



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 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.

Question 1

Generally, this question was well answered. Candidates showed a reasonably good understanding of the theoretical aspects of the promotions mix. The practical applications of the theory were not always as strong as they might be.

- (a) There was a good understanding of the role of trade fairs and exhibitions and also of the practical problems of attendance as an exhibitor.
- (b) The media mix for the small Irish manufacturing firm was well argued by most people. Candidates were able to argue a good case for use of the Internet. Some candidates argued for the use of TV advertising campaigns without taking into account the fact that few **small Irish manufacturing companies** could afford the costs of this medium.
- (c) The personal and technical characteristics of the overseas Sales Representative were well set out although few candidates referred to the specifics of dealing with the requirements of the HPAEs. The Examiner was looking for specific references to the awareness of cultural differences and the problems of coping with financial, contractual, political and travel difficulties.

Question 2

Only a handful of candidates failed to get a pass mark or better in this question. The question itself lent itself to a wide range of interpretation and the Examiner was happy to allow candidates to choose their own approaches. Some candidates took a very strategic approach and discussed naïve, pragmatic strategies as well as direct and indirect exporting stances. Some candidates took a completely channel/middleman approach. So long as candidates showed a solid academic knowledge and proof of having read and understood the principles set out in the recommended text, they got very good marks. A few candidates got poor marks because they simply listed the available options without - as the question required - discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the ones they mentioned.

Question 3

This proved to be a banker question for those candidates who attempted it. Most answers tackled three of the six available counter trade techniques well. On average between 125 and 150 words on each type of counter trade was 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 4

Again this was a 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 examination papers and in Examiner's Reports. Around 20% of the candidates who attempted this Question failed to achieve a pass mark because they failed to understand that International Marketing Planning is a highly structured process and such a plan contains a number of more or less standard sections and headings. Figure 1.3 in the recommended text illustrates this. A number of failures came about as the result of candidates not answering the second part of this question concerning the textile products company.

Question 5

Again the question worked well for almost every candidate who attempted it. The only option which candidates got consistently wrong was the 'del credere agent'. Some candidates failed to make clear the fact that this type of agent guarantees payment and takes responsibility for default of payment or bad debts. Candidates might like to note the comments regarding Question 3 in this Report about the length of submissions on each element of this type of question.

Question 6

This question was one of the less favoured on the entire paper. However, candidates who recognised that what was required was a SWOT analysis of the firm itself and who proceeded to structure an answer accordingly did quite well. Extra marks were awarded to candidates who emphasised the importance of the cost structure of the firm and its impact on the firm's ability to compete in overseas markets.

Question 7

In many cases, candidates described the various types of LOC but failed to answer the question asked – – "describe how a letter of credit operates". Figure 11.1 in the recommended text is actually titled 'How the letter of credit operates'. The process is a complex enough one. For this reason, candidates who described the process – even with only a fair degree of accuracy – were given high marks. Even candidates who got LOC and Documents Against Payment mixed up were still given good marks. Students should note that the Examiner considers an understanding of financing procedures and methods of payment as critical for students of International Marketing.

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 give a reasonable version of Table 4.2 from the recommended text, this question proved to be another banker. The Table itself invariably earned candidates who submitted it a pass mark. Candidates who did not submit a version of the Table, but who could discuss general market indicators or specific product indicators had no trouble earning themselves good marks.

It is fair to say that Candidates who had not read the recommended text carefully stood little chance of passing this question.