



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2008

SELLING SKILLS Certificate in Marketing Skills

General Comments

Only a small number of candidates sat this paper and all were successful. The average mark achieved was 55% which probably makes it the best overall performance in this subject to date. Similar to the May paper, the attempted answers from candidates in this exam were too short to cover the variety of issues that are incorporated in a professional exam. In Question 5 some students attempted to *Explain* five important concepts of Personal Selling in just one handwritten page. This lack of depth in answers was reflected in the marks allocated.

In addition, students must be particularly careful with handwriting. If the examiner cannot read the answer then it cannot be awarded marks.

Question 1

Overall students need to show more capabilities at incorporating the theory of the subject with the practice of the case study.

- (a) This question was essentially a theory question. The manual lists the value to the salesperson of objections.
- (b) An objection is a stated reason not to buy a product. It would have been useful for students to start their answer with such a definition and then to use it as a baseline for the remainder of the answer. Typically students identified about three expressed reasons not to buy the photocopier but others should also have been identified. Most students were unable to fit the various objections they had noted into the categories identified in the manual.
- (c) This part of the question was carried on from the previous part. Students should have been very specific on how they would respond to each identified objection. Two significant issues in student responses can be identified: in relation to the price objection students again were typically too quick to offer a discount, and insufficient use was made of questioning.
- (d) As with objections, students again typically failed to identify the full range of buying signals in the case study. When Knox's commented '*I presume delivery and set up won't take long*' she was essentially telling Conroy that she has decided to buy though even she might not be conscious of that decision yet. Had she not made up her mind she

would have phrased the comment differently. Therefore students should have concluded that there was a high likelihood of Conroy making the sale.

Question 2

Generally speaking high marks were achieved by the students who attempted this question, but then presumably it is now seen as the banker question. The answers to each of the five parts of the question were: €1,200, 66.67% (66% or 67% was acceptable), 40%, €400, and €120 respectively. For future examinations students are again invited to pay particular attention to this vital part of the syllabus.

Question 3

Only one student attempted this question and performed particularly well. The principles that should have been explained were: never accept the first offer, don't give away concessions, don't change the price, overcome greed, focus on desired benefits rather than issues, and avoid emotions. The factors that determine the balance of power in negotiations are indifference, scarcity, authority, investment, and knowledge.

Question 4

The differences that are usually identified include: the industrial market has fewer buyers, it tends to be more geographically concentrated, it involves greater technical complexity and customer specification, industrial customers buy less but in larger quantities, and they are characterised by greater rationality, and so on. The roles of members in the industrial Decision Making Unit are: initiator, influencer, decider, buyer, user, and gatekeeper.

Question 5

This was the most popular question among the participating students. In the case of each of the concepts listed, students should have been in a position to at least give a definition, explain its role and function in the selling process and identify the implications for the personal seller.