



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2003

BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF MARKETING

General Comments

The general pattern was that those who failed the May sitting were unable to use the intervening period to improve their grasp of the subject. Accordingly the majority of those who resat the examination in August failed again.

Following what is now becoming a trend in this subject, a high proportion of candidates were not in a position to attempt any kind of meaningful response to the requisite number of questions. Over 23% answered less than the five questions required and a further 25%, though attempting all five, failed to obtain even a single mark for at least one of their attempts. This strongly suggests that students are attempting to get by through studying only a portion of the course, an approach which lecturers must make every attempt to discourage.

Question 1

Part a) was very poorly answered. Very few candidates could explain what systematic observation involves and why it is necessary for scientific study. Nor indeed could they explain the benefits of measurement in terms of accuracy and reliability. Part b) required candidates to explain that statistics are used to summarise and interpret research findings. Few could do so. Part c) was quite well answered, though many omitted one or the other of the two reasons for publishing research findings i.e. to enable others to evaluate the work and to inform others of the findings so that they might apply them. Part d) was reasonably well answered with a good proportion of candidates showing a grasp that evaluation and replication are for the purposes of validating research findings.

Question 2

The majority of answers here, though often minimalist in the extreme, were at least on the right track. If candidates had made some attempt to explain themselves to a greater degree they would have won extra marks. Most, while being aware of the limited capacity and duration of working or short-term memory, failed to explain why this is a problem in terms of retaining information and failed to explain what obstacles there are to the rehearsal of information in STM. Few candidates remembered that 'State Dependent Learning' is an aid to retention in LTM.

Question 3

Giving a brief description of the big five personality factors should have presented little challenge and been a source of easy marks. Not so, however. 'Openness' - openness to new experiences or novel ways of seeing the world - was repeatedly confused with openness about one's own feelings and with honesty. 'Agreeableness' (tendency to see the positive side of others) was again and again described as weakness and the absence of opinions about anything. 'Extraversion' was repeatedly confused with stability - the positive end of the neuroticism dimension. Students need to understand that being high on extraversion does not confer upon

one a high degree of 'positive mental health.' Many descriptions of the five factors amounted to no more than a few adjectives being listed for each one indicating some rote learning but little understanding of what they involve.

Question 4

In answering this question there was a marked tendency to write about aspects of attitudes – e.g. social influence *on* and effects *of* on behaviour – which the question did not invite. To answer this question at all well it would have been necessary to deal with the multi-dimensional nature of attitudes i.e. that an attitude comprises beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies. Candidates universally failed to address that issue and so were unable to indicate what, in addition, is involved when a belief or a feeling becomes a full-blown attitude. Examples were generally very poorly used in the effort to aid explanation. While many referred to the example of attitudes in the US to the death penalty given in the textbook, few could show the relevance of this example to the question asked. Examples of specific beliefs or emotions were given but without indicating how they contribute to the formation of an attitude. Many confused the notion of behavioural influences on attitudes with social learning of attitudes. In the context of this question the behaviour in question is that of the subsequent attitude holder.

Question 5

Many answers to this question amounted to nothing more than a statement that the theory refers to the giving of rewards for good behaviour with perhaps some examples of rewards being given. That was not sufficient to gain a pass mark. It was expected that responses would include a discussion of **how** rewards influence employee motivation with reference to beliefs about the behaviour-reward relationship, generalisation, discrimination and the reinforcement of complex behaviours. There was a common tendency to include a discussion of other motivation theories instead of or in addition to Reinforcement Theory. No marks were to be obtained in this way unless the relevance of the discussion to the question in hand was clearly shown.

Question 6

This was a very poorly answered question with most having no idea of what a command group is and many no idea of how to describe a task group. A very common mistake here was to describe command groups as groups of managers and task groups as groups of workers under the supervision of the former. Another source of confusion was between command groups and overall organisational hierarchy such that the organisation is perceived as having a single command group comprising all of its employees. Few were able to explain the core issue concerning a command group i.e. that the members of the group each contribute to a common function and collectively achieve some specific organisational objective or objectives. Few succeeded in explaining that task groups are set up for an outcome the achievement of which is not deemed to merit the setting up of a dedicated command group because of its once-off or temporary nature or because, for other reasons, it would not be economical to dedicate staff full-time to the task.

Question 7

Strategy here was frequently taken to mean whether an organisation adopts a policy of internal or external control – thus taking the candidate into the confusing circular loop of attempting to explain an outcome by reference to that outcome. While some appreciation of a relationship between organisational size and design was frequently evident it was commonly unclear from the answers how or why larger size tends towards external control design. Technology was mostly understood solely in terms of Information Technology. Students need to appreciate that technology is a general term that refers to the means by which inputs are transformed into outputs. Few showed any grasp at all of what 'environment' means in this context and consequently few made any attempt to discuss how external factors such as competition or state of the economy impacts on organisational design.

Question 8

The main deficiency in answers to this question was detail. Answers tended to consist of broad generalisations and 'received wisdoms' such as one might expect from a surprise interview with a member of the public on the street. Rarely were any figures or statistics offered to support general statements made. On family life and the role of women most were able to indicate that women today play a much more prominent role in the labour force and some were able to comment on the decline in family size and in the prevalence of the extended family structure. On the Catholic Church many were unable to say more than that it does not have the power or influence it had in the past without saying how this manifests itself and without commenting on the decline in mass attendance and in vocations. The section on the economy was very poorly answered with many unable to say more than that the country is richer now than formerly. A discussion of the shift in employment from agriculture to manufacturing and service industries should have been included at very least. Education was also addressed in a very minimalist way. The effects of free secondary education and transport in the 1960s should have been addressed, as should the rapid growth of the third level sector and particularly the genesis of the RTCs or the Institutes of Technology, as they are now known. Answers often amounted to no more than the assertion that education is better now, this often accompanied by the unsubstantiated view that the quality of education in the past (as opposed to its availability) was deficient.