



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2008

MARKETING IN PRACTICE Certificate in Marketing Skills

General Comments

At each exam sitting there is a significant percentage of candidates who let valuable marks – those marks that lie between a pass and a fail grade – slip through their fingers because they do not apply the information that they have learned sufficiently well to the exam question they are addressing. This examiner would recommend that students carefully re-read their exam scripts to ensure that all diagrams are properly labelled, all aspects of each question fully answered and all answers are clearly marked. With close attention to detail, it is possible to extract a few extra vital marks.

Section A (50%)

Case Study: *Bookends*

Bookends is a well known bookshop located in Dublin's Temple Bar area. Students were asked to suggest a strategy to help the owner, Samuel Joyce, attract more business. Candidates were encouraged to consider options beyond merely selling books but were not allowed to sublet the premises. The case study produced some very good answers that showed students' awareness of social and economic changes in Dublin and Ireland.

In Section (i) students were asked to analyse the business environmental forces critical to Samuel Joyce's business. Most realised that the PEST analytical tool was best suited to this task and were able to provide commercially useful analysis of the changing demographics and social trends in Ireland, particularly with regard to the growing non-Irish community.

In Section (ii) students were asked to recommend a strategy to help Samuel Joyce grow his existing business. Most students were able to build on the opportunities they had identified in the PEST analysis, such as new demographic segments, so that they were able to recommend changes in the selection of books for these new segments. Others also suggested diversifying so that the venue also offered either a café or restaurant facility.

Question 2

A question on the promotion mix was well answered, with a brief introduction to what is meant by the mix, the elements of the mix and in some of the better answers, students also discussed how the mix should be adapted to suit different communications challenges.

Question 3

Services marketing tends to be one of the better understood parts of a marketing programme. Most candidates were able to describe the special characteristics of services and how they

require that we use an extended marketing mix of people, process and physical evidence in order to market our services effectively.

Question 4

The examiner was delighted to observe that students, in general, are very adept at using the SWOT analytical tool. There were, however, some examples of students confusing strengths (internal capabilities) with opportunities (external forces) and/or weaknesses (internal) with threats (external).

Question 5

A question on direct marketing and distribution was answered reasonably well. Students were asked to discuss the particular strengths of direct marketing but also to expand their answer to assess in what situations it is most effective. Some mentioned, correctly, that it is more commonly used in business-to-business marketing or where products may be distributed digitally, such as software or music products.