



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2005

### MANAGEMENT FOR MARKETERS Certificate in Marketing Skills

#### General Comments

This was the first year of this programme. 92% of candidates passed the examination. Well done to all of those candidates. Since it was the first year and obviously this is the first examiner's report I will discuss each part of each question in a manner that hopefully will provide guidance to next year's group.

Overall the standard of answering was good. The learning outcomes for the certificate required candidates to be able to list, describe, and discuss the points asked of them. In that regard the majority of candidates were able to do this. However I would make a number of points concerning examination technique.

1. The instructions on the paper were explicit. All questions carry equal marks. This also applied to part (a) and part (b) of the questions. Candidates were inclined to give very brief answers to part (a) of the question and write far more on part (b). In future where it is stated that all parts carry equal marks the answers should be roughly the same length.
2. Answer the question asked. Read the question carefully and be sure about what is required before you start to write.
3. Time management was generally not an issue as I think there was sufficient time allowed for the paper. A small minority of candidates wrote the customary 'out of time' remark but it was very few.
4. This course is about reading, understanding, and applying the concepts discussed in the manual. The examination therefore expects students to have read and considered each individual topic. Candidates cannot expect to do well if they are attempting to answer the question based on general knowledge only.

#### Section A – Case Study

Superquinn was selected as it is a company that everyone would be familiar with whether they shop there or not. Feargal Quinn is a well done personality and so his style of leadership would be well known. The questions were posed in a method similar to a comprehension test in that all answers were contained within the case.

The questions were introduced with the following comment 'Jones and George (2003) say that the four building blocks of competitive advantage are superior efficiency; quality; speed,

flexibility and innovation; and responsiveness to customers'. This was to provide candidates with some guidance as to the method they should use to frame their answer.

1. What sustainable competitive advantage does Superquinn have?

Candidates were open to select a number of issues, e.g. fresh food, service, innovation. It was important that the student would do more than just list a number of items they should also discuss why they choose a particular source of competitive advantage

2. Indicate how Superquinn has developed its competitive advantage by using the building blocks.

For some reason a number of candidates wrote that they did not know what the building blocks were in spite of their being listed at the beginning of the question. For most candidates they were able to apply the building blocks without difficulty.

3. How would you describe Fergal Quinn's leadership style?

This question was poorly answered. In some cases the answer was restricted to one line or one bullet point. As mentioned earlier all questions carried equal marks and so the same consideration should have been given to this question as the others.

## **Section B**

### **Question 1**

(a) Write a short note on the importance of quality in a customer focused organization.

Some candidates took the word 'short' to the extreme here. I would have expected about three quarters of a page on this point. The manual offers a number of definitions of quality and the importance of quality is discussed under different headings throughout the text. Therefore I would have expected a brief discussion beyond one line!

(b) Why are complaints important to an organization? Think of an occasion when you made a complaint. Describe how the complaint was dealt with. Was there a satisfactory outcome?

This question was very well answered. It was interesting to note that the vast majority of candidates described incidents where there was a negative rather than positive outcome. However the examples were well described and the points were well made.

### **Question 2**

(a) Consider the company you work for. What are the different factors at which your company is better than its competitors? What factors are they worse than the competitors? Describe how these different issues impact on the overall performance of the organisation.

This question again asked students to consider the area of competitive advantage. 'A' students used the 'building blocks' given in the case study. This was good thinking. This part of the question was well answered with a good mix of theory and practice given in most answers.

- (b) Now imagine that you are responsible for the overall management of your organisation. Outline some changes you would make in areas where you are under performing giving reasons for your choices.

Some candidates took a very strategic approach to this question and made some very far reaching decisions on changes they would like to see in their organizations. Others made operational changes. Either was acceptable but the strategic decisions and the argument for these decisions was unexpected and especially good to read and correct.

### **Question 3**

- (a) Outline the reasons as to why people resist change. Discuss the importance of creating the right environment for change.

This question, in spite of being on the sample paper, was poorly answered. The topic is covered in the manual and perhaps it was too theoretical for most students.

- (b) Consider the industry you currently work in or any industry with which you are familiar. Think about how that industry is changing and describe changes you have noticed. Outline the reasons that these changes were necessary.

Students found it difficult to discuss change at industry level and did not provide very good answers to the question. This question however did provide the exceptional students with an additional chance to gain marks. These students used a model such as PEST to discuss change in their industry. Many of these students had also answered the previous question and almost answered this question as a continuation of the previous question.

### **Question 4**

- (a) What is leadership? Describe briefly three people you consider to be a good leader stating why you think this.

I will have to reconsider using words such as 'short note' or 'briefly'. This suggested to candidates that two or three lines was sufficient. Again I would have expected about three quarters of a page at least giving descriptions of the three chosen leaders. Fergal Quinn appeared too often for my liking. I acknowledge that he is a strong business leader but candidates could have stretched themselves a little more!

- (b) Imagine you have been appointed to a leadership position in a large company. You are responsible for a team of 50 people divided into 5 different groups. They deal with various functions relating to customer service. The job is very stressful and requires staff to be very focused on their job. What traits would you bring to this type of position? What sources of power might be important ?

In this question most candidates were able to discuss the sources of power quite well but had difficulties discussing the traits they would bring to the position. It appeared as if many candidates had not considered themselves as management and found it difficult to put themselves in the position.