



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2001

MARKETING PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

General comments

Relatively few candidates sat the September paper. There was a pass rate of 57% with some very good performances. There was evidence of good preparation, careful reading of the questions and a willingness to address the issues raised in the questions.

Many of the comments made in the May report hold true for the performance of the weaker candidates in the September paper. It is worth reiterating two general comments in particular.

Firstly, candidates should note that it is vitally important to read the question carefully and to address in their answer the particular issue raised in the question. Candidates must not interpret questions as 'write all you know about...'.

Secondly, candidates should note that the learning objectives at this level revolve around evaluation and analysis rather than merely describing. This comment applies equally to the case study and to the more theoretical questions.

Question 1

The case study question is designed to test candidates' analytical and decision making abilities. Where candidates are analytical in their orientation they will achieve a good mark, providing that the analysis is well founded. Candidates who focus on description only by, for example, restating the case or merely reiterating the history of the company, will not be awarded a pass mark.

In relation to question 1(a) candidates achieving high marks were able to point out both the positive and negative aspects of the marketing communications strategy utilised for the product 'Uplift'. Candidates are encouraged to offer their own opinion on the marketing communication strategy based, of course, on the analysis they present. Weaker candidates merely described the communications strategy, many in fact replicating whole paragraphs of the case study.

Question 1 (b) requires candidates to identify, detail and evaluate at least two realistic strategic directions for the bank in relation to the third level student market in Ireland and candidates achieving good marks did this. Candidates who achieved lower marks restated the activities of the bank to date in this market.

Question 1(c) was a very straightforward question and most candidates answered it well. All candidates were able to identify the key practical difficulties related to implementing a relationship marketing strategy. Candidates distinguished themselves on their proposals to address the difficulties.

Question 2

Many candidates exhibited a good understanding of the value chain and how it has informed and influenced, in a very pragmatic way, the development and implementation of marketing strategy. Weaker students spent considerable time and space describing the value chain without making any connection to the development of a marketing strategy.

Question 3

On the whole this question was not well answered. The majority of candidates who answered this question presented a description of Porter's model and in most cases a very limited one at that. Very few candidates showed that they understood that the model offers an explanation of the forces influencing the structure and competitiveness of an industry, and by extension, insights towards strategy formulation. Porter's Five Forces Model of Competition is a very fundamental concept in strategic marketing. It is well covered in the basic text. At this level candidates should be very conversant with both the concept and its application.

Question 4

Candidates who received high marks for this question were able to identify the forms of market measurement that are needed in the development of a marketing plan. (The techniques and issues surrounding market measurement are well covered in the course text). High marks were given to candidates who indicated the benefits and limitations of at least some of these measurement techniques and who demonstrated currency in relation to recent developments in information technology that impact on market measurement. Weaker candidates presented a vague discussion on the market measurement, with little or no evidence of knowledge of market measurement techniques or their application.

Question 5

Very few candidates attempted this question, and those who did performed well. Candidates achieving good marks in this question demonstrated a good understanding of how and why markets change over time.

Question 6

The focus of this question was on the implementation of the marketing plan. Candidates receiving high marks on this question were well able to articulate the role and importance of implementation in strategic marketing and were very conversant with the key performance measurement and control techniques and their benefits and limitations. This is an area that is well covered in the text. Weaker candidates offered a limited and vague discussion on implementation of a marketing plan. Finally, candidates should pay attention to managing their time during the examination. A note to the examiner cannot alleviate mismanagement of examination time.