



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2006

STAGE 1 PROJECT

General Comments

This year in the Stage 1 project there was a disappointing number of higher grades (As and Bs), with 34% of candidates in this range. Only one in eight achieved an A grade and nearly one in five candidates were graded C, 28% graded D and in total an unprecedented 19% failed.

This high rate of failure and low concentration of higher grades could be significantly explained by the following points:

- Appallingly badly written and presented projects, too often there was an obvious lack of proof reading – there is absolutely NO excuse for typographical errors, mis-spellings, grammatical errors at this level;
- Lack of integration between sections where the obvious requirements are not for composite pieces but a thoroughly developed narrative, poorly performing projects lacked coherence and narrative development and more often than not had a rambling structure or NO observable structure;
- Little or no current literature reviewed, too many projects relied on the convenience of a single text book and in a worrying number no literature whatsoever was utilised. Significant inclusion - integration of relevant, additional and appropriate literature netted additional marks
- Over-reliance on direct quotations: these show nothing without commentary, other than a candidates ability to COPY from a source;
- Vague and roundabout recommendations that were speculative more often than not because the candidate had not in any significant way accessed relevant reading and had therefore not embedded any real best practice ideas. No recommendations means a 35% deficit in marks available;
- Projects which were short on words i.e. around 2,000 and less, did not fully ventilate the issues required and as a rule tended to fare considerable worse off;
- In one case it was page eleven before the candidate decided to address the second requirement of the project, 11 pages addressing 15% of the marks is sheer folly;
- Vast profusions of additional materials in the appendices that were unREFERRED to left the examiner to determine the point and theses of such materials. It is the responsibility of the candidate to draw any conclusions, determine the meaning fullness and evolve a narrative from such additional documents not the examiner;
- Use of SWOT analysis useful but diminishing returns when it was so extensive that it precluded full discussion of the principal marketing strategies. In some instances little reference was made to the basic elements of the marketing mix even the basics of price, product promotion, and place;

- Candidates ‘creating’ their own questions to address in the project instead of responding to the structured brief which the examiner requires – this makes no sense. Ignoring the recommendations section, ignoring the fact that this is a marketing project and there are aspects other than proportion or sponsorship to the marketing mix;
- No Stage 1 candidate must engage in primary research – this must be adhered to. The examiner noted deeply flawed questionnaires with no attention to proper construction, no interview theme sheets, no methodology sections recognising qualitative nor quantitative methods;
- When an examiner states as part of requirements that no projects should be contained in plastic covers (this has been a requirement now for three years), this is a requirement not an optional extra. In future NO project contained in such covers will be considered for marking;
- Vast overemphasis on promotion – sponsorship strategies, 3 page description of *kids in action* or 2 page descriptions of *getaway* weekends whilst useful tended to detract from the balance of the project;
- Lack of appropriate referencing and even plagiarism. If the examiner was to be zealously pedantic with respect to referencing then at least 90 percent of the projects received could be considered to have plagiarised at some point. Below is a brief description which clearly states the position:
 - Plagiarism essentially refers to copying the ideas and work of another and misrepresenting it as your own. This is a completely unacceptable practice and is prohibited in all academic institutions worldwide. Plagiarism is generally easily identified by the examiner, either through a change in writing style, the inclusion of irrelevant material or through familiarity with the source text. It is a serious offence and WILL result in a fail grade and disciplinary action.
- The project requirements are clearly laid out in the brief with specific allocation of marks. The challenge of this Stage 1 project is to integrate, in a secondary research manner, information from essential readings to a real organisation. If candidates even paid a rudimentary attention to this, there should be an obvious attention paid to what the examiner is looking for. In broad terms the examiner rewards:
 - Evidence of research, reading and understanding of relevant literature (relevance 1);
 - Response to the question not a question – integration of empirical work to practice (integration & relevance 2);
 - Evidence of critical thinking and reflection (evaluation);
 - Organised, effectively structured document which reflects professional written communication values (presentation);
 - Not a plagiarised document (citation).