

Specification for

Organizations conducting market research

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- Association of British Market Research Companies (ABMRC)
- Association of Market Survey Organisations (AMSO)
- Association of Qualitative Research Practitioners (AQRP)
- Association of Users of Research Agencies (AURA)
- City University London
- Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)
- Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS)
- Market Research Quality Standards Association (MRQSA)
- Market Research Society (MRS)
- Social Research Association (SRA)

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Contents

Committees responsible	Page Inside front cover
Foreword	iii
Specification	
Introduction	1
Section 1. General	
1.1 Scope	2
1.2 References	2
1.3 Definitions	2
Section 2. Quality assurance	
2.1 Quality assurance procedures and personnel	5
2.2 Client contracts	5
2.3 Planning, controlling and checking research activities	5
2.4 Purchasing	6
2.5 Staff training	6
2.6 Dealing with problems	6
2.7 Keeping and safeguarding records and materials	7
Section 3. Managing the executive elements of research	
3.1 Quotations and proposals	8
3.2 Responding to projects requiring research design	8
3.3 Design review	9
3.4 Responding to a price quotation request	9
3.5 Meeting the client's expectation	9
3.6 Project schedule	9
3.7 Questionnaires and discussion guides	9
3.8 Prior to conducting qualitative fieldwork	10
3.9 Qualitative fieldwork	10
3.10 Quantitative research analysis	10
3.11 Presentation of data	10
3.12 Checking	10
3.13 Reporting	10
3.14 Client supplied product/materials	11
3.15 Retention and safe keeping of project records	11
Section 4. Data collection	
4.1 General	12
4.2 Documented information about interviewers and recruiters	12
4.3 Reference requests	12
4.4 Market Research Society Code of Conduct	12
4.5 MRS freephone for respondents	12
4.6 General public reassurances	12
4.7 Identity cards for field based personnel	13
4.8 Instruction manuals	13
4.9 Supervisors	13
4.10 Project briefing	14
4.11 Code of conduct declaration	14
4.12 Record keeping for quantitative interviewing	14
4.13 Qualitative work	14

	Page
4.14 Hall tests	15
4.15 Telephone centres	15
4.16 Recruitment of interviewers and recruiters	15
4.17 Training of interviewers and recruiters	15
4.18 Appraisals	19
4.19 Data validation	21
4.20 Mystery shopping and observational research	23
4.21 Auditing	24
Section 5. Data processing	
5.1 General	25
5.2 Project management	25
5.3 Qualitative analysis	25
5.4 Electronic Data Capture (EDC) projects	25
5.5 Developing code frames	25
5.6 Applying code frames	25
5.7 Data coding verification	25
5.8 Data entry	25
5.9 Data entry verification	26
5.10 Data editing (post data entry)	26
5.11 Data file management	26
5.12 Specifying data processing output	26
5.13 Presentation of data	26
5.14 Data analysis verification	26
5.15 Issuing data to the client in electronic formats	26
5.16 Backup retention and storage of records	27
Tables	
1 Training content for interviewers	16
2 Training content for recruiters	17
List of references	Inside back cover

Foreword

This British Standard has been prepared by Technical Committee SVS/3.

In January 1996 the Market Research Quality Standards Association (MRQSA) published the *Service Standard for Market Research*. This standard had been developed by a consortium of professional bodies representing UK market research buyers and suppliers. Arrangements were made for market research organizations to be independently assessed against the requirements set out in the MRQSA standard.¹⁾

Having gained general acceptance of the benefits of standardization within the UK market research industry, BSI was approached to develop BS 7911 from the MRQSA industry standard.

Throughout this British Standard the use of the pronouns he, him, her, his, hostess, etc. is intended to be non-gender specific.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

¹⁾ Details of the assessment process are available from the MRQSA Scheme Administrator, c/o The Market Research Society, 15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AH.

Introduction

This British Standard specifies requirements for organizations and individual practitioners conducting market research. These requirements include the executive responsibilities, data collection and data processing activities which occur in market research projects, together with quality assurance requirements. Where necessary, industry specific terminology is defined.

This standard also gives guidance, in the form of notes in the text, on the implementation of the requirements.

This British Standard is voluntary in application but gives organizations the opportunity to be recognized as complying with a specified set of market research industry standards.

If a market research organization undertakes any amount, however small, of a process for which requirements are specified in this standard, the organization has to comply with those requirements to be accepted as complying with this standard.

This British Standard specifies minimum service levels which organizations seeking assessment are required to meet. This standard, therefore, defines the substance of market research service quality. Any organization complying with this standard, however, also requires working methods to ensure that the standard is followed consistently and constantly in all client work undertaken. It is hoped that organizations will strive to achieve higher levels where possible.

For the quality assurance requirements, an organization can either comply with the relevant section of this standard, or, by complying with the BS EN ISO 9000 series is deemed to comply with these requirements.

All market research organizations will perform some element of the executive function, and therefore have to comply with the relevant clauses of section 3 of this standard.

The requirements of the *Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) data collection standard* [1] have been incorporated into section 4 of this standard.

Section 1. General

1.1 Scope

This British Standard specifies requirements for conducting market research. In particular, minimum service levels are specified for quality assurance, executive responsibilities, data collection and data processing to be applied in market research projects. This British Standard is applicable to organizations and individual practitioners that supply market research and social research services. It applies to all types of research projects and to all staff responsible for and working on research projects.

1.2 References

1.2.1 Normative references

This British Standard incorporates, by dated or undated reference, provisions from other publications. These normative references are made at the appropriate places in the text and the cited publications are listed on the inside back cover. For dated references, only the edition cited applies; any subsequent amendments to or revisions of the cited publication apply to this British Standard only when incorporated in the reference by amendment or revision. For undated references, the latest edition of the cited publication applies, together with any amendments.

1.2.2 Informative references

This British Standard refers to other publications that provide information or guidance. Editions of these publications current at the time of issue of this standard are listed on the inside back cover, but reference should be made to the latest editions.

1.3 Definitions

For the purposes of this standard the definitions given in BS EN ISO 8402 apply, together with the following.

1.3.1 appraisal

Monitoring the effectiveness of an individual in carrying out assignments in accordance with training and instructions.

1.3.2 auditor

In data collection, an individual who on behalf of the organization calculates volume sales by counting in-store stock and delivery invoices.

NOTE. The term auditor is a specific term used in market research and is unrelated to auditing within business in general or assessment auditing.

1.3.3 CAI

Data capture by means of Computer Assisted Interviewing.

1.3.4 CAPI

Data capture by means of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing.

1.3.5 CATI

Data capture by means of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing.

1.3.6 client

The internal or external client commissioning or contracting the project or parts of the project.

1.3.7 code frames

The result of grouping closely similar responses used in coding open-ended questions, created through looking at a proportion of the responses in detail.

1.3.8 coding

The allocation of codes to groups of closely similar responses recorded against open-ended questions, in order to analyse that information together with the rest of the data.

1.3.9 data cleaning

The correction of data records to make them consistent in relation to filters and data logic.

1.3.10 data collection

A general term covering the collection of information such as:

- face-to-face interviewing in-home, in the street, in a central venue, at place of work;
- group discussions, depth interviews;
- telephone interviewing from a telephone centre;
- telephone interviewing from interviewers' homes;
- auditors collecting in-store information;
- evaluators conducting mystery shopping and client service work;
- respondents completing self-completion/postal questionnaires;
- through electronic techniques.

1.3.11 data entry

The input of questionnaire information into electronic format ready for survey analysis.

1.3.12 data preparation

A general term covering coding, data entry and editing/data cleaning that prepares data for analysis.

1.3.13 Data Processing (DP)

Data preparation and data analysis.

1.3.14 DP executive/analyst

The person with overall responsibility for the project during data preparation and/or data processing stages.

1.3.15 data record

Data relating to the completed questionnaire of an individual respondent, item/transaction (i.e. reportable unit).

1.3.16 depth interview

An interview that is not confined to a structured questionnaire.

1.3.17 Electronic Data Capture (EDC)

Use of computers to record or assist the recording of primary research data.

NOTE. This includes CATI and CAPI versions and other methods.

1.3.18 editing

A comparison of actual responses with possible responses, as defined by questionnaire structure and logic and then, if necessary, rejecting or amending some responses.

1.3.19 executive

An individual responsible for running, singly or jointly, a project or parts of a project.

1.3.20 field based individual

In data collection, an individual who works alone without direct and full time supervision.

1.3.21 forced editing

The application of rules specified for any data items which are deemed to be incorrect (e.g. a multiple answer given when only a single answer is required).

NOTE. These rules are written as a computer program and applied to data records relating to a project.

1.3.22 group discussion

Two or more respondents discussing an issue collectively.

1.3.23 hall test

Research conducted at a central venue (e.g. car clinic, product testing, advert testing).

1.3.24 hole count (frequency count)

A summary count of individual data items on the computer file.

1.3.25 interviewer

An individual who on behalf of the organization recruits/interviews respondents face-to-face or by telephone.

NOTE. Those who conduct depth recruitment and interviews are treated as interviewers.

1.3.26 logic data entry

Data entry processes which are programmed for specific projects to check question skips and response range checks.

NOTE. Automatic serial numbering alone does not constitute logic data entry.

1.3.27 moderator

An individual who is responsible for facilitating the interaction of the group discussion members, and for capturing the data generated.

1.3.28 MRS freephone

An independent service provided to the public to verify the legitimacy of UK market research agency members.

1.3.29 mystery shopping

Client service evaluation process involving individuals who on behalf of the organization collect information by behaving as customers and report their findings as a way of monitoring the quality of performance.

1.3.30 observational research

Collection of information without the involvement of a respondent.

NOTE. Excluding the processes of auditing and mystery shopping.

1.3.31 off-the-shelf product or methodology

A research product or methodology developed and made available to meet the needs of more than one client.

1.3.32 organization

Market research or social research body.

1.3.33 price quotation

Response to a client enquiry that is a priced response for specified work.

NOTE. This may reference the research design of another project.

1.3.34 proposal

Response to client enquiry for work which includes some element of research design.

1.3.35 recruiter

An individual who on behalf of the organization recruits respondents for depth interviews or group discussions.

NOTE. Those who conduct depth and group recruitment are treated as recruiters if they do no other type of work.

1.3.36 remote listening-in

In data collection, a method of validating the authenticity of responses and quality of interviewing in the telephone centre by the manager or supervisor listening to both sides of an operator's call.

NOTE. This may be by using monitoring equipment of voice recording media.

1.3.37 research universe

The scope of population segment included in the survey.

1.3.38 second person review

A review carried out by a second suitably (or similar) skilled individual to confirm the research objective can be met by the proposed design.

1.3.39 signed-off

A record kept on file confirming that the specified action(s) have been carried out, by whom, and on what date.

1.3.40 simple data entry

Data entry process containing no in-built logic checks.

1.3.41 specialist interviews

Specifically related to executive/business to business/medical/specialist samples or depth interviewing.

1.3.42 supervisor

An individual who on behalf of the organization undertakes at least one of the following data collection tasks:

- interviewing and selecting new recruits;
- training;
- appraisals/accompaniments;
- allocating work, progress chasing and/or project and quota control.

NOTE 1. If an individual only validates data collection work they are not deemed to be a supervisor.

NOTE 2. An individual employed full or part-time as an office-based member of staff is not deemed to be a supervisor.

1.3.43 supplier

An individual or organization that provides products or services that have an impact on the services delivered to the client by the research organization.

1.3.44 telephone centre

A central office housing a group of telephone lines used for market research recruitment/interviewing.

1.3.45 verification

A checking process during data coding and data entry stages undertaken by a second person.

1.3.46 viewing labs

Venues specifically arranged to accommodate group discussions.

1.3.47 virgin respondents

Respondents who attend a group discussion for the first time.

Section 2. Quality assurance

NOTE 1. The BS EN ISO 9000 series is an internationally defined and recognized model for quality assurance. The requirements of the BS EN ISO 9000 series are more extensive than those specified for the minimum level of quality assurance in this section. The quality assurance requirements of this standard are all covered by the BS EN ISO 9000 series, therefore any organization registered to the BS EN ISO 9000 series will be deemed to meet the quality assurance requirements of this standard.

NOTE 2. Cross-references to BS EN ISO 9001 are given in this section. The purpose of this is to show the overlap only and it should not be assumed that because a requirement is cross-referenced that it fully meets the particular clause of BS EN ISO 9001.

2.1 Quality assurance procedures and personnel

The organization shall have a defined senior member of staff responsible for the implementation of an effective quality assurance system and adequate resources to ensure that it is effectively maintained (see 4.1.2 of BS EN ISO 9001 : 1994).

The organization shall ensure that the following codes are available to staff.

- a) *The Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct* [2].
- b) *The International Chamber of Commerce/ European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ICC/ESOMAR) International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice* [3].
- c) *The Market Research Society (MRS) Guidelines for Handling Databases* [4].

NOTE. Attention is drawn to the provisions of The Data Protection Act [5].

The executive shall be familiar with these codes and take responsibility for ensuring that the codes are adhered to by themselves and all staff carrying out the various processes detailed within this standard.

Documented quality assurance procedures shall be prepared and effectively implemented throughout the organization. The procedures shall cover, as a minimum, the requirements of this standard (see 4.2.2 of BS EN ISO 9001 : 1994).

NOTE. Any format of documentation can be used including electronic.

The documented quality assurance procedures shall be maintained in such a way that staff have access to all procedures relevant to them whenever needed. Changes to procedures shall be controlled so that it is clear that the latest issue is in use (see 4.5 of BS EN ISO 9001 : 1994).

Compliance with procedures shall be auditable. It shall be possible, after the event, to establish whether a procedure has been followed (e.g. by examining files and documented records).

2.2 Client contracts

Client contracts shall be set out in documents to or from the client. When the client confirms the project, a senior member of staff, as defined in the quality system, shall review the contract to ensure that adequate and appropriate resources exist to fulfil the client's requirements. Acceptance of the contract shall be confirmed to the client in writing.

Changes and revisions to the contract made after initial commission shall be adequately set out in documents to or from the client and be clearly communicated to the staff involved in the work (see 4.3 of BS EN ISO 9001 : 1994).

2.3 Planning, controlling and checking research activities

The organization shall establish and maintain procedures to control all stages of the research process, including research design activities, to ensure that clients' requirements are met (see 4.4 and 4.9 of BS EN ISO 9001 : 1994).

Methods to achieve this shall include the following:

- a) the allocation of work to suitably trained staff;
- b) relevant work instructions given to staff so that they are aware of any changes made in a client contract at any time after its commencement;
- c) the attainment of suitable quality levels/proficiency of work (e.g. as defined by other sections of this standard) through training, supervision and documented instructions;
- d) monitoring and checking of stages of the research process, including those specified in other sections of this standard, so that relevant staff are aware of the current status of a project.

The organization shall establish and maintain procedures for unique project identification. There shall be procedures for checking progress of work and evidence that adequate control of the project has been maintained through monitoring or checking activities.

NOTE. Keeping relevant project records in a project file may be appropriate. A project status checklist within the file is an effective mechanism.

The organization shall establish and maintain procedures for the maintenance of equipment, including planned maintenance. This shall be appropriate to the consequences of failure or malfunction.

Where relevant, the capability of equipment (including hardware and software) to produce the required output shall be confirmed prior to installation (see 4.9 of BS EN ISO 9001 : 1994).