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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCSE Japanese 5JA03 01

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Paper 3 (5JA03 01): Reading and Understanding

This unit draws on vocabulary and structures from across the four specified common topic areas. The examination consisted of a number of short texts, notices or short news reports in Japanese with a variety of question types. Candidates were tested on their ability to understand written Japanese through a variety of tasks which require a response, written or non-verbal, to demonstrate their understanding.

In general, candidates coped well with the new syllabus. However, it was felt that many candidates would benefit from familiarising themselves with the 'x' answering method. Teachers should encourage them to follow strategies which will prevent duplicate answers in one row and no answers in another row. When confronted with spaces to be filled in, such as in Q3 and Q9, it was felt that many candidates did not read the questions properly and failed to notice that some of the answer boxes were already filled in. Teachers need to be aware that it is increasingly important for candidates to write their answers fully and clearly as the Mark Scheme is strictly adhered to.

Overall, the paper followed 'peaks and troughs' of difficulty pattern which was spread out throughout the paper. Teachers should remind candidates that more difficult questions do no longer appear towards the end of the paper and easier ones at the beginning. Candidates must be encouraged to attempt to answer all questions throughout the paper.

It was felt that the most candidates had a good knowledge of both hiragana and katakana, and the basic kanji. Therefore, a high number of candidates scored full marks in Q1.

In the new syllabus, candidates are required not only to know the meaning of a kanji but also of the pronunciation. The format for the kanji question, Q2, was a bonus for those who only know roughly how a kanji was pronounced. However, several candidates failed to realise the pattern in hiragana ending and did not take advantage of the clues.

A surprising number of candidates failed to identify numbers in kanji in Q3. Teachers need to make sure candidates are familiar with how the numbers are presented in Japanese, as well as training them to read questions fully before writing their answers.

Many candidates coped well with Q4, Q5 and Q6, and a high number of candidates scored full marks. For Q5, candidates should be reminded to write their answers clearly.

Q7 was testing candidates' ability to understand the meaning of kanji. It was evident words such as 地図 and 水 were obviously unfamiliar to many.

Many candidates struggled in the grammar section, Q8. Teachers should encourage them to follow strategies such as realising that a final verb should come before a full stop. Candidates should also pay attention to various tenses. Common confusions were 小さな and つよい, に and と, です and でした, and いました and ありました.

In the final question, many candidates coped well in the earlier sections. However, some failed to understand the context of the passage and perhaps misunderstood who 'you' was in (e). Similarly, some candidates failed to understand that brother's sleeping arrangement was not affected. Teachers must find strategies to improve students' comprehension skills as such question may be found in future papers. Despite the clear layout, some candidates did not give two points to gain the 2 marks in sections (a) to (d).

Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw mark boundary	50	41	36	31	26	21	16	11	6	0
Uniform mark scale boundary	70	63	56	49	42	35	28	21	14	0

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