



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2007

MARKETING IN PRACTICE Certificate in Marketing Skills

General Comments

The purpose of this report is to guide students towards improved performance. Students may find that Examiners' Reports emphasise the same points. This is because the same problems tend to arise across all papers and at all levels of examination. With good preparation, it is possible to reduce and even eliminate some of the poor exam technique that robs students of extra points. It would be wise for students who will be sitting the *Marketing in Practice* paper in May 2008 or at some future date to read this report carefully with due reference to the August 2007 paper.

In order to complete the paper successfully, students needed to demonstrate an ability to apply their knowledge gained from the programme to theoretical and practical questions. While the *Certificate in Marketing Skills* is complete in itself, those who perform well across all four subjects have the option to proceed to the Foundation Certificate in Marketing with an exemption from Stage 1.

The standard of scripts in *Marketing in Practice* was not as high as in previous years with many students achieving a C or a D grade. Those who did well were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of marketing theory and successfully applied that theory to the case study on marketing a college band and to questions that had a practical application of marketing theory. Students' personal experience of business added a welcome common sense approach to many of the problems set.

Question 1. Case Study: *In Your Face*

This year's case study looked at the challenge of marketing a college band that was about to go professional. The case study, carrying 50% of the total marks, asked the students to answer two questions on a promotion and segmentation strategy for the band *In your Face*. Many candidates failed to address the challenge of finding a wider audience (new segments) for the band. It was also surprising how few suggested any form of public relations to build the band's following as it began a nationwide tour.

Question 2

This question on the key components of a Marketing Information System was very straightforward for those who could identify and describe how marketing intelligence, secondary sources and market research together combined to make a company's MIS system. Wisely, those who could not name these elements steered clear of the question. Those who performed very well described each element, supporting their answer with examples.

Question 3

Almost all those who attempted Question 3 were able to describe the PEST model and make a reasonable attempt at showing how environmental forces might affect the tobacco market in Ireland. Some candidates mentioned the changing demographic profile in Ireland and how certain immigrant groups, as heavier smokers, were affecting tobacco sales. Most candidates were also able to refer to the advertising and marketing restrictions as well as the smoking ban (a political/regulatory force) and to show how these restrictions had had a direct impact on sales of cigarettes in this country.

Question 4

Pricing is not a popular question on a marketing exam paper, yet pricing is one of the most important elements of a marketer's tool kit and the only element that generates revenue. Candidates needed to examine how costs, customers, competitors and other environmental factors have an impact on how a company develops its pricing strategy.

Question 5

A question on SWOT analysis proved popular. Almost all those who attempted the question also showed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a diagram. However, very few were able to show how the SWOT helps companies plan for the future. For example, few addressed the issue of weaknesses and how companies must either plan to reduce their weaknesses or avoid marketing challenges where their weakness could lead to major problems for the company.