Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2021

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Japanese (1JA0)
Paper 4H: Writing in Japanese
Higher Tier

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Despite difficulties that students might have had in preparing for the November 2021 exam season, the majority of candidates for this Writing exam had prepared well and were able to come up with at least one idea for each bullet point of the writing tasks, as well as deal efficiently with the translation.

Task 1

The shorter task set was to write about either (a) 'Birthday celebrations' or (b) 'Learning outside the classroom'. Whilst task (a) may have seemed more approachable, it was in fact those who chose task (b) who on average gained higher marks. It is, of course, possible to gain full marks on either task, but for the second bullet point (in both tasks) candidates tended to write in greater detail for task (b). In (a) some simply wrote, for example, that they got a mobile phone, whereas for task (b) they were more likely to say where they went, who they went with, what it was like, etc, thus providing 'some effective language to interest', as well as giving a variety of expression. It was good to see that for both tasks, candidates had been well prepared to use the ～たい form to respond to the 'future' point. The majority of candidates answered all four points, even if only to say (for bullet point 3) 'I prefer celebrating with family' or 'school trips abroad are good'. One small but common error in task (a) was to add お to たんじょうび, even when talking about one's own birthday.

Task 2

For the longer task, candidates had to choose to write about either (a) 'Life after school' or (b)'Being green'. Interestingly, once again, although most chose the seemingly 'easier' topic (a), it was those who opted for the environment question that gained more consistently higher marks. It was probably the case that candidates who chose (b) had prepared well, having already written something on this particular theme, and thus were able to produce the specific vocabulary needed to discuss the bullet points, particularly the more challenging bullet point 4. It should be said that most candidates who tackled task (b) used the relatively 'easy' problem of litter in the local environment. It is not necessary for students to know a lot of technical vocabulary to be able to respond to a task like this.

When preparing to answer the longer task, candidates should be aware that the bullet points will give them an opportunity to use all three time frames (past/present/future), as required by the mark scheme. Equally, examples of each (at least, as clear as they can be in Japanese) have to be included in order to access top marks for linguistic knowledge. Whilst the future was always clearly shown in answer to both tasks, it was a common feature of responses to task (a) that candidates answered the bullet point which clearly signals the need for a past tense ('what you have already done') more in terms of 'what I am doing now'. From a content point of view, this is, of course, perfectly valid, but teachers should stress the need to include structures which are very clearly using a past tense.

Task 3

From the average mark of 9 gained on this task, it is clear that candidates were generally well able to deal with the more challenging elements of vocabulary and grammar within the translation. The past tenses in the second sentence (見たかったです、よくなかったです) were usually correct, as were those in the third. The only grammar pattern which commonly caused problems was 'we should go' in the final sentence.

As far as vocabulary is concerned, 'last year' was often not known, but inventive attempts were made to deal with it: 先年、前年. What was more worrying was the use of katakana to write 'Hokkaido' and 'Okinawa'; whilst the use of kanji is welcomed, but not obligatory, in this task, there is an expectation that candidates are aware of which writing 'system' is appropriate.