

Professional Certificate in Marketing

Assessing the Marketing Environment

**Senior Examiner Assessment Review Report
June and September 2011**



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UNIT NAME: Assessing the Marketing Environment

AWARD NAME: Professional Certificate in Marketing

DATE: June and September 2011

Background to the paper:

This assessment was based on a case study on Royal Mail. The organisation is moving from being part of the fabric of the UK's public sector towards a new era in the competitive global market of post and parcel fulfilment. These changes are taking place against the challenging backdrop of new media communications. The case was issued to candidates four weeks in advance of the exam. Candidates were asked to prepare and submit a four-page SWOT and PESTEL analysis that they could refer to during the exam. A clean copy of the case study was supplied at the exam. The format of the paper was five short tasks in Part A and three long tasks in Part B and candidates had to complete all tasks. Each of the Part B tasks was split in to two elements.

Although a UK company, the depth of information in the case study, and the generic services being described, made it a relevant and topical case for all candidates. The process of developing a SWOT and PESTEL analysis ahead of the exam gave candidates the opportunity to get to know the case material very well. This should have enabled them to discuss aspects of the case in relation to the elements within this syllabus. The tasks set were all clearly related to syllabus elements.

Comments on how the marking scheme was applied in terms of:

- Concept Application and Evaluation:

Overall the breakdown of the marking scheme for this unit is as follows.

Concept	40%
Application	30%
Evaluation	20%
Format	10%

- Syllabus Coverage:

The syllabus weighting for this unit is:

The nature of the organisation	15%
The micro environment	30%
The macro environment	40%
Undertaking a marketing audit	15%

All areas of the above syllabus breakdown were in the exam. The nature of this type of assessment and the variety of cases that will appear means that the syllabus breakdown as above is for guidance and may not be exactly replicated within each exam paper. The most important point that candidates should note is that the macro and micro environment together account for 70% of the syllabus.

It is also important to point out that the nature of this exam and the case study approach means that candidates should not expect a fixed format to the questions eg Task Three will

not always focus on the form of organisation and Task Six will not always focus on stakeholders.

- **Command Words:**

Candidates need to carefully consider the command words used within each task as this should shape their approach to the task. Eg.

Define ...

Identify ...

Describe ...

Explain ...

Evaluate ...

Analyse ...

Recommend ...

The mark scheme will award marks for the required responses. If asked to define then an in-depth analysis is not required. If asked to evaluate then it is not enough to simply describe.

Relative Weighting of Tasks

Part A tasks generally have a greater emphasis on theory. For example in Task One, half of the marks are for giving definitions of the terms.

Part B tasks give candidates the opportunity to develop application and evaluation in relation to the case. The Part B tasks are split into two elements with the respective marks clearly noted. This is to aid candidates in allocating appropriate time for the elements within the tasks.

Marks for format and presentation are only awarded in the Part B, report format questions. These were relatively easy to achieve by using a report style introduction to Part B and making good use of headings, sub-heading, bullet points, charts, diagrams or tables to give answers a clear structure and clear meaning. This paper allocates a total of six format marks and this can make a substantial difference to the candidate's ability to achieve a pass, or their target grade. This recognises the value of professional written presentation skills in the workplace. (See notes under guidance for improving performance)

- **Grade Differentiation:**

A grade candidates will generally have:

- Completed all tasks
- Completed all elements within each task eg defining and explaining all four terms in Task One
- Demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the theory within the syllabus for this unit
- Demonstrated a strong understanding of the case material and an ability to develop this with clarity and depth, as required by the tasks
- Used appropriate format and presentation in Part B. Throughout the paper, written clearly and concisely, using effective report format to ensure that all points are covered
- Submitted a SWOT and PESTEL analysis that demonstrated thorough knowledge and understanding of the marketing environment relating to the case. Likely to have made good use of this analysis to inform their answers.

B grade candidates will generally have:

- Completed all tasks
- Completed all or most elements within tasks eg defining and explaining at least three terms in Task One
- Demonstrated a good knowledge of the theory within the syllabus for this unit
- Demonstrated a good understanding of the case material and an ability to develop this with clarity and some depth, as required by the questions
- Used appropriate format and presentation in Part B and written concisely throughout

- Submitted a SWOT and PESTEL analysis that demonstrates a good knowledge and understanding of the marketing environment relating to the case.

C grade candidates will generally have:

- Completed all or most tasks
- Completed all or most elements within tasks eg defining and explaining at least two terms for Task One
- Demonstrated an adequate knowledge of the theory within the syllabus for this unit
- Demonstrated an adequate understanding of the case material although may have shown a limited ability to develop this with clarity and depth
- Format of Part B answers is adequate.
- Submitted a SWOT and PESTEL analysis that demonstrates an adequate knowledge and understanding of the marketing environment relating to the case.

D grade candidates will generally have:

- Completed most tasks
- Completed most or some elements within tasks, eg may have defined and explained fewer than two of the terms in Task One
- Demonstrated a weak knowledge of the theory within the syllabus for this unit
- Demonstrated a weak or limited understanding of the case material and a limited ability to contextualise.
- Format of Part B answers may be poor.
- Submitted a SWOT and PESTEL analysis or used that analysis in a way that demonstrates some gaps in knowledge and understanding of the marketing environment relating to the case.

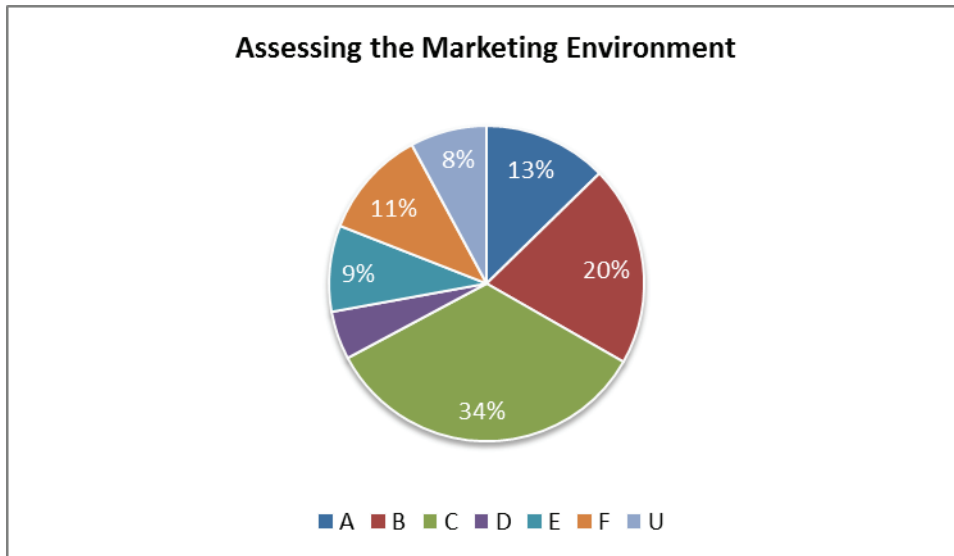
- Other points

The marking scheme is specific in terms of guiding examiners to award marks appropriately in proportion to the elements of each task and examiners are given guidance on key points that candidates may include in their answers. However, in most of the tasks, there is no prescriptive list of elements or factors that candidates must include. Eg ~If asked to analysis PESTEL issues, then candidates can make their own judgement as to which issues merit analysis.

June 2011

A general overview of how the assessment was tackled, including a statistical analysis on the assessment as a whole.

The overall pass rate for this paper was 67.18%



On the whole the performance of this cohort was fairly strong. Successful candidates exhibited a well-structured approach and maintained a clear focus on the case and on the tasks. The candidates that performed well demonstrated a good knowledge of the syllabus for this level and an ability to respond confidently to the issues presented by the tasks, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the case material provided and of the wider marketing environment.

In general, failing candidates demonstrated gaps in syllabus knowledge, a failure to address the tasks clearly and a failure to respond to the command words used (analyse, describe, evaluate etc.). The examining team felt that any poor performance in this exam was generally for the following reasons:

- Not responding to the task eg in Task Two – giving a generic response rather than one in relation to pension provision.
- Candidates seeming to have limited wider awareness of current issues, eg in Task Five, showing little understanding of employee share schemes.
- There was some evidence of gaps in syllabus knowledge. Eg in Task Eight, some candidates did not know the 5Ms model.
- Swathes of description that repeats the case information. Eg in Task Six describing the privatisation process rather than the benefits.
- A small number of candidates continue to allocate time poorly – usually evident as one or more tasks are omitted altogether.
- Failing to format answers in Part B – this is particularly frustrating if the six format marks could have brought a D grade paper to a C grade.
- Many of the above reinforce the importance of practising this type of assessment, ideally using past papers. The ability to review and analyse case material and relate it clearly to an organisation's marketing environment is a skill that is valuable in today's fast-changing marketing work place.

Comments Task by Task:

Task One

Define the following terms and briefly explain their significance to the Royal Mail postal delivery service:

- **monopolistic**
- **deregulation**

- **modernisation**
- **franchising.**

(8 marks)

- Candidates can of course approach the tasks within this exam in any order. Some seem to be more comfortable starting with the Part B 20-mark tasks. However, Task One is intended as a warm up question and it does seem to serve well in getting candidates into the flow of the tasks. This was a high scoring question in Part A with strong candidates often achieving full marks.
- It is important not to spend too much time – each term is only worth two marks and some candidates write as much as a whole page on each term when a couple of well written sentences could achieve full marks.
- Most terms were well understood with good explanations of their significance. Deregulation was sometimes interpreted as simply no regulation.
- For the first time the examiners have been aware of some maximum or high scoring answers, followed by a poor paper, suggesting that some tutors may be coaching candidates on all terms within the case. This is not really a problem but it should not be at the expense of teaching across the syllabus. A perfect eight for this task will not be enough to save a poor paper.
- McDonalds may be a well known franchise but candidates mentioning this without describing the impact of franchising on Royal Mail did not achieve full marks.
- A grade candidates will have given a clear definition for each term and a concise explanation of the significance of each one to Royal Mail.
- D/E grades tended to give weak definitions and limited contextualisation of Royal Mail. They have misunderstood at least one term.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

(Modernisation)...Royal Mail has been in conflict with the unions over modernisation. This is because replacing manual tasks, like sorting, with automated machinery will cut costs and improve productivity but may call for redundancies.

Task Two

Describe the social and economic trends that have resulted in many UK organisations facing challenges in meeting their future pension commitments.

(8 marks)

- The case gave adequate information on these significant issues, however this was one of the tasks that was often not attempted. This suggests that there was a lack of awareness of the core social and economic reasons behind the huge pension deficits.
- A general understanding of pensions was perhaps lacking in some cases. Candidates should have had a basic understanding of the critical social and economic factors behind this.
- Economic trends were generally better described than social trends.
- There was some tendency to drift towards internal financial issues rather than the economic trends that may face ‘many organisations’ as stipulated in the task.
- A grade candidates will have covered both social and economic factors and their descriptions would have been clear, comprehensive and well related to pension deficits.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...Decreased birth rate, alongside longer life expectancy will continue to cause a ‘top-heavy’ demographic that will mean more people claiming future pensions that paying in to pensions.

Task Three

Compare the legal status of Royal Mail Group plc (RMG) with its legal status when it was wholly owned by the government.

(8 marks)

- The transition towards public limited company (plc) status is a complex one for Royal Mail and the examining team were able to award marks generously for fair attempts at explaining this complex transition with appropriate reference to government run vs. plc. ,
- Sometimes this complexity was avoided by simply repeating generic features of the two types of organisation rather than relating clearly to the case. Some candidates also focused exclusively on plc status.
- Tables were used to mixed effect, sometimes structuring good answers but sometimes leading candidates to be excessively brief.
- Some marks were awarded in this task for drawing comparisons – noting similarities and differences - and not many achieved full marks here.
- A grade answers would refer to points related to both government run and plc status, making appropriate comparisons, highlighting similarities and differences.
- D/E grades are likely to have shown limited knowledge of the government department vs. plc ownership and may have given no comparison.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

... This results in a half-way status between public sector and fully private ownership as the government continues to hold majority share, but RM is managed like a private organisation.

Task Four

Describe TWO political or legal factors influencing Royal Mail's FUTURE development plans in relation to its postal delivery services.

(8 marks)

- Candidates seemed fairly confident with this task and were able to draw on their analysis to identify relevant political or legal factors.
- EU directive, USO and the likely imposition of VAT were all popular selections but Government leaning towards privatisation, role of Ofcom, deregulation and share ownership were all valid factors.
- Some marks were lost by giving generic answers and failing to focus on the FUTURE or on postal delivery services.
- Good answers described the influence in detail.
- A grade candidates would have describe two factors in a good level of detail and described how these may influence future postal deliveries.
- D/E grades may have identified two factors but these may have been lifted from the analysis with little explanation or no link to future postal delivery services.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...By removing the provisions holding RM back, such as delivery 6 days per week at uniform prices, it would allow RM to set its own terms and pricing...allowing for greater profit generation...

Task Five

Identify TWO benefits that an employee share scheme could offer those employees working for Royal Mail.

(8 marks)

- This is another task that was sometimes left until the end of the paper suggesting that candidates did not clearly understand what an employee share scheme was or were unable to identify the benefits from the perspective of employees. This showed a general weakness in understanding financial aspects of business and to some extent the larger sphere of economics.

- There was a tendency to link share ownership with pensions but this plausible link was not well explained or justified.
- Another failing in this task was to focus on benefits to the organisation rather than to employees.
- A grade candidate would have identified and described two benefits, such as financial benefits and control/influence over the future of the organisation.
- D/E grades may have identified only one benefit but it is more likely that benefits were described in terms of the organisation rather than the employees.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...shareholding by RM employees empowers them within the organisation. After fraught relations with the CWU, having an engaged workforce is very important to the future development.

Task Six

- a. Describe TWO benefits that privatisation is expected to bring to Royal Mail.**
(12 marks)
- b. Evaluate how the power and interest of TWO of Royal Mail's stakeholder groups may change as a result of privatisation.**
(8 marks)

- Most candidates answered Part A of this task well, describing two benefits of privatisation well, referring to eg corporate culture and ability to raise finance.
- Weaker answers tended to lose marks by being too brief. In developing a description good answers would explain why this would be a benefit, what doors would it open for the organisation?
- In Part B some candidates used Mendelow's matrix to help evaluate power and interest. This model is not in the syllabus and therefore did not in itself accrue marks, however, in some instances it was used to good effect in laying the foundation for a robust evaluation.
- Unfortunately a few candidates launched into theoretical or detailed descriptions of stakeholders (often more than two) but did not evaluate in terms of power and interest or were not able to explain how power and interest may have changed as a result of the privatisation process.
- A grade candidates will have a. described two distinct benefits and b. evaluated the changing power and interest of two stakeholders.
- D/E grades may have included the prerequisite number of benefits and stakeholders but it is likely that the description and evaluation lacked detail or depth.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...As a private organisation RM may come across fewer barriers to modernisation...RM need to be more efficient and innovative in order to continue to grow and innovation will support efficiency drives, giving customers better service at a better price.

Task Seven

a. Describe the opportunities and threats facing Royal Mail as a result of the growth of the internet.

(10marks)

b. Recommend and justify TWO secondary research sources that could be used to monitor trends in new communications media.

(10 marks)

- Part A of this task enabled candidates to draw on the content of their analysis and it was generally well answered with many achieving good marks. Most were able to keep their answers well focused on the growth of the internet.
- Sadly it also presented an opportunity to repeat case material and this meant that some of the answers were rather bland; lacking in description. Some candidates described growth of the internet in general suggesting they had not read the question.
- Part B was also fairly well answered and candidates were in many cases able to identify specific and relevant sources and justify their recommendations by describing the value of the resulting information.
- Detailed source information is not expected at this level but a reasonable awareness of the types of sources and their resulting information is expected.
- Sadly a few candidates did not understand the distinction between primary and secondary sources. This is fundamental knowledge for this level and an error that may have cost them all of the Part B marks.
- A definition of secondary sources was not asked for; however, marks were awarded for demonstrating an understanding of the term and could be guaranteed with an explicit statement or definition. (Marks would not be lost if the answer that followed demonstrated a clear understanding.)
- A grade candidates would have answered all elements of the task with an appropriate depth of description in A. and well justified recommendations in B.
- D/E grade candidates may have simply repeated case material in A or given bland and generic sources such as 'the internet' in Part B. It is also likely that answers lacked detail and depth – sometimes giving answers for this 20-mark task that were shorter than answers for 8-mark tasks in section A of the paper.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...For example the survey may tell us that direct mail provides a lower response rate from the consumer than e-marketing. This information will help us to understand the changes required in our marketing mix to respond to those trends.

Task Eight

- a. **Analyse THREE significant long-term changes in the macro environment that will impact on Royal Mail's future plans.** (12 marks)
- b. **For one of these changes, explain the impact on the internal organisation using the 5Ms model.** (8 marks)

- Most candidates seemed to be very comfortable with Part A of this task, drawing on their PESTEL to analyse a good range of macro factors.
- Only a very few drifted into micro or internal factors. If their analysis related internal factors to the external macro factor, marks would still be awarded. Eg modernisation is relevant as a response to changing technologies but if the answer did not refer to the wider macro factors driving the modernisation agenda, then marks would be lost.
- Part B. of the task was another story. 5Ms is in the syllabus but a significant minority were unable to recall it. There are several interpretations of 5Ms in various marketing texts and the examining team were briefed to accept any 'M', relevant to internal factors ie money, men, manpower, methods, machinery, minutes, mission and management.
- A proportion of candidates did not answer Part B and although some candidates undoubtedly ran out of time, it seems likely that some avoided the task because of a lack of knowledge.
- Another problem with Part B was a lack of focus of one change (as analysed in A.). This would generally result in poor marks rather than no marks.
- A grade candidates would have given a well thought through analysis of three macro changes and used the 5Ms model well in explaining the impact on RM of one of these changes.
- D/E grades may have veered towards micro or internal factors in Part A. They may have had a good stab at the 5Ms model but may have failed to give an adequate explanation of the impact of the chosen macro change on the organisation

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

(Environmental changes)... all machinery will be required to meet CO2 output requirements and our fleets may need to be updated to ensure that they are fuel efficient... (management) environmental efficiencies will need to be an important part of our culture and therefore communicated well – lead by example.

Feedback on the academic quality of the cohort(s) that has just been examined and the quality of the teaching, as judged by the results

Strengths and good practice:

- This was a paper that seemed to highlight very well those candidates that clearly understand all parts of the syllabus and how they work together to shape the business environment and the opportunities and threats facing the organisation.
- Most candidates planned their time well, completing all questions and allocating time appropriately based on the marks awarded for each task. It is recommended to start with Task One but candidates must be careful to avoid spending too much time on this task.
- More complex tasks sometimes had evidence of rough planning and this seems to help candidates to focus on key points relating to the task.
- References to the appended SWOT and PESTEL analysis suggest that candidates are making good use of this material to prompt answers, particularly for Tasks Two, Four, Seven and Eight. Strong papers often have an analysis that is uncluttered and easy to refer to.
- Theory represents 40% of marks at this level. The style of questioning is such that Part A tasks have a higher element of theory than the Part B tasks. Good answers to Part B tasks tended to refer to theory at an appropriate depth then relate that theory confidently to the case.

- Some candidates formatted their answers well and so ensured that all elements within each Part B task were clearly presented.
- There are some excellent A grade papers with modest word counts – however each word and each sentence contributes to the answer.

Common mistakes:

- Referring to analysis without any explanation. This was noticed more so than in previous cohorts. Answering a task by simply stating ‘see analysis point S1.1’ will not in itself gain any marks. Candidates may find it helpful to include the references to their analysis but they MUST include the relevant description/analysis within their exam paper response. (see notes below on analysis)
- Candidates continue to waste valuable time repeating points from the case without developing the analysis or evaluation requested by the tasks. Examiners will not award marks for simply repeating case material without analysis or explanation. This applied particularly to Tasks Two, Five and Seven (a). in this paper.
- Not reading the task. This relates to specifics such as being asked to focus on FUTURE development plans in Task Four.
- Marks are awarded for format and presentation in the Part B questions. Despite this, a small number of candidates responded to the tasks in essay style with no formatting whatsoever. There are often a high proportion of candidates hovering close to the 50% mark and good formatting can clearly make a difference between pass or fail. The worst example of poor presentation is when tasks are not numbered or identified at all and content is rambling. This can result in examiners facing a real challenge to decide which task the candidate is attempting to answer! (see notes below on formatting)
- Time management has improved enormously since the introduction of the syllabus in 2008 but a few candidates do still run out of time towards the end of the paper
- A fundamental misunderstanding of terms micro and macro – this is sometimes apparent in the analysis and did impact on some responses to Task Eight.

Suggestions of possible alternative approaches to tackling a task or parts of a task while making it clear that it is not the only way

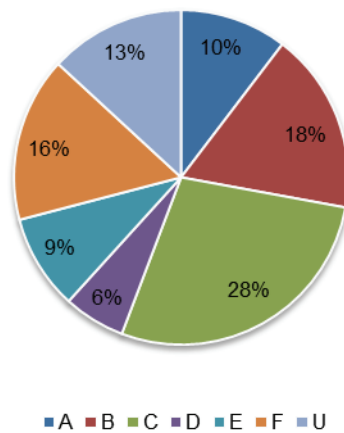
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- Use tables if these help you to ensure that you cover all elements of a task eg power and interest of stakeholders in Task Six
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- Definitions are not always asked for but if you give them the examiner will know with confidence that you understand the term. It may also help you to quickly focus on the task. Eg what is an employee share scheme (Task Five).
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- Use common sense – candidates may not immediately know how to respond to a task but should not panic. Eg in Task Eight (b) candidates that did not recall the 5Ms model could still gain some marks by explaining the impact of a macro change on the internal organisation

September 2011

A general overview of how the assessment was tackled, including a statistical analysis on the assessment as a whole.

The overall pass rate for September 2011 for this paper was 55.78%

Assessing the Marketing Environment



On the whole the performance of this cohort was very mixed. Successful candidates exhibited a well-structured approach and maintained a clear focus on the case and on the tasks. The candidates that performed well demonstrated a good knowledge of the syllabus for this level and an ability to respond confidently to the issues presented by the tasks, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the case material provided and of the wider marketing environment. This is a similar pass rate to that achieved in September 2010, suggesting that passing candidates have received a good standard of teaching and time to embed theoretical learning with a well developed awareness of how the marketing environment impacts on organisations.

In general, failing candidates demonstrated gaps in syllabus knowledge, a failure to address the tasks clearly and a failure to respond to the command words used (analyse, describe, evaluate etc.). The examining team felt that any poor performance in this exam was generally for the following reasons:

- Not responding to the task eg. in Task Two – Explaining the impact of changes in the macro environment without focusing on the economic environment as asked.
- Gaps in syllabus knowledge. Eg. in Task Eight, being unable to explain CSR.
- Swathes of description that repeat the case information. Eg. in Task Eight detailing the USO, as described in the case, rather than evaluating how CSR may impact upon it.
- A small number of candidates continue to allocate time poorly – usually evident as one or more tasks are omitted altogether.
- Failing to format answers in Part B – this is particularly frustrating if the six format marks could have brought a D paper to a C.

Comments Task by Task:

Task One

Define the following terms and briefly explain their significance to the Royal Mail postal delivery service:

- **barriers to entry**
- **competitive advantage**
- **private capital**
- **direct mail.**

(8 marks)

- Candidates can of course approach the tasks within this exam in any order. Some seem to be more comfortable starting with the Part B 20-mark tasks. However, Task One is intended as a warm up question and it does seem to serve well in getting candidates into

the flow of the tasks. This was a high scoring question in Part A with strong candidates often achieving full marks.

- It is important not to spend too much time – each term is only worth two marks and some candidates write as much as a whole page on each term when a couple of well written sentences could achieve full marks.
- Terms were generally well understood although definitions of competitive advantage were weaker and the significance of private capital and direct mail were not always well explained.
- Occasionally a candidate will achieve maximum or high marks for this task, and then produce a poor or failing paper. This suggests that some tutors may be coaching candidates on all terms within the case. This is not really a problem but it should not be at the expense of teaching appropriate understanding and ability to analyse, evaluate etc. A perfect eight for this task will not be enough to save a poor paper.
- A grade candidates will have given a clear definition for each term and a concise explanation of the significance of each one to Royal Mail.
- D/E grades tended to give weak definitions and limited contextualisation Royal Mail. They may have misunderstood at least one term.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

Private capital is finance received from a private source such as another business or an individual, rather than a public source such as the Government.

Task Two

Explain how TWO changes in the macro economic environment may impact on Royal Mail's services.

(8 marks)

- In many cases the task was well answered with candidates making good use of their analysis to prompt responses and referring to eg. the economic climate, exchange rates and availability of finance.
- Sadly, a small but significant number of candidates achieved zero, having failed to read the task and referred to macro issues such as technological or social.
- Some candidates mentioned VAT but in describing the impact, clearly had little idea of the concept of VAT and how it would impact on the organisation, its services or its pricing
- Some candidates repeated case material about RM in general but did not relate these to relevant macro trends.
- A grade candidates will have given a detailed explanation of the two changes, firstly setting the macro scene and then explaining the impact on RM.
- D/E grades may have referred to only one issue, or lack any detail on the change or the impact

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

... Slow growth means there is less demand for postal services. Business will be cutting back their expenditure...reducing advertising spend, reducing a source of revenue for Royal Mail.

Task Three

Analyse TWO social trends that may influence the future of Royal Mail's household delivery services.

(8 marks)

- Generally this task was well answered and candidates seem to be comfortable in using their analysis to identify two trends that were relevant to RM. These included use of social media, speed communications and the convenience of online shopping.
- However, in some cases the answers read as if candidates were analysing technological trends. Whilst there is clearly cross-over, the task demanded a focus on social and this was sometimes absent, resulting in lower marks. Some confused economic and social trends.

- Issues such as changing lifestyles leading to the convenience of speedy communications and buying online were most popular. Others were the aging population and migration.
- A grade candidates will have analysed two trends in some detail and related these clearly to RM's household delivery services.
- D/E grades may have identified the issues as technological or given a very limited analysis.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...Overall, social trends, including cash rich/time poor, are moving customers towards increasing use of and dependence on the internet, however, the associated online orders will require a household delivery service creating significant opportunities for RM.

Task Four

Briefly analyse the trends outlined in Appendix Two of the case study 'UK Postal Services Value Forecast 2008-2012' and identify TWO possible limitations of this data when considering future trends.

(8 marks)

- This type of task (focusing on a specific appendix from the case) had not been asked before and clearly it threw a few candidates off track. This is evidenced by the number of candidates missing the task out altogether. The best tactic was to take a look and have a go.
- The appendix simply showed a continuing growth but a fall in the rate of growth. This part was straight forward. Too many candidates then went on to describe possible reasons for these trends rather than identifying possible limitations of the data. Those that did well referred to the lack of a publication date, queries over source of data or methodology, lack of breakdown and failure to take account of relevant fast changing marketing environment issues.
- A grade candidate will have identified the declining growth this data and identified two possible limitations, giving a clear justification for each point.
- D/E grades may have identified the declining growth but may have failed to focus on limitations of the data or given very limited detail or justification.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...The longer the period of time this is projected over, the less accurate it will be. Forecasts don't necessarily allow for unpredicted factors such as technological innovation.

Task Five

Analyse the impacts of the possible move to private ownership on TWO of Royal Mail's stakeholder groups.

(8 marks)

- This was generally well answered. Candidates are normally very comfortable analysing impacts upon various stakeholders and many chose to analyse the impact on employees and government. As in some previous papers, selection of two similar stakeholder groups, such as staff and management, hinders candidates' ability to score particularly well.
- Some candidates were evidently thrilled to find 'the stakeholder task' and spent too much time for the marks available. Some analysed the impact on more than two groups – pointlessly as no further marks could be awarded.
- They were able to explain the impact of the transition to private ownerships – demonstrating a clear understanding of the privatisation process.
- Some statements were very sweeping and with little justification eg. 'much more efficient and therefore large pay rises for employees'. Without justification, these attracted fewer marks.

- A grade candidates will have analysed the impact in detail on two stakeholder groups, their analysis referring to a range of issues and showing a clear understanding of the significance of the change.
- D/E grades may have analysed only one group of their analysis would be very limited.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

... (customers) If RM is taken over by an existing postal service, this may increase the skills and the product range available to customers, improving customer value.

Task Six

- a. Describe the changing technological environment in the context of the post and mail sector.** (8 marks)
- b. Illustrate TWO potential advantages and TWO potential disadvantages of using new technologies to improve internal communications within Royal Mail.** (12 marks)

- Lengthy introductions are not required – do not waste words and time.
- Most candidates achieved good marks for the whole of this task and some achieved very high or even full marks.
- In Part A they were able to make good use of their analysis to explore a range of technological issues and particularly high marks were achieved for a tight focus on the context of this sector.
- Stronger candidates would have referred to issues beyond digital communications eg modernisation of mail processing equipment or green technologies.
- In Part B, as long as they kept a focus on internal communications, they were able to build marks quickly by illustrating advantages and disadvantages. Some candidates spoke about communications in general, limiting marks.
- Where the task was addressed correctly, good answers ensued with clear reference to speed, reliability and staff engagement.
- A grade candidates will have detailed a wide range of technological factors and advantages and disadvantages with good detail and a clear focus on internal communications.
- D/E grades may have given very limited detail on part a. and probably a lack of focus on internal communications in Part B.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...Technology has also affected efficiencies by providing automated sorting or mail and enhancement to delivery operations...reducing costs and giving RM a competitive advantage....systems can store and analyse customer data to optimise customer recruitment, retention and loyalty.

Task Seven

a. Describe how Royal Mail can monitor its service quality with business customers. (10marks)

b. Analyse the resources that would be required to make Royal Mail's performance in the business-to-business market comparable with that of its competitors. (10 marks)

- Most candidates performed well in Part A describing the importance of service quality with particular reference to business customers, recognising the pull of competitors.
- A range of valid methods were described including monitoring internal data, Service Level Agreements, primary research, competitor analysis and customer relationship management. Candidates were rewarded for referring to a good range as well as describing in depth.
- In Part B candidates were less confident but good answers referred to case material about competitor strengths and the needs for investment/modernisation.
- Some used the 5Ms model in a positive way and indeed this will have prompted them to consider the financial and manpower resources required to improve performance.
- High scores were however dependent on appropriate reference to competitiveness and this was sometimes absent.
- A grade candidates will have described a range of monitoring methods in detail and referred in specific terms to several examples of resources that could result in improved performance.
- D/E grades are likely to have given a fair description of monitoring methodology but a weak analysis of resources – talking in general terms about competitors.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...RM would need to invest in modernisation to improve the speed and reliability of the service. Businesses increasingly require reliable and quick services in order to satisfy their own customers. This will require financial, human resource rationalisation and up skilling and advanced technology.

Task Eight

a. Define and explain the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). (8 marks)

b. Evaluate how CSR issues may impact upon the 'Universal Service Obligation' in the future. (12 marks)

- Overall this was not a high-scoring task. Although all candidates are aware of CSR, far too many were only able to give a very rudimentary definition and examples used to illustrate and explain suggested a limited knowledge of this principle.
- A good knowledge of CSR, combined with an understanding of the USO as described in the case, did prompt many candidates to give a plausible evaluation of their relationship, considering issues such as miles, vehicle emissions, job security for staff, service for the wider community and waste paper – some in the context of the impending privatisation.
- Sadly, if candidates did not have a strong grasp of CSR, they seemed unable to make the link and a small but significant number will have achieved zero marks for B.
- A grade candidates will have given a detailed explanation of CSR and will have related a range of issues to the USO with a focus on the future.
- D/E grades may have given a fair definitions and explanation of CSR but are likely to have a very limited evaluate of the links with the USO in this case.

Excerpt from an A grade paper:

...Daily collections from every box and office and daily deliveries to every address will be increasingly challenged where targets are being set to reduce emissions...Changes to the fleet (to reduce emissions) will be expensive and changes to the USO will be controversial, requiring extensive consultation and attracting the attention of pressure groups.

Suggestions of possible alternative approaches to tackling a question/task or parts of a question/task while making it clear that it is not the only way

Use tables if these help you to ensure that you cover all elements of a task eg. advantages and disadvantages in Task Seven.

Definitions are not always asked for but if you give them, the examiner will know with confidence that you understand the term. It may also help you to quickly focus on the task. Eg. what is private ownership (Task Five).

Use common sense – candidates may not immediately know how to respond to a task but should not panic. Eg. in Task Eight b. there was no obvious model or source for this task – take a moment to think it through and the social/ethical/environmental impacts of the USO would become clearer.

General Comments June and September

Commentary as to whether recommendations made in previous years have been properly followed up.

The general improving trend with this paper suggests that recommendations are being followed. Some perennial problems remain and improvement strategies to overcome these are detailed below.

Guidance about how candidates can avoid making similar errors and strategies for improving performance

Two key areas are featured in detail below: format and presentation and preparation and use of the analysis. Other points are:

- Know the syllabus – understand its structure and particularly the micro and macro environments, which together represent 70% of the marks for this paper. Each paper cannot cover all elements of the syllabus but you should be prepared for any. Read supporting texts (but be aware that anything not in the syllabus will not, in itself, accrue marks).
- Candidates are encouraged to complete this unit after Marketing Information and Research. If this is not possible or practical then ensure that you understand the fundamentals or research but more particularly the primary and secondary sources of information that could relate to the marketing environment.
- Read the tasks carefully and be absolutely sure what is being asked of you. Underline the command words in the task – if you are asked to describe then it is not enough to just identify, and if you are asked to evaluate it is not enough just to describe
- Read them again and be clear what is being asked for eg TWO benefits, ONE factor, opportunities and threats.
- Put yourself in the marketing role described and consider how you could best make a positive contribution the organisation in relation to the given task. Examiners will always reward content that is plausible, possible, realistic and justified.
- Be worldly wise – read papers, discuss issues in class, and reflect on your own role as a consumer and how you might relate to this organisation. There is a great deal to be

learned by assessing the marketing environment of any organisation, large or small, and candidates should be encouraged to discuss and assess the marketing environment of organisations that are known to them.

- Practise the case study and exam approach. Read a past case, prepare a SWOT and PESTEL, go through points from the syllabus and relate these to particular areas of the case, try the tasks under exam conditions, then reflect carefully on the Assessment Review Report for that paper. This should give you a good feel of what is required for this assessment and the pitfalls to avoid.

Developing a really useful SWOT and PESTEL Analysis:

DO

- invest time working in your tutor groups and as individuals to develop a detailed SWOT and PESTEL analysis – drawing information from the case and from recommended texts for this unit.
- structure it clearly so that you can refer to it easily during the exam
- refer to it during the exam – to prompt or develop answers.

DO NOT

- insert models beyond SWOT and PESTEL – eg stakeholder analysis, Porter's 5 Forces, marketing mix etc. These will be of little or no help and could compromise your marks.
- pack it with too much complicated detail – this may only serve to confuse you in the exam.
- use the analysis to summarise the case – you will have a clean copy of the case study at the exam.
- respond to tasks by stating only eg 'See factor T2 in analysis/appendix'. You can refer to it but you **MUST** state what it is and why it's relevant /important/significant.

Going for full format and presentation marks:

DO

- use a report style introduction to Part B (To:...From:... Subject:... Date:...) but remember not to include your own name
- use numbering and/or headings that clearly identify the exam tasks
- start each tasks on a new page (this applies to all eight tasks)
- use bullet points or subheadings to make individual points distinct
- use tables, diagrams or charts if appropriate
- use good concise business English, ideally with good spelling (this is not an English exam but good English will ensure you get your key points across well)
- try to use third person – a good discipline for all business documents

DO NOT

- introduce a different numbering system – stick to the task numbers. In poor papers examiners can sometimes struggle to identify which task the candidate is tackling.
- use informal language – 'if you like' and 'come in handy' and 'OK' are not terms you would expect to find in a business report
- write in the margin please – very frustrating for the examiner trying to find a space to annotate.
- give a lengthy introduction or conclusion to Part B as this will not gain format and presentation marks. (Conclusions within tasks may be used if appropriate to highlight key points.)

Recommendations for how performance can be improved in future assessments

For D/E grade candidates:

It may be that your paper has failed because you have missed one or more questions or answered one or more questions wrongly, demonstrating poor knowledge or poor understanding of the task. However, if you feel that you answered all questions and did not have any major errors then it is likely that your paper has failed for a number of reasons:

- You did not answer in sufficient depth. Think particularly of the command words of analyse, evaluate and recommend.
- Detail – if a question is worth 10 marks and your answer is short (less than 100 words or fewer than 2-3 points made) the chances are that you have not gone into enough detail or referred to enough points.
- Range – eg when asked to describe opportunities and threats in Task Seven it was not enough to focus on just social media.
- You may have repeated lots of information from the case. The ability to contribute to marketing decision making means developing case information by making astute observations, offering positive suggestions or proposing practical approaches that support performance in the market place.

For F/U grade candidates:

- Be very sure of the difference between micro and macro –poor papers often demonstrate a lack of understanding of this key concept.
- Same for primary and secondary research/sources – a key concept required for this unit.
- Read quality press to understand marketing environment issues facing organisations in your area (public sector, private sector and voluntary sector).
- Investigate other known organisations and analyse issues and trends in their marketing environment. Consider the extent to which the organisation can control any of these issues. What information about the macro or micro environment can inform their decision making?
- The marketing environment applies to a corner shop on any street in the world, just as much as it does to multinationals. Walk those streets and stop and think about the factors that are affecting those businesses.
- Review syllabus content and ensure that your learning is covering all areas. Then relate syllabus areas to known organisations or case study organisations – considering how it impacts on them. Take note of the syllabus weighting - 70% of the weighting is related to the macro and micro environments.
- Refer to past cases - read the cases, complete an analysis and then tackle the tasks.

Finally, the mystery of failure. It is entirely possible for candidates to demonstrate reasonable theoretical knowledge and attempt all questions but still fail (probably a D). This is usually because, throughout the paper, they are failing to develop answers in sufficient detail or depth, listing very few points in the Part B questions, being too descriptive in terms of repeating case material or dwelling on theory or failing to focus on the task.

Clarification about any syllabus or assessment changes

No changes have been made to this syllabus.

No changes are being made to the assessment format, however, it is important to note that the mark-split for Part B tasks may vary.

Possible future assessment themes

This assessment will always include five short and three long tasks and the long tasks will generally be split into two elements. The syllabus for Assessing the Marketing Environment is

wide ranging and it is impossible to predict which elements may arise in exam questions. The tasks will always be wholly influenced by the case material.

Cases are identified well in advance so some information within the case may seem out of date. However, as the marketing environment is ever-changing, CIM may change the case, amend the case material and the shift emphasis of the assessment at quite a late stage in the assessment preparation process. For this reason, CIM cannot guide tutors and candidates on future assessment themes.

Candidates are NOT expected to study up to date information around the case organisation but a good awareness of contemporary macro environmental issues will be very beneficial.