

KENYA SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION FOR CLERICAL OFFICERS

APRIL 2021

PAPER CODE: 101

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

DATE: TUESDAY, 27 APRIL, 2021

TIME: 9.00 A.M. – 11.00 A.M. (2 HOURS)

INSTRUCTION TO CANDIDATES

1. This paper consists of three sections: A, B and C.
2. Section A consists of two compulsory questions carrying 30 marks.
3. Section B consists of eleven compulsory questions derived from a passage carrying 30 marks.
4. Section C consists of three questions carrying 20 marks each. Answer any two questions.
5. Answer all questions on the answer booklet provided.

SECTION A (COMPULSORY)

1. You wish to seek a week's leave of absence to enable you prepare adequately for the upcoming Proficiency Examinations for Clerical Officers. Using blocked format, write a letter to your Head of Department through your Head of Section seeking approval.
(15 Marks)
2. It has been noted that there have been a lot of queries on misuse of stationery by clerical officers in your department. The Head of Department has hence appointed you Secretary of a committee established to investigate into the matter. Assuming that the Committee is through with the inquiry, write a report.
(15 marks)

SECTION B

READ THE PASSAGE BELOW AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW:

Payment for goods and services **rendered** to a large extent determine the future of a business. However, collecting payments for goods and services rendered is one of the challenges that threaten the stability of many entrepreneurs. Infact, entrepreneurs struggle with expensive loans and sometimes miss good opportunities yet their debtors struggle with expensive loans and sometimes miss good opportunities yet their debtors owe them a fortune.

Most enterprises experience cash flow problems. These problems may be attributed to factors such as the entrepreneur's inability to collect money from customers on time and the fear of upsetting big customers. Failure to collect money from customers on time makes small enterprises lack **sufficient** cash for their day-to-day operations while allowing their debtors to have interest-free loans for their operations. Failure to collect debt on time may wipe out all the profits and eventually push a profitable enterprise into severe cash flow crisis.

On the other hand, large enterprises which can afford to give their customers longer credit periods without hurting cash flow have smarter control systems which enable them to enjoy the benefit of timely payments by customers. Ironically, these large enterprises **drag their feet** in paying the small enterprises that happen to be their suppliers thus making them struggle with cash flow. An entrepreneur must understand that collecting money from customers on time is crucial since it helps minimize the changes of taking expensive loans. It also reduces the possibilities of disappointing one's employees and suppliers by failing to pay them on time. Furthermore, timely collection of money from debtors is a prerequisite for success.

An entrepreneur, therefore, requires to design a good payment strategy that puts pressure on customers to pay on time. To begin with, an entrepreneur can develop a credit policy which

should specifically apply when dealing with first time customers. Such a policy should be guided by the terms that the entrepreneur has suppliers. For instance, if the supplier gave the entrepreneur one month credit period, then the entrepreneur should strive to give the customer a shorter credit period to pay. This will prevent a situation where the entrepreneur would lack cash to pay the suppliers.

In addition an entrepreneur should be **reluctant** to sell on credit. It is better to have stock than to sell it on credit and not get paid on time. This is because delayed payments will make the entrepreneur not realize the time value of money. In the event that an entrepreneur decides to sell on credit, however, an invoice should be issued to the customer immediately the goods are delivered. The invoice will make the customers understand that just as they expect quick delivery, the entrepreneur equally expects payment without delay according to the agreed terms.

Demand for advance payment before supplying goods is yet another strategy. Asking for deposit or down payment will also reduce potential cash flow problems. Furthermore, an entrepreneur can offer standard payment options such as use of credit cards and cheques thus allowing the customer to use their preferred payment method. An entrepreneur should also ensure that goods are supplied against well-issued and signed purchase orders. Otherwise, following up debts becomes hard and in the event of non payment, the entrepreneur cannot make any legal action to recover the money.

Entrepreneurs should remember that customers are doing them a favour by buying their products. The customer had considered all options and found the products or service to be the best value for money. Therefore, the customer needs the entrepreneur just as the entrepreneur needs the customer and should not use credit sales as the only way of enticing customers. It should be understood that cash flow management is the most important element in running a **viable** business.

(Adapted from: “Business Daily”, Tuesday, January 24, 2017.)

QUESTIONS

3. (a) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage.
- (i) drag their feet
 - (ii) sufficient
 - (iii) reluctant
 - (iv) viable
 - (v) rendered **(5 marks)**
- (b) State **two** reasons that lead enterprises to cash flow problems. **(2 marks)**

- (c) According to the passage, state **two** reasons for immediate issuance of an invoice to customers. **(2 marks)**
- (d) According to the passage, highlight **three** ways an entrepreneur would ensure they do not lack cash to pay suppliers. **(3 marks)**
- (e) Mention any **three** reasons collection of money from customers is crucial. **(3 marks)**
- (f) In about 130 words, and according to the passage, explain the strategies that an entrepreneur may adopt to ensure timely payment by customers. **(10 marks)**
- (g) Answer the following questions according to the instructions given.
- (i) Payments for goods and services rendered to a large extent determine the future of a business. (Rewrite in passive voice). **(1 mark)**
- (ii) Most small enterprises experience cash flow problems. (Add a question tag) **(1 mark)**
- (iii) The customer needs the entrepreneur just as the entrepreneur needs the customer. (Begin with "both -----"). **(1 mark)**
- (iv) The customer had considered all options. (Begin with "All -----") **(1 mark)**
- (v) Following up debts becomes hard. (Rewrite in future tense). **(1 mark)**

SECTION C: ANSWER ANY TWO QUESTIONS

4. (a) Your Head of Department appointed you secretary to the Clerical Officers Training Committee. Explain **five** responsibilities you will be expected to perform during the meeting. **(10 marks)**
- (b) As a Clerical Officer, explain **five** benefits of memos as a type of written communication in a government office. **(10 marks)**
5. (a) Having served as a Clerical Officer for the last two years, highlight **five** merits of telephone conversation in an office. **(10 marks)**

- (b) Mr. Pepe, the Head of Department has consistently encouraged clerical officers to communicate official matters through Email as opposed to sending short text messages using mobile telephones. Explain **five** advantages of using Email in the office. **(10 marks)**
6. (a) Highlight **five** personality related barriers of effective listening you may have experienced as a clerical officer. **(10 marks)**
- (b) As a Clerical Officer you are addressing members of your department in a meeting. Explain **five** ways in which the audience body language would help you know if they are paying attention. **(10 marks)**