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Japanese (continuers)

2015 Chief Assessor’s Report

# Subject Name

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## Overview

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.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Oral Interaction

Common topics included school life, future plans, hobbies and pastime activities and family.

Across the sample of oral interaction tasks presented at moderation, it was pleasing to see that students responded to a selection of open-ended questions on one or more topics. This provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate evidence of the highest standard, particularly against I2.

Most students were able to accurately comprehend the questions and the responses were generally relevant to the topic. It was noted that in some cases the interaction between the teacher and student was in plain form speech. An interaction in polite form is encouraged between teacher and student.

Teachers are encouraged to give students a variety of closed and open-ended questions to respond to spontaneously. Open-ended questions allow students to respond with depth and breadth in their answers.

The stronger, more spontaneous responses were achieved when the teacher also followed the student lead and asked questions based on the student responses, rather than continuing with a pre-determined set of questions. This allowed for unpredictable topic shifts and in many cases this was handled well. This resulted in a more spontaneous conversation and students were able to demonstrate evidence at the A level in expression (E3).

On occasion, students were provided with a pre-determined list of questions prior to the oral interaction and were only asked questions from the list which resulted in memorised responses. In most cases this did not allow for the spontaneity required in order to assess E3.

Most schools adhered to the time limit of 5-7 minutes as proscribed in the subject outline for oral interactions. Teachers are reminded that anything presented beyond the 7 minute limit cannot be assessed or reviewed to confirm results at final moderation.

Text Production

It was pleasing to see a range of topics and themes covered across this assessment task, including travel to Japan, homestay experiences, school life and job applications.

Common text types presented at final moderation included articles, diaries, speech scripts, and blogs. In some instances, a stimulus text was used to respond to, but the majority of responses were formed creatively on a given topic. If the task design includes responding in writing to a stimulus text, it is encouraged that the text be included in the moderation package at the end of the year. When designing tasks, it would benefit students if the context, purpose and audience was specified.

It was noted that most tasks were designed to enable students to achieve at the A level of the performance standards, particularly in relation to ideas and expression.

Text productions all varied in length, and although there is no word limit stipulated in the subject outline for this task in the folio, most schools set character counts between 600-800 characters. It was noted that in some cases text productions of less than 400 characters lacked the depth of treatment of ideas, information, or opinions.

It was noted that students used a range of linguistic features with good control and, on occasions when errors were made, most did not impede meaning. Some weaker responses produced included variable accuracy with some basic errors. These errors included tense, particle and spelling errors.

Text Analysis

A good range of topics was covered, and material presented at the clarifying forum was also used by some schools.

Reading and responding tasks were the predominant type of analysis tasks presented, with few schools choosing to use aural texts. Teachers using listening texts are encouraged to include these, or their transcripts, in school packages for final moderation.

Teachers are reminded that the assessment of text analysis tasks must be based on evidence presented in the student responses and judged against the performance standards given for Japanese (continuers). Marking student work using numerical results does not necessarily reflect the same level of achievement against the performance standards.

When using past examination style text analysis tasks, including reading and responding and listening and responding, teachers are encouraged to review the questions being asked about texts to ensure that IR1 and IR2 are being assessed. The text analysis tasks need to include questions that draw out responses from students that analyse linguistic and textual features.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Common topics this year included anime, Japanese music, sumo wrestling, *Harajuku* fashion, Japanese cities, Japanese schools and festivals. Students should be encouraged to choose topics that enable them to best utilise their linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills, and encouraged to steer away from topics that require vocabulary and structures beyond this.

It was noted that for some in-depth study topics, students should be prompted and encouraged by their teacher to research interesting facts or present opinions or new ideas on the topic/issue, rather than providing general information only. This will allow students to develop depth in their responses, as well as create interesting and informative products. Teachers are reminded that it is not necessary for students to provide a vocabulary list.

Oral Presentation in Japanese

Most responses adhered to the time length prescribed in the subject outline of 3-5 minutes with only a few responses falling under or passing over this parameter.

The most common text type chosen this year was a speech.

As discussed, depth of ideas was achieved through comprehensive planning and preparation, where ideas were elaborated, opinions and arguments justified and complex ideas communicated effectively and originally.

On occasions when students relied heavily on written notes or a transcript in delivering the oral presentation, it was difficult to confirm results and achievement against E2 since intonation, fluency and pronunciation were affected.

Written Response in Japanese

It is pleasing to note that the majority of responses adhered to the character limit of 600 characters as proscribed in the subject outline. Responses that fell under this limit were not always able to demonstrate detailed and varied depth and breadth.

Teachers are reminded that responses to the three tasks included in assessment type 2: in-depth study must be different in their nature, context, purpose and audience. Students still need guidance to select a topic or issue and then determine a number of sub-topics to achieve the varied nature of tasks and information presented. An oral reading of the written response in Japanese is not suitable to demonstrate evidence of achievement.

Generally, the oral presentation was an informative speech, and the written response was a personal piece, allowing students to use the content they have researched in different ways, demonstrating their skills and ability to utilise Japanese effectively.

Reflective Response in English

It is pleasing to note that proscribed limit of 600 words was generally adhered to for the reflective response in English. Very few schools chose the oral option but those who did were able to reflect on their chosen topic for 5-7 minutes.

Most written responses were in the form of a report. This provided students the opportunity to develop ideas in relation to I2. It was noted, however, that in a few instances written responses tended to be recounts rather than reflective pieces. As a result, this meant that evidence against IR2 and IR3 was not demonstrated and could not be assessed.

Teachers are advised to provide opportunities and prompts for students to encourage reflection on how cultures, values and beliefs are expressed in texts and reflect on these connections between their own culture, values and beliefs (IR3).

In most cases, there needed to be deeper reflection on own values, beliefs, ideas, and practices in relation to those represented in texts.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

ORAL EXAMINATION

General Comments

One hundred and sixty-seven students presented themselves for the Japanese (continuers) oral examination in 2015. For the conversation, approximately 26% of the candidates achieved an A grade, while 15% received D+ or lower. The average grade in the conversation is B-. In the discussion section 23 % achieved an A grade, while 29% received D+ or lower, which resulted in the average grade of C+. There was a large core of students who performed unsuccessfully in the discussion section this year. Significant lack of preparation was seen as a common phenomenon among the less successful performances.

Section 1: Conversation

The majority of strong responses showed comprehension of all or most of the examiners’ questions, and many included appropriate answers with a good degree of confidence and fluency. Better responses showed that students were able to move comfortably beyond prepared answers and spontaneously elaborated on their initial responses by giving reasons, opinions and impressions. Over-prepared answers, however, were common this year again. Preparation is essential of course, but it is vitally important to know that effective preparation is the main thing that allows the student to communicate more naturally with the examiners and does not make the student look and sound as if merely presenting prepared answers.

There were a number of less capable responses that indicated difficulty in understanding even basic questions and were unable to provide any relevant responses. It is imperative that in working towards the oral examination students ensure they have a good understanding of proscribed themes and topics and get familiar with predictable basic questions.

Ideas (Relevance)

Responses were mostly relevant for stronger students, but many weaker students gave incorrect or irrelevant answers because they did not understand the questions.

Students should know that questions are not always asked in an interrogative sentence typically ending in the particle か. For example, many students did not recognise examiners’ asking for confirmation or clarification (e.g.・・・ね？) and incorrectly thought they were being asked a new question and tried to think about what the question was. Students should practice this at school.

Examiners commented this year again that some students kept on with prepared sentences, adding things which were not necessarily relevant to the question asked. Some students even interrupted the examiner and directed the conversation by presenting rehearsed information before questions were asked. It was also evident again that some students responded only to a familiar key word in the question and jumped into a prepared but irrelevant answer. Learning detailed information by heart and presenting it as ‘speech’ is strongly discouraged.

Students should be encouraged to develop good communication/ interaction skills to make their responses relevant to the questions. Some suggestions include:

* listen carefully right to the end of a question paying particular attention to tense, aspect and mode (remember that the meaning of a Japanese utterance is typically determined in the end of the sentence);
* avoid presenting a long speech and instead wait for follow-up questions;
* know but do not rely on predictable questions; and
* develop strategies to deal with unexpected or more difficult questions.

It is strongly recommended that students start to practise the above as early as possible. It takes time to develop these skills. Observing and analysing Japanese background speakers’ conversation is a good way to understand how a natural flow of conversation is constructed in the language.

Ideas (Depth of treatment of ideas, information or opinions)

Depth of ideas should be observed in the interaction between a student and examiners and not in the student’s rehearsed speech. But it seemed difficult for most students to be able to give an appropriately extended answer. Some students took over the conversation by presenting rehearsed speech without waiting for follow-up questions. Others were so under-prepared and lacking confidence that they were unable to go beyond minimal answers.

For a conversation to develop into a certain depth, it is helpful when students give the examiners something to continue the conversation with. For example, when asked about their hobbies, students might include a brief reference to a recent event or experience or a future plan regarding his/her hobbies (e.g. reading a best seller, competition participation, cooking for some special occasion etc.) The examiners will probably ask questions about the event/experience or plan saying for instance, “Oh, how did you like the book?”, “How did you go in the competition?”, “What are you going to cook?” and so on. Again, it is not about presenting well-rehearsed extended answers that matters – it is rather discouraged. It is about how deeply students can get into and develop their interaction with the examiners.

Expression (Capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately)

There was a huge range in students’ capability in conveying information. While strong answers displayed the expression of complex ideas very accurately, weaker answers often didn’t go beyond one or two words and sentences often were not finished with grammatical structure.

Although minor errors (particularly in pronunciation) are often ignorable when a conversation flows naturally, more serious grammatical errors can confuse the conversation significantly. Typical examples observed include the confusion of tense of verbs, adjectives, and です/ます and the case particles such as が、は、を、の.

Many students did not sufficiently cope with questions which contained more complicated structures (e.g. relative clause). They also showed a lack of confidence with interrogatives such as どう、どんな 、どうして and どのぐらい. Some students did not finish sentences, limiting their answers to one or two words. The most successful students, on the other hand, showed a mastery of complicated sentence structures, including a range of subordinating conjunctions (e.g. ～から/ので、～たら、～時、～ても).

Pronunciation was generally good, and yet common errors which appear year after year did so again. Some examples include:

* confusion between similar vowels as in えいが/えいご;　あに/あね;　おにいさん/おにさん;　まだ/まで; かわいい/こわい;
* confusion between similar consonants as in かもく/かぞく/かがく.

‘Foreign accent’ or phonetic interference from one’s background language was often evident in students’ pronunciation and intonation, but it was very rare that foreign accent by itself seriously impeded clarity of utterances.

Other linguistic features that were often not known or were confused in use included:

* The conjunction から/ので mistakenly preceded the reason-clause like ‘because’ in English.)
* numbers and counter suffixes, especially in　年、年生, かい (number of times)
* tense and time words (e.g. 来年…しました。きのう…行きます。)
* ほか as in, for example ほかの日に…, and ほかに何か言いたいことがありますか

With regard to appropriateness of expressions, it came to examiners’ attention that some students did not differentiate between formal and informal ways of speaking. In the context of oral examination, students should be able to keep to formal/polite expressions such as すみません rather than ごめん, and もういちどおねがいします instead of もういちど？

Learn to use あいづち and fillers (e.g. ええと、そうですね) effectively in order to comfortably stay in the natural flow of conversation;

Expression (Coherence in structure and sequence)

Weaker answers were typically short – usually in one sentence with a single piece of information, hence there were minimal room for organising information and ideas logically and coherently other than arranging words in the correct grammatical order, even which was not always done successfully. Stronger answers showed the adding of extra information and opinions to support statements without over-talking and taking over the conversation.

When used appropriately, あいづち can be a very useful linguistic device to construct a coherent conversation interaction. It can show that a student understands the examiner’s questions and is genuinely engaged in the conversation. For better communication, learn to use a wide range of あいづち expressions rather than repeat the simplest ones such as はい、ああ。Some useful examples include ああ、そうですね、そうですか、～ですか (confirming the question, seeking clarification)、わかりました、ええand so on

Expression (Capacity to interact and maintain a conversation)

In stronger answers, maintaining conversation itself was not a particular issue. But it is still important that all students be aware that there are many techniques and linguistic devices such as stated above to improve their conversation skills and outcomes.

Most students knew at least one expression to seek help but some students could not keep the conversation going by using it effectively when needed, resulting in a long uncomfortable pauses. Not much interaction happened in weaker answers as some students tended to stick to their minimal responses and were reluctant to go beyond their prepared answers.

Section 2: Discussion

Although there was a range in students’ ability to cope with discussion on their in-depth study topics, a strong trend towards low grades in the discussion section was regrettably even more evident this year with 29% students ended up in a D or E grade. Examiners commented that significant number of students turned up for the oral examination without adequate preparation for in-depth study discussion.

Despite the overall trend above, some students performed well. Most of the better responses were based on confident engagement in the discussion and effective presentation of what the student studied with great enthusiasm and interest. In addition to thorough linguistic preparation, the strongest answers demonstrated sensitivity and maturity in understanding different cultures and people, which added much depth to students’ study and discussion.

As always, the choice of in-depth study topic was a crucial factor to determine students’ performance in the discussion. Appropriate topics are those that are manageable, interesting and sufficiently challenging to discuss at the final examination. It is recommended that student choose a topic of her/his own interest after good consultation with teacher. It is always quite noticeable when students had not chosen the topic themselves because they tended to lack the interest and ability to give independent comment with opinion. Also of note here is that students should choose a topic that they can comfortably discuss in Japanese and can go beyond simply reciting memorised answers.

Presentation of main points on the outline form was still problematic this year. There is a continuing need to emphasise that ‘the dot points’ should provide information to enable examiners outside the school to instantly understand the focus of the study and facilitate the discussion effectively. Also, the dot points should sufficiently cover/match the overall topic of one’s in-depth study. Some students’ topics were very broad (e.g. Japanese festivals, Japanese food) but the actual research was done only on one example of the whole topic. Some students’ dot points solely consisted of lengthy research questions, not all of which were suitable or relevant for the oral examination purposes. Most importantly, the form should be completed legibly and guidance on how students present their dot points on the outline form is benficial well before the oral examination. Examiners commented that they couldn’t read some of the words due to untidy writing and/or spelling errors.

Some students brought in support objects such as photographs from the internet and fluffy toys or plastic figures of anime characters. Mostly they were not really useful. To make a significant impact on their marks, students should be able to provide more than just an explanation of what the object is.

Ideas (Relevance)

Research topics presented this year were generally relevant to the purpose of the in-depth study, but students’ performance in the discussion did not consistently deliver the appropriate amount of relevant information and ideas. Many struggled to go beyond the prepared answers and could not genuinely engage in the in-situ discussion with the examiners.

Students often did not recognise when questions about dot points were asked slightly differently from what they had expected. They should know and be prepared to answer questions asked in various ways. For example, where the word ‘history (of a festival)’ appears as one of the dot points, the question may be heard as:

* そのまつりのれきしについておしえて（話して）ください。
* そのまつりにはどんなれきしがありますか。
* どのくらい長いれきしがありますか。
* そのまつりはいつ始まりましたか。
* それはむかしからあるまつりですか。
* and so on.

It is expected of course that students change and restructure their answer according to the question asked. Reciting one prepared answer text is not suitable for all of the question forms above.

Another technique to know is that students should not give long ‘speech’ when asked to explain what they have learned about a dot point. They should say a few relevant things and then wait to take part in a more natural discussion.

It is emphasised again that one-minute introduction speech is not assessed. It is a shared impression among examiners over years that presenting one-minute speech does not help. It does not count. Therefore the better examination strategy is to maximise the time for engaging in the actual discussion, which does count, and use relevant information and expressions in response to examiners’ questions.

Ideas (Depth of ideas, information or opinions)

Many students had researched their topic in some detail but not in sufficient depth. Only the most successful responses included evidence of good research and were able to give thoughtful and convincing comments and opinions in response to various questions. Other responses lacked evidence of good research.

It is vitally important that students study and discuss their chosen topics in connection with Japanese cultures and cultural values and include reflective thoughts on their own cultures and values. Many students’ work this year was superficial and lacking the appropriate depth in content and interpretation. Depth of research and discussion is not achievable by only presenting gathered information. To add depth, gathered information has to be interpreted and analysed by the researcher. To make one’s work relevant to the purposes of in-depth study, discussion of cultural values is essential. Comparative, cross-cultural approaches may be helpful when students reflect on their study and their own values. In preparation students and teachers must ensure that appropriate and reputable resources in the topic area are accessed. They should not rely on sources and materials of dubious quality.

Also of note here is that students and teachers should be well aware of limitations of knowledge and experience that could be gained from the in-depth study task. In-depth study is a very minor research task, and it never aims to allow students to incorrectly believe they have learned enough to be able to ‘judge’ cultures of other people and their own. Over-generalisation of particular cultures and peoples, and/or making suggestions and advice to change or ‘improve’ other people’s cultures and ways of thinking are nothing more than an inappropriate and immature behaviour, which must be avoided with careful supervision and guidance by the teachers at the earliest opportunity.

In discussion most students were able to answer only the simple introductory questions which asked them to explain each dot point. There was limited depth when deeper questions were asked (e.g. justify one’s opinion, provide reasons). Genuine discussion is challenging, but students should at least predict what they might be asked based on their dot points and practise. Examiners commented that many students used the expression “それについては勉強しませんでした (I did not study that.)” as an excuse when they probably just did not understand the question. Stronger students at least tried to guess or gave some sort of reply rather than evading the question.

Expression (Coherence in structure and sequence)

Grammatical accuracy and range of expressions were generally very good in rehearsed parts of answers, but there was limited flexibility when less-predictable questions were asked and students had to change the sentences they had memorised. In fact the majority of students could hardly engage I discussion appropriately – they only tried to answer the questions using a prepared text.

Refer to the Relevance section above for types of possible questions on one dot point. These questions were fairly predictable within the range of grammar for SACE Stage 2, but rarely actually prepared or practised by many students.

This year – again - many students showed a lack of language skills needed to deal with questions relating to interpretation (IR1) and reflection (IR3). Suggestions and guidance are included below (interpretation and reflection).

Expression (Capacity to interact and maintain a discussion)

As mentioned above, many students struggled to maintain the flow and momentum of a discussion. Even clearly strong responses often involved long, prepared responses to the examiners’ initial questions. Students should be encouraged to keep an initial response short (not more than 2 or 3 sentences) and then wait for the examiners to ask follow-up questions.

It is to be repeated here that one-minute introduction speech is not assessed. Examiners agree that those students who do not give the speech tend to do better in the discussion.

Interpretation and reflection (Interpretation of meaning in texts)

The majority of responses including many stronger ones included only simple information about texts that students used (e.g. book titles, website names). Most could not describe the content of the texts in depth and/or add one’s interpretation to it. For better planning and preparation, the following insertion may be found helpful:

interpretation (IR1) questions for in-depth study discussion are mainly to examine:

* the insight and clarity of a student’s interpretation and explanation of the content and context of the texts she/he used for in-depth study; and
* how effectively a student gives evidence or example/s from the texts to support her/his interpretation.

Questions may be heard as:

* どんな本を読みましたか。それについて少し教えてください。
* その本にはどんなことが書いてありましたか。
* それはどんな本ですか。

In answering these questions, students should present their interpretation of meaning in the text(s) by identify and explaining:

* the content of the text(s) (general and specific information);
* the context, purpose and targeted reader or audience; and
* the concepts, perspectives and ideas represented in the text(s).

Interpretation and reflection (Reflection)

Overall, there is still a lack of preparedness and confidence among students (and possibly their teachers) in dealing with reflection questions. Most students could only say, “I learnt a lot”, “It was interesting” and could not give a reasonable answer that appropriately reflects one’s own study experience and cultural views. To be able to reflect on one’s experience and values, students has to have conducted a reasonably solid research with some insights and depth, but most students’ research appeared to be shallow and superficial and did not go beyond a mere gathering of factual information. Only a handful of strongest students successfully handled reflection questions. For better preparation, see the following detail for reference.

Reflection (IR3) questions for the discussion are mainly to examine to what extent a student has learned:

* about culture, values, beliefs, practices and ideas of Japanese people from the texts used and her/his own values, beliefs, practices and ideas in relation to those expressed in the texts; and
* from her/his experience of doing an in-depth study.

Some related questions may include:

* In-depth study の勉強をして、日本の (人々、文化、社会、、　など)　について何を学びましたか。
* In-depth study のの前と後であなたの（かんがえ方、いけん）はどうですか。かわりましたか。
* 日本の・・・と、あなたの文化の・・・をくらべて、どうですか。ちがいますか。
* In-depth study の勉強（）はどうでしたか。
* どのくらいしましたか。はうまくいきましたか。
* このトピックについてもっと知りたいことがありますか。

Students should then present their reflection on:

* how Japanese cultures, values beliefs, practices and ideas are represented or expressed in the text(s);
* their own values, beliefs, practices and ideas in relation to those in the texts studied; and
* their own learning.

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

General Comments

One hundred and seventy-two students sat the Japanese (continuers) written examination this year. Students’ marks were spread over a wide range across all sections.

As in previous years, section 3 - writing in Japanese was handled well by most students. Section 2 - reading and responding (part A) was also well handled by majority of students. Section 2 - reading and responding (part B) and some of the section 1 - listening questions (e.g. Question 1 and Question 5) proved the most challenging.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

*Question 1*

Despite the simplicity in words and content of the text, this question was treated poorly by many students. While 31% of students achieved full marks, 40% gained no mark. The mean score was 0.9 out of 2. There was a wide variety of incorrect answers.

1(a) Many unsuccessful answers included inaccurate information such as overdue books, math test in the library, opening of library and so on. The context of the text was misunderstood by many students.

1(b) Many students did not catch the time at all or correctly in Question 1b.

*Question 2*

This question was generally handled well. 92% of students gained two marks or more with 34% achieving the full marks of four. The mean score was 2.8.

2(a) Majority of students understood the shoes were expensive. A number of responses, however, did not mention that Yuki had other shoes in the same colour.

2(b) A common error was thinking Yuki told Tadashi to buy the shoes for her.

*Question 3*

Question 3 was best handled in Section 1. 86% of students gained two marks or more with 38% of students achieving the full marks of four. The mean achievement was 2.9.

3(a) Generally well done, but some answers were short and fragmented and did not give sufficient detail. Some students wrote ‘party’ rather than explaining the context.

3(b) Numerous students incorrectly mentioned that Lisa likes karaoke. There are again many short and inadequate answers (e.g. ‘basketball club’) where more detail and the context were needed.

*Question 4*

This was another comfortable question for most of the students. 50% of students gained 4 or 5 marks out of the possible 5.

4(a) Stronger students included all relevant details. Many others did not include John’s Queensland tour guide experience.

4(b) This question was generally answered well, but many students missed full marks by omitting John’s long-term availability (i.e. until August nest year). Some students struggled with ‘days of the week’ expressions.

*Question 5*

This was the longest text in the listening section, and students’ marks were broadly distributed. The mean score for this question was 2.8 out of the possible 5 (56%).

5(a) Few students included detailed response to this question. Omission of *Shinkansen* times and why the roads were congested were common. Many students thought that the female speaker was going to be late for work.

5(b) This was quite well done. Most students understood the taxi driver was helpful, as he offered advice on alternative travel route and did not accept money.

Students need to be aware that they should include all relevant information, as often detail was lacking in their responses. Also, when the question requires a response in English, do not copy out too many Japanese words from the original text. If Japanese words are used in response, they need to be clearly explained in English.

Section 2: Reading and Responding Part A

This section clearly discriminated the students’ levels. Those students who successfully read the texts and understood the details demonstrated their understanding clearly and concisely, while those who understood the text only partially gave broad and/or inadequate answers based on their guess or personal knowledge. Not a large number of students achieved full marks, but most students were able to gain reasonable scores in this section. 66% of students obtained more than half of the 15 marks available. The mean score was 9.7 (64%).

*Question 6*

6(a) Most students understood that the idea of the body getting angry was that the body would react badly and become sick, but only some students were able to articulate that this was caused by habitually eating same single food.

6(b) This question was generally answered very well.

6(c) Most students were able to establish that the grandmother lead a healthy and active life and gave relevant examples from the text. Although many students were able to communicate the grandmother’s healthy attitude toward food (e.g. eats fresh food from her own garden and local farmers and fishermen rarely eats sweets), fewer students were able to establish and give example of the grandmother’s humble and respectful attitude toward food (e.g. stops eating before getting full and express gratitude after eating). Some stronger students were able to establish that the grandmother was a person of a flexible and fun-loving mind who occasionally allows herself to eat chocolate as comfort food (saying humorously that it is to nourish her mind), but only a few students referred to and included her motto for living (live each day peacefully and enjoyably).

*Question 7*

7(a) This question was generally answered well.

7(b) Most students were able to identify two factors that contribute to Japanese people’s longevity, but fewer were able to add necessary details. Only some students were able to establish that daily *ofuro* (deep hot bathing) helps relax mind and body and promotes good sleep while also promoting hygiene and prevent illness.

7(c) Most students understood the question accurately and provided some relevant answers. The sources of information for the texts were identified accurately by most students, but weaker responses often revealed insufficient knowledge of (meta-linguistic) terminology necessary to discuss stylistic features of texts (e.g. anecdotal, analytical, informative etc.)

Section 2: Reading and Responding Part B

*Question 8*

The stimulus text this year was of a comparable degree of difficulty to previous years, and most students seemed to understand the context and the content. However, other students did not grasp the specific points in the texts that they were expected to respond to. The marks were widely distributed, with the mean score 7.4 out of 15 (49%).

Ideas (Relevance)

The careful reading of the stimulus text is vital to attain high marks. Good responses identified, analysed and responded to all relevant information in the stimulus text in the appropriate length. Some students showed good reading comprehension skills and grammatical skills but needed to be more careful about the word limit and not to include irrelevantly creative ideas and waste the space to write more relevant and necessary content.

Main items to respond to were:

* the graduation ceremony (how it was)
* Yoshi’s preparation for university entrance exam (how it is going)
* reflection on Yoshi’s home stay
* response to the ski trip invitation with some detail

Ideas (Depth of treatment of ideas, information or opinions)

Successful responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of the stimulus text and gave clear and relevant response, which were often well elaborated and supported with reasons. Stronger responses demonstrated an ability to ‘re-work’ the stimulus text effectively, combining information and expressions to create original ideas and sentences. They did not just copy and paste ideas and expressions from the original text. Many weaker answers were only partially relevant to the topic and purpose, therefore there were not many appropriate elements to add depth to their responses.

Expression (Capability to convey information accurately and appropriately)

Students’ linguistic skills varied very widely this year again. On one hand, there were a number of responses demonstrating very good accuracy and manipulation of a wide range of relevant grammatical structures. On the other hand, weaker responses showed insufficient linguistic skills to convey even basic information and ideas. In weaker answers, expressions were often fragmental, and/or structured based on English word order. There were also frequent errors in the most basic spelling, grammar and *kanji*.

Common errors were observed in:

* verb and adjective conjugation (esp. past tense)
* locative particles such as に、で
* use of 行く、来る
* *kanji* and katakana words

Expression (Coherence in structure and sequence)

Most responses were reasonably well structured and sequenced. However, use of linguistic cohesive devices such as conjunctions and deictic words was often absent or problematic. Students are encouraged to incorporate these expressions so they can use the writing space more efficiently.

There were many untidy pieces of work with frequent crossing out, insertions, and poor writing of scripts. Students should plan well before they start writing and should present their responses as neat as possible. Some suggestions are below:

* plan your response (use provided space to take notes)
* take into account paragraphing
* do not rush, and be careful to avoid errors in simple things
* write legibly and neatly across the page
* avoid cross-outs and insertions
* read your answer and check carefully for errors

It is also suggested that students think flexibly when they want to express certain things and cannot come up with appropriate words and grammatical structures. Do not struggle too much with uncertainty but instead try to think of a different way of responding.

Section 3: Writing in Japanese

Overall this section was handled well. The two choices of questions were almost equally popular, with Question 10 being chosen by 52% of students and Question 9 by 45%. There were also a small number of students who did not attempt this section. The score distribution was widely spread. For Question 9, 21% of students achieved an A grade, while 16% received a D grade or lower. For Question 10, 23% of students achieved an A grade, while 18% fell into a D or an E grade.

Ideas (Relevance and depth of treatment)

*Question 9*

Students who chose this question generally well understood the purpose of the text and wrote relevant answers. While most students were able to convey some information and about a restaurant and include some review, many answers were limited to simply providing a menu (or names of dishes) and basic description of the taste (e.g. おいしいです、いいです). Successful answers provided detailed and varied information about food, service, and location. Author’s experiences and feelings were well described in strong answers. In some successful answers, ‘questions’ were used effectively to engage the readers.

*Question 10*

Most answers were sufficiently relevant to the question. Successful answers showed full understanding of the question and included clear and detailed explanation of an important school event with interesting examples and were able to give relevant advice to Japanese visitors. The strongest responses demonstrated excellent skills in engaging the audience by, for example, asking questions and including humour. Many less successful answers were only partially relevant to the context (esp. the purpose and the audience). For example, some weak answers consisted almost solely of an introduction of school, with no or limited reference to a specific event and one’s own experience.

Expression (Capability to convey information accurately and appropriately)

*Questions 9 and 10*

The most capable responses demonstrated an excellent knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary and *kanji*, correct tenses, and used a number of connectives to join phrases and clauses. Some strong responses successfully used the appropriate interpersonal particles (e.g. よ、ね) to engage the target audience. Many other responses tended to rely heavily on familiar structures that had probably been mastered in the earlier years of the student’s language study and did not include the full range of expressions and structures available to students from language study at senior secondary level.

Expressions in students’ answers were often incorrect, ungrammatical or inappropriate when students apparently resorted to the direct translation from English (or their first language), picked up words from dictionaries and put it into their answer in a careless manner. It is important that students learn meanings of words in contexts, rather than as isolated (or de-contextualised) forms as often seen in vocabulary lists and concise dictionaries.

Expression (Coherence in structure and sequence, and observation of text-type conventions)

Most students were able to organise their response well, using paragraphs appropriately and attempting an introduction and a conclusion. There is, however, a continuous need to encourage the use of lexical devices such as conjunctions and deixis to create a text of better and more coherent structure and sequence. Except in a few careless instances, responses included the conventions appropriate for the expected text types.

## 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.

In most cases, LAPs were provided with an addendum where appropriate. The majority of schools packaged materials appropriate, including all necessary school and student material. Schools should check that CD’s with oral tasks included in the package are in good working order.

## General Comments

For students to achieve an A+ for Assessment Type 1: Folio or Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study, the A+ Grade needs to be sustained across all tasks.

Japanese (continuers)

Chief Assessor