



MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

Admin Handbook

Effective from January 2014 Assessment Round

**The new syllabus - effective from the January 2014
Assessment Round**

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

MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice
Admin Handbook – New Syllabus – Jan 2014 - Updated May 2015
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1. Introduction

This *Administration Handbook* is intended principally for course leaders and centre administrators, including examination administrators and invigilators, who are involved in the preparation of candidates for MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice.

The MRS awarding body, **MRS Qualifications**, is responsible for administering the Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice (Advanced Certificate). The members of MRS staff responsible for contact with centres are the Professional Development Co-ordinator and the Head of Membership Development. .

Copies of this handbook are available from MRS Qualifications or can be downloaded from the MRS Website.

Contact the Professional Development Co-ordinator regarding:

- registrations
- requests for and submission of examination documentation
- arrangements for examinations
- results and certificates
- transfers

Contact details:

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7566 1805

Fax: +44 (0)20 7490 0608

Email: profdevelopment@mrs.org.uk

Contact the Head of Membership Development regarding:

- application forms for accreditation and re-accreditation
- accreditation visits
- centre briefing meetings
- professional advice and support in relation to the Advanced Certificate

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2. Administration Timetable

At this time...	The MRS will....	The centre should...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 4 weeks prior to course start date: 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete and submit a Course/Programme of Learning Notification Form
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 3 weeks before the examination 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete and submit a Candidate Registration Form complete and submit Candidate Second Registration Form for candidates resitting a component of assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 14 days prior to the examination date 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit any requests for transfers and/or deferrals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 weeks prior to the examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch the candidates' letters of confirmation to the centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> distribute the confirmation letters to the individual candidates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 week prior to the examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch all examination materials to the centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confirm receipt of the materials store materials in a secure place inform MRS of any discrepancy between the despatch form and contents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> on the day of the examination 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that all MRS Qualifications guidelines are followed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> immediately following the examination 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch the completed examination scripts, along with other examination documentation and a completed Examination Material Despatch Form, to MRS Qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 7 days following the examination date 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that any requests for Special Consideration have been submitted to MRS Qualifications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 2 weeks following the examination date 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> submit the centre's assessed Integrated Assignments, along with associated documentation, to MRS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 12 weeks following the examination date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch results slips to the centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> distribute the results slips to individual candidates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 40 days of the release of results 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> submit completed Enquiry forms for any candidates wishing to use the enquiry service submit an Appeal in writing for any candidates wishing to appeal against decisions which affect their grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 6 weeks of release of results date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch Certificates to the centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> distribute the certificates to successful candidates

3. Centre Requirements

Courses and programmes of learning

Centres wishing to prepare candidates for the MRS Advanced Certificate qualification must first receive approval by MRS Qualifications to operate as an 'MRS Accredited Centre'.

Centres may offer appropriate preparation in a variety of ways. To meet centre accreditation requirements, centres may wish to:

- design and deliver 'stand alone' part-time or full-time courses of study;
- incorporate preparation for the Advanced Certificate as part of *either*:
 - a wider course of study (e.g. an appropriate undergraduate degree) *or*
 - a wider programme of professional training and development

In such cases, the Advanced Certificate preparation element is described as a *programme of learning*.

Course design

It is the responsibility of each accredited centre to devise a course or programme of learning based on the MRS Advanced Certificate accredited syllabus. Each course or programme of learning should allow for 120 study hours. The suggested breakdown of study time is as follows:

- 45 hours of contact with tutor(s) (including tuition time, seminars, revision workshops etc.)
- 45 hours of guided study (reading and research)
- 30 hours for the preparation and completion of the integrated assignment

It should be noted that this breakdown is designed to provide guidance only. Centres are required to submit course plans as part of the accreditation process.

Components 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 examination (2 hours 30 minutes).

Further details on the administration of these components can be found in *Components of Assessment* and *Candidate Assessment*. For full details of the study requirements of these components, please refer to the *MRS Advanced Certificate Full Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines* document.

Course length

Course start and finish dates are set by the individual centre. Centres usually choose to work towards the examination date for which candidates have been entered.

Timing of assessed components

There are 2 assessment rounds each year in January & June.

Centres should select the appropriate examination session for their candidates. Assessment Dates are published on the MRS Website.

Integrated assignments should be internally assessed at the centre and submitted to MRS Qualifications by the published submission deadline. Assignments submitted after this deadline will be assigned for moderation in the next assessment round. Further details about the integrated assignment can be found in Section 6.

Staffing the course/programme of study

All courses or programmes of learning leading to the MRS Advanced Certificate must be staffed by appropriately qualified and experienced tutors or trainers. In order to ensure that the *MRS Code of Conduct* receives appropriate coverage during the course or programme of learning, a minimum of one tutor or trainer must be an MRS Full or Associate Member.

All tutors or trainers involved in assessment must be approved by MRS Qualifications as part of the accreditation procedure. In cases where no Member of MRS is part of the tuition team, the centre must nominate an appropriately-qualified and experienced team member to become a member of MRS within one year of accreditation having been awarded. If a centre wishes to add tutors or trainers to the assessment team then details must be submitted to MRS Qualifications sufficiently in advance of their joining the programme to allow for consideration and approval.

The use of guest speakers is permitted for sessions in specialist areas.

4. Accreditation Procedure

Initial accreditation

Centres wishing to offer a course or programme of learning for the first time should submit a formal application for accreditation. Application forms are available from the Qualifications & Membership Manager.

Details of the accreditation procedure are listed in the document *A Guide to Centre Accreditation*.

Post-accreditation documents

Once accredited, the centre will be sent a pack, which includes two copies of the *Letter of Centre Accreditation* to offer courses or programmes of learning towards the MRS Advanced Certificate. Both copies of this letter should be signed and one copy of the letter returned to MRS Qualifications before the course or programme of learning begins. Centres are not considered fully accredited until the signed *Letter of Centre Accreditation* letter has been returned to MRS Qualifications.

The Accreditation pack contains:

- Letter of Centre Accreditation (x2)
- Accreditation Report – final version
- Accredited Centre Certificate
- *Code of Conduct*
- Link to MRS Accredited Centre 'Password Protected' section of Website for - :
 - Awarding Body Policy Documents
 - MRS Accredited Centre Logo & Guidance doc
 - Admin/Registration docs
 - Syllabus
 - Guidance on Assessment
 - Dates & Fees
 - Learning Resources
 - Centre Network Sessions

Re-accreditation

The period of accreditation lasts for 5 years. Centres must apply for re-accreditation every 5 years.

Updates to accredited courses or programmes of learning

Centres are required to submit an *Annual Centre Update*, confirming centre details and informing MRS Qualifications of any significant changes to the course or programme of learning. These include changes to course design, staffing, premises or major changes to resources. On receipt of the update MRS Qualifications will review the details to ensure that the centre continues to meet accreditation requirements, amend accreditation details where necessary, and reissue an updated letter of accreditation if necessary.

Notification of courses being run

Once accredited, it is the responsibility of the centre to notify MRS Qualifications of its intention to offer a course or programme of learning.

Centres are required to submit a *Course/Programme of Learning Notification Form* at least 4 weeks prior to the start date of each course or programme of learning. Centres offering more

than one course or programme of learning per year are required to submit a completed Notification form for each course/programme of learning which is offered.

5. Responsibility of the Centre

Accreditation of the centre's provision of courses is dependent on the centre continuing to meet conditions in the following areas:

Recruitment of candidates

The centre should ensure that:

- candidates recruited onto the course meet or exceed the minimum entry requirements for the qualification.
- screening procedures enable the centre to assess the suitability of the qualification for the individual candidate.

Support of candidates

The centre undertakes to:

- provide an appropriate programme of support to enable candidates to meet the learning outcomes of the qualification.
- ensure that at least one member of the tutor team is in membership of the MRS, at either Member or Certified Member level.
- ensure that the MRS is provided with an annual update, detailing any proposed changes to the accredited programme and to the team of tutors responsible for assessment.

Provision of access to assessment

The centre should ensure that:

- appropriate systems and facilities exist to enable candidates to complete both components of assessment leading to the qualification to which accreditation applies. Assessment requirements for each of these components are detailed in this handbook and in other documentation available from MRS Qualifications.
- appropriate systems and facilities exist to enable candidates who are unsuccessful in one or both components of assessment to resubmit for assessment at a later date
- all members of the tutor team responsible for the assessment of candidates' work undergo appropriate briefing and standardisation training.
- an appropriate system of formative assessment exists to enable both tutors and individual candidates to assess the individual's progress in relation to summative assessment requirements.
- all candidates receive appropriate briefing about the requirements of each of the two components of assessment.

Adherence to administrative, quality assurance and access requirements

The centre undertakes to:

- adhere to the requirements as laid out in this Handbook.
- complete and submit to the MRS all necessary documents relating to the centre, course and candidates in accordance with notified deadlines.
- submit payment of all relevant fees and/or invoices to the MRS in accordance with relevant deadlines.
- a single named point of accountability for the quality assurance and management of the qualification.
- use buildings for assessment purposes that provide access for all candidates, in accordance with relevant legislation.
- provide the MRS and the regulatory authorities with access to premises, people and records, and to cooperate with the awarding body's monitoring activities.

Dealing with malpractice

The centre should ensure that:

- they adhere to MRS published procedures for dealing with malpractice (*Section 9*) on the part of candidates, centre staff, and any others involved in providing the qualification.
- they report to MRS any suspected malpractice, failure to cooperate can lead to certificates not being issued and future entries and/or registrations not being accepted and the potential withdrawal of accreditation.
- access is available to MRS should there be a requirement for the inspection of an accredited centre at any time.
- they are aware that MRS must conduct a full investigation into instances of alleged or suspected malpractice, and must take such action, with respect to the candidates and centres concerned, as is necessary to maintain the integrity of the qualification. The actions taken will be commensurate with the gravity of the malpractice. Failure to comply may result in accreditation being withdrawn from the centre.

Commitment to MRS standards and values

MRS is the code-holding body within the UK for ethical standards in market and social research. All centres which are awarded MRS-accredited status are required to abide by both the standards and the values embodied in the MRS Code of Conduct.

The centre must ensure that:

- at least one member of the tutor team involved in the delivery of the accredited course is a member of MRS, at the level of either Associate Member or Full Member.
- all candidates at the centre following a course or programme leading to the MRS Advanced Certificate are informed about the role of MRS and the *MRS Code of Conduct* in ensuring ethical and professional standards of market and social research.
- all candidates have access to the *MRS Code of Conduct* (electronic or hard copy).
- any research activity undertaken within the programme offered by the accredited centre is conducted with due regard to the *MRS Code of Conduct* and related codes of conduct.

Withdrawal from accreditation

- The centre may withdraw from offering the qualification during the accreditation period. However, centres wishing to withdraw must ensure that provision is made for access to assessment for candidates who have been registered for forthcoming assessment sessions. Such centres should contact MRS to discuss ways in which access to assessment might be assured for those candidates.

6. Candidates

Number of candidates

Centres are expected to enrol a minimum of 10 candidates per year per course or programme of learning. There is no maximum number of candidates.

Entry requirements and Selection of Candidates

Candidates will normally meet one or more of the following criteria:

- one year of relevant experience in market or social research
- completion of the MRS Foundation course/MRS/City & Guilds Certificate in Market & Social Research
- 2 A Levels (or equivalent)
- satisfactory nomination by an employer
- satisfactory nomination by course tutor (for candidates taking the qualification as part of an undergraduate degree)

Additionally, candidates are recommended to have:

- GCSE English & Maths (Grade C or above), or equivalent.

It is the centre's responsibility to assess candidates and to make judgements about their suitability for the course or programme of learning on offer. The centre's decision in this matter is final.

Language requirements

The language used in all assessed components of the MRS Advanced Certificate is English. The language 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.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments refer to adjustments made to allow access to assessment for candidates who would otherwise be disadvantaged by temporary or permanent disability. A wide range of adjustments can be made, depending on the individual candidate's specific needs. Reasonable adjustments may include, but are not limited to:

- changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing a candidate extra time to complete the assessment activity;
- adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in larger font;
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader;
- re-organising the assessment room;
- using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software.

Each request for an adjustment to be made to the way in which assessment is delivered should be made to MRS. The individual candidate's needs are then considered on the basis of the evidence provided and in line with guidance given by relevant bodies (e.g. RNIB for candidates with visual impairment).

It should be noted, however, that all candidates are required to complete all necessary components of assessment for each particular MRS qualification. Any reasonable adjustment made must not unfairly advantage the candidate for whom it has been arranged, and must not threaten the security or integrity of assessment.

Where reasonable adjustments have been applied the work produced by the candidate will be marked to the same standard as the work of other assessed candidates.

Please refer to the *MRS Qualifications – Policy Handbook* for full information and guidance on how to request a Reasonable Adjustment.

Special considerations

A Special Consideration is action taken immediately before or after an assessment to allow candidates who have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury, indisposition or adverse circumstances just prior to or at the time of an assessment to demonstrate attainment.

Special consideration may be given following a scheduled assessment to a candidate:

- who is present for the assessment but who may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances which arose at or near the time of assessment
- who misses part of the assessment due to circumstances outside their control.

'Adverse circumstances' include circumstances outside the candidate's control which can be shown to have had a marked effect on their performance in the assessment (e.g. bereavement prior to an assessment; severe disruption to assessment due to problems at the venue or centre).

Special consideration should not give the candidate an unfair advantage, neither should its use cause mislead regarding a candidate's achievements. The candidate's result must reflect his / her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his / her potential ability.

Special consideration, if successful, may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the candidate. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the candidate.

Please refer to the *MRS Qualifications – Policy Handbook* for full information and guidance on how to request a Special Consideration.

Candidate registration

In cases where the Advanced Certificate registration fee is not included in the course fee, centres must ensure that potential candidates are aware of the MRS registration fee prior to their joining the course. They should also inform the potential candidate of the date by which the registration fee must be paid.

It is the centre's responsibility to register all candidates with MRS Qualifications, for assessment, via the web-enabled *Candidate Registration Form*. It is the responsibility of the Centre Co-ordinator to inform their candidates that as part of the Advanced Certificate registration process

they will be added to the MRS Database, if they are not already. All candidates entered onto the database by MRS Qualifications will not have their details passed to any 3rd party.

Registration forms must be received at MRS Qualifications by the relevant closing date. Any late entries may incur an additional administration charge. Please see the *Administrative Timetable (Section 2)* for more information.

Requests for *Reasonable Adjustments* for candidates with special needs should be made in writing at the time of candidate registration. Please refer to the *Policy Handbook* for further information.

From the date a candidate is registered with MRS for assessment they have three years in which to successfully complete both elements of assessments in order to be awarded the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice.

Extensions may be made to the registration period where Special Considerations are cited by a candidate. Candidates re-registering with MRS for assessment will be required to pay the published registration fee.

Candidate withdrawal

If a candidate withdraws from assessment for serious medical reasons, the centre should notify MRS Qualifications immediately and provide a medical certificate. Refunds of fees can only be given for serious medical reasons (accompanied by a valid medical certificate) or in cases of close family bereavement. These are the only circumstances in which fees are refundable.

Centres must complete and submit a *Withdrawal/Deferral Form* to the Professional Development Co-ordinator as soon as possible following a candidate's decision.

Resit and deferred candidates

In addition to first-time candidates who have registered at the centre, centres may have to deal with other types of candidate registrations:

- Resit/Referred - candidates who failed one or both components of assessment during a previous session and are retaking it/them
- Deferred - candidates who have deferred completion of the assessed components
- No Show - candidates who fail to attend or submit an assessment without giving prior notice

Resit Candidates

Candidates wishing to retake one or both assessed components must register for the retake(s) through their original registration centre on the appropriate *Candidate Second Registration Form*. Copies of this form will be sent to accredited centres as part of the Advanced Certificate documentation. Any requests for reasonable adjustment must be made at the time of registration.

Candidates who fail to complete successfully both components of assessment within the three-year registration period will be required to follow another course or programme of learning and be re-registered as a new candidate.

Candidates can take each component of assessment a maximum of three times within their three-year registration period. Candidates who are unsuccessful in a component on the third attempt are normally required to wait until the end of their three-year registration period before

being able to re-register with MRS for assessment. Prior attainment of a component in a previous registration period will not be carried forward. On re-registering candidates will be required to sit/re-sit assessment both components of assessment.

Candidates re-registering with MRS for assessment will be required to pay the published registration fee.

Full specifications and assessment criteria for both components of assessment can be found in the [Full Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines](#).

Deferred Candidates

Candidates may wish to defer completion of a component of assessment. Any request for deferral must be made through the candidate's centre, and the centre must confirm that they will be able to support the candidate through the deferral period. In particular, centres must confirm that it will be possible to carry out the delayed assessment of the candidate's integrated assignment if this component is deferred.

In circumstances where the centre can support the candidate's deferral, MRS Qualifications can transfer the candidate's registration to a future assessment session. A request for deferral must be made by submitting [Withdrawal/Deferral Form](#) prior to the candidate's allocated examination date. *A deferral fee is payable.

*If a candidate is deferring due to a serious medical reason or due to a close family bereavement, the centre should notify MRS Qualifications immediately, enclosing a medical certificate where appropriate. The candidate will then be deferred to the next assessment round and the deferral charge will be waived, provided that all other fees associated with candidate and the Advanced Certificate have been already been paid.

No Show Candidates

Candidates who fail to attend an examination or submit an IA without notifying MRS Qualifications will be classified as a **No Show* and will be required to pay a deferral fee and a re-sit fee in order to be transferred to another assessment round.

*If a candidate is does not attend an examination due to a serious medical reason or due to a close family bereavement, the centre should notify MRS Qualifications ASAP after the assessment, enclosing a medical certificate where appropriate. The candidate will then be deferred to the next assessment round and the deferral charge will be waived, provided that all candidate fees associated with the qualification have already been paid.

In all cases, centres must complete and submit a [Withdrawal/Deferral Form](#) to the Professional Development Co-Ordinator as soon as possible following the candidate's decision.

Candidate fees

Centres will receive an invoice for each candidate registered. Late entries will incur an additional administration charge. The list of Awarding Body Fees is available from the MRS Website.

MRS Credit Policy - Qualifications

UK-based Members and Company Partners

- 30 day credit terms available
- All invoices must be settled in full in advance of the exam date*

UK-based Non-Members

- 30 day credit terms available where a satisfactory credit history exists
- 30 day credit terms available to major UK corporations/organisations
- Cash with order in all other cases
- All invoices must be settled in full in advance of the exam date*

Overseas Members, Non-members and Company Partners

- Cash required with order

***Please note**

- All invoices must be settled two working days prior to the examination/assessment date to ensure entry.
- MRS reserves the right to refuse an applicant's entry at any examination/assessment where payment has not been received in advance.
- All bookings from outside the UK must be accompanied by a bank transfer or credit card payment.

7. Components of Assessment - The Integrated Assignment (IA)

Aim of IA

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

IA submissions are provided twice per year in **January & June**. The IA Submission dates are published on the MRS website, usually one year in advance.

The purpose of the IA is to allow the candidate to demonstrate the extent to which they can apply the principles and techniques captured in the MRS Advanced Certificate syllabus to a practical research problem. The IA requires candidates to develop a proposal for a research project based on their own analysis of the research problem.

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

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

Format of IA

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

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

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

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

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

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

Despatch of assignments

The centre is responsible for despatching the candidates' completed and assessed integrated assignment to MRS Qualifications, to arrive in accordance with the time schedule given in the published submission deadlines.

Along with the assignments themselves, centres should include a completed *IA Despatch List*.

Integrated Assignments should be sent to MRS Qualifications, using a secure or guaranteed delivery method (e.g. recorded or registered post).

Return of assignments

MRS Qualifications retains securely all formally-assessed items for a period of 3 years. However, centres may, if they wish, return their retained copies of assignments to the candidates once final results have been released.

8. Components of Assessment - The Examination

Aim

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.

Format of the examination

The 2^{1/2} hour (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.

The examination comprises two sections:

- 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.

Details of question types, tasks and assessment criteria can be found in the document *A Guide to the Examination*.

Sample Examination Papers are available from the *Resources for Candidates* section of the MRS Website.

The written examination is externally marked.

Each centre should appoint an Examinations Administrator, who can take responsibility for liaison with MRS Qualifications and for the conduct of all aspects of the examinations.

The Examinations Administrator

The Examinations Administrator is responsible for the conduct of all aspects of the examination. In some centres, the Examinations Administrator may be a member of the tutor/trainer team. In centres where this is not the case, it is important that the Examinations Administrator liaises closely with the tutors/trainers to ensure that candidates are kept informed about examination systems and requirements.

The Examinations Administrator is responsible for:

- informing candidates and the tutor team of the examination time and date;
- keeping question papers and answer booklets secure, both before and after the examination;
- arranging a suitable examination room;
- making any special arrangements which have been arranged in advance with MRS Qualifications (e.g. for candidates with special needs);
- informing each candidate of:
 - *the centre number;*
 - *his or her candidate number;*
 - *requirements for identification;*
 - *regulations concerning the conduct of the examination;*
 - *the date, time and place of the examination.*
- appointing and briefing appropriate invigilators;
- providing materials for candidates on the day (e.g. extra pens and continuation paper);
- providing the invigilator with appropriate documents and support on the day of the examination;
- collecting and despatching examination papers and examination scripts after the examination.

Examination timetable

The published timings of all examinations must be followed by all centres, both in the UK and overseas. For overseas centres published timings should be taken as *local* time. However, if unusual circumstances prevail, an overseas centre may request to start the examination at a different time. Requests for this permission must be sent in writing to the Professional Development Co-ordinator, who will confirm in writing if the request is upheld.

Ensuring security of examination papers and answer booklets

Examination papers and answer booklets will be despatched to centres approximately 1 week prior to the examination date. The Examination Administrator will be informed by email of their despatch.

On receipt of the materials at the centre, the Examinations Administrator should:

- check that the contents of the package matches the despatch checklist included in the package, and is adequate for the number of candidates taking the examination;
- check that the material has not been damaged or opened in the post;
- check that the material has not been tampered with in any way;
- confirm receipt of the materials with the Professional Development Co-ordinator and inform them of any points noted above.

All examination materials should be stored in a highly secure place (ideally a safe or locked metal cabinet). The Examinations Administrator should ensure that only a small number of authorised people have access to this secure environment.

The Examinations Administrator must contact MRS Qualifications immediately if s/he becomes aware of a breach of security or if confidential material is put at risk (e.g. as a result of fire, theft or unauthorised access to the material).

MRS Qualifications reserves the right to visit centres during the examinations period and to spot-check security arrangements for examination materials.

The examination room

The Examinations Administrator is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate room is allocated and prepared for the examination. The examination room should:

- provide an appropriate level of comfort for candidates (heating; lighting; ventilation; appropriate seating);
- be as quiet as possible;
- be equipped with a clock, which can be seen easily by all candidates;
- be equipped with a flipchart or board displaying the centre number and the start and finish times of the examination;
- be free of posters or other material which is visible to candidates and likely to be of aid to them during the examination.

Candidates should be seated facing the same direction, and in the order of their candidate number. Chairs should be a minimum of 1 metre apart and candidates should be supplied with desks which are large enough to hold comfortably their open examination papers and answer booklets.

A record of the seating plan should be made, signed by the invigilator and enclosed with the completed examination scripts.

Candidates completing the examination under agreed special arrangements may take the examination in a separate room where appropriate. Examination conditions in this room must mirror those in the main examination room.

Appointment of invigilators

The Examinations Administrator is responsible for the appointment and briefing of invigilators.

There must be an appropriate number of invigilators (a minimum of 1 per 25 candidates) and all candidates must be seen by at least one invigilator at all times.

If only one invigilator is appointed, that person must not be:

- a relative of any of the candidates;
- the tutor/trainer who has had responsibility for preparing the candidates for the examination.

In circumstances where only one invigilator has been appointed, s/he must be able to summon help easily without leaving the room or disturbing the candidates.

Prior to the examination day, the Examinations Administrator must ensure that the invigilators have been briefed appropriately. This includes providing them with a copy of *Guidelines for Invigilators*.

On the day of the examination, the Examinations Administrator must provide each invigilator with:

- a copy of the *Information for Candidates* (these are despatched with the examination papers);
- a further copy of *Guidelines for Invigilators* and details of any announcements to be made to candidates prior to the start of the examination (copies of this document will be despatched with the examination papers);
- a list of all candidates sitting the examination and an attendance record;
- all question papers, answer booklets, information for candidates, plus surplus stationery.

The Examinations Administrator must also be available to deal with unforeseen difficulties and with any disruption by a candidate or candidates. Any unforeseen difficulty should be reported to MRS Qualifications. Reports should be submitted on the *Special Considerations Form* which is designed for this purpose.

Disruptive behaviour on the part of a candidate may lead to his or her disqualification. The decision to disqualify a candidate rests with MRS Qualifications. Therefore reports on incidents should be clear and provide as much relevant detail as possible.

The responsibilities of the invigilator

The invigilator is responsible for ensuring that the examination is conducted properly. An invigilator or invigilators must be present in the examination room for the entire period of the examination. This includes the 20 minutes prior to the examination during which the candidates are arriving in the room.

As with all examination procedures, the MRS retains the right to visit the centre on examination day to ensure that invigilation procedures are being followed.

Invigilators must give their whole attention to the conduct of the examination. They must not carry out any additional tasks while invigilating.

Guidelines for Invigilators are distributed with examination materials or are available on request from MRS Qualifications.

Following the examination

At the end of the examination, the Examinations Administrator must collect all question papers, candidates' scripts and unused answer booklets from the invigilator(s). The invigilator should also supply the completed record of attendance and seating plan. Any candidate absence should be shown on the seating plan. Both the seating plan and record of attendance should be signed by the invigilator. These records are needed in case and possible irregularities are identified during the marking of candidates' scripts.

Release of examination papers

The examination question papers must not be removed from the examination room by the candidates. They must be collected by the invigilator and returned to MRS Qualifications.

Despatch of scripts

It is important that the Examinations Administrator guard against any possible loss or security breach in his/her dealings with the candidates' completed examination scripts. The following guidelines are designed to guard against the possibility of any such loss or security breach. The Examinations Administrator should:

- check that s/he has collected all completed examination scripts;
- pack the scripts, along with the completed attendance record, seating plan and completed *Examinations Materials Despatch Form* detailing the contents of the package for immediate despatch to MRS Qualifications. Packaging must be securely fastened;
- wherever possible, despatch examination scripts to MRS Qualifications on the same day. If this is not possible, scripts should be returned to the secure storage for despatch on the following day;
- send the scripts by Special Delivery Mail or courier. A certificate of posting must be obtained and kept at the centre;
- confirm the despatch of materials with the Professional Development Co-ordinator.

Lost scripts

If, for any reason, a candidate's script is lost during transportation prior to the completion of marking, then no grade can be issued and the student will be required to undertake an alternative assessment.

9. The Award of the MRS Advanced Certificate

The Advanced Certificate is awarded to candidates who submit work for both components of assessment and who successfully meet or exceed pass requirements in both components of assessment.

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 will normally need to achieve a minimum of a Pass grade in each question. If one answer is awarded a Fail grade, candidates will normally be expected to achieve a Merit band or above in one of the remaining two questions in order to pass.

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 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 a 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) a maximum of three times within their 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.
- Integrated Assignments which fail to meet the pass criteria may be re-submitted for assessment when appropriate improvements have been made. Resubmission of the same assignment topic is permitted, but limited to a maximum of two times.
- 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.

Candidates wishing to retake one or both assessed components must register for the retake(s) through their original registration centre on the appropriate *Candidate Second Registration Form*. Copies of this form will be sent to accredited centres as part of the Advanced Certificate

documentation. Any requests for reasonable adjustment must be made at the time of registration.

Candidates can apply to transfer and take the relevant component of assessment at a different centre. In such cases, the transfer procedure outlined in the section above should be applied.

Candidates who fail to complete successfully both components of assessment within the 3-year registration period will be required to follow another course or programme of learning and be re-registered as a new candidate.

Full specifications and assessment criteria for both components of assessment can be found in the *Full Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines*.

Final results

Results will be agreed by the Advanced Certificate Chief Examiner(s) and moderators, and will be issued in accordance with the **published results release date**.

Candidates' results will be sent to the centre of entry. The centre should despatch the results as soon as possible.

Please note that MRS Qualifications is unable to relay results via email or telephone.

10. Certificates

Certificates for successful candidates are normally issued within 6 weeks of the final results being released. Certificates will be sent to the candidates' centre of entry by secure delivery. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the candidates' certificates are despatched to their candidates by a secure delivery method.

Issue of Replacement Certificates

Replacement Certificates may be re-issued under the following circumstances:

- if the Certificate is damaged in transit to candidate and the original damaged certificate is returned with a *Replacement Certificate Request Form**
- if there is proof that the Certificate has not been delivered to the candidate
- if candidate details are incorrect on the Certificate and the incorrect certificate is returned with a *Replacement Certificate Request Form**

**The original Certificate must be returned with the Replacement Certificate Request Form in order to issue a replacement.*

Candidates who have lost or damaged their certificate do not meet the criteria for re-issue of a duplicate can request a *Statement of Achievement*.

All claims for replacement certificates must be made within 3 months of the certification date on the *Replacement Certificate/ Statement of Achievement Request form*.

Disclaimer

Awarding bodies reserve the right not to issue a replacement certificate. MRS Qualifications will make every effort to check the candidate identity and certification against the information given, and to provide a replacement certificate or statement of achievement. MRS Qualifications can take no responsibility for fraudulent claims. All replacement certificates issued by MRS will be clearly marked 'REPLACEMENT CERTIFICATE'.

Statement of Achievement

Candidates who do not meet the criteria for re-issue of a Certificate can apply for a Statement of Achievement.

A request for a Statement of Achievement can be made up to 10 years after the certification date.

The request must be made on the *Replacement Certificate/Statement of Achievement Request Form*.

11. Enquiries about Results

Marking & assessment procedures

The procedures for marking the Examination and Integrated Assignment components of the Advanced Certificate include:

- a programme of training and standardisation for all examiners;
- the double marking and moderation of a substantial number of examination scripts and Integrated Assignments;
- double marking of all examination scripts which have not met the Pass standard on initial assessment;
- moderation of all examination scripts where double marking has resulted in a change in grade;
- moderation of all Integrated Assignments and examination scripts which have not met the *Pass* criteria on initial assessment;
- individual consideration at the Awards Meeting of the results of all candidates where:
 - the examiner or assessor has indicated that the script or assignment straddles a grade borderline.
 - double marking has resulted in a change to the original grade awarded by the first examiner;
 - the moderator has indicated that the work requires further scrutiny.

Enquiries about results

MRS Qualifications will not normally enter into correspondence with individual candidates. It is the responsibility of the centre to issue results and to follow up any enquiries about results from candidates. However, should a candidate feel that an issue has not been resolved satisfactorily; the centre should advise the candidate to write to MRS Qualifications via the *Appeals procedure*.

Enquiry procedure

Please refer to the *Policy Handbook* for further information.

12. Appeals procedure

Appeals against results – What constitutes an appeal

The Appeals process exists to enable centres and direct registration candidates to appeal against decisions which affect the grades awarded to candidates. The appeals procedure focuses on whether, in making decisions on the results to be awarded or on issues relating to irregular conduct, MRS Qualifications:

- used procedures which were consistent with the criteria governing the qualification
- applied its procedures properly and fairly in arriving at judgements.

The Appeals process does not focus on the candidate's performance in the examination or coursework assignment. It does not routinely involve the remarking or reassessment of a candidate's work. However, if the appeal finds that procedures have not been followed appropriately, a remarking of the candidate's work may be ordered by the Appeals Committee. If such reassessment calls into question the results awarded to other candidates in the same assessment round, MRS Qualifications will take steps to protect the interests of other candidates.

The Appeals process is not open to candidates who feel that their performance may have been adversely affected by illness or other unforeseen circumstances which affected them at the time of the examination. These candidates are advised to follow the procedures detailed in *Special Considerations*. These procedures are detailed for candidates in registration confirmation documentation and in the Information for Candidates guidance provided on the day of the examination.

Submitting an appeal

Please refer to the *Policy Handbook* for further information.

Appeals Procedure Administration Timetable

At this time...	The MRS will....	The centre should...
STAGE 1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 40 days of the release of results 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> submit an Appeal in writing for any candidates wishing to appeal against decisions which affect their grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 3 working days of receipt of appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch a letter confirming receipt of appeal 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 14 working days of receipt of appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch a response to the centre detailing the outcome of Stage 1 of Appeal 	
STAGE 2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 14 working days of receipt of letter detailing the outcome of Stage 1 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> submit a request for their candidates appeal to be sent to the MRS Qualifications Appeal Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 3 working days of receipt of request for appeal to be sent to Qualifications Appeal Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch a letter confirming receipt of request 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 12 weeks* of receipt of request for appeal to be sent to Qualifications Appeal Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch of a letter advising centres of the Appeals Committee's decision - Stage 2 	
INDEPENDENT REVIEW		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 21 days of the receipt of the letter advising centres of the outcome of the result of the Appeals Committee's decision - Stage 2 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> submit a request for their candidates appeal to be sent for an independent review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within 12 weeks of receipt of request for appeal to be sent for an independent review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despatch of a letter advising centres of the outcome of the independent review 	

13. Malpractice Procedure

What constitutes malpractice

Malpractice is any irregular conduct, on the part of a candidate or centre staff, which gives unfair advantage to a candidate or group of candidates, or disadvantages other candidates. The Assessment Information, distributed to all candidates with their confirmation of registration, outlines the consequences of such conduct.

Examples of irregular conduct which constitutes malpractice include:

- plagiarism of another's work
- copying or collusion, or attempted copying or collusion, during an examination or of other assessed work
- obtaining unauthorised access examination material
- using or trying to use unauthorised material or other aids in an examination (e.g. unauthorised electronic media such as mobile phones and palm tops; notes, books and study guides)
- behaviour which disrupts, or has the potential to disrupt, the smooth running of the examination (e.g. not following the invigilator's instructions)
- impersonating a candidate (i.e. claiming to be someone other than yourself)
- altering or forging any results documents or certificates

Identifying malpractice

Cases of malpractice can be identified in a number of different ways. They may be:

- reported by the centre (e.g. via a report from an invigilator or the Examinations Administrator or on a Special Considerations form, where the behaviour of an individual has had a disruptive effect on other candidates)
- reported by an examiner or assessor, who may identify shared answers in an examination script or identical wording in a coursework assignment
- identified by a moderator, who may identify identical work in coursework assignments

In cases where malpractice is identified or suspected by a centre, the centre is required to submit a written report detailing the suspected irregular conduct, and identifying any candidates who have been complicit in this conduct. Failure on the part of a centre to co-operate with MRS Qualifications in an investigation of malpractice may result in certificates not being issued and/or future registrations not being accepted from the centre.

Dealing with malpractice

All cases of suspected malpractice are investigated thoroughly by MRS Qualifications.

Please refer to the *Policy Handbook* for further information.



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