

26.0 FRENCH (501)



In the year 2010, 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.

26.1 CANDIDATES' GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The table below shows the performance of candidates in French (501) in the years 2009 and 2010.

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

Year	Paper	Candidature	Max. Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
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
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

The following observations can be made from the table above:

26.1.1 There was an increase in candidature from 2196 (2009) to 2357 (2010).

26.1.2 There was an improvement in performance. This is seen in the higher mean score of 55.63 from 50.13 in the previous year.

26.1.3 The three individual papers contributed to the subject mean improvement for there was a mean increase in all the individual papers.

26.2 PAPER 1 (501/1)

This paper consists of three sections:

26.2.1 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 twice to the recorded material with in built pauses then they answer the questions.

Weaknesses

Candidates could not bring out the verbs matching with certain leisure activities. They did not seem to know the use of the superlative. They also missed out on key issues required in the recorded passages.

Advice to teachers

The teachers need to train their students from the first year in listening comprehension and expose them to different types of situations. They need to give more practice to students on everyday topics e.g. leisure activities, sports, parts of the body, directions, numbers and superlatives.

26.2.2 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

Candidates could not distinguish nasal sounds from others.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to give their students constant practice on dictation especially using phonetics in French language and on various themes. This is more useful if it begins in form 1.

26.2.3 Section 3: Composition

This section is divided into two questions, one functional and the second one is creative writing. There were two letters in question one; one was informal, the other was formal. In the second question, there was an imaginative story, which was to continue from a given beginning.

Weaknesses

Candidates wrote essays without linking them to the given guideline.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should train students on how to write guided compositions.

26.3 PAPER 2 (501/2)

This paper consists of 2 sections.

26.3.1 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

Candidates answered the comprehension questions from general and prior knowledge other than from the context given. Those who attempted to answer from the context given, many picked excerpts instead of using their own words.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to give more practice in comprehension and train students to understand the passage and answer question using their own words. They should be reminded to get the answers from the given content and not from general knowledge.

26.3.2 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

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

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.

26.4 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.

26.4.1 Section 1 Reading aloud (cards A and B)

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 liaison and wrong pronunciation were the main errors. In card A – *semaines fille, sympa, mignons, baigne, essayer* were the main problem. In card B – common errors were *mignons Alpes, douze, sapin, animateur, baigne, rigole, famille*.

Advice to teachers

Teachers need to train students on reading varied material with emphasis on nasal sounds <ille>, <g> as well as train in intonation and liaison.

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

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 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

Candidates could not express themselves in proper French and instead inserted English words where the insufficiency was.

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.

26.4.3 Section 3 Conversation

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 and resulted to mixing 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.

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.