



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2008

STAGE 2 PROJECT

General Comments

As the overall standard of the August Stage 2 Project was satisfactory, the examiner wishes to use the opportunity to provide some overall guidelines to future candidates.

The Stage 2 Project is designed to challenge the student to apply and adapt the marketing concepts and strategies they have learnt towards a practical business problem. The project should therefore be viewed as an opportunity for students to display their marketing ability. Consider this report as you would a brief sent by a client. Every client expects a professional standard of presentation and most are capable of downloading corporate information from the internet themselves. Candidates should desist the desire to cut and paste unedited information from corporate websites.

Whilst cognisant of the value of the internet to secondary research, the examiner will only award marks to information which is referenced in a manner that includes: the author, title, publisher and date. A string of *www's* will not suffice. Over the years the examiner has observed a distinct lack of marketing terminology or concepts in many of the submissions together with a bland level of analysis that one would only find in a coffee table publication. The examiner will not award marks where the information is not pertinent to the marketing function or where plagiarism is suspected.

Irrespective of the industry under investigation, the Stage 2 Project is, above all, a business report with a marketing focus. Such reports require an impartial objective style and should therefore be written in the third person. In previous years, some students have failed to divorce their personal feelings and opinions – thus losing objectivity, which is the hallmark of analysis.

The project brief usually requires the candidate to investigate a specific industry, profile a main player, its products, markets and competitors. Candidates are expected to be familiar with such concepts as PEST, SWOT, segmentation, product lifecycles, adopter categories and product portfolios which should be the staple diet of aspiring marketing graduates. Such concepts not only provide professional credence but also provide a solid structure to any marketing report. Where applicable, concepts should be augmented with appropriate charts and diagrams.

In the second part of the brief, the student is often required to employ appropriate primary research techniques in order to gauge the effectiveness of the company's marketing efforts. In order to be fair to the student, the examiner has deemed that a sample size of thirty is sufficient. It is critical that the candidate explains the reasoning behind their choice of sample, sample size, survey methodology etc. It is unacceptable that students should cite lack of time as their reason for single interviews. Marks will be awarded based on questionnaire design, cross tabulation of data and use appropriate charts.

The examiner is mindful that most candidates will not have Stage 2 subjects completed when submitting the project. The brief is divided into different sections and the marking system displayed for each section is provided purely as a guideline for candidates. The final mark is judged holistically, taking all components in mind. Stronger submissions will demonstrate the linkage between secondary information, the use of primary research to fill the information gaps, the conclusions reached and recommendations. Weaker submissions rarely utilise the information gleaned in market research and tend not to follow through into the recommendations reached. Far too often in the past, candidates have concentrated myopically on marketing communications whilst ignoring the opportunities presented by manipulating the other parts of the marketing mix.

The examiner strongly advises you to start your project immediately on receipt, as it will take you a considerable amount of time to amass information and lay it out in a logical order. The sooner you commit information to paper the more time you will have to reflect on your thoughts and to hone your presentation in a professional manner.