



MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice

**UNIT 2 – The Practice and Context of Market & Social
Research**

Assignment Materials & Tasks – June 2014 Assessment

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

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MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice
Unit 2 – June 2014 Assessment Materials
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Introduction

This document provides the material for the June 2014 assessment round of Unit 2 of the MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice. It contains the tasks and materials on which your assignment must be based. These materials include a description of a research context, a proposal for a research project designed to address the research problem and four tasks related to the materials.

The research problem and proposal contained in this sample material is entirely fictional. Any similarity to any real-life organization, company or business is entirely unintended.

Mode of assessment for Unit 2 Principles & Practice of Market Research

You are required to complete all four tasks. These are externally assessed and externally moderated.

Assignment specifications

Each task is designed to be completed in essay format and should address the issues detailed in the specifications table for that task. Copies of task specifications can be obtained from your centre.

The total word count for all four tasks should fall between 5000-7000 words (excluding appendices). Word limits for individual tasks are provided for general guidance.

All words within the main body of the text, including those within tables and the bibliography are included within the word count. Text within the title page, contents page and Footnotes are not included in the word count.

Appendices of material used to illustrate points made within the body of the assignment may be included if you feel these are necessary. Materials included in appendices are outside of the word count and are not to be used to extend the word limit.

Assignments that considerably exceed the 7000 word limit (by more than 10%) will be graded as 'non-compliant' as they do not comply with assessment criteria and cannot be assessed with the qualifications framework.

Candidates **must** include an accurate word count at the end of the assignment.

All assessed components of the MRS Diploma should be completed in English.

Assessment weighting

The tasks are weighted in accordance with the weighting ascribed to each area within the syllabus description and also with the level of analysis required within each assignment.

Task 1	25% of total
Task 2	25% of total
Task 3	25% of total
Task 4	25% of total
Total	100%

Presentation of your assignment

The assignment should be printed on A4 white paper, with a one-inch margin around the text. Text size should ideally be 11pt.

Make sure that each section within your 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.

All four tasks should be secured together and submitted as one assignment. The assignment should be secured with a staple in the top left hand corner. Please do not bind your assignment by any other means.

Number of copies

You are required to present three hard copies of the assignment in its final form for formal assessment to your centre co-ordinator by the centre's specified deadline. All copies must include an Assignment Cover Sheet. One copy of your assignment will be retained by your centre. The remaining two copies will be sent to MRS for external assessment.

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.

Pass requirements

In order to complete a unit successfully, candidates should meet or exceed the Pass requirements highlighted in the assessment sections of the handbook.

In order to be awarded the Diploma, candidates must achieve a Pass grade (or above) in all 4 units of assessment.

Grading System for each unit of Diploma assessment

Unit 1

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. Guidance on the general assessment criteria for each grade can be found in the following table.

Units 2 & 3 and 4

Candidates are given an overall band grade (Distinction, Pass or Fail). The assessment criteria for each assignment is 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 Distinction, Pass and Fail grades. In order 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). In order 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 for all Units please refer to the **Full Syllabus & Assessment Guidelines Handbook**.

The Research Problem

Background

The *Keep it Klean* campaign has been in existence for around 50 years. Introduced by the UK government, it is now a separate charitable organisation, funded by a combination of central and local government grants, and by individual and corporate donations.

Keep it Klean aims to educate people to care for their local environment, to use environmentally friendly waste disposal services, and not to litter or pollute by carelessly discarding personal and household waste. Local authorities, which are responsible for condition of local environments, across the UK work with the charity to publicise their cleaning and environmental services, and are keen to improve the satisfaction of their residents with the services they provide.

Acting on behalf of local authorities, and with funding from central government, *Keep it Klean* conducts an annual environmental audit to monitor the levels of litter, graffiti, and dog waste, and an annual quantitative consumer satisfaction survey both across the UK to measure the public's perception of their local authority cleaning and environmental services.

These surveys have regularly produced consistent findings; it seems that there is no direct correlation of the public's perception of their local environment and the objective condition of that environment, i.e. good standards of local cleanliness do not produce high levels of satisfaction with local government environmental cleaning services.

Part of the role of *Keep it Klean* is to advise local authorities on how to improve the service they offer to their residents. There is a clear need for understanding what people actually want in terms of services provided and the cleanliness targets which local authorities need to pursue. In addition, *Keep it Klean* provide advertising and communications material used by local authorities to promote their services and to encourage residents to participate in helping with waste and litter disposal. An understanding of attitudes will help to focus communications more effectively and assist both *Keep it Klean* and the local authorities to improve their performance in this area.

In an attempt to understand this problem in more detail, and to provide guidance to local authorities on how to improve public satisfaction with their services, *Keep it Klean* appointed *Rich Research Ltd* to investigate the problem that they identified, namely:

What do the public expect in terms of cleanliness, and how are people's perceptions of their local environment formed?

The Proposal

Rich Research Ltd has produced the following research proposal for *Keep it Klean*:

Client's Information Needs

The client, *Keep it Klean*, is seeking data to help it advise the local authorities it works with. It is specifically seeking information on what people perceive as cleanliness, and how local authorities can improve their performance to raise customer satisfaction levels.

Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

- To measure awareness of the current levels of environmental cleaning services provided by the local authorities.
- To gain an understanding of the public's perception of environmental cleanliness.
- To identify the criteria used by the public to evaluate the performance of local authorities in providing environmental services.
- To provide information to help local authorities improve perceptions of their environmental services.

Research Programme Proposed

We recommend a three-stage programme of both qualitative and quantitative research among a target group of payers of local taxes, which is used to fund Environmental Services, across the UK.

Qualitative Research

In order to understand local tax payers' perceptions of the places they live in, it is proposed that qualitative group discussions be conducted in four areas of the UK, North, South, East and West. The final locations will be selected after consultation with the client. Each of the areas will be studied using four group discussions each. Those selected to participate will be invited to take part in a three hour group discussion, held in selected local authority premises. Groups will be moderated by experienced *Rich Research* qualitative professionals. The discussions will include an exploration of people's emotional associations with places and will explore perceptions of different towns and cities to see how people rate their own areas in comparison, in terms of cleanliness and general environmental issues. Other key issues will also be identified after consultation with the client. Groups will be audio recorded.

Qualitative Sampling:

We propose recruiting a total of 16 groups, each comprising 8 members. Groups will be homogenous for age and sex, i.e. 8 male and 8 female groups, each divided into two age bands, as follows:

19-39

40+

Recruitment for these groups will be conducted by telephone, from the list of recent participants in the annual consumer satisfaction survey conducted by *Keep it Klean*. Selection for participation will be made at random, using criteria of age, sex and location. An inducement of a £100 discount on council tax bills will be given to each participant.

Quantitative Research

We propose a **two stage** quantitative research plan:

Having identified key issues from the qualitative research, as detailed above, we propose to conduct baseline research to show which of these issues are most important to council tax payers. We will identify 10 representative local authorities across the UK for this research. We will then use the research findings to advise these local authorities on how to improve their environmental services. We then propose to **repeat the quantitative research** 12 months after the advice has been given, to evaluate the impact of the changes which we have advised.

We propose a face-to-face doorstep interview method for both waves of this research.

Quantitative Sampling

A sample of 300 people will be randomly drawn from the electoral roll for each of 10 representative local authorities chosen. This process will be repeated for the second wave of the quantitative research programme, with initial participants excluded from the second survey. We therefore envisage a sample size of 3000 for each wave of the survey, so a total sample of 6000 names will be required in total. With an estimated response rate of 60% (two calls will be made to each address) we envisage an overall sample size of 1800 per survey, with a total of 3600 completed interviews overall.

Final Data Analysis and Reporting

Data collected from the **qualitative** focus groups will be analysed, and a written report and oral presentation of the main findings will be made to the client. *Keep it Klean* will then be invited for a full discussion of the findings, and this discussion will be used as the basis for the design of the quantitative phase of the survey. The **quantitative data** will be analysed using survey analysis software, and a copy of the processed data will be made available to the client in a format to be agreed.

An oral presentation of the main findings of the **first stage** of the quantitative research will be given immediately after the end of the survey period. The local authorities participating in the first stage will then be invited for a formal meeting, along with the client, to discuss how they will address the issues raised.

The **second stage** of the research, designed to measure the efficacy and impact of these changes will be designed and initiated once the changes have been in operation for a full 12 month period.

After all research has been completed, a full written report will be given to *Keep it Klean* for dissemination to all UK local authorities at. An oral presentation will then be made, and further research needs will be discussed at this stage.

TASKS

Task 1: Project Analysis Task

(1,250 – 1,750 words)

(Weighting: 25% of total)

This task requires you to evaluate the fitness for purpose of the proposed programme of research as contained in the proposal document.

Your answer should provide evaluations of:

- The definition of the research problem being investigated.
- The fitness for purpose of the proposed programme of research.
- The usefulness to *Keep it Klean* of the programme of research which has been outlined, with specific reference to the research objectives and the decisions to be taken.

Task 2: Analysis of the Research Sample

(1,250 – 1,750 words)

(Weighting: 25% of total)

This task requires you to analyse and evaluate the sampling plan proposed for this research project.

In your answer you should:

- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches to sampling identified for both qualitative and quantitative phases of the research, in relation to the given research objectives, and with reference to relevant statistical theory.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of the size and composition of the qualitative and quantitative samples, in relation to the given research objectives and analysis plan.
- Identify the statistical tests which could be applied in analysing the quantitative data provided by this sample, with justification for their use.
- Evaluate the fitness for purpose of the sampling proposed for all phases of this research.

Task 3: Developing and Evaluating Data Collection Tools (1,250 – 1,750 words)
(Weighting: 25% of total)

This task requires you to prepare and provide a detailed rationale for a data collection tool or tools.

Either:

Qualitative Stage

- a) Devise a topic guide for use in the group discussions. The topic guide should provide sufficient information for the moderator to gather the data required in relation to the appropriate research objectives.
- b) Provide some rationale for the structure and design of your topic guide, identifying its strengths and limitations in relation to gathering the information required.

Or:

Quantitative Stage

- a) Design 6 questions, to include appropriate response formats and instructions for completion, for inclusion within the **FIRST** quantitative survey.
- b) Provide a rationale for the inclusion of each of your six questions, identifying the strengths and limitations of the questions in relation to gathering the information required.

Task 4: Reporting and Contextualising Research Findings (1,250 - 1,750 words)
(Weighting: 25% of total)

This task requires you to specify the format and prepare an outline content of the **final** research presentation (**the oral presentation at the end of the final survey period**) which will be made to the client at the end of project. You should refer to the research proposal and to your own identification of gaps in this proposal to help you determine the main areas to be covered.

In your answer you should:

- Specify the format and outline content, in the form of headings and subheadings, of the final research presentation.
- Justify the format and content choices made in terms of managerial decision making.
- Specify the proposed audience for the final presentation.
- Discuss how possible research findings should be used by the client.
- Outline any barriers to implementation of the research recommendations.
- Specify any further research or specific sources of information which could be consulted to aid managerial decision making.



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