



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2003

### SERVICES MARKETING MANAGEMENT

#### General Comments

Overall the main comments are as with the Summer examination. Students need to read the question precisely and answer what is asked. The instructions stated that marks would be awarded for the relevant use of contemporary Irish and international examples of marketing practice. In addition where such examples were sought marks were indicated on the examination paper, e.g. 5% of a total 20%. In spite of this many students presented answers with excessive examples and insufficient theory.

I must again make the point that the text book is compulsory reading. Students cannot expect to get good grades or even pass grades if they have not studied the compulsory text.

Because of the small numbers involved in the August examinations in this subject it is difficult to make broad generalizations.

#### SECTION A

The compulsory question was different to previous years. The change had been signalled to the lecturers and so candidates were forewarned. However there was a tendency for candidates to put everything into their answer. Some answers lacked focus. The question asked students to debate one side of the argument for or against having a company goal of exceeding customer expectations. I expected discussion on the sustainability of having such a goal, the problems of creating unrealistic expectations, the factors that influence customer expectations, etc. In general the answers focused on a discussion of the Gap Model. While this approach was acceptable it appeared as if those taking the examination had prepared an answer for the compulsory question in the Summer as if this was now going to be the 'new standard question' to replace the 'old standard question' on the difference between product and services marketing.

I would reiterate that the compulsory question can relate to any part of the course and that future candidates should not expect the Gap Model to be a 'one size fits all' answer.

## SECTION B

### Question 2

This question at its most basic level asked the difference between product and service marketing. 75% of candidates attempted the question but it was not particularly well answered. The most common failing was to merely list the characteristics of services and not to relate the theory to the pairs of companies given as examples to discuss. This was disappointing as I would have expected this to be a 'banker' question.

### Question 3

This was a question where some students confused the factors that influence desired service with the sources of desired service expectations. Both concepts are discussed in chapter 3 of the text. Sources of desired service expectations are (1) explicit service promises, (2) implicit service promises, (3) word of mouth communication, and (4) past experience. The question was attempted by 50% of candidates.

### Question 4

A very specific question on which candidates scored very highly. The lowest mark awarded was 65%! The four strategies are (1) financial bonds, (2) social bonds, (3) customization bonds, and (4) structural bonds. Candidates gave good examples from a variety of service companies.

### Question 5

The importance of service employees and their role in service delivery is a key part of the syllabus. As a result this was a popular question and reasonably well answered. There was an over emphasis on the recruitment and HR areas and not enough on the role of the employee in creating customer satisfaction and service quality. Only one candidate achieved an 'A' grade on this question.

### Question 6

I must make a general comment on students' knowledge of the promotion of services. Since I began examining Services Marketing I have consistently asked a question on marketing communications and each year it is the question on which candidates score poorly. It appears as if candidates assume they know the topic and don't bother studying the text chapter. This examination was no exception. The question focused on Internal Marketing Communications but some answers covered Integrated Marketing Communications.

Again read the question and answer what is asked is the best advice I can give.