

Nationally and Interstate Assessed Languages at Background Speakers Level

2015 Chief Assessor’s Report

# Nationally and Interstate Assessed languages

# (background speakers)

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## Overview

The Nationally and Interstate Assessed Languages at Background Speakers Level Chief Assessor’s report provides general information and feedback about the school assessment component and the oral examination for Japanese, Korean, Malay, and Persian at background speakers level.

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information. For information and feedback on the written examination, please refer to subject-specific Chief Assessor’s Report under Assessment on the subject minisite.

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## School Assessment

To allow students to achieve their potential, teachers are encouraged to pay attention to assessment task design. Assessment tasks should be clear and assessment conditions appropriate.

Overall, responses that successfully demonstrate the performance standards to a high grade band are: relevant, create the desired impact on the audience, demonstrate a highly developed, sophisticated control of language, and show insightful interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and reflection on the writer’s values and practices.

For students to be able to demonstrate their learning at the highest grade band it is advisable for them to be exposed to a variety of different assessment tasks to give them the opportunity to express their own ideas and to focus on evaluation and reflection.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

There are three assessments in this part: interaction, text production, and text analysis. Most teachers designed appropriate assessment tasks for this assessment type, which allowed students to demonstrate that they had met the performance standards.

Interaction

The most popular styles of assessment task in the interaction were discussions, interviews, and multimedia presentations followed by responding to questions. Using a diverse range of topics and styles such as discussions, interviews, forums, and debates may give students the best opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to interact with others for the purpose of exchanging information, opinions, and ideas in the studied spoken language (Japanese, Korean, Malay, or Persian).

Most students did well in this task but some were not given the opportunity to achieve at the highest level of the performance standards for this task because the interaction was heavily scripted and lacked spontaneity.

If a presentation or talk is chosen as the interaction task, it is important that students have the opportunity to respond to questions from the audience in order to demonstrate specific feature E3 (Use of strategies to initiate and sustain communication).

The most successful students demonstrated a clear idea of the purpose, audience, and context of their interaction, and this understanding influenced the way the interaction was structured and the language that was used. Students should take care to speak with the appropriate formality for the assessment task set. Many students demonstrated competence in ideas and expression by expressing opinions in response to open-ended questions without using a script or relying on rehearsed answers.

The less successful students used mainly rehearsed, general information on the topic and provided less analysis of the topic. Some students need to develop confidence and increase their preparation in order to respond at some length to unscripted questions and comments.

It is important for an appropriate interlocutor to be engaged in the interaction assessment tasks, so that students are given the opportunity to expand their answers. It should be noted that working as a group for the interaction task may make assessment of the individual difficult.

Generally, interaction assessments were recorded clearly. However, where the interaction occurs between students, such as a role play or interview, it is imperative that each student is clearly identified on the recording.

Marking schemes based on the performance standards were used well.

Text Production

Responses were more successful when they were based on a specified contemporary issue and focused on one text type. This provided opportunity for formative preparation, with explicit focus on the language and structure relating to this text type.

The most successful responses met the assessment task requirements of:

* addressing an issue as specified in the subject outline. The less successful responses provided a recount of a film or information on a topic without considering different perspectives
* conveying an opinion about the issue, as well as providing information. The better responses were from students who were able to use information and ideas arising from the text(s) to form and express their own opinions.

Sometimes students had difficulty creating texts in which they expressed ideas, opinions, and perspectives on contemporary issues. Students will benefit from exposure to a wide range of texts and a clearly specified assessment task. An assessment task should specify a context, purpose, audience, and the text type for production, as well as the kind of writing (e.g. descriptive) the students are required to produce.

Most students gave broad focus on the contemporary issue raised in the texts but did not relate them to the specific question asked. However, the language skills shown were generally of a high standard.

A variety of text types was seen, covering a range of different contexts. Many responses were written appropriately and concisely, addressing the conventions of the text type. Revision of different forms of writing and scaffolding may help students complete their assessments with confidence.

The subject outline allows for a range of assessment conditions, and the length for a text production is not prescribed. However, teachers are encouraged to clearly identify the conditions (e.g. test conditions, drafted tasks), including the word limit, in the assessment task.

Text Analysis

It is important that students are given the opportunity to fulfil the requirements set out in the subject outline. Some good text analysis assessment tasks allowed students to compare the perspectives, ideas, and opinions in the text(s) on the topic so that students were able to demonstrate their competent evaluation and reflection.

Students will benefit from practicing and developing skills in contrasting information, opinions, perspectives, and ideas in texts and in drawing their own conclusions. Most students responded to questions in their own words and with appropriate textual references to support their opinions. In the less successful responses, students identified the key issue but were not able to incorporate examples from the text(s) effectively to support their views.

In some languages, few students analysed the texts, but merely summarised the main points. There was, in those languages, little attempt to analyse, and make inferences based on, linguistic, cultural, and stylistic features, and the use of language was not discussed.

Good design of the assessment task enables students to analyse linguistic, cultural, and stylistic features as well as to evaluate cultures, values, and ideas in texts. The text analysis is an opportunity to demonstrate skills in interpretation, evaluation, and reflection. This is an opportunity for bilingual skills to be developed and for insights into language and culture to be demonstrated.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Topic Choice

Teachers are encouraged to discuss proposed topics for the in-depth study with students in detail. For example, tourism in this context is not about descriptions of the landscapes, but considering issues such as the impact of the travellers on the living environment and the everyday life of the local people. Another example is a mere description of a cultural festival. This is irrelevant to the expectations of an in-depth study; students should provide evidence of the development of their own ideas, opinions, and perspectives. Topics such as *‘Chinese New Year’* tended to be largely descriptive rather than analytical and interpretive, and did not provide the focus for in-depth responses.

Many students completed in-depth studies to a high standard. However, there were several students in some languages who had almost identical topics. The requirement from the subject outline is for each student in the class to research a different aspect of the topic.

To assist with meeting the requirements of the in-depth study, a procedure such as that outlined below may be negotiated with students:

Step 1: Selection of topic — Themes and contemporary issues/topics

Students, supported by the teacher, should carefully consider their proposed topic for the in-depth study, ensuring it is relevant to the list of themes and contemporary issues/topics in the subject outline.

Step 2: Selection of topic — Resources

Another consideration in the selection of a topic is the sources of information that are available to the students. It is important that the range of resources includes a variety of contemporary works, with different perspectives presented in different text types. A range of different resources should be selected for analysis, so that students can explore their topic in sufficient depth. At least three of the resources should be in the studied language (Japanese, Korean, Malay, or Persian). In practice, it would be appropriate to reconsider the topic chosen as early as possible if no relevant resources can be found.

Step 3: Assessment tasks

Timlines should be set up for the three required assessment tasks: oral presentation in [Language], written response to the topic in [Language], and reflective response in English. It is important to note that the three tasks should differ in context, audience, and purpose.

In general, opportunities for students to perform at their highest level need to be provided through the selection of an appropriate, challenging topic. A possible question for the students to consider before deciding may be ‘What will I learn from this in-depth study?’

Oral Presentation in [Language]

(Japanese, Korean, Malay, or Persian)

In this assessment students demonstrate the capacity to present ideas, opinions, and perspectives in [Language] on an aspect of their in-depth study. Teachers are reminded to clearly specify a context, purpose, and audience for the assessment.

Students who achieved a high standard in the oral presentation were able to present or discuss the process and findings of their in-depth study in a spontaneous and independent way without reading from a script. Successful oral tasks demonstrated analysis and comprehensive knowledge, supported by opinions on the issue investigated.

Written Response to in [Language]

(Japanese, Korean, Malay, or Persian)

The stronger written responses in [Language] (Japanese, Korean, Malay, or Persian) analysed findings from a variety of sources and synthesised information. Better responses correctly referenced quotes and the ideas of others, which were then elaborated in the student’s own words. Responses were less successful when presented as a series of quotes without some attempt to analyse and evaluate the information, ideas, or perspectives.

Teachers are reminded to clearly specify the purpose and audience, the text type for production, and the kind of writing required (e.g. persuasive).

Reflective Response in English

The most successful students obviously had a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve in this assessment. They focused on certain aspects and reflected in detail on their learning through the in-depth study. Less successful responses did not have a clear purpose other than to present some general information about the topic or simply describe the process of their research. The reflection requires personal, deep thinking; it must not be a recount or a narrative.

The in-depth study, in principle, will enable the students, at the end of the research journey, to reflect on new findings. It may lead her/him to a change of mind or perspectives, or to an adjustment of beliefs. A successful reflection of the whole in-depth study is not merely a discussion of the methods for finding suitable resources; it includes how students’ thinking has changed, and any learning that was new or surprising or which challenged their own values or beliefs in relation to the issue. A topic that the students already have a deep knowledge of might not provide adequate opportunity for learning.

In some languages, a number of students did not complete this task according to the subject outline requirements. Assessment tasks reflecting on learning in the language more generally, without the focus on the in-depth study, do not provide the intended focus or depth for the reflective response in English.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

In general, most students were well prepared for the oral examination, demonstrating knowledge and skill in exchanging and explaining information, opinions, and ideas in spoken [Language]. Most students performed well and displayed a good knowledge and understanding of their in-depth study. They interacted confidently with the examiners and were prepared to share the knowledge gained from their research. A small number of students lacked fluency and were insufficiently prepared.

In discussions pertaining to their research, some students demonstrated an awareness of issues of reliability and validity of resources on the Internet. Some students considered the experience equipped them with the capabilities to succeed in their tertiary studies, as well as to operate in a knowledge-based global economy.

Stronger responses successfully created the desired interest and impact, engaged the audience, expressed complex ideas, provided personal opinions and elaborated in detail on an in-depth, well-informed analysis of contemporary issues/topics. Some students produced sophisticated observations and conclusions. Most of the students’ answers were consistently accurate and appropriate in terms of expression, although students are encouraged to take care to use accurate terminology to describe their research. Those students who showed insightful reflection of their personal values, beliefs, ideas, and practices performed better.

A variety of different and interesting topics were chosen for the in-depth study. The ‘In-depth Study Outline for Oral Examination’ forms provided on the SACE website were used well. Many students did not use aids such as photos, or graphs. Those who did used them competently and appropriately.

Students are reminded to be present at the oral examination venue 15 minutes before their scheduled examination time.

Written Examination

For information and feedback regarding the written examination, please refer to the subject-specific Chief Assessor’s Report under Assessment on the subject minisite.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work. It is preferable for teachers to provide an indication of how the grade was determined, for example through shaded performance standards or assessment rubrics.

All student materials are to be submitted for moderation if required. Where student work is missing, a ‘Variations — Moderation Materials’ form should be provided.

There is no need to submit the supporting materials, such as the texts studied for the in-depth study, the draft of the written tasks, and so on. Evidence of students’ learning will only be looked for in the assessment tasks.

It is vital that moderators are able to access, and hear students clearly in, recordings of the interaction (Assessment Type 1) and the oral presentation (Assessment Type 2). Teachers should refer to the subject mini-sites for information about preparation of non-written materials and submission of electronic files, and submit student work in accordance with these instructions. Materials should be checked to make sure that that all recordings are in an accessible format.

A CD/DVD/USB for each student with oral assessment tasks provided in a separate file (not in a continuous single file) is a good way to submit audio files. An alternative is to have a folder of assessment tasks for each student on a single CD/DVD/USB. In either option, students’ SACE registration number should be indicated clearly for each audio file.

A copy of the learning and assessment plan (LAP) should be included with each school package, together with a complete set of assessment task sheets. If changes have been made to the LAP since it was approved, an addendum should be attached.

When submitting the final grade for the assessment type, teachers are advised to check their calculations or determination of the grade carefully, to avoid any clerical errors.

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