



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2004

### STAGE 1 PROJECT

#### **General Comments**

This year in the Stage 1 project there was a moderate number of higher grades (As and Bs), with just 38% of candidates in this range, with one in eight achieving an A grade. Nearly one in three candidates were graded C, 23% graded D and in total 9% failed. The prevalence of optical businesses allowed candidates great freedom to explore organisations they had not been exposed to previously, or even considered in marketing terms.

#### **Content & Technical Issues**

It is consistently obvious to the examiner that only a select minority of students bothered to consult past examiners reports which detail the structural and tactical keys to success in the Stage 1 project. As is typical of previous years, the project had four identifiable requirements, but as is also typical of previous years, candidates selectively ignored the brief.

#### **Content Issues**

The brief asked candidates to select an optical business with which they are familiar, and detail their assumptions. One fifth of the total marks were allocated to the provision of a summary of the background to the chosen business and the core activities it is engaged in. A significant number of students showed a clear over-reliance on discussion of their chosen company's background. Included in some weaker projects were lists of product ranges (pages in some cases) with price lists and even company financial statements. Although a relevant requirement, the company profile should be a small part of the overall project NOT most of it.

The third component of the project required attention to be paid to the marketing activities of the business, and to describe in detail how the company has faced the continuing challenges for survival. This section in most projects was dealt with adequately, and many analyses were founded on principles of the marketing mix and market segmentation. But those who concentrated solely on sales and promotion principles were ignoring wider salient themes. As to whether the company's marketing strategies give it a competitive advantage over competitors, this was ignored by most candidates.

The final section of this project was NOT optional. Recommendations where called for must be made. Even a cursory glance at the marking scheme provided should make this obvious. A final reminder is that such recommendations must be appropriately referenced if they are not the candidate's own ideas, otherwise they may be interpreted as plagiarism.

#### **Technical Issues: Presenting & Packaging Your 'Product'**

This year, like previous years, there existed an appalling and frankly inexcusable carelessness in the presentation of projects. Hand written corrections are not appropriate, correct use of the

English language and punctuation are. With widely available software there are NO excuses for such neglect. Even a simple proof reading by many candidates would have addressed many of these outstanding issues. This examiner views such lack of attention extremely negatively. Presentation and packaging skills are ESSENTIAL.

#### EXAMINER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Answer the question.** In order to answer the question you need to have organised yourself. Plan your Project: establish the main points and list them or use a mind map. Go back to the plan as you are answering to avoid omitting an important point. This technique should also add logic to the development of your argument.
- Structure your project. This means clearly differentiating between your different sections such as: 'Introduction' and 'Recommendations'.
- If the question calls for recommendations, make sure your answer includes some – and make them specific, not wandering and generic.
- Be professional –reflect the view that Marketing is there to make a contribution to an organisation, but also PRESENT your work in a professional manner appropriate to the Marketing profession.