



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2007

### SELLING SKILLS Certificate in Marketing Skills

#### General Comments

The average mark achieved on this paper was 45%. Similar to the May paper, the attempted answers from candidates in this exam were too short to hope to cover the variety of issues that are inevitably incorporated in a professional exam. This lack of depth in answers is reflected in the marks allocated.

#### Question 1

- (a) Students were required to *be specific* regarding the approach they would use in the circumstances. Students typically didn't apply the standard approaches and tended not to be specific. The standard approaches in question being: the greeting approach, the personal approach, the stall approach, the service approach, the merchandise approach, the curiosity approach, and the acknowledgement approach.
- (b) Students should have identified the type of information they would need on which to base a viable sales presentation. For example, the following information types might have been included: prospect's name, likely use of car, occupation, family circumstances, other users, mileage, lifestyle, technical/style requirements, budget, trade-in details, etc, etc. Obviously this information will not be collected in a "complete-the-questionnaire" style format but rather in a normal conversational style. This question also gave students an opportunity to differentiate between open and closed questions.
- (c) This part of the question carried the greatest number of marks and therefore was the most important. Initially students should have nominated a sales presentation method or an amalgam of presentation methods to suit the circumstances. Students were expected to base their sales presentation outline on the information that they had collected in Part (b). It was particularly important that students converted the car's features into benefits and gave specific examples. So what is the benefit of an anti-lock braking system, what is the benefit of a spacious boot, etc.? Many students noted the need to convert features into benefits but didn't do so, instead simply repeating the feature as though it was a benefit. Students who did present benefits should have suggested how they would prioritise these benefits in their presentation. The use that would be made of a test-drive should have been emphasised in the presentation outline.
- (d) Students should have noted the importance of *follow-up*, the cost of acquiring a new customer, the lifetime value of a customer, and value of positive word-of-mouth. Overcoming cognitive dissonance was an important element in this question, as was an ability to differentiate between *follow-up* and that period immediately after the sale is

closed. In describing the follow-up that they would engage in students should have described what they would do in the weeks immediately after the sale and at the time of the car's replacement.

### **Question 2**

This could be seen as the banker question and one therefore expects that students will be well prepared for it and would get high marks. Primarily this was the evidence on this occasion with most students who answered the question getting full marks. The answers to each of the five parts of the question were: €600, 66.67% (66% or 67% was acceptable), 40%, €200, and €60 respectively.

For future examinations students are again invited to pay particular attention to this vital part of the syllabus.

### **Question 3**

Part (a) required students to explain four techniques used to alleviate perceived risk: demonstrations, guarantees, trial orders, and reference selling. *Explain* was a particularly important word in the question. Part (b) required students to present a plan for overcoming the standard competitor objection.

### **Question 4**

The retail price-setting methods that might have been described were: direct cost + pricing, competitive pricing, psychological pricing, and recommended retail pricing. Among the measures of retail success that could have been identified are: sales, market share, profit, current ratio, stockturn, gross profit margin, net profit margin, return on investment, etc.

### **Question 5**

The allocation of marks in this question entirely depended on which closing techniques the student chose. However, irrespective of the technique chosen students had to demonstrate an understanding of it and be in a position to apply it to the sale of a personal computer. It was not possible to answer this question properly in a one-sentence *explanation* of a closing technique and without reference to a personal computer, but this is exactly what some students attempted.