

26.0 FRENCH (501)

In the year 2011, KCSE French Examination was tested in the following three papers;

Paper 1 (501/1) – tested listening Comprehension, Dictation and Composition.

Paper 2 (501/2) – tested Reading Comprehension and Grammar.

Paper 3 (501/3) – tested Reading Aloud, Exposé and Conversation. This is an oral paper.

CANDIDATES' GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The table below shows the performance of candidates in French (501) in the years 2010 and 2011.

Table 37: Candidates' Overall Performance in French for the last two years

Year	Paper	Candidature	Maximum Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2010	1	2357	45	21.85	7.92
	2		30	17.44	5.60
	3		25	16.42	4.60
	Overall		100	55.63	16.83
2011	1	2553	45	24.26	8.05
	2		30	14.71	5.67
	3		25	17.17	4.29
	Overall		100	56.06	16.80

The following observations can be made from the table above:

1. There was an increase in candidature from 2357 in 2010 to 2553 in 2011.
2. There was an improvement in performance. This can be observed in the higher mean score of 56.06 of 2011 from 55.63 in 2010.
3. There was an improvement in the mean grades for individual papers except for paper 2

Paper 1 (501/1)

THIS PAPER CONSISTS OF THREE SECTIONS

Section 1: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Question 1-6

This section deals with different situations such as advertisements, interviews, news items, etc. and is marked out of 15 marks. The students are required to listen twice to the recorded material with in-built pauses then they answer the questions

Weaknesses

Candidates forgot simple vocabulary and could not write numbers correctly. They also had problems with possessive adjectives, tenses, means of transport, French first names and also with accents.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should give students more practice on vocabulary numbers and accents. They should expose the students to different situations based on the ten topics in the syllabus.

Section 2: Dictation

Dictation consists of a passage recorded on a tape, with various punctuation marks and is marked out of 5 marks. The passage is read three times. The first time it is read through for the students to acquaint themselves with the text. The second time, it is read with pauses calculated to enable the candidates to write down what he/she has heard. The third and the last time, it is read through without pauses.

Weaknesses

Candidates had problems with intonation, homonyms, accents, punctuation and grammar.

Advice to teachers

Students should be exposed more to dictation with more stress put on grammar, agreements (accord) tenses and homonyms.

Section 3: Composition

This section is divided into two questions, one functional and the second one is creative writing. Under functional writing candidates had a choice between a recipe and a CV. In the creative writing candidates were given a choice between two situations which were guided.

Weaknesses

Candidates lacked appropriate language and vocabulary to use while writing a recipe. They were also not able to write CVs well.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should give students a lot of practice on all topics covered in the syllabus, especially in functional writing. They should also train students on relevance while writing guided composition as well as vocabulary and expressions.

Paper 2 (501/2)

This paper consists of 2 sections.

Section 1: Reading Comprehension

This section is marked out of 15 and consists of a number of passages which the students are to read, understand and answer correctly the questions based on the content of the passage.

Weaknesses

Some candidates lifted words from the passage, including entire sentences without any links to the questions. Some wrote numbers in figures even when they should have written them in words or vice-versa. Some candidates had problems with synonyms and antonyms.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should train students to answer questions by being precise and focussed. They should also guide students on how to answer using own words and avoid lifting excerpts from given passages. They should also expose students to a wider range of reading materials.

Section 2: Grammar

Questions 6, 7 & 8

This section is marked out of 15 and tests the use of pronouns, prepositions, adjectives, verbs and modes. The candidates were to rewrite sentences given in correct French, fill in the blanks and match portions of sentences given.

Weaknesses

Candidates could not use correct grammatical structures. The filling in blanks was done mechanically without making an effort to understand the context or be coherent.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should train students to handle all the grammatical structures as stipulated in the syllabus and how to answer different type of grammar exercises. Students should be trained to understand the whole passage before filling in the blanks.

Paper 3 (501/3)

This is an oral paper which tests the candidates' knowledge of communicative and grammatical skills, i.e. their ability to understand the input stimulus and instructions as well as demonstrate their skills in an oral context. These aspects were examined in 3 sections and were marked out of 25 marks.

Section 1 Reading aloud (cards A and B).

Section 2 Exposé (Cards A, B, C and D)

Section 3 Conversation

Each candidate is given 15 minutes to prepare after choosing cards at random for both sections 1 and 2. Use of dictionaries, textbooks or any external material is not allowed.

Section 1: Reading Aloud

The candidates are expected to read in correct French, respecting liaison, intonation, articulation, punctuation as well as show comprehension. It could be a dialogue, a monologue or a description. Both cards are of equal difficulty and more or less the same length.

Weaknesses

Card A – Reading Aloud – some candidates had difficulty pronouncing words like récemment, début, meilleurs, parc, intéressait, animateur, tort and with liaison and nasal sounds

Card B – There were difficulties with words like aucun, eu, sympas, tort athlète, seule, plus

Advice to teachers

Teachers should give students more practice on reading with emphasis on the phonetic sounds, liaisons and enchaînements.

Section 2: Exposé

Candidates were to pick a card at random out of the 4 subjects provided and were to analyze and synthesize their ideas in a coherent and logical manner with appropriate vocabulary and expressions. The cards had such varied topics e.g. family, discipline issues, preparation for KCSE, description of a favorite person, what one does while waiting to join the university. The candidates were given two minutes to talk on the topic of choice.

Weaknesses

Some candidates had limited vocabulary and brought in anglicisme while some presented memorized conversations without responding to the questions.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to give students a lot of practice in debates, public speaking, class presentation to widen the students' vocabulary and language structure. They should tackle different themes contained in the syllabus.

Section 3: Conversations

Candidates were to converse on topics being guided by the examiner, understand the questions and respond appropriately, building on the questions and sustaining conversations by talking in context more than the examiner.

Weaknesses

Candidates lacked knowledge of vocabulary and grammar which resulted to mixing of French and English or saying very little.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should expose students to other activities e.g. drama , debate, French clubs, where they will learn to talk freely and with a rich vocabulary. They should train students on all possible topics as per the syllabus.