



# **MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice**

## **Admin Handbook**

Effective from June 2020 Assessment Round

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

MRS supports the sector with specialist training and qualifications, professional membership, company accreditation, cutting-edge conferences, glittering awards and advice on best practice.

MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research Practice  
Admin Handbook – August 2025  
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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 Manager and the Head of Membership Development.

### **Contact the Professional Development Manager 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](mailto: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

Contact details:

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7566 1881

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## 2. Administration Timetable

At this time...	The MRS will....	The Centre should...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at least <b>4 weeks</b> before the registration closing date.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Submit any requests for Reasonable Adjustment with supporting documentation</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at least <b>7 weeks</b> before the examination</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete and submit a <b>Candidate Registration Form and upload to the MRS SFTP</b></li> <li>complete and submit <b>Candidate Second Registration Form</b> for candidates resitting a component of assessment and upload to the MRS SFTP</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>6 weeks</b> prior to the examination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>email registered candidates to confirm registration and to give details of online exam and/or IA Submission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n/a</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least <b>14 days</b> prior to the examination date</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete and submit any requests for transfers and/or deferrals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on the day of the examination</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that all MRS Qualifications/TestReach guidelines are followed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>7 days</b> following the examination date</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that any requests for <b>Special Consideration</b> have been submitted to MRS Qualifications.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>2 weeks</b> following the examination date</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>submit the Centre's assessed Integrated Assignments, along with associated documentation, to MRS</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>12 weeks</b> following the examination date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch results emails to the Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distribute the results emails to individual candidates</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>40 days</b> of the release of results</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>submit completed <b>Enquiry forms</b> for any candidates wishing to use the enquiry service</li> <li>submit an <b>Appeal</b> in writing for any candidates wishing to appeal against decisions which affect their grade</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>2 weeks</b> of the closing of the Enquiries and Appeals period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch digital Certificates to the Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distribute the digital certificates to successful candidates</li> </ul>

### 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. 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 Member or Certified 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 Head of Membership Development.

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

### Post-accreditation documents

Once accredited, the Centre will be emailed a pack, which includes the *Letter of Centre Accreditation* to offer courses or programmes of learning towards the MRS Advanced Certificate. This letter should be signed and 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)
- Accredited Centre Certificate
- *Link to MRS 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

### Re-accreditation

The period of accreditation lasts for 3 years. Centres must apply for re-accreditation every 3 years.

### Updates to accredited courses or programmes of learning

Centres are required to inform 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 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.

## 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 holds 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.
- appoint 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 Member or Certified 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 Certificate in Market 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.

To complete the assessed components of the MRS Advanced Certificate, candidates are expected to have English language skills (reading and writing) equivalent, as a minimum, to Level C1 in the Common European Framework for Languages / 6.5 in IELTS.

### 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, scribe or a reader.

- re-organising the assessment room.

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 based on 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 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.

Centres must only submit applications for special consideration where an adverse issue or event has, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their normal level of attainment in an assessment. For example, a candidate who has temporarily experienced illness, injury or some other event outside of their control at the time of the assessment.

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.

Registration forms must be received at MRS Qualifications by the relevant closing date. Any late entries may not be accepted or incur an additional administration charge. Please see the *Administrative Timetable (Section 2)* for more information.

Requests for *Reasonable Adjustments* for candidates should be made by submitting a Reasonable Adjustment form with supporting documentation **at least 4 weeks** prior to

the registration deadline. Please refer to the *MRS Qualifications – 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 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 Manager 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 in advance 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. 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. This can be specified at the time of deferral or left open. A candidate may only defer to a round that is within their registration period. Extensions will not be granted.

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. Where the candidate specifies the round they are deferring to, they will be registered and invoiced as soon as they have notified MRS of their deferral. If their deferral is left open, they will be charged the deferral fee once they have chosen and registered for their preferred round.

*\*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. These are the only circumstances under which fees can be waived.*

*If a candidate defers more than once, appropriate evidence must be submitted at the time of each deferral request, otherwise the deferral fee is payable*

### 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 to be transferred to another assessment round.

*\*If a candidate 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 Manager 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.

Fees are reviewed annually by MRS Qualifications. Revised fees are added to the MRS Website in the January prior to the fees becoming effective in the April.

### MRS Credit Policy – Advanced Certificate

#### Advanced Certificate Qualification

##### **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**

- Payment required with order – bank transfer or card payment

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

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 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 the candidate. Both the Brief and the Proposal are assessed.

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

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

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

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

### Despatch of assignments

Candidates must submit their Integrated Assignment to their Centre co-ordinator by the specified deadline. Submission of IAs must be in digital format, as per the instructions below.

The Centre co-ordinator is required to submit, for each candidate, the Integrated Assignment, a completed Integrated Assignment Coversheet and Assessment Feedback Sheet to MRS by the published submission deadline.

Candidates assessed assignments are submitted to MRS via upload to the SFTP by the deadline, using the following instructions:

- Submit one copy only, but keep a saved version on file.
- Word format.
- Title IA files in the following format: 'IA Surname Initial'
- Upload each IA's coversheet and assessment feedback as separate files, in the following formats:
  - 'Coversheet Surname Initial'
  - 'Feedback Surname Initial'. If submitting 2 pieces of feedback for one candidate, please title these 'Feedback Surname Initial First Marker' and 'Feedback Surname Initial Second Marker'. Documents not in this format will not be accepted.

Documents should then be submitted in a folder entitled 'IA Surname Initial'. Integrated Assignments and accompanying documents that do not follow these instructions will not be accepted.

The writable PDF versions of the Coversheet and Assessment Feedback sheet can also be found in the [Accredited Centre Area](#) of the MRS website.

### Storage of IAs

MRS Qualifications retains securely all formally assessed items for a period of 3 years.

## 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<sup>1/2</sup>-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 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 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 Examination is online and remotely invigilated. The host of the examination is TestReach. TestReach are both ISO 27001:2013 and ISO 9001:2015 Certified.

Candidates answer the questions on a computer as opposed to using pen and paper. They are supervised by an invigilator over the internet, who is connected to the candidate by camera, audio and remote screen-share. With the invigilator physically present supervising, the exam can therefore be sat at any suitable location.

MRS will supply by secure file transfer candidate names and email addresses to TestReach. Approximately 1 week before the examination date candidates will receive an email with login details giving access to resources to assist candidates with the application. Candidates will be guided through a procedure to download and install the TestReach desktop application and carry out a short system check, to prepare their computer for exam day.

No special equipment is required for a remotely invigilated exam, a standard desktop or laptop with a webcam, a microphone and good quality internet connectivity (not dial-up) is sufficient.

All the key requirements are checked during the system check process and in the unlikely event of any issues, these will be brought to candidates' attention and can be resolved well in advance of exam day. TestReach technical support is also available to assist if required.

**Minimum system requirements for remotely invigilated exams are:**

- A laptop or computer running Windows 7+ or Mac OS 10.10+
- Intel Core i3 (or equivalent) and 4GB RAM
- A working webcam
- A working microphone and speakers
- Minimum screen size of 13" and resolution of 1024 x 768
- Good continuous internet speed of 2Mbps or higher

MRS is the examiner/awarding body and remains the data controller, TestReach is the data processor. The data that TestReach holds is as per that outlined in Annex 1 at the bottom of the Master Subscription Agreement (view [here](#).) The videos of candidates taking exams via remote invigilation, are automatically deleted 6 weeks after the exam date by TestReach (unless they are specifically asked to hold a video for longer, e.g. to assist in the assessment process. Videos will only be viewed by MRS Awarding Body Staff. All exam data is transferred from TestReach to MRS via sFTP and stored on MRS Servers.

**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.
- arranging a suitable examination room, if applicable.
- making any special arrangements which have been arranged in advance with MRS Qualifications (e.g. for candidates who have been awarded Reasonable Adjustments).
- 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, if applicable.*

**Examination timetable**

The published timing of the examination is 10.00am – 12.30pm. Candidates may receive a start time from TestReach that differs by up to 30 minutes. This is to allow for staggered candidate registration processes to be undertaken by the TestReach invigilators. Once

logged in all candidates have an individual examination timer which gives them the full allotted exam time.

For overseas Centres the examination should be sat at the equivalent UK time of 10.00am – 12.30pm. However, if this is not feasible, an overseas Centre may request to start the examination within reason, 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.

### The examination room

If a Centre is hosting candidates to sit the exam, 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 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 sat a minimum of 1 metre apart.

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.

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 their 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.

## 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. 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 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 awarded a Fail grade.

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.

- To be considered for the award, Referred candidates must retake the component in which they were not successful.
- 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. Submission 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 re-register as a new candidate and repeat both elements of assessment.

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 telephone.**

## 10. Certificates

Certificates for successful candidates are normally issued within 2 weeks after the closure of the Enquiries and Appeals period. Certificates, in digital format, will be sent to the candidates' Centre of entry by secure delivery - sFTP. 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 there is proof that the Certificate has not been received by the candidate
- if candidate details are incorrect on the Certificate. The incorrect certificate must be returned to MRS with a *Replacement Certificate Request Form* to issue a replacement

Candidates who have lost 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 components of assessment 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 Failed 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 Failed 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 who are registered via a Centre. 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 been resolved unsatisfactorily; the Centre should advise the candidate to write to MRS Qualifications.

### Enquiry procedure

Please refer to the *MRS Qualifications - 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 regulatory 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 undertaken. 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 should follow the procedures detailed in policy and procedures for *Special Consideration*. 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 *MRS Qualifications - Policy Handbook* for further information.

## 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 to examination material.
- using or trying to use unauthorised material or other aids in an examination (e.g. unauthorised electronic media such as mobile phone and smart watches, 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.

### AI Misuse

Candidates are expected to demonstrate their own knowledge, skills and understanding as required for the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice (Advanced Certificate) and set out in the qualification specification.

While AI is becoming an established tool at the workplace, for the purposes of demonstrating knowledge, understanding and skills for the Advanced Certificate, it's important for candidates' progression that they do not rely on tools such as AI.

Candidates should develop the knowledge, skills and understanding of the subjects they are studying. They must be able to demonstrate that the IA submission is the product of their own independent work and independent thinking.

As has always been the case candidates must submit an Integrated Assignment (IA) which is candidate's own work. This means both ensuring that any final IAs are in candidates' own words and is not copied or paraphrased from another source such as an AI tool, and that the content reflects their own independent work.

AI misuse is where a candidate has used one or more AI tools and has submitted work for assessment when it is not their own. Examples of AI misuse include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work submitted for assessment is no longer the candidate's own
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content

- Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the candidate's own work, analysis, evaluation or recommendations
- Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information/reference
- Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

AI misuse constitutes malpractice as defined in the *MRS Qualifications – Policy Handbook*.

Please refer to the *MRS Qualifications - Policy Handbook* for further information, including Potential indicators of AI misuse, AI – The Responsibilities of Centres, AI – Centre Information, AI Checklist, Identifying Malpractice and Dealing with Malpractice.



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