



# **MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice**

## **Admin Handbook**

Effective from June 2020 Assessment Round

With members in more than 50 countries, MRS is the world's leading authority on research and business intelligence.

MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice  
Admin Handbook – updated June 2020  
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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction.....</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>2. Administration Timetable.....</b>                                      | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3. Centre Requirements .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| Courses and programmes of learning .....                                     | 7         |
| Course design .....  | 7         |
| Components of assessment .....   | 7         |
| Course length .....  | 8         |
| Timing of assessed components .....  | 8         |
| Staffing the course/programme of study .....                                 | 8         |
| <b>4. Accreditation Procedure.....</b>                                       | <b>9</b>  |
| Initial accreditation.....   | 9         |
| Post-accreditation documents .....   | 9         |
| Re-accreditation.....  | 9         |
| Updates to accredited courses or programmes of learning .....                | 9         |
| Notification of courses being run .....                                      | 9         |
| <b>5. Responsibility of the Centre .....</b>                                 | <b>10</b> |
| Recruitment of candidates .....  | 10        |
| Support of candidates .....  | 10        |
| Provision of access to assessment .....                                      | 10        |
| Adherence to administrative, quality assurance and access requirements ..... | 10        |
| Dealing with malpractice .....   | 11        |
| Commitment to MRS standards and values.....                                  | 11        |
| Withdrawal from accreditation.....   | 11        |
| <b>6. Candidates .....</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| Number of candidates .....   | 12        |
| Entry requirements and Selection of Candidates.....                          | 12        |
| Language requirements.....   | 12        |
| Reasonable Adjustments .....   | 12        |
| Special Considerations .....   | 13        |
| Candidate registration.....  | 13        |
| Candidate Withdrawal .....   | 14        |
| Resit and deferred candidates .....  | 14        |
| Resit Candidates .....   | 14        |
| Deferred Candidates.....   | 15        |
| No Show Candidates .....   | 15        |
| Candidate fees .....   | 16        |
| <b>7. Components of Assessment - Assignments .....</b>                       | <b>17</b> |
| Setting of Assignments .....   | 17        |
| Presentation of Assignments.....   | 17        |
| Assignment length.....   | 18        |
| Confidentiality.....   | 18        |
| Assessing assignments.....   | 18        |
| Despatch of assignments.....   | 18        |
| Return of assignments .....  | 18        |
| <b>8. Components of Assessment – Examinations .....</b>                      | <b>19</b> |
| The Examinations Administrator .....   | 19        |
| Examination timetable .....  | 19        |
| Ensuring security of examination papers and answer booklets.....             | 20        |
| The examination room .....   | 20        |
| Appointment of invigilators.....   | 21        |
| The responsibilities of the invigilator .....                                | 21        |
| Following the examination .....  | 22        |
| Release of examination papers.....   | 22        |
| Despatch of scripts.....   | 22        |
| Lost scripts.....  | 22        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>9. The Award of the MRS Diploma .....</b>               | <b>23</b> |
| Pass requirements.....                                     | 23        |
| Overall Result .....                                       | 24        |
| Grading System for each unit of Diploma assessment .....   | 24        |
| Unit 1 – The Principles of Market & Social Research.....   | 24        |
| Units 2 & 3 and 4.....                                     | 24        |
| Unit 5.....  | 24        |
| Final results.....   | 25        |
| <b>10. Certificates .....</b>                              | <b>26</b> |
| Issue of Replacement Certificates.....                     | 26        |
| Statement of Achievement .....                             | 26        |
| <b>11. Enquiries about Results .....</b>                   | <b>27</b> |
| Marking & assessment procedures.....                       | 27        |
| Enquiries about results.....                               | 27        |
| Enquiry procedure .....                                    | 27        |
| <b>11. Appeals procedure.....</b>                          | <b>28</b> |
| Appeals against results – What constitutes an appeal ..... | 28        |
| Submitting an appeal.....                                  | 28        |
| Appeals Procedure Administration Timetable.....            | 29        |
| <b>12. Malpractice Procedure .....</b>                     | <b>30</b> |
| What constitutes malpractice .....                         | 30        |
| Identifying malpractice .....                              | 30        |
| Dealing with malpractice .....                             | 30        |

## 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 Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice.

The MRS awarding body, **MRS Qualifications**, is responsible for administering the Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice (Diploma). 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 Accredited Centre Section of 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](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 Diploma

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> prior to the registration date</li> </ul>                   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit any requests for <b>Reasonable Adjustment</b> with supporting documentation</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at least <b>3 weeks</b> before the examination</li> </ul>                           |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete and submit a <b>Candidate Registration Form</b></li> <li>complete and submit <b>Candidate Second Registration Form</b> for candidates resitting a component of assessment</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><b>2 weeks</b> prior to the examination</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch the candidates' letters of confirmation to the centre</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distribute the confirmation letters to the individual candidates</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1 week</b> prior to the examination</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch all examination materials to the centre</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confirm receipt of the materials</li> <li>store materials in a secure place</li> <li>inform MRS of any discrepancy between the despatch form and contents</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 guidelines are followed</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>immediately following the examination</li> </ul>                                    |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch the completed examination scripts, along with other examination documentation and a completed <b>Examination Material Despatch Form</b>, to MRS Qualifications</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 slips to the centre</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distribute the results slips 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 Certificates to the centre</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>distribute the certificates to successful candidates</li> </ul>  |

### 3. Centre Requirements

#### Courses and programmes of learning

Centres wishing to prepare candidates for the MRS Diploma 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 Diploma as part of *either*:
  - a wider course of study (e.g. an appropriate postgraduate degree) *or*
  - a wider programme of professional training and development (e.g. as part of an employer in-house training programme).

In such cases, the Diploma 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 Diploma accredited syllabus. Each course or programme of learning should allow for 300 guided learning hours. The suggested breakdown of study time is as follows:

- Unit 1 - 45 hours of guided study
- Unit 2 - 90 hours of guided study
- Unit 3 - 90 hours of guided study
- Unit 4 - 90 hours of guided study
- Unit 5 - 75 hours of guided study

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

In addition, candidates are expected to undertake self-directed reading in areas of their own choice to ensure that they feel confident about undertaking the components of assessment included in the qualification.

#### Components of assessment

The MRS Diploma comprises 5 individually assessed units. Candidates are required to complete 4 assessed units: units 1, 2 and 5 are compulsory for all candidates, and all candidates must complete *either* unit 3 *or* unit 4. All units are externally assessed. These are:

- **Unit 1** - The Principles of Market & Social Research – *Assessment by examination*
- **Unit 2** - The Practice & Context of Market & Social Research – *Assessment by assignment*
- **Unit 3** - Analysing and Interpreting Quantitative Market & Social Research Data – *Assessment by assignment*
- **Unit 4** - Collecting, Analysing and Interpreting Qualitative Market & Social Research Data – *Assessment by assignment*
- **Unit 5** - Case Studies in Market & Social Research – *Assessment by examination*

It is recommended that candidates follow the units in sequence as each builds on knowledge and skills developed in the previous.

Further details of the administration of the components of assessment can be found in *Components of Assessment* and *Candidate Assessment* of this document. For full details of the study requirements of these components please refer to the *MRS Diploma Full Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines*.

### Course length

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

### Timing of assessed components

There are 2 assessment rounds each year, in June and December. Centres may enter candidates for one or more Unit assessments in a single assessment round.

When registering candidates for assessment, centres should indicate the selected assessment round(s) for each Unit assessment.

### Staffing the course/programme of study

All courses or programmes of learning leading to the MRS Diploma 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 Full or Associate Member.

All tutors or trainers 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 wish 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 sent a pack, which includes two copies of the *Letter of Centre Accreditation* to offer courses or programmes of learning towards the MRS Diploma. Both copies of this letter should be signed, and one copy of the letter must be 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* 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 the 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 3 years. Centres must apply for re-accreditation every 3 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.

## 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 MRS, either at Member or Certified Member level.
- ensure that MRS is provided with an annual update, detailing any proposed changes to the accredited programme or 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 all components of assessment leading to the qualification to which accreditation applies. Assessment requirements for each of these components are 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 a component of assessment to resubmit/resit 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 all of the components of assessment.

### Adherence to administrative, quality assurance and access requirements

*The centre undertakes to:*

- adhere to the requirements as laid out in the *Diploma Administrative 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 MRS 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 Diploma 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:

- successful completion of the MRS Advanced Certificate and a minimum of one year's experience in a research-related role
- successful completion of The Chartered Institute of Marketing's (CIM) Professional Diploma in Marketing, Marketing Research & Information Level 6 module plus a minimum of one year's experience in a research-related role
- a degree or appropriate professional qualification which contained a significant research component and a minimum of two year's work experience in a research-related role
- a minimum of three year's work experience in a research-related and evidence of training within that role.

Candidates who have completed the MRS Advanced Certificate are not required to undertake an additional course of study before entering for the Unit 1 examination.

### Language requirements

The language used in all assessed components of the MRS Diploma 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 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 via a Reasonable Adjustment form. Supporting documentation from a recognised authority (e.g. doctor's note or report) must be submitted with the form. 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 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 Diploma 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.

The Candidate Registration Fee covers registration for all four modules of assessment. This fee is payable at the time of registration of the candidate for their first unit of assessment.

It is the centre's responsibility to register all candidates with MRS Qualifications. Prior to completing the *Candidate Registration Form*, the centre administrator should ensure that each candidate has completed and submitted an accompanying *Candidate Registration with MRS*

*Form*. The *Candidate Registration with MRS Form* only needs to be submitted at the time of registration of the candidate for their first unit of assessment and is not required for subsequent unit registrations.

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* 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 *Policy Handbook* for further information.

From the date a candidate is registered with MRS for assessment they have four years in which to successfully complete the four Diploma unit assessments to be awarded the MRS Diploma in Market and Social Research Practice. This potentially gives candidates eight assessment opportunities in which to successfully complete the four units of assessment.

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. Refund 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 the 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 candidates

- Resit - candidates who failed a component 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

A candidate who has failed to meet the pass criteria for a unit of assessment is awarded a Fail for that unit. Candidates are required to successfully pass 4 units. Candidates need only resit the unit(s) in which they were unsuccessful.

Candidates who have been unsuccessful in a unit can register to resit it within the four-year registration period.

Candidates wishing to retake a unit of assessment must register for the retake(s) through their original registration centre on the appropriate *Candidate Second Registration Form* Any requests for reasonable adjustment must be made at the time of registration.

Candidates can take each unit of assessment a maximum of three times within their four-year registration period. Candidates who are unsuccessful in a unit assessment on the third attempt are normally required to wait until the end of their four-year registration period before being able to re-register with MRS for assessment. Prior attainment of units in a previous registration period will not be carried forward. On re-registering candidates will be required to sit/re-sit assessment of all four units.

Candidates who fail to successfully complete all four units within their four-year registration period are normally required to re-register with MRS for assessment, and prior attainment of units in a previous registration period will not be carried forward. On re-registering candidates will be required to sit/re-sit assessment all of the four units.

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

### 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 '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 of the candidates 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 – Qualifications

#### **UK-based Members and Company Partners**

- 30 day credit terms available
- All invoices must be settled in full in advance of the exam/assessment 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 - Assignments

### Setting of Assignments

The material and tasks for Units 2 & 3 are provided by MRS Qualifications in advance of each assessment round. All materials and tasks for these written assignments relate directly to the learning outcomes and specifications from the syllabus. All assignments are submitted to MRS for external assessment.

For Unit 4, Centres should provide or give approval for a research task around which the collection, analysis and interpretation of data should be based. Candidates may elect to base their assignment on work undertaken for their employer as part of an ongoing or current research project or Centres may set research objectives based on issues which they themselves may wish to investigate.

Centres are responsible for ensuring assignment titles and guidance which relate directly to the learning outcomes and specifications from the syllabus.

### Presentation of Assignments

Assignments should be presented in the specified format and should address the issues detailed in the specifications table for that assignment. The centre should provide guidance on the sections and type of information expected within each assignment.

Submission of IAs must be in digital format, as per the instructions below

The assignment should be presented with a one-inch margin around the text. Text size should ideally be 11pt.

Ensure that each section within the assignment is easy to read by:

- using headings and bullet points effectively.
- avoiding over-brief note form. If you include notes, you should ensure they make your points clearly and overtly.
- ensuring that your use of English is clear, accurate and appropriate to a client audience.

The centre co-ordinator is required to submit, for each candidate, their assignment accompanied by a separate [Assignment Coversheet](#), giving the candidate's name, MRS candidate number and centre number. Centres are requested to ensure that candidates have completed the Candidate Declaration on this form. This declaration attests to the authenticity of the individual candidate's work. Assignments with incomplete Candidate Declaration will be returned to the centre for completion and this, in turn, may delay release of the candidate's result

Candidates assignments must be 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: 'Unit, Number, Surname Initial'
- Title Coversheets in the following format: 'Coversheet, Unit, Number, Surname Initial'

Assignments and accompanying documents that do not follow these instructions will not be accepted.

### Assignment length

The maximum word count for each assignment is as follows:

Unit 2 = 7,000

Unit 3 = 6,750

Unit 4 = 6,750

The above limits do not include appendices. Appendices, however, should not be used to extend the word limit. Please refer to the individual assignment specifications for full guidance.

Candidates must understand the importance of respecting the word limit. All words within the main body of the text, including those within tables are included within the word count. Text within the title page or contents page is not included in the word count.

Assignments that considerably exceed the specified word limit for a unit assessment (by more than 10%) will be graded as 'non-compliant' as they do not comply with assessment criteria and cannot be assessed with the qualification's framework.

### Confidentiality

MRS recognises that some assignments submitted for Unit 4 may be based on sensitive, real-life projects. Therefore, assignments will be treated with confidentiality if required. Confidential assignments will be read only by the appointed assessors, appointed moderators and approved members of MRS staff and will not be selected for use in training and standardisation\*.

It is strongly advised that any assignments based on a real-life research problem should be anonymised to ensure that the client, product, research agency and personnel are disguised.

\*If they wish their assignment to be treated confidentially, candidates are required to include a covering letter with the assignment outlining the reasons for their request.

### Assessing assignments

All candidate assignments are externally assessed by MRS Qualifications examiner/assessor team, in accordance with the criteria laid out in the *Diploma Assessment Specifications & Guidelines*.

### Despatch of assignments

The centre is responsible for despatching the candidates' assignments 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 *Assignment Despatch List*.

Candidates assignments must be in digital format and submitted to MRS via upload to the SFTP by the deadline.

### 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 – Examinations

Units 1 and 5 are both assessed by externally-set examinations.

There are 2 assessment sessions per year for both Units, in **June and December**. Details of question types, tasks and assessment criteria can be found in the *MRS Diploma Full Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines (Units 1 & 5)*.

All written examinations are 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 the examination should be sat at the equivalent UK 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 her 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. because 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.
- a tutor or 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 the person who 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, MRS Qualifications 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.

There are 2 sets of guidelines for invigilators, for Unit 1 & Unit 5 examinations. These 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 Material 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 Diploma

The MRS Diploma is awarded to candidates who successfully meet or exceed pass requirements in 4 units of assessment.

Candidates are not eligible for the award in cases where plagiarism or dishonesty has been brought to the attention of MRS Qualifications.

### Pass requirements

The following grid summarises the mode of assessment and grading for each unit of the MRS Diploma in Market and Social Research Practice.

To be awarded the qualification, all candidates must complete successfully:

- units 1,2 & 5
- *either* unit 3 *or* unit 4

It is recommended that candidates follow the units in sequence as each builds on knowledge and skills developed in the previous.

| Unit title   | Mode of assessment                                     | Assessment periods | Internal/external   | Grading                 |
|--|--|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Unit 1:</b><br>The Principles of Market & Social Research                                     | Examination (3-hour paper)                             | June & December    | Externally assessed | Fail, Pass, Distinction |
| <b>Unit 2:</b><br>The Practice & Context of Market & Social Research                             | 4 Coursework assignments (5000 – 7,000 words in total) | June & December    | Externally assessed | Fail, Pass, Distinction |
| <b>Unit 3:</b><br>Analysing & Interpreting Quantitative Market & Social Research Data            | Coursework assignment (5,000 – 6,750 words)            | June & December    | Externally assessed | Fail, Pass, Distinction |
| <b>Unit 4:</b><br>Collecting, Analysing & Interpreting Qualitative Market & Social Research Data | Coursework assignment (5000 – 6,750 words)             | June & December    | Externally assessed | Fail, Pass, Distinction |
| <b>Unit 5:</b><br>Case Studies in Market & Social Research                                       | Examination (up to 90 minutes prep & 3-hour paper)     | June & December    | Externally assessed | Fail, Pass, Distinction |

## Overall Result

No overall grade is awarded for the MRS Diploma. The *certificate* issued to successful candidates will give the level of achievement in each unit of assessment.

## Grading System for each unit of Diploma assessment

For all units' candidates will receive a grade – Distinction, Pass or Fail. The assessment structure for the units varies depending upon the format of the assessment.

### Unit 1 – The Principles of Market & Social Research

Question 1 is worth 50% of the final mark and Questions 2 and 3 are each worth 25%. Where questions are subdivided into 2 or 3 tasks, the weighting for each task within the question will be clearly indicated.

Answers will be awarded a band grade (Distinction, Pass or Fail). In order to pass the examination, candidates will normally be required to achieve a minimum of a Pass grade in all three questions.

All candidates must pass Question 1. Candidates who are awarded a Fail grade in either question 2 or 3 will normally be expected to achieve a strong Pass grade in the other question.

### Units 2 & 3 and 4

Candidates are given an overall band grade (Distinction, Pass or Fail). The assessment criteria for each assignment are included in the assignment specifications. In addition, the level descriptors provide guidance for the expected depth and range which are expected to be demonstrated at pass, distinction and fail grades. To pass the assessment candidates will normally be required to achieve a minimum of a Pass grade for each task within the assignment. Candidates who are awarded a Fail grade for a task will normally be expected to achieve a strong Pass grade or above in one or more of the remaining tasks to pass.

### Unit 5

Candidates are awarded a band grade (Distinction, Pass or Fail). To pass the examination, candidates will normally be required to achieve a minimum of a Pass grade in all three questions. Candidates who are awarded a Fail grade in one question will normally be expected to achieve a strong Pass grade or above in one of the remaining two questions to pass.

For full guidance on the levels of attainment required for awarding each grade please refer to the *Assessment Level Descriptors*.

The *Assessment Specifications & Criteria* provide guidance on the core information required by each assessment.



### Final results

Results will be agreed by the Diploma 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

A Certificate will be issued to candidates who successfully complete all the requirements of the MRS Diploma. The Diploma certificate will detail the units completed by the candidate, along with the level of achievement in each unit. Certificates will not normally be issued for the completion of individual units.

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 by secure delivery - sFTP. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the candidates' certificates are despatched to their candidates securely.

### 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* in order to issue a replacement

Candidates who have lost or damaged their certificate but 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. The awarding body 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. The organisation 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 Assignment components of the Diploma include:

- a programme of training and standardisation for all examiners.
- the double marking and moderation of a substantial number of examination scripts and 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 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. Where a candidate does not feel that an issue has 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.

## 11. 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 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...   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>STAGE 1</b>   |   |  |
| <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 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>3 working days</b> of receipt of appeal</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch a letter confirming receipt of appeal</li> </ul>                                      |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>14 working days</b> of receipt appeal</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch a response to the centre detailing the outcome of Stage 1 of Appeal</li> </ul>        |  |
| <b>STAGE 2</b>   |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>14 working days</b> of receipt of letter detailing the outcome of Stage 1</li> </ul>  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>submit a <b>request</b> for their candidates appeal to be sent to the MRS Qualifications Appeal Committee</li> </ul>          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>3 working days</b> of receipt of request for appeal to be sent to Qualifications Appeal Committee</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch a letter confirming receipt of request</li> </ul>                                     |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>12 weeks*</b> of receipt of request for appeal to be sent to Qualifications Appeal Committee</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch of a letter advising centres of the Appeals Committee's decision - Stage 2</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>INDEPENDENT REVIEW</b>  |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>21 days</b> of the receipt of the letter advising centres of the outcome of the result of the Appeals Committee's decision – Stage 2</li> </ul> |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>submit a <b>request</b> for their candidates appeal to be sent for an independent review</li> </ul>                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within <b>12 weeks</b> of receipt of request for appeal to be sent for an independent review</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>despatch of a letter advising centres of the outcome of the independent review</li> </ul>      |  |

## 12. 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 Information for Candidates, distributed to all candidates with their confirmation of registration, outlines the consequences of such conduct.

Examples of irregular conduct which constitutes malpractice includes:

- 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 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

### Identifying malpractice

Cases of malpractice can be identified in several 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 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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