



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2002

### MARKETING INFORMATION ANALYSIS I (MIA I)

#### General Comments

Those who are unfortunate enough to have to sit in August should be advised that it is designed to be similar in standard but not identical to the May paper. Both papers are set in February and only when the drafting is complete is a decision taken as to which is for May and which for August. The August paper is not therefore a 'softer option'.

With the Examiners' reports now on the MII web site, students are advised to download all available reports and to take the comments to heart. Frankly, 'new' comments are hard to compose as the same errors recur with each successive cohort of students. For that reason many of the comments on the individual questions are similar to those in previous years.

#### Comments on individual questions

##### Question 1

The answers on the subject of sampling were very poor. They are neither popular nor well done. Only a quarter of the candidates tried the question and few met with success. To answer the question asked, a candidate must be able to use a confidence interval to define the boundaries of an estimate for a population percentage. The second part concerned the allocation of a sample of 1200 people, when one is given the details of the population in terms of gender and age.

##### Question 2

This question was attempted by virtually everyone and produced the best results. However this is only to be expected, as it required students to draw a histogram, to calculate the mean and standard deviation. As the attempts at the last section (on calculating a confidence interval) were very poor, students might pay more attention to this topic in the future.

Firstly, all students should get full marks for the construction of a histogram from raw data. Secondly, the students were asked to calculate the mean age from the frequency table. This is very basic and should be mastered by all candidates. As I have said previously – 'Anyone who cannot do this really does not deserve to pass'. The standard deviation was also required. This again is fundamental to the course and should be within everyone's competence.

##### Question 3

About 40% of candidates attempted this question. In part (a) the calculation of an overall index was required. This is a fundamental area of this topic – only requiring a fairly basic calculation. Everyone should know about the Consumer Price Index in a fair amount of detail as it is so frequently spoken about in the media. Finally, the calculation of spending on food away from home is adjusted from 1999 to 2002 levels. The size of the national market on an annual basis required the spending to be adjusted to 2002 levels and then to be

transformed to an annual basis by multiplying by 52 weeks. Then a further multiplication by 1.2 million households will represent the total national market.

#### **Question 4**

Usually time-series analysis is the most popular question and usually is well performed. This year again this proved to be true. This year, the data began in quarter 2 of the first year, which proved a problem for many people when calculating the trend and seasonal variation. The meaning of 'seasonal variation' wasn't well understood. The forecast of sales of each quarter of 2002 was generally OK.

#### **Question 5**

The distinction of correlation and regression were not well understood and should be clear for all candidates. The regression of turnover on floor space was not very popular and didn't generally earn high marks. Finally, students were asked to plot a scatter diagram – which generally was well done.

#### **Question 6**

As usual, the probability questions were not very popular. Nearly 40% attempted the first short question on the normal distribution and the results were fairly dismal. The short question on the probability of a gas find on either the West Coast or the Irish Sea wasn't popular nor did it provide good results for the majority of candidates. Part C was a very basic question on the Poisson distribution and should be within the competence of anyone who studied this material. Part D required the students to construct and examine a tree diagram of all the possible outcomes of this situation. The option with the highest expected value should be chosen.

#### **Question 7**

About 25- 30 % of candidates attempted these questions on hypothesis tests. The section on chi-square was fairly basic but unfortunately it was not well answered. Neither was the question on the difference of two sample percentages well done.

#### **Question 8**

Most students did well on this question where they were asked to design a research programme on attitudes to the euro. Here the clear outlining of research objectives, the statement of the target population, the actual presentation of the sampling procedure to be implemented and some indication of the questionnaire content characterised the better answers.