



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2004

BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF MARKETING

General Comments

This Summer's results showed a marked improvement in performance over last year. The distribution of grades was as follows: A = 6%; B = 8%; C = 12%; D = 25%; E = 6% and F = 42%.

While it can hardly be seen as positive that 42% of those who sat the paper failed with a further 6% in a marginal position (E grade), it represents a considerable reduction in failure rates from last year, which in turn represented a marginal improvement on the year before.

Once again a substantial number of candidates sitting the paper do not have a sufficient grasp of the syllabus as a whole to even attempt the requisite number of questions. In all, 29% of candidates attempted fewer than the five questions required and a further 13% made such a poor attempt on at least one question as to obtain no mark at all for that effort. This year there was no significant centre effect on performance with the Dublin and provincial papers showing a broadly similar distribution in pass rates.

Question 1

This was a relatively popular question attempted by 58% of candidates. Many answers betrayed a lack of even a basic grasp of the difference between an experimental and a correlational research design i.e. that the former is designed to show a cause-effect relationship whereas the latter just measures the degree of association between the variables. It followed not surprisingly then that most candidates could not describe what an experiment involves in simple terms – that one variable is manipulated to check its impact on another variable. Descriptions of observational research design frequently intruded on the answers, often without any attempt at all made to relate what was being written to the question asked.

Question 2

Attempted by 64% of candidates. A number of common factors were evident that tended to detract from the marks awarded. Candidates had a tendency to devote a lot of effort to describing Ireland in the past instead of focusing on how it has changed. Another tendency was to discuss the negative effects of religious decline on Irish society which was not asked. While most answers suggested correctly that clerical abuse and associated scandals have contributed to the decline of religious influence, many failed to discuss the influence of urbanisation, industrialisation, individualism, T.V. and exposure to external cultural influences. In describing the evidence of decline many failed to cite the introduction or repeal of legislation (contraception, divorce, homosexuality) opposed by the Catholic Church. Many answers betrayed a reliance on 'popular wisdom' rather than academic study, citing

such factors as people being ‘too busy’ to have time to devote to religious observation as a cause of religious decline. The overwhelming emphasis on clerical abuse as a cause of decline indicates the same reliance on the popular media. Candidates seem unaware that the signs of decline long preceded the scandals of the 1990s.

Question 3

This was not a popular question, completed by only 25% of candidates. A major source of confusion here seems to have been between an organisation and a group. In attempting to describe an organisation many described a group instead. Indeed Tuckman and Jensen’s stages of group development were described in some detail in several answers. Many seem to fail to grasp that an organisation consists mainly in the arrangements that are instituted for controlling performance and not in the people who are being controlled. In explaining what an organisation is very few were able to explain what is meant by ‘social arrangements’ for the control of performance, i.e. such factors as job and role definitions, supervisory systems, rules of conduct and so on.

Question 4

Performance on this question was above average - it was completed by 65% of candidates. The majority showed that they knew the basics of classical and operant conditioning. Few, however, explained what exactly the behaviourist theory is – that it explains learning as the formation of associations between conditioned responses and environmental stimuli, the mechanisms for the establishment of such associations being classical and operant conditioning. Instead, most simply launched into a description of examples (Pavlov’s dogs and Skinner’s rats etc.) without any introduction of what it is all about. Students need to be encouraged to respond to examination questions as questions – just as one would respond to a question in any other context – and not as simple prompts to regurgitate passages of learned-off material. Better marks will always be obtained by answering the question asked.

Question 5

This was the most popular question (82%) and had the highest overall pass rate. Those who failed the question simply did not know what the five needs are that constitute Maslow’s hierarchy. Among those who had a knowledge of the needs, a remarkably high number described Esteem needs as ‘Self-Esteem’ and went on to describe the need for ‘self-esteem’ - to think well of oneself - rather than ‘esteem’ - the need to be thought well of or respected by others, which is the correct explanation. Overall, explanations of each of the five needs tended to be minimal. It is not sufficient, for example, to say that ‘safety needs’ involve ‘the need to feel safe and secure.’ Predictably the words ‘physiological’ was universally misspelled, often bearing little or no relationship to the actual word. With regards also to this set of needs, few stated that it is defined in terms of the basic physical requisites for immediate survival. Many just said it was the need for food and water. There was a good deal of confusion also about the next level of need – safety or security needs. Many confused this with shelter or protection from the elements, which is essentially a physiological need.

Question 6

Question 6 was one of the less popular questions, completed by only 29%. While most showed some appreciation of how the Likert Scale is constructed, many candidates had no knowledge at all about the Osgood Semantic Differential Scale. It was confused with a variety of other questionnaire formats. Among those that did show an understanding of the scales, a lot of answers went no further than to offer examples of individual questions

constructed after the fashion of the two scales but failed to indicate how such items are aggregated to get an overall scale score.

Question 7

This question was answered by 68% of candidates. A lot of marks were lost on this question through failure to address the question asked. A high number of candidates focused on describing various perceptual errors such as the halo effect or stereotyping but did not go on to suggest how one might avoid falling foul of such errors. Another common unhelpful tendency was to include a great deal of irrelevant material about the workings of the perceptual system. As always candidates need to appreciate that no marks will be obtained by answering unasked questions.

Question 8

This question was answered by 62% of candidates. At (a) it was expected that students would indicate that intelligence manifests itself in problem solving and ability to adjust to environmental demands, and that it is to be understood as a complex combination of brain structure and information processing skills. While most answers indicated how intelligence is detectable, few offered any indication of what it actually is. Students had great difficulty getting across the basic idea for (b) that all intelligence tests are norm-referenced and, using a variety of techniques, tell you how far above or below the average a person's performance lies. Answers to (c) tended to be quite good, most showing that they understood the evidence for both a genetic and environmental influence on intelligence. Here, however, students would benefit from the ability to summarise information. Going into too much detail about specific sources of evidence such as, say, the Skeels and Dye study took up a lot of time and was unnecessary in the context of the question asked. While a high proportion of candidates quite correctly referred to Ogbu's Inferior Caste explanation for racial differences found on intelligence test scores, the vast majority failed to point out two key issues - that the inferior caste effect on intelligence test scores occurs in the absence of racial differences and where such caste members lose their inferior status through emigration the intelligence test scores of their children improve markedly.