



MRS Qualifications

Policy Handbook

Updated November 2017

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

MRS Qualifications Policy Handbook
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1. MRS Qualifications – Who are we & what do we do

MRS Qualifications have been designed for people with different levels of knowledge and experience, with all qualifications sharing the same underlying principle of improving excellence in research.

MRS Qualifications are designed by practitioners, for practitioners ensuring that candidate learning is firmly linked to professional practice.

The aim of this document is to provide a short guide to the work of the MRS Awarding Body, how it is structured and what it does.

What is an Awarding Body?

MRS is an awarding body for vocational qualifications in market and social research.

The MRS Awarding Body is responsible for the development, delivery, quality and monitoring of all aspects of assessment for the MRS suite of qualifications. These qualifications currently include:

- *MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice*
- *MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice*
- *MRS Certificate in Market and Social Research*
- *MRS Certificate in Interviewing Skills*

Accessing MRS Qualifications

MRS Awarding Body accredits a wide range of organisations (known as 'centres') to deliver its qualifications. All centres undergo a rigorous accreditation process in order to become an MRS Accredited Centre. A full list of all MRS Accredited Centres for each qualification can be found in the Qualifications section of the MRS website.

Access to a programme of learning for the MRS Certificate in Market & Social Research is via the MRS Online Programme, Market Research - An Introduction. For the MRS Certificate in Interviewing Skills MRS works with centres to establish a training and assessment programme.

How is the MRS Awarding Body structured?

Within the Awarding Body, there are two key roles:

Head of Membership Development (Samantha Driscoll) is responsible for the ensuring the effective delivery and appropriate monitoring of all aspects of the assessment process.

Professional Development Co-ordinator (Hayley Jelfs) is responsible for ensuring the accurate registration of candidates, for ensuring that accurate and up-to-date information is sent to candidates and centres, and for liaising with centres and venues to ensure the appropriate conduct of examinations.

The Head of Membership Development and Professional Development Co-ordinator are accountable to the **Managing Director (Debrah Harding)**.

The MRS Awarding Body & accountability to the profession

The role of the MRS Awarding Body is to provide qualifications which suit the needs of those involved in the research sector. In order to ensure that the qualifications which are developed meet – and continue to meet – the needs of individuals and employers, the Awarding Body reports to the MRS Professional Development Advisory Board (PDAB).

Who are the PDAB?

The PDAB comprises experts drawn from both the supply-side, client-side and academic sectors of research. Their role is both to advise on and to monitor the development of MRS strategy and policies in the area of professional development, and to ensure their ongoing relevance to the industry as a whole.

What does PDAB do?

The PDAB normally meets twice per year, in order to:

- review developments in research to ensure that both MRS qualifications and MRS training programmes develop to meet emerging research needs
- oversee the design and development of qualifications
- advise on the appointment of Task Forces, drawn from employer organisations and academic institutions, to oversee the development of new qualifications as and when required
- monitor the performance of the MRS Awarding Body via reports on all statistics relating to registration and achievement

MRS is required to produce a Pre-Meeting Report which is discussed at the meeting detailing activity and performance.

How are qualifications assessed?

The MRS Awarding Body is responsible for developing and monitoring all aspects of the assessment of MRS qualifications to ensure that:

- each assessment method used is fit for purpose
- the method of assessment differentiates between candidates only on the grounds of their ability, and is free from any form of discrimination
- the standard required to complete the qualification successfully remains consistent over time
- centres and candidates understand what is required by each assessment method
- those involved in assessing candidates' work are appropriately qualified, experienced and briefed to ensure consistency and accuracy of assessment.

Types of assessment

MRS uses four different forms of assessment within its suite of qualifications:

- *External examinations* are set and marked by MRS.
- *External assignments* are set and marked by MRS.
- *Coursework assignments* are set and marked by the individual centres. All coursework assignments are then submitted to MRS for moderation.
- *Online Multiple Choice* – automatic assessment.
- *Portfolios* are marked initially by the individual centres and then submitted to MRS for moderation

The following grid shows how each of the MRS qualifications is assessed:

Qualification	Type of assessment
MRS Certificate in Interviewing Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portfolio and Skills assessment
MRS Certificate in Market & Social Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-Line Randomly Selected 40 Multiple Choice questions
MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coursework assignment and examination
MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Units 1 & 5 assessed by examination All other units assessed by assignment

Ensuring consistency

- All examinations are compiled against clear criteria. Each examination paper includes questions which represent an appropriate balance of topics across the syllabus for the qualification or the unit. All papers are compiled by the Chief Examiners for the qualification or unit, and are then reviewed by a panel of expert moderators.
- All assignments are supported by a set of specifications and assessment criteria, highlighting the areas which should be covered in the assignment and the knowledge and skills which the candidates need to demonstrate in order to pass.
- Everyone who is involved in assessing candidates' work is also directly involved in research, either as a research practitioner or as a lecturer/teacher within an academic centre. All MRS examiners, moderators and assessors have to undergo specialist training to ensure that they can assess candidates' work consistently and fairly.

How are centres and candidates supported?

The MRS Awarding Body provides a wide range of information and material to support both centres and candidates in relation to assessment.

Supporting centres

Comprehensive information about the requirements of the qualifications is available. This information takes various terms depending on the level and nature of the qualification. Materials include for example:

- administration handbooks, giving guidance on all aspects of assessment systems;
- annual training and standardization meetings for those involved in the internal assessment of assignments;
- Centre Network Sessions;
- updates on any developments to assessment systems;
- a dedicated password protected area of the MRS Website for accredited centres, to provide regular updates, learning resources and all relevant administration documents;
- publication of an assessment report following each assessment round, to include amongst other things, statistics and candidate performance analysis;
- training support materials e.g. online courses, training handbooks and text books.

In addition, centre representatives are encouraged to contact the MRS Awarding Body directly if they require specific information or assistance.

Supporting candidates

In addition to providing supporting information for centres, the MRS Awarding Body provides a range of information for individual candidates:

- the Qualifications section of the MRS website provides guidance to potential candidates on the structure and requirements of each qualification, along with links to centres which offer the qualification
- candidates can also access more detailed information about assessment, including practice exam questions and sample answers, via the website
- following their registration for assessment, all candidates receive confirmation of their registration and information about assessment systems
- information about how to enquire about or appeal against final grades is included with each candidate's results confirmation.

How is the MRS Awarding Body's work monitored?

All aspects of the work of the MRS Awarding Body are monitored to ensure that MRS qualifications continue to meet the needs of candidates and of the sector. In order to meet all of these requirements, several monitoring systems exist, some or all of which are used for MRS Qualifications depending on the type of assessment used:

- All operational aspects of assessment are subject to a series of internal checks within the awarding body. This monitoring is overseen by the Head of Membership Development.
- Consistency of assessment is monitored via statistical analysis of results. Following each assessment round, results are reviewed in relation to those of previous rounds in order to identify if any anomalies exist. This work is carried out by the Chief Examiners and industry moderators during the Awards Meeting.
- Feedback on the work of the MRS Awarding Body is gathered during the annual Centre Network meeting (for all centres). Centres are also encouraged to contact MRS on an individual basis with comments and feedback. Customer satisfaction surveys will also be carried out to allow for a more systematic approach to evaluating the awarding body's work with centres.
- Candidates are encouraged to give feedback on their views of the qualifications to their centre.
- The MRS Awarding Body currently reports twice annually on its work to the PDAB. The awarding body's work will be reviewed bi-annually by an External Audit Team reported to the PDAB.
- All aspects of the work of the MRS Awarding Body are regulated and liable for audit by an External Audit Team.

2. Customer Service Statement

The Market Research Society (MRS) is committed to providing the highest possible levels of customer service for both candidates and accredited centres. This statement outlines the services that candidates and accredited centres can expect from the Qualifications Department at the MRS. It will help us to monitor all our enquiries and to guide the development of our services.

If you wish to comment on this statement, or on any other aspect of the services offered by the MRS Qualifications Department, please contact us

Accredited centres

The MRS Qualifications Department provides:

- email update notifications to centres, as and when required
- a framework for the administration of qualifications in centres which is manageable, cost-effective and responsive to the developing needs of centres
- administration handbooks complete with MRS information, forms, syllabi and contacts, updated annually.
- ad-hoc administration handbook updates and other relevant information
- telephone and email support at MRS for all enquiries regarding MRS qualifications
- other relevant information on qualifications, syllabi as appropriate
- an interactive website where information can be accessed
- a monitoring service on all aspects of centre management of MRS qualifications through centre visits/meetings and annual updates.
- an opportunity for centres to participate in the development of MRS qualifications and systems via customer feedback surveys and networking events

Candidates for MRS qualifications

The MRS Qualifications Department provides:

- telephone and email support at MRS for all enquiries regarding MRS qualifications
- full and up-to-date information about all MRS fees relating to qualifications on the MRS website
- a system allowing candidates to sit examinations overseas at an independent centre.

Communication

The MRS is open from 9.30am-5.30pm Monday to Friday directly (excluding weekends and public holidays) to answer any queries. An answering service is available and all calls will be picked up the next working day. Phone: 020 7490 4911.

You can also email the MRS directly on profdevelopment@mrs.org.uk or fax on 020 7490 0608.

Enquiries

We aim to:

- acknowledge and respond to calls, faxes, emails and Internet enquiries within 3 working days from receipt.
- send an information pack to prospective accredited centres within 3 working days from initial contact.
- acknowledge completed applications from prospective centres within 4 working days from receipt.

Centre approval

We aim to:

- contact the prospective centre to discuss the initial application within 2 weeks from acknowledgement date.
- arrange an accreditation visit within 8 weeks from receipt of application.
- send to the centre a report based on the accreditation visit within 6 weeks from the visit. This report confirms the status of the centre's accreditation and contains recommendations made by the External Verifier in relation to the centre's programme.
- review centre provision of qualifications annually via a system of self-assessment.
- revisit all centres at least twice during the 5-year accreditation period for monitoring/quality assurance purposes.
- despatch a copy of the monitoring report within 6 weeks following the visit.

Centre administration & information

We aim to:

- provide administrative frameworks which do not place an unnecessary burden on centres. This includes: providing easy-to-follow instructions for administrative requirements; providing summaries and reminders of key administrative tasks which need to be completed prior to a given deadline; keeping to a minimum the number of forms which centres are required to deal with; responding positively and effectively to any requests from centres for the streamlining of information or administrative requirements.
- confirm the registration of candidates within 10 working days from receipt of registration forms.
- provide a list of fees every year, detailing all possible costs raised by the MRS in relation to its qualifications. This information will be provided as an insert to the Administration Handbook, included in newsletters and be detailed on the MRS website.
- provide a range of publications, including examination reports and associated support material, free of charge to accredited centres.
- despatch all publication orders within 5 working days from receipt.

Centre support

- provide induction and ongoing support for all centres in how to carry out the role of MRS Accredited Centre
- provide regular training and briefing sessions on all aspects of the centre's role, including the role of internal assessor.
- provide a high level of personal service to all accredited centres, with staff who understand the context and needs of the individual centre.
- consult with centres on the most manageable ways in which to effect necessary changes in the structure or administration of qualifications.
- provide regular opportunities for centres to provide feedback to MRS Qualifications on the qualifications and systems which support them, via annual customer satisfaction surveys and network events.

Examination results & certification

We aim to:

- send out examination results within 12 weeks from the examination date. Results will be sent to the candidate's centre of entry.
- despatch certificates within 6 weeks of the date from the release of results. Certificates will be sent to the candidate's centre of entry.

Enquiries & appeals

We aim to:

- acknowledge all requests for enquiries into results and appeals against results within 3 days from receipt.

The procedure for enquiries & appeals is explained in the centre's Administration Handbook and on the result slip issued to candidates

If you are not satisfied...

If you have any comments or complaints about any aspects of our service, please contact the MRS Head of Membership Development. Receipt of all comments and complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days.

All complaints are reviewed by the Managing Director.

3. Exam Script Security

MRS Qualifications takes the security of all examination materials very seriously, and has strict procedures in place at all stages of the assessment process to protect the security of materials: prior to assessment, during assessment and after assessment, including methods of transit of materials. Both centres and members of the examiner team have strict procedures to which they must adhere to ensure security and to minimise the potential loss or damage of any exam materials.

If a candidate's script is lost or damaged during transportation, prior to marking, the student may be required to undertake an alternative assessment.

4. Reasonable Adjustments

What are 'Reasonable Adjustments'?

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

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

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

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

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

Permanent Disability

If the condition is permanent evidence must be submitted which specifically states that the condition is likely to affect the candidate throughout their life. Candidates only need to submit this evidence with their first application for reasonable adjustment.

If a candidate requires an adjustment for subsequent assessments, providing it is the same as has been approved previously, evidence does not need to be re-submitted.

Temporary Disabilities

If the condition is temporary evidence must be submitted with each request for an adjustment.

Please note that MRS must grant approval for all reasonable adjustments and reserves the right to refuse requests. If an adjustment is made without written approval from MRS, this could constitute malpractice.

Reasonable Adjustment Guidance

Extra Time

Where assessment activities are time constrained a candidate may be allowed extra time during an assessment if he/she has a condition which affects the speed of processing.

The amount of extra time allowed should accurately reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the candidate's difficulty. 'Unlimited' extra time will not be allowed. The additional allowance of 25% of the total assessment time is the normal allowance for most needs. An additional allowance of up to 33% may be permitted in exceptional cases.

When issuing a *Reasonable Adjustment* it is imperative that there is consistency that equates equally and fairly to examinations of differing durations. The percentage method is used to ensure this requirement is fulfilled.

Before the centre allows extra time for the candidate, the centre should be satisfied that the candidate can cope with the content of the qualification and that the candidate is medically fit to undertake the extended assessment.

Supervised Rest Breaks

A candidate may, if there is a demonstrated need, be allowed supervised rest breaks during an assessment.

Supervised rest breaks may be taken either in or outside the assessment room. The duration of the breaks will not be deducted from the assessment time. The centre should be aware that, during the supervised rest breaks, the candidate is still under assessment conditions and that the usual regulations governing conduct of assessments will apply during this time.

Change in the organisation of the assessment room

Minor changes to the organisation of the assessment room may benefit some candidates with visual or hearing impairment or with physical difficulties.

Visually impaired candidates may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting.

Deaf candidates may benefit from sitting near the front of the room and in good light.

Some candidates may benefit from using chairs with arm rests or adjustable heights.

Separate accommodation within the centre

It may be necessary to accommodate the candidate separately if they are using readers, scribes or word processing equipment which may disturb other candidates.

Readers

A reader is a person who, when requested, will read to the candidate all or part of the assessment material and the candidate's written responses.

Where there is evidence of need a reader may be allowed where reading or understanding of the written word is not an assessment requirement or the competence being assessed.

- The centre should, in consultation with the candidate, decide whether the use of a reader will be an effective arrangement. The candidate may be more comfortable with:
 - the use of speech/screen reading software which reads out the material without decoding or interpreting it
 - accessing the assessment material in electronic format, in Braille or through sign language.
- The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a reader.
- The reader should not normally be the candidate's own tutor or assessor, except in circumstances where it is necessary to do so. In such cases, MRS should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the candidate be used as a reader.
- The centre should select the reader on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the candidate. The reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate and should have sufficient knowledge of the subject to read technical terms accurately.
- A candidate should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the reader and should have used this arrangement during the programme of learning leading up to the assessment.
- The centre should ensure that the candidate and reader are clear about the limitations of the reader's role.
- A separate invigilator must be present when a reader is used to ensure that the guidance regarding readers is followed.
- The centre should give the reader clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the assessment. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.
- For a candidate requiring a reader and a scribe, the same person may act as both as long as permission has been given for both arrangements.
- The candidate using a reader should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other candidates.
- Where a candidate is not eligible for the use of a reader, it may be helpful for the candidate to read the questions aloud. In these circumstances the candidate must be accommodated in a separate room so that other candidates are not disturbed. Separate invigilation should be arranged in these cases. The invigilator may not correct the reading of the candidate.
- The reader is responsible to, and should be approved by the Centre Co-ordinator
- The reader:
 - should read only as requested by the candidate. The candidate may choose to read some parts of the assessment him/herself.
 - should read accurately. If the reader is working with a deaf or hearing impaired candidate, the reader should articulate clearly.
 - should only read the exact wording (instructions and questions), and not give meanings of words, rephrase or interpret anything.
 - should repeat instructions and questions on the paper only when specifically requested to do so by the candidate.
 - may consult a dictionary, where this is allowed, at the candidate's request and read out entries
 - should read, as often as requested, the answers already recorded, but may not act as proof-reader

- should not advise the candidate regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which the questions should be answered
- may enable a visually impaired candidate to identify which piece of visual material relates to which question, but should neither give factual help to the candidate nor offer any suggestion
- is permitted to help a visually impaired candidate using diagrams, graphs and tables to obtain the information that the print/amended print copy would give to a sighted candidate
- should, if requested, give a visually impaired candidate the spelling of a word which appears on the paper, but otherwise spellings must not be given.
- should refer any problems during the assessment to the invigilator.

Scribes (or amanuenses)

A scribe is a person who, in an assessment, writes down or word processes a candidate's dictated responses.

The centre should, in consultation with the candidate, decide whether the use of a scribe is an appropriate adjustment. As the effective use of a scribe requires high level communication skills from the candidate, the centre is advised to consider whether the candidate would be more comfortable with the use of a computer. The candidate is also more likely to use a word processor rather than a scribe in the workplace.

- For a candidate requiring a scribe and a reader, the same person may act as both, provided permission has been given for both.
- The use of a scribe should not affect the assessment requirements for the qualification being assessed.
- The centre should select a scribe on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the candidate. A scribe should be able to produce an accurate record of the candidate's responses, write legibly and/or word process at a reasonable speed, and have sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to record technical terms correctly.
- The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a scribe.
- A scribe should not normally be the candidate's own tutor or assessor, except when it is necessary to do so. In such cases, the awarding body should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the candidate be used as a scribe.
- A candidate should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the scribe and used this arrangement during their learning programme.
- The centre should ensure that the candidate and scribe are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role.
- The centre should give the scribe clear instructions regarding what he/she is required to do/what he/she is not allowed to do during the assessment. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.
- The candidate using a scribe should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other candidates.
- A separate invigilator should be present when a scribe is used to ensure that the guidance regarding scribes is followed.
- The scribe is responsible to and should be approved by the Centre Co-Ordinator.
- During the assessment a scribe:

- should check with the candidate for which parts of the assessment they wish to have their responses scribed. The candidate may choose to write some responses him/herself.
- should neither give factual help to the candidate nor offer any suggestions.
- should not advise the candidate regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be answered.
- should write down answers exactly as they are dictated. Where spelling accuracy and punctuation is being tested, the scribe must follow explicit instructions from the candidate. The scribe may not take responsibility for spelling technical words.
- should write a correction on a typescript or Braille sheet if requested to do so by the candidate.
- should not assist the candidate to produce any diagrammatical or graphical material. If assistance with this is needed, approval should be obtained from the awarding body in advance of the assessment. Exceptions to this are Entry Level qualifications where the scribe is allowed to draw or add to diagrams in accordance with the candidate's instructions.
- may, at the candidate's request, read back what has been written but no comment must be made about any part of the candidate's response.
- should immediately refer any problems in communication during the examination to the invigilator.

Use of a Laptop, Word Processor

Candidates who are able to complete assessments with handwriting are expected to do so. Candidates with disabilities may be permitted to use a laptop or similar device where their disability means they cannot write by hand.

The following restrictions apply:

- The laptop or similar device must be owned by the accredited centre.
- The centre must ensure that the laptop is not networked, does not have access to the internet/email. Microsoft office must be the only software available.
- The invigilator should print candidate answers.
- Candidates should sign each page of the printed answers before submission to MRS.

Assessment material in enlarged format

The enlargement of paper-based assessments is possible. The centre will have to apply, outlining requirements, by the deadlines set by MRS. Examples include:

- unmodified enlarged papers where the standard paper is photocopied from A4 to A3, thus enlarging the whole paper and retaining the original layout and visual presentation.
- Where the awarding body provides externally set assessment material in enlarged format, the centre will have to apply by the deadlines set by individual awarding bodies.
- It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised resource or reference material in a suitable format for the candidate

Assessment material on coloured paper

The production of assessment material on coloured paper is possible. The centre will have to apply, outlining requirements, by the deadlines set by MRS.

- It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised resource or reference material on coloured paper, if required for the candidate.

Responsibility of an Accredited Centre – Reasonable Adjustments

All MRS Accredited Centres have a duty to implement the Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy for all MRS candidates who study with the centre. This responsibility includes assessment of needs, recommendation of reasonable adjustment, communication with MRS and provision of the resources to facilitate the adjustment.

Requesting a Reasonable Adjustment

MRS makes every effort to ensure that all candidates have equality of access to assessment. As soon as a request is received it can be acted upon. However, delays in making requests may mean that the adjustments cannot be made in time for the assessment round for which the candidate is registered.

Candidates registered with a MRS accredited centre

The Centre Co-ordinator at the accredited centre is responsible for assisting with the request for reasonable adjustments.

Candidates should inform their MRS Centre Co-ordinator at the same time as enrolling for an examination or assessment. The centre should assess the request and complete a *Centre Reasonable Adjustment Request form (Appendix 1)*; this must be submitted to at least MRS four weeks before registration cut-off date for the assessment round the candidate wishes to participate in. Supporting evidence should be attached to the form. The centre should retain a copy of the candidate's request for its own review and audit purposes.

On receipt of the *Centre Reasonable Adjustment Request form* from the accredited centre, MRS will confirm in writing to the centre if the proposed adjustment has been approved.

Candidates not registered at an MRS accredited centre

Direct Candidates should apply for reasonable adjustments by completing a *Direct Candidate Reasonable Adjustment Request form (Appendix 2)* and submitting this directly to MRS. Completed requests must be submitted to MRS at least four weeks before the registration cut-off date for the assessment round the candidate wishes to participate in. Supporting evidence must be attached to the form.

On receipt of the *Candidate Reasonable Adjustment Request form (Appendix 2)*, MRS will confirm in writing to the candidate if the proposed adjustment has been approved.

5. Special Consideration

What is a 'Special Consideration'?

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.

Eligibility criteria

A candidate who is fully prepared and present for a scheduled assessment may be eligible for special consideration if:

- performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the candidate e.g. recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the assessment;
- alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment proved inappropriate or inadequate;
- part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the candidate;
- there is a sufficient difference between the part of the assessment to which special consideration is applied and other parts of the qualification that have been achieved to infer that the candidate could have performed more successfully in the assessment.

A candidate will not be eligible for special consideration if:

- no evidence is supplied by the centre that the candidate has been affected at the time of the assessment by a particular condition;
- any part of the assessment is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absence;
- preparation for a component is affected by difficulties during the course, e.g. disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, or industrial disputes.

Applying for a Special Consideration

A centre should apply for Special Consideration using the *Special Consideration Request* form. A separate form should normally be completed for each candidate for each qualification. However, in cases where a group of candidates has been disadvantaged by a particular event (e.g. fire alarm) a single form should be submitted. A list of candidates affected should be attached to the form.

The candidate needs to submit evidence in support of special consideration. This may include medical evidence or a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information.

The application should be signed and dated by a member of the centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority by the Centre Co-Ordinator. The signatory must declare that the information given is accurate.

The application for Special Consideration should be submitted as soon as possible after the assessment and not later than 7 working days after the examination. Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of the examination have been released in the following circumstances:

- application has been overlooked at the centre and the oversight is confirmed by the Centre Co-Ordinator;
- medical evidence comes to light about a candidate's condition, which demonstrates that the candidate must have been affected by the condition at the time of the examination, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment;
- for on-screen assessments where results are immediately available.

What consideration can be given?

If the application for Special Consideration is successful, the candidate's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a candidate's result.

If MRS is informed of a candidate's request in advance of the assessment, appropriate guidance can be given. This could include:

- a recommendation to delay until the next assessment round. Any such transfer would be made at no cost to the candidate or centre.
- guidance on a Reasonable Adjustment which could be made prior to the examination (see Section 3).

In all cases, the decision of whether to proceed is that of the candidate. MRS will provide guidance only.

If MRS is informed of a request for Special Consideration in cases where the candidate has participated in assessment, or where a candidate has decided to proceed after having sought advice from MRS (above), the following consideration may be given:

- candidates who have been unable to sit for one of two required components of assessment may have their result for that component released as a partial result, with the second result deferred.
- candidates who have taken assessment but have been unable to complete it may have their work reviewed, subject to the assessment requirements outlined below.

Assessing the work of candidates for whom Special Consideration has been given

When a request accepted for Special Consideration, the candidate's work will be incorporated into standard assessment processes. The assessment team involved in the initial assessment will not be informed of the request which has been made. This is to ensure that all work is assessed to the same standard and in line with the same criteria. It is designed to ensure that any Special Consideration does not unfairly advantage or disadvantage the candidate for whom the consideration was given.

All requests for special consideration are reviewed at the Awards Meeting which follows the assessment period. In order to make an aegrotat, the Chief Examiner and Moderators must see evidence that the difficulties experienced by the candidate had a noticeable effect on the standard of his/her work. Candidates may be considered for an aegrotat if their assessment falls into a borderline fail category, and evidence for ability in the areas in which problems have been found can be found in the candidates' other piece of assessment. These are the only circumstances in which MRS uses one piece of assessment to support amendments to another piece of assessment.

In cases where evidence does not support an aegrotat but where the request for Special Consideration does provide convincing evidence that the candidate has been adversely affected during the assessment, the Chief Examiner and Moderators may recommend that the candidate be allowed to retake the component of assessment at no extra charge.

6. Enquiries Procedure

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

Enquiries about results

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

Enquiry procedure

The enquiry procedure exists to provide candidates and centres with more detailed information about candidate performance than is provided by the final result. Candidates wishing to query their result should also follow the enquiry procedure detailed below.

All enquiries to MRS Qualifications concerning final results should be made via the centre.

A two-stage enquiry process exists:

- Candidates or centres wishing to receive a breakdown on results in each section of the examination can request a **Results Breakdown**. This will give the individual candidate's grade in each examination question.
- Candidates who are awarded *Fail* or *Referred* in either the Examination or the Integrated Assignment can request a **Results Report** on the component in which they were unsuccessful. This will give the grade awarded for each section, a summary of the assessment decisions made by the examiner(s) in relation to the component, and any additional assessment made by the external moderator.

Centres wishing to request *either* type of report must complete and submit a *Results Enquiry* form (Appendix 4) to the Professional Development Co-ordinator within 40 days of the release date of the results.

An administrative fee is payable for both types of report. Documentation is available to all centres and candidates from the MRS Website or on request from MRS Qualifications.

Important Notice: It is MRS Policy not to release candidate examination scripts. There is no legal obligation for MRS to release candidate examination scripts. Indeed the Information Commissioner who is responsible for the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act which regulates personal data such as assessment documentation, recognises the special nature of examination scripts and has developed specific guidance on this topic which gives awarding bodies exemption for providing such information.

The Examiner Report provides an outline detail of the question requirement, for each question selected by the candidate. Feedback is given relating to how the candidate responded to the question, this includes weaknesses and where applicable the strengths. The grade achieved by the candidates for each part question and the overall grade achieved for the question is also detailed. An exemplar report is available to view on the MRS Website.

7. 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 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

Candidates who wish to lodge an appeal against the results of their assessment must do so via their centre. MRS Qualifications can only consider an appeal if the appeal is submitted in writing by the centre's appointed point of contact, or, in the case of direct registrants, by the candidate.

Appeals must be made in writing (by letter, fax or email) within 40 days of the release of results and must give a full explanation of the circumstances and grounds for the appeal.

An administrative fee is payable for appeals against results, Pre- and post-examination information sent to centres contains details of all fees.

Contacting MRS Qualifications

In the first instance, candidates should raise and discuss their concerns with the centre and every effort should be made to resolve those concerns at this point. This may be by way of the enquiry system.

If the issues have not been resolved to the candidate's satisfaction, they should request that a written appeal be submitted. The written submission should include the candidate's full name, centre and candidate number, along with details of the basis for appeal. The submission, along with the Appeals fee, should be forwarded to the Head of Membership Development at MRS Qualifications.

The Head of Membership Development will respond to the candidate, normally via the centre, to inform them that the matter is under investigation.

Appeals procedure: Stage 1

In the first instance, the written evidence relating to the appeal will be considered by the Head of Membership Development. The aim of this stage is to decide if the evidence provides an appropriate basis for an appeal and if any further work should be actioned (e.g. remarking of the candidate's work; gathering of additional evidence).

At the end of this stage, a written response to the appeal will be forwarded by MRS Qualifications to the candidate, normally via the centre. This response will detail the outcome of Stage 1, and include information on any further work which has been actioned.

MRS Qualifications aims to complete this stage of the appeals procedure within six weeks of receipt of the written submission. It should be noted, however, that some appeals may take longer to investigate. In such cases, MRS Qualifications undertakes to keep centres and candidates informed of the progress of the appeals procedure.

Appeals procedure: Stage 2

A candidate who is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 may request that their appeal be sent to the MRS Qualifications Appeals Committee for consideration. The Appeals Committee includes the MRS Managing Director and at least one member who is not, and has not been at any time during the past seven years, a member of MRS boards or committees, or an MRS employee or examiner.

The Appeals Committee will review all material relevant to the case, including:

- the appellant's assessed work
- all correspondence relating to the appeal
- guidance given to markers (where appropriate)
- any reports devised at earlier stages in the process

The role of the Appeals Committee is to review all the evidence to decide if there are grounds for the appeal to be upheld. If they wish, the candidate may present their appeal in person to the Appeals Committee.

All requests for appeals to be heard by Appeals Committee should be made in writing to the Head of Membership Development within 14 days of receipt of the letter detailing the outcome of Stage 1. Written confirmation of receipt of the request will normally be sent to the candidate, normally via the centre, within 3 working days.

MRS Qualifications aims to advise centres and candidates in writing of the outcome of the result of the Appeals Committee's decision appeal within twelve weeks of receipt of the written submission. It should be noted, however, that some appeals may take longer to investigate. In such cases, MRS Qualifications undertakes to keep centres and candidates informed of the progress of the appeals procedure.

Independent review of appeals

A candidate who remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 2 may submit an appeal for independent review. A formal application for an independent review must be made within 21 days of the receipt of the letter detailing the outcome of the Appeals Committee's decision. MRS Qualifications will forward any such appeals to an independent reviewer who will consider appeals against the Appeals Committee's decision. Candidates whose appeal is sent for independent review have the right to present their case in person to the independent reviewer.

Candidates whose appeals are sent for independent review will receive written notification of the outcome within twelve weeks of receipt of the written submission.

Appeals procedure: Outcomes

Depending on the nature and outcome of the investigation into an appeal, a decision will be made about the result issued to the candidate:

- The original result may be confirmed.
- The original result may be overturned and replaced with a higher or lower grade. This may result in the awarding of the qualification where, originally, no award had been made.

In all cases where the original grade is changed, an amended Results Statement will be issued and Certificate (where awarded) will be issued.

In cases where the original grade is replaced with a higher grade, or where an award is made where originally none had been made, the candidate will receive a full refund of the Results Enquiry fee and Appeals fee.

The result of any complaint or appeal addressed under these procedures is regarded as final by MRS Qualifications.

8. 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 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 palm tops; notes, books and study guides)
- behaviour which disrupts, or has the potential to disrupt, the smooth running of the examination (e.g. not following the invigilator's instructions)
- impersonating a candidate (i.e. claiming to be someone other than yourself)
- altering or forging any results documents or certificates

Identifying malpractice

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

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

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

Dealing with malpractice

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

Stage 1

Where a case of suspected malpractice has been identified by an invigilator or other centre representative, or by an assessor or examiner, the evidence is reviewed in the first instance by the Chief Examiner(s) and nominated moderator(s) who form the Awards Committee for the given assessment round. Where the suspected malpractice is identified by the moderator who is a member of the Awards Committee, a second moderator is invited to consider the evidence.

The Chief Examiner(s) and moderator(s) review all available evidence related to the case. This may include reports, examination seating plans, answer papers and assignments. If they decide that there is no case to answer, they recommend that the candidate's results are released.

If it is decided that the matter needs to be investigated further, the candidate's results are withheld until a full investigation can take place.

Stage 2

If further investigation is required, the Head of Membership Development contacts the centre to inform them of the Committee's decision, and the centre is responsible for passing the information to the candidate. The centre is then required to provide MRS Qualifications with any further information which it has relating to the case, and/or a written statement from the candidate.

The Chief Examiner(s) and moderator(s) review all of the information related to the case, including the candidate's statement and any additional information provided by the centre. This review has two possible outcomes:

- The Chief Examiner(s) and moderator(s) may recommend that the candidate's original result is released unchanged.
- They may recommend that the result be withheld permanently. In this case, the candidate will not receive the result for the component of assessment to which the malpractice related. However, the candidate may re-enter for this component at a future date. However, in cases where a candidate or candidates have been found to have plagiarised coursework assignments, these assignments may not be submitted in future assessment rounds. In these cases, candidates are required to submit a new assignment.

Completing investigations into malpractice

The malpractice procedure outlined in this section is designed to ensure that decisions relating to assessment results are fair, consistent and based on full consideration of all of the available information. MRS Qualifications aims to complete the investigation of cases of suspected malpractice within 8 weeks.

If candidates wish to appeal against a malpractice decision which has involved them, they may do so using the published **Appeals** procedure.

9. Equal Opportunities Policy

MRS is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all candidates wishing to take MRS qualifications, regardless of gender, age, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation. To this end, MRS will:

- develop and deliver qualifications, the structure and syllabuses of which focus only on the knowledge, skills and understanding required by market and social research and which are free from any form of discrimination
- ensure that entry requirements for qualifications allow for diversity of prior learning experience and are based solely on professionally-relevant criteria
- deliver assessment systems which differentiate on ability only, and are free from any form of discrimination
- make provision for access to assessment for candidates who would otherwise be disadvantaged by a temporary or permanent disability

All MRS Accredited Centres are required to have a clear commitment to equal opportunities.

10. MRS Credit Policy - Qualifications

UK-based Members and Company Partners

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

UK-based Non-Members

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

Overseas Members, Non-members and Company Partners

- Cash required with order

*Please note

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

11. Appendices



Centre Reasonable Adjustment Request

Please complete a separate form for each individual candidate and send a completed copy to MRS at least four weeks before the registration cut-off date for the assessment round the candidate wishes to participate in. Supporting evidence must be attached to the form.

Centre Number: Centre Name:

Candidate Number: Candidate Name:

Qualification:

Assessment Round:

Preferred Exam Venue Location:

Reason for Application

Reasonable Adjustment Required (please be specific)

Evidence in support of the application

This may include:

- The centre's assessments of candidate's needs
- History of provision within the centre
- Medical certificate
- Psychological or other professional assessment report

Please provide details of supporting evidence:

Declaration:

I confirm that:

- the information provided is accurate
- the centre will be able to provide the arrangements requested
- the reasonable adjustments will be implemented in accordance with the guidance given by MRS

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to:

Head of Membership Development
The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street
London
EC1V 0JR



Direct Candidate Reasonable Adjustment Request

Please complete and send to MRS at least four weeks before the registration cut-off date for the assessment round you wish to participate in. Supporting evidence must be attached to the form.

Candidate Number: Candidate Name:

Qualification:

Assessment Round:

Reason for Application

Reasonable Adjustment Required (please be specific)

PTO

Evidence in support of the application

This may include:

- Medical certificate
- Psychological or other professional assessment report

Please provide details of supporting evidence:

Declaration:

I confirm that:

- the information provided is accurate
- the reasonable adjustments will be implemented in accordance with the guidance given by MRS

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to:

Head of Membership Development
The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street
London
EC1V 0JR



Special Consideration Request

This form should be completed to report any circumstance that has had an unavoidable, adverse effect on the individual's ability to complete an examination.

All requests for special consideration must be made as soon as the issue to be considered comes to light, and not later than 7 days following the examination.

Qualification:

Assessment Round:

Does the circumstance affect an individual candidate: Yes* No

*If yes, please enter the candidate name and number:

Candidate Number: Candidate Name:

Does the circumstance affect all candidates in the examination room: Yes No

Details of Circumstance: (Please provide precise times, a description of the event and details of any action taken)

PTO

Evidence in support of the application

This may include:

- Medical or psychological evidence
- Statement from the invigilator

Please provide details of supporting evidence:

I confirm that this is an accurate account of the circumstance.

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to:

Head of Membership Development
The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street
London
EC1V 0JR



Results Enquiry Form

Candidate Number: Candidate Name:

Qualification:

Assessment Round:

Breakdown of Examination Mark Yes No

Examiners Report (IA) Yes No

Examiners Report (Exam) Yes No

Administration Instructions

1. Please complete all required details.
2. MRS must receive this form within 40 days of the release date of the results.
3. An administrative fee is payable for each type of report.
4. Prior to returning this form to MRS please take a copy for your own records.

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to:

Professional Development Co-Ordinator
The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street
London
EC1V 0JR

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