monitor fieldwork progress instantaneously*	• *may not have email contact for all customers – those contacted by mail may find it too much bother to go online to respond* • *depending on the customer profile, there may be limited numbers who have access to internet* • *more difficult to control sample – those who are contacted may forward the weblink to the survey to others. Very difficult to control who is responding.* •

b) The retailer has decided to use a postal survey. Outline the steps which they could take to maximise response rates. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

In order to pass, candidates are expected to identify a minimum of two steps which the researcher can take to maximise response to the survey and to provide a clear and relevant rationale. Credit should be given for a wider range of suggestions, particularly where these are related clearly to the context. Weaker answers may provide only generic suggestions with little or no justification for their inclusion.

Possible steps include:

- *advance warning to customers of survey, contained in one of the company's regular mailings*
- *return envelope / postage*
- *incentives for completion – prize draw?*
- *bright and attractive layout (with graphics?) to attract respondents*
- *easy-to-follow instructions and clear time frame for completion*
- *reminders in advance of the closing date*

Question 3

Following a prolonged period of marketing activity, a chain of private health clinics has recently opened a number of clinics in towns across a part of the country it had not previously operated in. The organisation now wants to know whether and to what extent potential customers are aware of them. Your agency has been awarded the contract to carry out this research. The client wants the survey conducted face-to-face but does not want to use any form of street intercept for the survey as this is not permitted within some of the towns where they have opened their new clinics.

a) Describe at least two sampling methods which could be used for this survey, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods chosen.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Candidates should identify at least two sampling methods, each with at least one advantage and one disadvantage, or three methods, with more limited analysis, in order to pass. Stronger answers may link suggestions with the marketing drive identified in the context, whilst weaker answers may provide only generic suggestions. Any generic suggestions given, though, should be clearly applicable to the given situation.

Potential sampling methods include:

Method	***Advantages***	***Disadvantages***
Random	• *Provides a sample across all households in the area which is being targeted – perhaps provides a more representative cross section?* • *Will reach people who may not have seen marketing – help to identify if awareness has penetrated beyond the marketing drive?*	• *Potential non-response: how interested will people be in participating? Could be time consuming & expensive* • *May report lower awareness as it may have a large sample of people who were not targeted by marketing*
Stratified random	• *Depending on how marketing was done, could split households into those which were targeted in marketing drive and those which weren't* • *Possibly more representative of population of interest than quota*	• *Need to ensure the stratification factor(s) selected are appropriate* • *Potentially more expensive as interviewers will need to do more call-backs than quota sampling as substitutes are not accepted.*
Quota	• *Possibly cheaper option than other two* • *Possible to select potential users based, e.g. on their current supplier*	• *Need a great deal of information about the population of the area: who is to be targeted?*

b) Which sampling method would you recommend? Give reasons for your choice.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

The approach to this answer will depend on the answer given to Part a. Candidates should provide a clear recommendation, with convincing justification, in order to pass. Stronger answers may identify how any limitations (which may have been identified in Part a) could be addressed. Weaker answers may provide only a generic answer, rather than focus on the needs of the context. Examiners should judge if any generic points made are applicable to this particular context.

Question 4

A number of new members of staff have recently joined your organisation. You have been asked to run a training session for them focusing on *the purpose of individual interviews in both qualitative and quantitative research projects*.

a) Describe the purpose of individual interviews undertaken for qualitative research studies and those undertaken for quantitative research studies, highlighting the key differences. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-half of total)

Candidates should make at least 3 clear comparisons between the two types of interview. They may choose to organise their ideas either by 'differences' or by focusing on first one type of interview then the other. In both cases, the focus should be on the comparison of the two types of interview. Credit should be given for the range of points identified and clear and convincing examples that clearly illustrate the points made.

Qualitative interviews	***Quantitative interviews***
• *Good for exploring issues in-depth* • *More freedom for interviewer to explore issues* • *Setting can be important, with sensitivity of topic a key determiner in whether phone interviews can be used* • *Can be more than one-to-one (e.g. paired)* • *More time consuming than quant (therefore also more costly per interview, and possibly lower sample sizes)* • *More open questions* • *Less directive than in quant* • *Use of projective or enabling techniques* *The interviewer:* • *Must listen and respond to subtle clues* • *Must be skilled at reading non-verbal info* • *Recorded on video/audio, may be transcribed*	• *Good for directional, conclusive and robust data gathering* • *Standard questions (no interviewer freedom)* • *Wide range of settings possible* • *Generally one-to-one* • *Can ask remotely, e.g. by phone. May not involve an interviewer – e.g. web-based surveys may be viewed as interviews* • *Usually shorter than qual* • *More closed questions* • *Pre-coding restricts range of possible answers* • *Some probing possible, but less than in qual* • *Cost per interview usually lower, therefore larger sample sizes more achievable, therefore more scope for analysing sub-groups* *The interviewer:* • *Must question efficiently and effectively* • *Listening skills important but less than qual* • *Many ways to record (CAPI, CATI, CAWI)*

b) Following the training session you will be leading a team of qualitative researchers on a project exploring the attitudes of staff on behalf of one of your clients. The staff being researched will be from the client's offices located in Europe and Asia Pacific. Describe the steps you would take to ensure ethical practice and consistency in approach across the team of researchers.

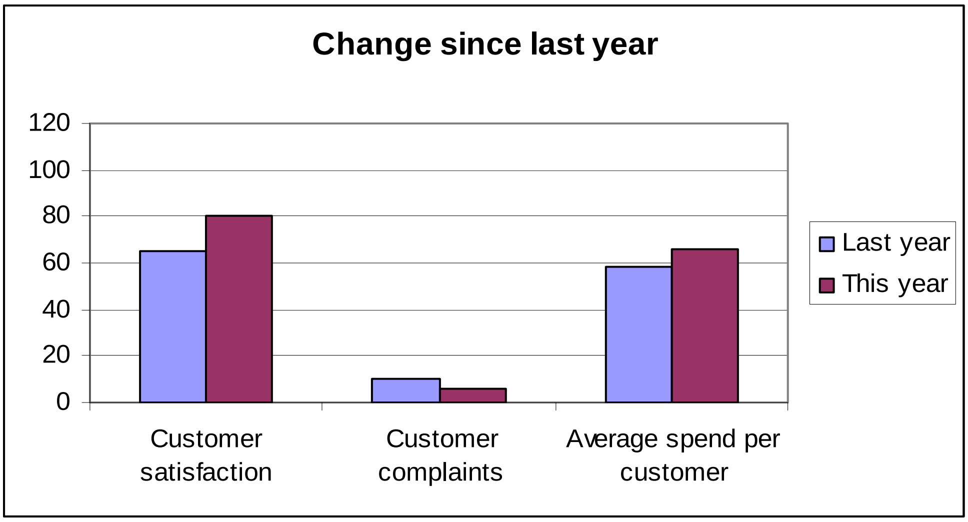
(Weighting: one-half of total)

Candidates are expected to identify a minimum of two steps, with detailed rationale, to meet pass level. Candidates with more steps may provide more limited rationale. Stronger candidates may identify sequential steps which can be taken and will provide clear justification for their suggestions. In order to pass, candidates should discuss the fine balance of permitting difference between teams whilst also ensuring the research objectives are met.

- *Review the research objectives: Ensure that there is shared understanding of the aims and the type of information required.*
- *Interviewers to have early sight of/involvement in discussion guide development to ensure all are clear and comfortable with content and sequence.*
- *All interviewers briefed at the same time to ensure all have sufficiently similar understanding*
- *Review the discussion guide: Do all interviewers agree on the aim and interpretation of the questions? Do all feel it can be covered in the time given for the interview?*
- *Discuss the approach and structure of tasks. How are respondents going to be warmed up? What types of techniques are to be used (e.g. projective techniques)? What (if any) materials are to be used and how will they be used?*
- *Give approximate times to be spent on each section of the discussion to ensure consistency across interviews*
- *Ensure agreement on how data will be recorded. Also what data will be recorded – e.g. are you going to record non-verbal behaviour?*
- *Review the make-up of the sample (i.e. geographical spread, age groups etc): What similarities and differences are there? Can possible impacts on the data collection be anticipated?*
- *Arrange meeting/communication following the first round of interviews if possible to discuss and resolve any problematic issues, and to do a debrief of early findings and examine their impact.*
- *Confirm that the work will be undertaken according to the most stringent codes of conduct rules that the organisation follows in both Europe and Asia Pacific in relation to researching employees For example you would compare codes such as MRS, ESOMAR plus any other relevant Asia Pacific codes to identify the most stringent requirements and apply them across the exercise to ensure all Staff being researched are given the same, maximum level of ethical protection.*
- *Review how the staff research will be reported to ensure that staff identities are protected.*
- *Review the process for the inclusion of verbatims to ensure that they are anonymous and don't inadvertently identify respondents e.g. via the language used, scenarios described etc.*
- *Review the research approach being undertaken in each country and ensure cultural differences have been adequately reflected.*
- *Review any translation arrangements for research materials and ensure adequate checking is built into the procedure to ensure translations are adequate.*

Question 5

A supermarket regularly monitors a wide range of customer feedback measures. Key data is presented to the Board of the Supermarket every three months. Below is an example of the type of data presented to the Board.



a) Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the graph in conveying information about the research findings, giving reasons for your suggestions.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

Candidates are expected to evaluate the graph as a presentation of research findings. At pass level, candidates should identify a minimum of one strength and two weaknesses, with appropriate justification. Stronger answers are those which provide deeper analysis and/or a wider range of strengths or weaknesses.

Strengths include:

- *Clear bar chart, with shading used to differentiate findings from different years*
- *Key to explain what the shading represents*
- *Categories being focused on clearly identified in the X axis*

Weaknesses include:

- *No indication as to what the scale(s?) on the Y axis represents. Can't be percentages as it goes up to 120. Different data sets reported on different scales*
- *No indication of sample size*
- *No indication of statistical significance*
- *Ordering of the X axis – sometimes useful to order these according to largest responses down to lowest responses.*
- *Last year/this year are only relevant terms for a relatively short period and only to an audience that knows what time periods were being covered. Would therefore be better to state the specific time periods the research refers to.*
- *Problem of misinformation if non-response/weightings/response rates are not evident.*

b) The Board are considering using the first two categories (customer satisfaction and customer complaints) as the basis of a marketing campaign. The *MRS Code of Conduct* contains rules on the reporting of research results including presentations and the use of research findings. Based on these rules, what advice would you give to the supermarket on the use of research findings in marketing material? Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Candidates are expected to demonstrate familiarity with the range of rules included in Section B, particular rules B49 – B61 of the MRS Code of Conduct. At pass level, candidates should identify at least three areas which they should make the client aware of, with some rationale for their selection. Answers which provide only two suggestions should provide more rationale to demonstrate that the candidate understands the key principles on which the guidance is based.

Key areas which should be identified include:

- *Results cannot be used to mislead the public*
- *Facts should be clearly differentiated from interpretation*
- *Research conclusions must be clearly and adequately supported by the research data*
- *Protecting the anonymity of respondents in situations where verbatim excerpts are presented*

Guidance to the client may include some or all of the following points:

- *If you are likely to want to attribute verbatim comments, we need to make sure that respondents are informed of this and that permission is sought for recontact to seek consent for use of the verbatims*
- *If the findings are to be published (e.g. in marketing or press material), members of the public must be able to access the technical details. How will this be arranged?*
- *Any graphs/charts and other materials drawing on the results provide enough technical detail to 'enable reasonable interpretation' of the validity of the results. This should include:*
  - *Information on sample size*
  - *Information on the questions asked*
  - *information on weighting*
- *Any marketing material being prepared should be checked by the researcher before publication to ensure that it is not using the results inappropriately.*

Question 6

StayHome is a major national charity which provides services for elderly people living alone. Cuts in funding have put the charity's future at risk. One possible option which would help StayHome continue to deliver its services is to merge with The Home Service, another national charity with a similar remit. The Board of StayHome is unsure if this option would provide the best outcome for the people who use their services and for the care-givers who work for the organisation. It has approached a research agency to help the charity gain the insight needed to inform the decision.

a) Describe what you understand by the term 'insight' to mean in a research context and in the context of StayHome's business and the decision they are facing. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-third of total)

Examiners should note that this section of the question is worth one-third of the overall total. Candidates should provide a description or definition of what they understand the term 'insight' to mean in a research context in general and in the specific StayHome context.

Candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of 'insight' as a term which covers the development of an understanding of issues through information gathered from a single source or from a wide variety of sources, i.e. that insightful research will generally result in an understanding of the context in which the client operates – the context might include SLEPT/PEST/PESTLE (combinations of social/cultural, legal, economic, political, technological, environmental factors) or STEER factors (socio-cultural, technological, economic, environmental, regulatory) – and the context in which the client's target market operates/the way it behaves.

At pass level, candidates should identify that insight attempts to create a 'fuller' understanding of issues, for example information which:

- *informs the client's actions*
- *relates to client strategy*
- *applies knowledge to help drive growth*
- *leads to operational improvement*
- *assists in client decision-making*

etc, rather than simply providing data. For example, candidates might also talk about having an extremely good understanding of the client, their business issues and the context in which they are operating – over and above what might be deemed necessary /acceptable for traditional research.

b) Describe the types of research that the research agency might do in order to gather evidence that will help StayHome make their decision. Give reasons for the suggestions you make, highlighting any ethical issues which might need to be considered.

(Weighting: two-thirds of total)

Examiners should note that this section of the question is worth two-thirds of the overall total.

The success of an answer to this section is likely to depend on the breadth of definition included in section (a). At pass level, candidates are expected to identify at least two types of research which might include some/all of the following:

Secondary data:

- *Existing market research reports on the services provided by each organisation*
- *Existing research reports on the extent to which elderly people pay for home services*
- *Reports from funding bodies on how funding for services is distributed and the possible changes in funding*
- *Newspaper/magazine reviews of both StayHome and The Home Service and their services*

Quantitative:

- *Survey of their clients, gauging reaction to The Home Service brand.*

Qualitative:

- *Focus groups with employees, gauging their perceptions of the StayHome brand values and how these compare with The Home Service*
- *Focus groups with clients, again gauging their reactions/perceptions to both charities*

Ethical considerations:

- *The client group is potentially vulnerable and care needs to be taken to reassure respondents about the nature of the research and the use to which information will be put. I*

Stronger answers are likely to provide a wider range of sources and/or types of information, or greater reflection on how the different types of data might work together to help produce greater insight. They may also identify that gathering information from a client group who may be vulnerable needs to be undertaken carefully. Informed consent is required whilst ensuring that the information-gathering does not distress the clients. Weaker answers are likely to provide only a limited range of data sources and not relate this to how it would generate insight in this context. A candidate should be able to pass without mentioning all three general sources as long as there are at least two well developed points.

- *The MRS Code of Conduct requires researchers to ensure that respondents are not harmed or adversely affected as a result of participating in research. This ethical requirement would need to be considered carefully in light of the potential vulnerabilities of the respondent group which will be elderly and may have physical and mental health issues.*
- *Environment for conducting research e.g. if conducting groups could this be done in care homes with appropriate facilities rather than 3rd party venues.*
- *Covers, adult children may have concerns about their elderly patient/parents being researched. Need procedure for how this would be handled.*