



25.0 FRENCH (501)

In the year 2009, KCSE Examination for French 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.

25.1 CANDIDATES' GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The table below shows candidates' performance in French (501) in the years 2008 and 2009.

Table 30: Candidates' Overall Performance in French in the Years 2008 and 2009

YEAR	PAPER	CANDIDATURE	MAXIMUM SCORE	MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
2008	1	2219	45	17.42	7.70
	2		30	13.01	5.44
	3		25	16.09	4.33
	Overall		100	46.65	16.13
2009	1	2196	45	20.04	8.42
	2		30	14.24	6.07
	3		25	15.85	4.64
	Overall		100	50.13	19.13

The following observations can be made from the table above:

- 25.1.1 There was an improvement in general performance in the year 2009 as compared to that of the year 2008. This is attested by the overall mean of 50.13 in the year 2009 as compared to 46.65 in 2008.
- 25.1.2 The candidature dropped slightly in 2009 (2196) when compared to that of the year 2008(2219).
- 25.1.3 The mean scores for papers 1 (501/1) and 2 (501/2) increased in the year 2009 when compared to the year 2008.

25.2 PAPER 1 (501/1)

This Paper Consists of Three Sections:

25.2.1 Section 1: Listening Comprehension

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 2 times with pauses to answer questions.

Weaknesses

Candidates could not get French names e.g. Versailles and had problems with homonyms and homophones as well as local names.

Advice to Teachers

The syllabus expects the candidates to understand French spoken in different registers and at normal speed as spoken by a native French speaker. The teachers need to do their best to inculcate grammar and handle all the topics as expected in the syllabus. They should give the students more practice on phonetics.

The teachers need also to train their students from the first year in listening comprehension and expose them to different types of situations. They should also teach the learners adjectives of color, time and tourism.

25.2.2 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

The confusion of homonyms and homophones was common)

Advice to teachers

Students need to be trained to differentiate homonyms from homophones. Teachers should start training students on dictation from year.

25.2.3 Section 3: Composition

The section is divided into 2 questions, and is marked out of 25 marks. The first question (qn. 6) was based on functional writing. There was a choice between a dialogue and an informal letter. The second question (qn. 7) was based on creative writing.

Weaknesses

Composition- Some candidates were not able to use the right format for the letter. Some confused *remerciements* (thanks) and *voyages*(travel). Past tense was a challenge and the vocabulary was a limitation.

Advice to teachers

Composition – Teachers should train students on letter writing formats and various types of functional writing as well as past tense (passé composé and imparfait)

25.3 PAPER 2 (501/2)

This paper consists of 2 sections.

25.3.1 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

The candidates were unable to transfer their knowledge correctly despite the fact that they understood the passages. The candidates misunderstood the questions and gave wrong answers. Sometimes, candidates simply lifted sentences from the passage to give as answers.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should expose students to a wide range of reading material to improve on their vocabulary. They should also train them on how to paraphrase the information they get in the passages.

25.3.2 Section 2: Grammar

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

Some candidates did not apply the grammatical structures they had learnt. For the blanks, some failed to get the right words, mainly prepositions.

Advice to teachers

Candidates should read the whole passage to understand it before filling in the blanks. They should also do more practice on grammatical structures. Teachers should instill correct usage of basic grammar as stipulated in the syllabus.

25.4 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 or textbooks is not allowed.

25.4.1 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

Lack of respect for liaison and improper pronunciations were principal errors of the candidates. In card A *hélas copines, équipe, sympa, changer* were noted while in Card B *Guy, dessinateur, molignac, récemment, plus, peine* were noted.

Advice to teachers

More practice in phonetics, allocating some time for speaking in French and participation in drama recommended. They should also work on nasal sounds and transparent words (words that are written the same way in English & French, but have different meanings).

25.4.2 Section 2: Exposé

Candidates were to pick a card at random on 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 as merits and demerits of mobile phones. They were given two minutes to talk on the topic.

Weaknesses

Most candidates were able to talk on the subjects in general. Where there were pros and cons, they tended to dwell on one and forget the other. The very poor candidates simply said a sentence and then kept quiet.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should give a lot of practice to students through debates, public speaking and encourage the use of different ways of expressing one's opinion. They should also train them on a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structure.

25.4.3 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

There were difficulties in the use of conditional, passé composé and future simple. A few struggled to understand the questions. Some were limited in vocabulary and would resort to English words.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should encourage conversations by asking questions which will elicit explanations and not just a simple 'yes or no' answer. Group work should be encouraged and pair work for dialogues with emphasis on correct grammar and expression. Student should be exposed to other activities where they would freely speak in French.