



## **EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**AUGUST 2000**

### **BUYER BEHAVIOUR**

#### **General Comments**

The performance in this examination was very poor indeed. Many candidates cannot have bothered to prepare seriously for the examination, nor did they bother to present their material in a careful or clear manner. Lest there be any confusion, in terms of progressing from one stage to another of the Institute's graduateship programme, the Autumn examinations carry the exact same weight as those held in Summer; therefore the same high standard is required and the examination scripts are assessed in the same rigorous manner.

Nearly one in every three failed to attempt five questions. Many candidates only wrote a few lines as an attempt on individual questions and these are not included in these figures. How can candidates expect to achieve pass grades when they produce so little evidence of their work?

It is a waste of time to reproduce the question at the start of the "answer". Time is limited enough and it is best used focusing on the task at hand.

As regards legibility, it must be stressed again that it is the candidate's responsibility to provide material that is capable of being marked with reasonable facility. The clear and appropriate use of headings and sub-headings improves the presentational appearance of answers, and attracts higher marks.

Questions should be answered in a full and comprehensive manner that attempts to examine the complexity of the subject matter and to elucidate its applications to marketing decision making.

Many candidates wrote as if the briefest mention of the shortest summary of the barest details of the topic in question would suffice. It does not. Candidates are required to deal with questions in a professional manner which exhibits a full and detailed grasp of the subject.

The subject is inherently concerned with marketing decision making; all answers should therefore be imbued with a marketing orientation. Those candidates who show the ability to apply what they learn in other marketing classes to the subject matter of this paper, are developing the correct approach to the subject.

While cross-fertilisation with other subjects is encouraged, there is no point in hoping that what is (poorly) learned in another subject will suffice to answer questions in this subject. The buyer behaviour syllabus and buyer behaviour text must be studied, in depth.

In some cases, topics that were not directly asked on the paper were still produced, frequently without any "tailoring", as answers to totally different questions. Where prepared material is completely at variance with a question's main thrust, it is a waste of time to write it all down; more marks could be gained by making a genuine attempt at the question as posed, or by attempting a different question.

Where the prepared answers were apposite they were frequently not adequately directed to the precise point at issue. This approach can fortuitously lead to a pass result but it cannot generate better grades. To generate better grades, a more evaluative approach is required that does not solely rely on lists and categories.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Question 1**

Less than half of those who attempted Question One (nearly two thirds of the candidates) attained a pass mark and less than half of those attained a higher grade. Many had no idea at all what this question was about but were prepared to give their views on a range of topics which had nothing at all to do with the question. Those who had some idea were so limited in their knowledge that they could only manage the briefest exposition. This is not sufficient. The question must be read carefully and treated seriously. The key lies in careful preparation. Very few took this approach.

### **Question 2**

The pass rate for Question Two was just one-in six of those who attempted it (about one third of the candidates). Half of those who passed attained a higher grade. Those who passed were able to give the basic approaches to explaining satisfaction and dis-satisfaction as outlined in the text-book. Few enough were able to give a clear indication of how these approaches impact on marketing strategy. Vague generalities about satisfaction and its "importance" are not at all what is required in this question. Many who failed the question did not apparently appreciate that this is a technical subject which requires accurate and detailed work.

### **Question 3**

Just over two out of every five candidates attempted Question Three. Just less than two in five passed. Half of those who passed achieved a higher grade. Semiotics is a serious topic and has considerable interest and relevance for marketers. Where the text is a little limited (and it is limited on this topic) a serious candidate for this qualification should read outside the text to deepen his or her knowledge. However, again, the over-riding impression is of candidates' reluctance to grapple seriously with the subject. A minimalist tendency seems to be prevalent which assumes that the merest "minimum" will suffice and anything more is unnecessary. Wrong. It is almost unimaginable that candidates for this examination would not be able to comment on two current or recent Irish marketing campaigns but there were such.

### **Question 4**

This was the most popular question with seventy per-cent of candidates attempting it. The pass rate was just less than two-in-five of those attempting it. Forty per-cent of those who attained a pass grade achieved a higher grade. While many were able to give brief definitions of personality, self-concept and psychographics (some of them very much in the "folk definition" category), very few were able to give any explanations of what they mean, or to elaborate on them in any meaningful manner. Hardly any could tackle the issue of the usefulness of these variables for market segmentation. To acquire the ability to explain and apply consumer

behaviour variables in a marketing context is a basic requirement of this course. It clearly requires much more work than was evident in this examination.

### **Question 5**

Fifty-seven per-cent of the candidates attempted Question Five and just over half of those attained a pass grade. Nearly three in every four of those who passed achieved a higher grade, by far the best such performance in this examination. As can be seen by the large proportion of higher grades, most of those who knew how to tackle this question were able to do so at a reasonably high level. Unfortunately, too many were not able to tackle it any level which was acceptable. Many candidates who were able to give an explanation, however brief, of what is meant by the experiential approach to attitude change, failed to make any mention of other available approaches. This failure may arise from lack of knowledge or from lack of attention to the question as it is posed. Quite a few papers had very good answers to this question with well prepared theoretical content and well focused application to the marketing problem posed. A number of these scored "A"s.

### **Question 6**

Question Six was the joint second most popular (along with Question One) in this examination; sixty-five per-cent of candidates attempted it. Hopes were badly mis-placed. Less than one-in twelve passed (the worst performance in this examination). No-one attained a higher grade (also the worst performance in this examination). It was distressing to find that the vast majority were not able to mention any Irish social class categories or measures even in the most general fashion. So they had no idea whether or not social class was useful for segmentation purposes.

### **Question 7**

Nearly two out of every five candidates attempted Question Seven. Just over one third of them passed. Sixty per-cent of those who passed attained higher grades. Many confused types of groups with different group influences. Is that possible? Yes it is. The topic of group influences is straight out of the text-book and there is no excuse for not having a passable knowledge of it.

### **Question 8**

Forty-six per-cent of candidates attempted Question Eight. Fifty-nine per-cent of them attained a pass mark (the best such performance in this examination). Of those who passed, sixty per-cent achieved a higher grade. The message comes through loud and clear. If you work hard enough to achieve a pass grade, it is not that terribly difficult to do even better. The topic of situations is well covered in the text book. Unfortunately, too many of the answers which were written demonstrate quite clearly that "not many people know this".