

3.3 FRENCH (501)

In the year 2012, 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.

3.3.1 CANDIDATES' GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The table below shows the performance of candidates in French (501) in the years 2011 and 2012.

Table 12: Candidates' Overall Performance in French for the last two years

Year	Paper	Candidature	Maximum Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
2011	1		45	24.26	8.05
	2		30	14.71	5.67
	3		25	17.17	4.29
	Overall	2553	100	56.06	16.80
2012	1		45	22.29	8.07
	2		30	15.65	6.10
	3		25	17.25	4.31
	Overall	2565	100	55.13	17.24

The following observations can be made from the table above:

- (i) There was a very slight increase in candidature in 2012.
- (ii) There was a drop in performance from a mean score of 56.06 in 2011 to 55.13 in 2012.
- (iii) In paper 1, the mean score dropped from 24.26 in 2011 to 22.29 in 2012 while in papers 2 and 3, there was an improvement.

3.3.2 French 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

In some cases, candidates tried to reason instead of giving the answer based on what they heard. They had a problem with the name "Mayaka".

Advice to teachers

Teachers should expose students to more out door activities to enable them to perform even better than this year.

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

Some candidates had challenges with, accents, punctuation and grammar.

Advice to teachers

More practice should be given to students right from form one.

Section 3: Composition

This section is divided into two questions, one functional and the second one is creative writing. In the section of 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

Evident in the composition was absence of essay writing practice.

Advice to teachers

Essay writing skills should be inculcated in the students by giving a lot of practice. The topics in the syllabus should be used to form the various types of essay evaluations.

3.3.3 French 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 when responding to comprehension questions lifted sentences from the passage even when they were irrelevant. They did not bring out the answers clearly. Some had problems with “documents authentiques”.

Advice to teachers

Students should be taught how to read and understand the passage, then answer the questions after comprehension using their own words. They should train students to use the spaces provided for responses to avoid giving long sentences as answers. Handling of various documents should also be trained.

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

Some candidates answered questions disregarding grammatical structures and context. Candidates matched answers without looking at all the options given.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should train students on how to handle exercises of gap filling and sentence matching while regarding grammar and context.

3.3.4 French 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 out aloud 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

The candidates had difficulties in pronouncing a number of words. Sometimes they did not respect liaisons and intonation.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should give students more practice in reading out loud various types of materials.

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

A few candidates had limited vocabulary and used anglicisme while some presented memorized conversations irrelevant to the topics being tested.

Advice to teachers

Teachers should give more practice especially through exposure to debates and drama.

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

Some candidates had limited vocabulary hindering their fluency in carrying out the conversation.

Advice to teachers

Opportunities should be made available more often allowing students to converse in French. These can be done in class, clubs, French days and in drama club.