

Exam Paper No: _____



MRS Diploma in Market & Social Research Practice

UNIT 1 – The Principles of Market and Social Research

Exemplar Exam Paper & Answer Guide

Instructions for Candidates

- Time allowed 3 hours.
- Candidates must answer all questions within this exam paper.
- 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.
- All answers must be written in your Examination Answer booklet.

Important Note: The requirement is for candidates to complete questions 1, 2 & 3 and all part questions within these questions, failure to do this by not completing the requirement may result in the paper being marked as non-compliant.

This Exam Paper must not be removed from the exam room. At the end of the exam please hand this paper back to the Invigilator.

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 – Exemplar Unit 1 Materials
March 2012
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Read the following case study and answer ALL questions.

SeaLux Cruises

SeaLux Cruises is a new cruise operator consisting of two ships operating out of the port of Southampton in Southern England. It has been operating for just over one year and provides cruise based vacations using its 1,400 berth ship, Med Blue around the Mediterranean and cruises around Scandinavia and the Baltic States through its 1250 berth ship, Northern Blue. The emphasis is on offering relaxing vacations with an emphasis on 'luxurious discovery' through a wide range of dining, entertainment and excursion choices. On Med Blue, a 12-day Mediterranean cruise with stops in Venice, Barcelona, Rome and five other cities starts at around £2,000.

Although the first year has gone well with very satisfied passengers and no technical problems, the cruises have been running at below optimum capacity. The level of bookings for the sixteen cruises scheduled for the next twelve months is also around 35% below target. This is causing the company some concern particularly when industry sources and the performance of competitors clearly suggest that the UK cruise market is going through a period of tremendous growth. There is a view among the senior management of the company that the product offering is correct for the target market but the promotion and sales activity is failing to raise awareness and attract or convert potential passengers.

Unlike other cruise lines that use travel agents to sell their cruises, SeaLux undertakes direct advertising in national newspapers and magazines leading to customers booking direct with SeaLux through their internet site or telephone hotline. The senior management are now concerned that low sales may reflect an unwillingness of the target market (the over 40 age group) to book cruises on a direct basis as they may require the advice and reassurance of a travel agent. Alternatively the poor sales may simply reflect a low awareness of the advertising and the company's offerings. SeaLux is therefore keen to undertake a programme of research to examine the effectiveness of the advertising and the attitudes of the target market towards the preferred methods and channels for the booking of cruise based holidays. The company has budgeted up to £70,000 for the research project.

Question 1

You are a Research Executive in a market research agency and have been asked to make reasonable assumptions based on the brief above and produce a proposal to address the research needs of the company.¹

¹ For the purpose of this question, your proposal should exclude the sections relating to personal CVs, related experience and references and contract details.

(Total 50 marks)

Answer Guide

Candidates are expected to produce a proposal in a standard format. The exact content will be determined by the assumptions made by each candidate. These should include:

Background (8 marks)

Describe the company, its activities, the marketing decisions Sealux require to make and the rationale for doing the research. This should be done in an appropriate style and should be written in clear, non-ambiguous language.

Objectives (16 marks)

Objectives should be far more precisely defined than they were in the case. They should clearly demonstrate an understanding of the information needs in relation to the marketing decisions that are likely to be undertaken by Sealux.

Approach and Method (20 marks)

A whole range of qualitative and quantitative approaches could be suggested here, but candidates should demonstrate that they have taken account of:

- the objectives
- the target market
- the size of the budget

This section should clearly set out how the information is to be gathered and the sampling arrangements. Better answers will set out justification for these.

Reporting and Presentation Procedures/Timing Fees (6 marks)

- reporting and presentation procedures
- timing
- fees

This last section will not be assessed for accuracy of calculations/suitability of figures/timescales but candidates will be rewarded for including them and writing them in an appropriate format.

Question 2

- a. Design a discussion guide for use in a series of group discussions to address some or all of the research objectives of the proposal set out in Question 1.

(15 marks)

- b. Provide a detailed description of two projective techniques that could also be used within the group discussions, alongside the discussion guide, to help address the research objectives

(10 marks)

(Total 25 marks)

Answer Guide

The discussion guide and projective techniques should be assessed on:

- appropriate phases of the discussion guide:

Introduction

- Objectives
- Personal Introductions
- Agenda

Discussive

- Topic Areas
- Stimulus Material

Summarising

- Summarising Discussion
- Closing
- Administration

(5 marks)

- appropriateness of topics to the research objectives **(10 marks)**
- detailed description, creativity and appropriateness of projective techniques to research objectives. Examples may include brand mapping, brand personalities, projective questioning, cartoon completion, mood boards, sentence completion, story completion, word association, role play, photo sorts etc.

(10 marks)

Question 3

You are a senior research executive in a research agency that undertakes market and social research. You have been asked to produce a guide for new staff on the communication of research results to client organisations. Set out your key guidelines for:

a. Structuring and writing market and social research reports **(12 marks)**

b. The preparation of oral presentations **(8 marks)**

c. Ensuring that the reporting of research findings adheres to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. **(5 marks)**

(Total 25 marks)

Answer Guide

For part a), candidates should set out:

- Key phases of audience thinking sequence
- Typical research report format (i.e. key components)
- Some of the key considerations when writing a report (areas similar to: assuming understanding, excessive length, unrealistic recommendations, spurious accuracy, obscure statistics, too much gloss, use of tables / graphs) **(12 marks)**
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For part b), Candidates should set out:

- Typical structure
- Presentation techniques (areas such as: eye contact, variety, simplicity, checking understanding, provide handouts, acting natural, summarising, rehearsing, clarifying questions) **(8 marks)**

For part c), Candidates should set out aspects that particularly address the following : -The conclusions disseminated are clearly and adequately supported by the data.

- The reports and presentations clearly distinguish between facts and interpretation. When interpreting data they make clear which data they are using to support their interpretation. In particular for qualitative research, the reports and presentations accurately reflect the findings of the project in addition to the interpretations and conclusions.
- The reporting and data tables set out sufficient technical information necessary to assess the validity of any published findings

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