

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

## GCSE Japanese (1752/1753)

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## Paper 1 - Listening and Responding

This year's paper contained a mix of formats the majority of which were familiar to candidates, but a greater proportion of marks were awarded for answers written in the target language. In general, candidates coped well and did not appear to be disadvantaged.

Totally accurate Japanese was not expected in these target language answers. Again it was felt that many will need time to become familiar with the x answering method and teachers should encourage them to follow strategies which will prevent duplicate answers in one row and no answers in another row. The candidate's knowledge displayed in their answers appeared similar to that evinced in previous years. The returning to the old format for the sequencing question also seemed clearer to candidates and this was the most successful question on the paper with many otherwise weaker candidates scoring full marks.

Overall the paper followed 'peaks and troughs' of difficulty pattern but with more difficult questions coming at the beginning with some weaker candidates scoring less well at the start and only scoring marks on the later questions, these included questions to be answered in English. Candidates need reminding to listen to the whole conversation before selecting their correct answers.

Although the weather is a common topic the information was not presented in a totally straightforward way and thus questions 1-5 proved difficult for some candidates.

After this 'peak', questions 6-10 deemed more accessible although the word *ばいてん* was obviously unfamiliar to many.

Location is a common topic and although the format of the question was unfamiliar, most candidates realised it was a place setting once they had heard the example, therefore questions 11-15 were thus well answered.

When confronted with spaces to be filled in, such as in questions 16-18 and 24-29, it was felt many candidates did not read the question properly, with many not noticing that some of the answer boxes were already filled in.

*みどり* and *みかん* appeared to be unfamiliar to candidates and in questions 27-29, many candidates had difficulty recognising prices. The number 6, as *むつつ* also caused problems for a high proportion of candidates.

In the final question many candidates fabricated answers based on hearing a single word correctly and did not appear to consider whether the given answer might fit with the context of previous answers.

Once again the word for 'south' seemed to be unfamiliar to many candidates and a surprisingly large number failed to recognise *きょうかい*.



## Paper 2 - Speaking

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 House, Home and Daily Routine 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 awarded for all attempts to speak in 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.

In some instances candidates were given no opportunity to use the past tense and this may adversely have affected their result. 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 and this year there was evidence of candidates being better prepared in this respect. Where candidates can add *とおもいます* and *たいです* their answers are considerably more convincing.

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.

In the new syllabus it will be particularly important that candidates are allowed to make their presentations and teachers need to read the specifications very carefully to ensure that their candidates are not disadvantaged.

As in previous years, 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*.

This year there was also confusion in the general time words such as *きょねん* and *ことし*. Examiner's also found that candidates often had difficulty expressing dates correctly.





## 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. However the vocabulary used in question 1 may have been less familiar and a surprising number of candidates were unaware of the New Year greeting or of the word for 'graduation'.

In question 2 (the best answered question on the paper) a high number of candidates scored full marks. It was recognised that many candidates might confuse the picture meant to be a souvenir shop in question 3 with a picture representing an art gallery given the type of modern exhibition some candidates may have seen; thus both answers were accepted.

The new format for the kanji question 4 was a bonus for those who know roughly what a kanji means. However several candidates failed to realise which kanji had been used as the examples and thus failed to score full marks as they repeated those kanji in their lists.

Teachers need to be aware that kanji questions in the new syllabus will require knowledge not only of meaning but also of pronunciation.

Candidates are now familiar with the format for question 5 but this year's test again, proved much more challenging with only a few candidates gaining full marks.

Many candidates used good strategies such as realising that a final verb should come before a full stop. Common confusions were 中・近く、本・木、車・電車 and 出て・たくさん question 6 was similar to past papers but this gave many candidates carte blanche to guess.

The overall impression of an easier passage perhaps misled some candidates; many appeared unaware of the distinction between the Japanese language and things which come from Japan. Several failed to give two points to gain the 2 marks for (b).



## Paper 4 - Writing

Most candidates competently answered question 1, with weaker candidates still seem to have difficulty with *かたかな*, however, readable words were awarded a mark. Question 2 was presented in a familiar way with full sentences were not expected, therefore most candidates scored well as they provided all the information required.

The format for question 3 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 transport) required a particle addition which some candidates found difficult, but most still managed to gain marks for communication.

Candidates were considerably more likely to choose option *イ* in question 4 and this year only a very few candidates attempted to write both essays. A high proportion of candidates was 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 popular second essay tried to describe their normal day in the familiar essay pattern they had learnt and did not meld this information with going to a concert too well.

Weaker candidates stuck to simple sentences but managed to show a good vocabulary range none the less particularly in the first choice. This first choice produced by far the best answers with imaginative offerings from detailed analysis of the words themselves to children's stories of the 'once upon a time' type.

Many candidates have practised adding large number of 'feelings' to their essays and these they used to effect in their 'concert' essays. Sadly, however, sequencing of tenses was not always sound and many candidates could offer adjectives in the past tense to complement sentences in the present which made their essays confusing to read and impeded comprehension.

## 2009 Statistics

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries 1752

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	75	64	53	42	34	27	20	13	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	60	48	37	30	23	17	11	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	36	29	22	16	13	10	8	6	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	31	26	21	16	13	10	7	4	0

### Paper 4 Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 4 grade boundaries	55	44	38	32	26	21	16	11	6	0



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