



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2000

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY

General Comments

While the Pass and Fail rates have remained more or less the same as last year, the standards of answering have improved perceptibly. The number of C marks is substantially up on previous years. The B and C graded answer papers read much better than previously. There are more relevant references to the material in the recommended text and good diagrams appear frequently in answer papers. There is also much less emphasis being placed on the 'soft' aspects of cultural factors as they affect international marketing and much more emphasis on the 'hard' strategic planning, cost and logistical aspects of the subject. It is very obvious that the recommended text is being used more effectively and there seems to be a realisation that it is impossible to bluff a way through the topic. A worrying trend that is emerging at this time is the lack of insights by Students into the changes that are taking place in the international marketing environment. Basic awareness of what is happening in the European Union and Eastern Europe and of the changes taking place in the technological and international business environments seems to be missing. Lack of awareness of what is happening in the international marketing arena can almost be guaranteed to leave students at a grave disadvantage in future examination situations.

Question 1

The answers to this Question can only be described as appalling. Only a handful of candidates scored more than a bare pass mark. From the standard of the answering, it looks suspiciously as if what few marks were obtained were earned more on the basis of general knowledge than on a real understanding of the respective roles of either of the three institutions mentioned in the Question. A similar question was asked in August 1999 with very similar results. (See Examiner's Report on August 1999). Candidates must expect to be asked this type of question since organisations such as Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia and Bord Failte are mainstays of Ireland's international marketing effort.

Question 2

Less than one third of the Candidates who attempted this question succeeded in obtaining a pass mark. This was mostly because it was obvious that Eastern Europe that currently stands on the verge of full integration with the EU might just as well have been on the far side of the moon as far as most Candidates were concerned. The Examiner had hoped that Candidates would discuss the enormous market opportunities represented by the larger former Eastern Block economies with their very substantial populations and developing discretionary spending power. At the same time, many of these countries are an emerging threat to Irish dairy producers because they are large, reasonably low cost producers of dairy products in their own right. Even though their lack of sophisticated quality control, packaging, brand management and distributions systems limits their ability to compete effectively outside their own countries at present, this situation can be expected to change. The Examiner would have been very happy to give good marks for any mention of these issues.

Question 3

This proved to be a banker question for those Candidates who attempted it. Similar questions have been asked quite frequently in previous examinations and previous Examiner's Reports have indicated clearly what is required by way of a good answer.

Question 4

Again this question was well answered question by most Candidates. This is to be expected given the amount of emphasis that the Examiner has given to strategic planning in previous examination papers and in Examiner's Reports. Candidates should be advised that a great deal of emphasis is being placed on the **pace of change** in macro-environmental factors as they affect international marketing. Theorists and practitioners are increasingly concerned about the ability of management to cope with the accelerating pace of change and the need to further develop the principles of strategic management. Therefore, it is likely that this topic will crop up in future International Marketing examination papers.

Question 5

Again the question worked well for almost every Candidate who attempted it. the Examiner was expecting answers that were close to nine points mentioned in Table 12.1, page 371 of the essential text. Most of the answering was close enough to these nine points to earn Candidates good pass marks or better.

Question 6

This question was one of the less favoured on the examination paper. This was probably because Candidates did not know what were the three functions that all sales personnel must perform. Candidates who mentioned the functions correctly – see page 378 of the essential text – were practically guaranteed a pass mark. Candidates who made a reasonable attempt to discuss each function with any degree of understanding of how they apply to international marketing earned themselves substantial extra points in addition to their pass marks. When studying the recommended text, Candidates should note carefully occasions when the text contains materials such as apply to questions 5 and 6 of this paper. Tables and points set out in numbered formats lend themselves to being asked as questions in examination papers if only because they effectively test whether or not Candidates have studied the recommended text.

Question 7

Most answers tackled three of the eight available choices on this question quite well. On average between 125 and 150 words on each option proved quite adequate to give candidates a good pass mark or better. Candidates might like to note that less than 125 words – about ten lines of average sized handwriting – is probably the minimum amount of discussion required for a pass.

Question 8

The topic is again a basic component of the knowledge base of the student of International Marketing. Nor is it a particularly difficult topic. For Candidates who had studied the book and could show a reasonable knowledge of Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the essential text, this question proved to be another banker. Some Candidates slipped up by failing to read the question carefully. The question asked that Candidates would suggest the circumstances in which exporting might not be the most appropriate entry strategy for foreign markets. Quite a number of Candidates simply listed and discussed strategies other than exporting without suggesting why exporting itself might be inappropriate. Nevertheless, if discussions were lucid enough, the Examiner gave a pass mark or better. However, it is appropriate to mention the need for Candidates to read all questions carefully and to ensure that they answer what they are actually being asked and not what they think they are being asked.