

In the year 2021, KCSE French Examination was tested in the following three papers;

Paper 1 (501/1) – tested Listening Comprehension, Dictation and Creative Writing.

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

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 2018 to 2021.

Table 12: Candidates' Overall Performance in French for the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

YEAR	PAPER	CANDIDATURE	MAX SCORE	MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
2018	1	3,697	45	19.59	8.06
	2	3,697	30	11.6	5.3
	3	3,705	25	19.28	3.9
	Overall	3,706	100	50.4	17.26
2019	1	3,901	45	22	7.76
	2	3,901	30	8	5.08
	3	3,899	25	19	3.81
	Overall	3,901	100	50.49	15.26
2020	1	4,225	45	23.58	7.59
	2	4,225	30	13.32	5.73
	3	4,225	25	20.02	3.53
	Overall	4,225	100	56.66	15.46
2021	1	5,048	45	14.43	5.85
	2	5,045	30	17.86	6.81
	3	5,036	25	20.37	3.3
	Overall	5,049	100	52.59	14.46

The following observations can be made from the table above:

- (i) There was an increase in candidature by 824. This is a percentage increase of 16.32 points from the previous year.
- (ii) There was a decline in the overall performance from a mean score of 56.49 to 52.59.
- (iii) Paper 501/1 recorded a sharp decline in the mean score from 17.86 in 2020 to 13.32 in 2021. This could be attributed to the change in paper format. Paper 501/2 recorded an improvement of 4.54 percentage points while performance in paper 501/3 bears semblance to that of 2020.

This paper consists of three sections:

Section 1: LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Passages 1 - 4

This section deals with different situations such as advertisements, interviews, news items, etc. and is marked out of **15**. The candidates are required to listen twice to the recorded material with in-built pauses then answer the questions. This year the paper sampled the following:

QUESTION/ PASSAGE	TESTED	WEAKNESSES
1.	Vocabulary of places, agreement and knowledge of saying time in French.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling mistakes • Confusing adjectives with names of people.
2.	Recall, synthesis and application of knowledge on family members, country names and saying age in French.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to use gender of nouns appropriately.
3.	Knowledge on weather and sports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges with vocabulary like “concours d’elegance” and “conditions climatiques.”
4.	Knowledge on professions, time, dates and colours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language interference/ influence.

Advice to teachers

- Expose students to adjectives, longer listening passages.
- Expose students to more vocabulary on weather and sports.
- Teachers should emphasize on spelling of French words that are similar to English.

Section 2: Dictation

Dictation consists of a passage recorded on compact disc (CD), 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 candidates to acquaint themselves with the text. The second time, it is read with pauses calculated to enable the candidates to write down what they have heard. The third and the last time, it is read without pauses to enable candidates to make any necessary changes in their work.

Weaknesses

Spelling, punctuation, accents, plural and subject-verb agreement in terms of gender and number.

Advice to teachers

Emphasize more on grammatical aspects.

This section is marked out of 15 and requires candidates to write a composition in French of between 150 and 180 words. Candidates were expected to interpret the instruction and write a composition based on the described situation. They were to choose and write one composition on either of the following situations:

6. (a) You have found a big sum of money in an envelope next to a river. Describe what follows.
Or
(b) One day, you decided to learn cycling. Recount what followed.

Weaknesses

- Inability to correctly interpret the instruction. Some candidates began their compositions using the wording on the question paper rubric.
- Lack of vocabulary to develop the story.

Advice to teachers

- Discourage candidates from cramming compositions and encourage creativity.
- Emphasize on correct tenses.

3.3.3 French Paper 2 (501/2)

This paper consists of 3 sections.

Section 1: Reading Comprehension

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

Weaknesses

- Candidates' inability to interpret vocabulary and apply the same to different word structures and situations.
- Candidates picked sentences straight from the passages and came up with incoherent responses.

Advice to teachers

- Encourage learners to read widely and extensively so as to build their vocabulary.
- Encourage learners to practice paraphrasing.

Section 2: Grammar

Questions 4, 5 & 6

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 use speech acts to give different ways of saying something.

Weaknesses

- In **Question 4**, where candidates were required to rewrite sentences, they had challenges applying grammatical concepts such as pronouns, adjective agreements and past tenses.
- In **Question 5**, which had filling in of blanks, candidates answered with words that could not bring out the desired meaning.
- In **Question 6**, which had speech acts, candidates could not apply socio-cultural aspects of the language in the communicative situations.

Advice to teachers

- Teach grammar in context.
- In filling in the blanks, candidates should be encouraged to read the entire text and get to understand the context before answering.
- Infuse cultural studies in teaching French as a language.

Section 3: Functional Writing

This section is marked out of **10** and requires candidates to write a composition in French of between **120** and **150** words. They were to write a friendly letter by choosing between the following two options:

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- (a) Your friend invites you to celebrate his/her success in examinations. Unfortunately, you are not available for the event. Write him/her a letter explaining your situation.
 - (b) You would like to go for an excursion with some comrades. You are available but you need permission. Write a letter to ask for authorisation.

Weakness

Candidates failed to differentiate between formats for formal and informal letters.

Advice to teachers

Emphasize on formats for all functional writings.

3.3.4 French Paper 3 (501/3)

This is a face to face examination administered by assessors. It tests the candidates' knowledge of communicative and grammatical skills as well as vocabulary. It also tests their ability to understand the input stimulus and instructions and respond by using their skills in an oral context. The paper has 3 sections which are marked out of **25**.

Section 1: Reading Aloud

This section is marked out of **5** and requires candidates to read a passage aloud in French while paying attention to pronunciation, liaison, rhythm, articulation, punctuation and intonation. It could be a dialogue, a monologue or a description. Both cards are of equal difficulty and more or less the same length.

Weaknesses

- In card A, there was anglicisme where some candidates read words like *exemple*, *certaines*, *protection* and *touristes* same way they are read in English. In Card B, the same was observed.

Students to be taught correct pronunciation of French words that are similar to English words. Such words to be taught in isolation, through embedding in sentences and also in free speech.

Section 2: Exposé

The section is marked out of 5 and requires candidates to pick a card at random out of the 4 provided. They were to analyse and synthesize their ideas in a coherent and logical manner with appropriate vocabulary and expressions. Candidates were to do oral presentation on a given topic while paying attention to fluency, relevance, intonation, articulation and coherence. They were given two minutes to talk on the topic of choice. See the table below on the theme contained in each card;

CARD	THEME
A	Technology
B	Transport
C	Careers and professions
D	Hobbies

The English translation of the task contained in each card:

CARD	TASK
A	"Facebook is an important social media network." Give your opinion.
B	In your opinion, how can we prevent road accidents?
C	Describe the career that you prefer.
D	Describe your preferred hobby/leisure.

Weaknesses

Card	Weaknesses
CARD A	Some candidates were not familiar with the word <i>Facebook</i>
CARD B	None
CARD C	Some candidates could not go beyond naming careers and practitioners
CARD D	None

Advice to teachers

- Expose learners to emerging issues in media and walk them through how to present their opinions on varied topics.
- Train students to speak about their future careers and allow them to be questioned by their classmates.

Section 3: Conversations

Candidates were required to engage in a conversation in French with the assessor based on a minimum of 4 topics that are in the syllabus such as school life, family, technology, environment, transport, hobbies and tourism.

Advice to teachers

Prepare students in analysis and application tasks by giving them more oral assignments.