

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCSE

GCSE Japanese (1752 / 1753)

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Paper 1: Listening and Responding

This year's paper contained several new formats but in general candidates coped well and did not appear to be disadvantaged although all will need time to become familiar with the x answering method. Teachers should encourage their students to follow strategies which will prevent duplicate answers in one row and no answers in another row. The candidate knowledge base displayed in their answers appeared similar to that evinced in previous years. The new format for the sequencing question also seemed clear to candidates but very few were able to answer all sections correctly. Overall the paper followed 'peaks and troughs' of difficulty pattern and this allowed the weaker candidates to make an effort through to the end scoring not only on the early Q1-10 but also on Q16 -20 and beyond. Candidates need reminding to listen to the whole conversation before making up their minds as to the correct answer. Q21-25 proved more difficult as candidates found it hard to pick out and write down the information they needed: once again many candidates do not appear to know the names of the 4 main islands of the Japanese archipelago or be familiar with Japanese surnames. Q26-35 required concentration, but as this is a vocabulary area reassuringly familiar to most candidates most succeeded well. The one section which yielded problems was that testing directions by points of the compass. Once again candidates proved less adept at answering the questions in English, many appearing to offer answers to the wrong question word ("Why" rather than "How do you know" for Q37b) or the wrong question (all of 38). Candidates also found it difficult to give enough detail about the car and did not recognise (or could not spell sufficiently clearly) the name Hoffman.

Paper 2: Speaking

As has come to be expected, candidates performed consistently well on their prepared topic but the two unprepared topics were sometimes thin by comparison. The most popular chosen topic this year appeared to be Media, Entertainment and Youth Culture with the most successful unprepared topic being In the UK and Abroad. Successful candidates had clear methods for responding to questions taking the clues from the question; these candidates also asked for repetition when they had apparently not clearly understood. Weaker candidates resorted to mumbled responses or silence, not realising, perhaps, that even a しりません or a わかりません might be appropriate and gain some credit. Candidates were credited for all attempts to speak Japanese. Teacher examiners were not always sympathetic to the needs of the candidates: interrupting, speaking too fast or too slowly, asking a question the candidate had already answered, asking どうして at inappropriate points were again all hurdles for less able candidates to overcome. Sympathetic teacher examiners helped candidates to gain more marks by keeping the conversations simple and giving concrete examples when the candidate appeared to have lost the thread of the question. Candidates should be encouraged to use adjectives and adverbs to 'colour' their answers, and a simple 'から' on the end of many answers would greatly enhance the level of communication achieved. An increasing number of Teacher-Examiners failed to follow the guidelines and prejudiced the performance of their candidates by not allowing them time to speak about their prepared topic, by not following the list of allocated topics accurately and by not using the topic areas specified in the examiner's handbook. A significant number of candidates lacked an ability to pronounce words clearly and particular difficulties were encountered in さい・せい、きらい・きれい えいご・えいが

Paper 3: Reading and Responding

More than 50% candidates obviously read ひらがな、かたかな and the basic 漢字 fluently and are thus able to move reasonably quickly through the first four questions. In Q1, たつきゅう was much confused with the more familiar やきゅう and in Q2 ひじょうぐち and きんえん appeared unfamiliar. Q3 indicated that candidates who learn 漢字 for meaning only (and thus score well in Q4) find a question where they have to know how to pronounce the words more difficult. In addition, it seems that many candidates were unable to understand the simple sentences, (in particular Q3c) and thus were unable to select the correct answer. Having selected an answer, a significant number of candidates failed to copy the word correctly. As Q4 contained more compounds than in the past it seems to have caused difficulties for some candidates. Candidates are now familiar with the format for Q5 but this year's test proved much more challenging with only a few candidates gaining full marks. By contrast the format for Q6 was considerably different from that of past papers. Candidates experienced difficulties with the sums of money involved and some seemed confused by what was meant by 'public transport'. However, many candidates appeared to enjoy the freer style of parts (b) and (c), writing well considered answers which showed they had understood the relevant parts of the texts.

Paper 4: Writing

Most candidates competently answered Q1. Weaker candidates still seem to have difficulty with *かたかな* but readable words were given a mark. Q2 was presented in a new way but most candidates adapted with apparent ease to the altered approach. Some had several attempts at a good answer, and realised perhaps that they were unsure of the verb or the particle; others appreciated that responses like *がすきです。がおおきいです。* would fit equally well. For this exercise short simple sentences giving the information asked for are all that are required and candidates should guard against trying to make their answers too long or complicated, introducing errors of grammar, which may impair communication.

The format for Q3 is now well understood although some candidates are still losing marks by writing outside the box of squares allocated for the answer or forgetting to write the date. One item of information (about New Year presents) required a change of tense which some candidates found difficult to adjust to but most still managed to gain marks for communication.

Candidates were considerably more likely to choose option *ア* rather than *イ* in Q4 and this year only a very few candidates tried to write both essays. A high proportion of candidates were well prepared and wrote good essays using the set *漢字* appropriately and showing knowledge of the various grammatical structures in the syllabus, however, many of these who opted for the second essay tried to make their teacher into a 'friend' so they could describe him/her in the familiar essay pattern they had learnt. Less able candidates stuck to simple sentences but nonetheless managed to show a good vocabulary range particularly in the first choice. Most candidates prefer to write action rather than description and thus may not have communicated sufficient content about their teacher for an answer in the second essay. *一日* was taken by some candidates to mean the first day of school but this did not affect their content marks. It did mean, however, that they were writing often in the wrong tense.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries 1752

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	76	66	56	46	37	28	20	12	0

(NB each paper is worth 25% of the total)

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries 1753

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	72	62	52	42	33	25	17	09	0

(NB each paper is worth 33% of the total)

Paper 1 Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 1 grade boundaries	50	37	31	25	20	16	12	8	4	0

Paper 2 Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 2 grade boundaries	20	17	15	13	11	9	7	6	5	0

Paper 3 Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 3 grade boundaries	50	34	29	24	20	15	11	7	3	0

Paper 4 Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 4 grade boundaries	55	43	37	31	26	21	16	11	6	0

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