

Japanese (continuers)

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

JAPANESE (CONTINUERS)

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

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

All folios presented for moderation included from three to five tasks with at least one interaction, text production and text analysis as indicated in the subject outline.

Interaction

Common topics included School Life, Future Plans, and Family, where students responded to a set of questions on one or more topics. Students are encouraged to practice with a set of questions but not to rely on memorised responses. Better interactions were those that included a variety of questions on the topics that had not been memorised. This resulted in a more spontaneous conversation and students were able to demonstrate an A level in specific feature E3 *Capacity to interact and maintain a conversation and discussion*, as responses were more spontaneous, and conversation initiated.

Most students adhered to the time limit of five to seven minutes for Interactions. Teachers are reminded that any interaction beyond the seven minutes cannot be assessed or considered at moderation.

Text Production

Common topics included Travel to Japan, Homestay Experiences and Job Applications, with common text types being letters and speech scripts.

The design of tasks should specify a context, purpose and audience.

The majority of students presented a creative text on a given topic. Some tasks however, required students to respond to a stimulus text. Teachers are advised to carefully consider their design of these tasks so that students' responses avoid duplication of information and expressions used in the stimulus text. A copy of the stimulus text is useful to be included in the package sent in for moderation.

It was noted that most tasks enabled students to achieve high levels in the Ideas and Expression assessment design criteria.

Text productions varied in length, and although there is no word limit in Assessment Type 1: Folio, most schools set character counts between 600-800 characters. It was noted that text productions that were less than 400 characters often lacked in I2 *Depth of Treatment of Ideas, Information, or Opinions*.

Text Analysis

A good range of topics were covered, and material from the clarifying forum was also used by some schools. Reading and responding tasks were predominant with less than 20% of schools choosing to use spoken texts.

The text analysis task design should allow students to provide evidence of their learning in relation to the assessment design criterion Interpretation and Reflection. However, some of the tasks presented for moderation simply required students to extract information from the texts, which did not allow them to show their ability in language analysis, or achieve at the highest level. The text analysis task is an appropriate place to include questions related to linguistic features to give students the opportunity to address IR2.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Common topics this year included Anime, Japanese Food, Harajuku Fashion, and Japanese Schools. The choice of topics for the in-depth study must come from the prescribed themes of 'The Japanese-speaking Communities' and 'The Changing World'. There should be opportunities for the students to research and reflect upon aspects of Japanese culture, values, practices and beliefs.

There are three tasks required for this assessment type: an oral presentation in Japanese, a written response in Japanese; and a reflective response in English. The three assessment tasks must differ in context audience and purpose. All of the assessment design criteria must be addressed over the three tasks.

Oral Presentation in Japanese

Most schools adhered to the time length of three to five minutes as specified in the subject outline. It must be noted that this is the time limit for the presentation. It does not include a discussion about the topic as that takes place as part of the oral examination at the end of the year.

The best presentations were those where the students were very familiar with their topics and did not just read from a script. It was apparent that these students had a good understanding of their topic and the content of their presentation and were thus able to achieve high levels in expression due to excellent intonation, fluency and pronunciation.

Written Response to the Topic in Japanese

The majority of students adhered to the character limit of 600 characters. Responses that were well under this limit were sometimes lacking in depth of treatment.

The response for the written tasks cannot be the same as the response for the oral task. Some information/examples/ideas may be appropriate for both tasks but the responses must be different. Some students presented a written piece which was almost identical to their oral presentation.

Using a different text type for these two tasks (e.g. an informative speech for the oral presentation and a personal piece for the written response) proved very effective in helping students to ensure that the tasks differed in context, audience and purpose. For example, a good task design for the written response in Japanese was a diary, allowing for personal writing, and therefore differing in language and structure to the oral presentation.

Reflective Response in English

The limit of 600 words was generally adhered to. A few schools chose to do an oral presentation and the students were able to reflect on their chosen topic for five to seven minutes. This gave students the opportunity to develop ideas. It was noted, however, that in some cases students who chose this option tended to use a content approach, rather than reflection.

There was some improvement in the reflective response in English this year. However, some students still used a content approach to this task rather than reflection. This meant that there were limited opportunities to demonstrate learning for IR3.

Many students were able to reflect on their own learning journey and the best responses also provided reflection on and comparison between their own cultures, values, beliefs, ideas and practices and those represented in the texts.

Operational Advice

In most cases learning and assessment plans were provided, including the addendum where necessary.

The majority of schools packaged materials separately for each student, and not by task, as required. Separating the two assessment types (folio and in-depth study) is also expected.

Schools should ensure that CD's with all oral tasks that are in an accessible and audible format are included in the package.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

General Comments

178 students presented themselves for the Japanese (continuers) oral examination this year. For the conversation, approximately 30% of the candidates achieved an A grade, while 9% received D+ or lower. As has been the case in past years, students' marks were more heavily distributed towards the lower end in the discussion section. This year 27% achieved A- or higher, while 18% received D+ or lower in the discussion.

Section 1: Conversation

Overall, students performed very well in the conversation section. Most students comprehended all or most of the examiners' questions, and many provided appropriate answers with a good degree of confidence and fluency. Less successful students, however, were unable to go beyond short or minimum responses. Capable students were able to

move comfortably beyond prepared answers and spontaneously elaborated on their initial responses by giving reasons, opinions and impressions.

Ideas (Relevance)

Although students' comprehension of questions proved good, there was one main problem that has been pointed out by examiners repeatedly every year – students being over-rehearsed or 'taking over' the conversation. Examiners commented that some students kept on with prepared sentences, adding things which were not necessarily relevant to the question asked. Some students interrupted the examiner and directed the conversation by presenting rehearsed information before questions were asked. It was also evident this year again that some students responded only to a familiar key word in the question and jumped into a prepared but irrelevant answer. Although it is often in students' interest to try to maintain conversation, learning detailed information by heart and presenting it as a 'speech' is strongly discouraged.

Students should be encouraged and taught to develop good communication/interaction skills to be successful in the conversation section. Some suggestions include:

- Listen carefully right to the end of a question, paying particular attention to tense (remember the meaning of a Japanese utterance is typically determined in the end of the sentence);
- Avoid presenting an extended speech;
- Pause and give the examiners to take part and ask follow-up questions;
- Learn to use 'fillers' and あいづち effectively in order to maintain the natural flow of conversation;
- 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.

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

Depth of ideas should be observed in the interaction (conversation) between a student and examiners and not in the student's rehearsed speech. 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 summer holiday plans, students might include reference to visiting their grandparents, a part-time job and so on. So the examiners can then ask about their extended family (grandparents) or their job saying for instance, 'Oh, do you often visit them?', 'What do you do with them?', 'Do you already have a part-time job?', 'How would you like to use the money you will get?'

Again, it is not about presenting well-rehearsed extended answers that matters. It is about how deeply students can get into and develop their interaction with the examiners.

Expression (Capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately)

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, です/ます and particles.

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 and どうして. 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). It was pleasing to see that some students comfortably used a variety of verb forms (e.g. ~たことがあります、～つもりです、～たいと思います、～からです), which in previous years had been reported as difficult for students to deal with.

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。今朝...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?

Expression (Coherence in structure and sequence)

Weaker answers were typically short – usually in one sentence with a single piece of information, hence there was 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. Strong students effectively added extra information and opinions to support their statements without overtalking and overtaking the conversation.

Effective use of あいづち should be encouraged for better and coherent interaction. When used appropriately, あいづち can be a very useful linguistic device to show that a student understands the examiner's questions and is genuinely engaged in the conversation.

Although many students used あいづち to some extent, most of them relied on one simple expression such as はい or ああ. Only very strong students were able to use a wider range of あいづち expressions including ああ、そうですね、～ですか (confirming the question, seeking clarification)、ああ、わかりました、それはそうですが and so forth.

Expression (Capacity to interact and maintain a conversation)

Examiners commented that most students this year were able to comprehend questions well and that even weaker students were able to give reasonably relevant answers. Most students knew at least one expression to seek help when needed. Stronger students used a variety of verbal communication strategies during the conversation, e.g. あいづち fillers,

thanking to the examiners when receiving help, responding to correction, as well as using the silence (pauses) appropriately. On the other hand, not much interaction happened with some students as they tended to stick to their minimal responses, and seemed reluctant to go beyond the prepared answers.

Section 2: Discussion

There was quite a range in students' ability to cope with the discussion. Compared to the conversation, students in general were less able to cope linguistically with the discussion on their in-depth study topics. Strong students, however, were well prepared and spoke very well on demanding topics. It was evident this year again that many students relied too heavily on memorised answers to be able to discuss beyond what had been rehearsed. Some students could say nothing at all except what they had learnt by rote.

The choice of topic is crucial to a successful performance in the discussion section. Teachers should ensure that their students' topics are manageable, interesting and sufficiently challenging to discuss in the final examination. While it was pleasing to see many students passionately talk about the topic of their own choice and interest, it was quite obvious when students had not chosen the topic themselves because they tended to lack the interest and ability to comment independently with opinion. Examiners commented that some topics were too broad (e.g. festivals in Japan, Japanese schools) to allow students to go into depth in discussion or demonstrate their research. Also noted was that some students had chosen topics that were too difficult for them to comfortably discuss in Japanese and hence recited memorised sentences from books and the Internet sites without understanding what they were saying.

Also extremely important is how the main points are presented on the in-depth study outline form. The dot points should provide information to enable examiners outside the school to readily understand the focus of the study and facilitate the discussion effectively. Also, the dot points should sufficiently cover the overall topic of one's in-depth study. Some students' topics were very general (e.g. Japanese festivals, Japanese transport, Japanese food) but the actual research was done only on one example of the whole topic (e.g. *Tanabata*, *Shinkansen*, *Osechi-ryori* respectively). Teachers are encouraged to supervise and give guidance on how students present their dot points on the outline form well before the examination.

Some students brought in support objects such as photographs from the Internet and fluffy toys or plastic figures of anime characters. Mostly they did not add depth to the student's discussion. 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 and teachers are reminded this year again that the one-minute introduction speech is only optional and not assessed. If students have decided to give an introduction of their in-depth study, they should do so in as short a time as possible so that they can use relevant information and expressions in response to questions, thus maximising the opportunities to actually engage in the discussion, which is assessed.

Also, students should not give a long ‘speech’ when asked to explain what they have learned about a dot point. They should say a few relevant things which would then lead in to natural discussion.

Ideas (Depth of ideas, information or opinions)

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

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 (Capacity to convey information accurately and appropriately)

Expression (Coherence in structure and sequence)

Grammatical accuracy and range of expressions were generally very good in rehearsed parts of answers, but there was little flexibility when less-predictable questions were asked and students had to change the sentences they had memorised. This year again many students showed lack of language skills to deal with questions relating to Interpretation (IR1) and Reflection (IR3). Suggestions and guidance are included below.

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

- how insightfully and clearly a student interprets and explains the content and context of the texts he/she used for the in-depth study; and
- how effectively a student gives evidence or example/s from the texts to support his/her 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).

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 his/her own values, beliefs, practices and ideas in relation to those expressed in the texts; and
- from his/her 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、習慣、価値観など)について何を学びましたか。
- In-depth study の研究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(経験)はどうでしたか。
- どのくらい研究しましたか。研究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.

Expression (Capacity to interact and maintain a discussion)

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

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

Written Examination

General Comments

Students' marks were spread over a wide range. Overall there was evidence of the students' sound knowledge and understanding of basic Japanese language in the SACE Continuers level.

As in previous years, students in general answered better in the text-production type questions (e.g. Section 3 Reading and Responding Part B, and Section 4 Writing) than in the text-analysis type questions (Section 1 Listening and Section 2 Reading and Responding Part A). Many students seemed to be able to understand the general meaning of given texts whether spoken or written, but lacked precise focus on and understanding of the words and wordings in the texts. To be able to comprehend and analyse unfamiliar texts within a restricted time frame, it is absolutely necessary that students have learned (i.e. memorised) a good set of basic vocabulary relevant to the theme and topics appearing in the subject outline. Use of dictionaries should be minimal during the examination.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

In general there was a good understanding of the texts and the questions and tasks posed. Students were adequately able to identify and analyse information in a general sense but lacked an ability to pick up finer and deeper details of the texts. Some very basic features such as days and times were often misunderstood. In preparation for the listening section of

the examination, students should develop a good understanding of basic vocabulary and should be trained to pay careful attention to details in texts. Full understanding of the questions and tasks is also essential. In more open questions, it is very rare that students are asked to simply provide plain translation of a text. They should be prepared to give more interpretive and/or analytical answers that demonstrate a deeper understanding of the text. It is also recommended that in the classroom students be exposed to a wide range of aural text types including poems, songs and stories.

Question 1

Question 1 was the simplest and hence best answered of all the questions in this examination. Majority of students answered successfully. 80% achieved full marks for this question.

Question 2

This was another basic question and treated fairly well by many students. Most students understood the dog was missing and the female speaker was asking for help, but many missed the fact that she (the caller) was contacting a radio station. Finer details such as the colour of the dog and the contact phone number were often incorrectly picked up.

Question 3

Surprisingly this text of TV/radio announcement proved to be one of the most difficult questions. Despite the simplicity in words and content of the text, there was confusion about details of information such as times and forms of transport, and their availability and unavailability.

3(a) Many students understood the purpose of the text and were correctly able to identify that planes had been cancelled due to a typhoon, but many neglected to mention the *Shinkansen* had also been cancelled. Some students mistakenly thought the typhoon was in Hiroshima.

3(b) There was an interesting but incorrect approach to this question. Some students gave an opinionative response, mentioning that they would take a train or bus as it was safer during the typhoon. For this question, answer should be purely based on the information in the text provided. Only 12% achieved full marks.

Question 4

For the majority of students this was another difficult question. The text was the longest of the 5 listening questions, and the questions required students to choose and re-organise relevant information from the text. Less than 10% of students achieved full marks here and the overall marks were more heavily distributed towards the lower end.

4(a) Most students showed their understanding that Sarah had presented her speech well as she had practised with her teacher before. The main difference between weaker and stronger responses was in the depth of explanation of Sarah's speech experience. Stronger students included the fact that Sarah received unexpectedly many and various questions about Australia (e.g. geography, history, the outback and Indigenous people's life) from the audience and regretted that she was not prepared enough to be able to answer those questions.

4(b) There was a full range of levels of response to this question. The strongest answers showed a comprehensive understanding of how Sarah's friendship with her room-mates had

developed, while weaker answers identified relevant information only partially. Many students stated that Sarah and her room-mates became good friends, but neglected to state that she found it difficult at first, as the room-mates all had different customs, tastes of foods and so on. Many also misunderstood the word えいが (movie) to be 英語 (the English language) and went on to talk about English conversation between the room-mates. The weekend trip to Kyoto was often missed out. Strong answers covered a whole range of relevant information including the fact that the friendships still continues as Sarah chats with them online and is hoping to visit her friends when she graduates from high school.

Question 5

There were a pleasing number of successful answers to this question with 46% of students achieving full marks.

5(a) The only multiple-choice question in this examination and generally very well done.

5(b) This is purely a ‘language’ question, which asks students to demonstrate their understanding of Japanese phonology and its writing system. Many students successfully identified and provided an appropriate Japanese word for the game to continue. However, some students missed the last word said by the player or did not understand the rules of the game or the rules of Japanese phonology.

Section 2: Reading and Responding Part A

This section clearly discriminated the students’ levels. Those who successfully read the texts and understood the details expressed their understanding clearly and concisely, while those who understood the texts only partially gave vague or incorrect answers based on their guess or personal knowledge. Overall, students demonstrated general understanding of the texts, but many did not show comprehensive understanding of details in the text.

In preparation for the Reading and Responding section, teachers are encouraged to incorporate a wide range of language texts from various sources so that students can become familiar with texts of different styles, topics and purposes, and of different linguistic difficulty or complexity. Answer techniques (e.g. including all relevant information and supporting an answer with relevant information from the text) should also be understood by students.

Question 6

The score distribution was quite polarised for Question 6. Approximately 25% of students achieved full marks, while 45% gained the score of 3 or less out of 7. The mean score was 4.2/7.

The question requires comprehensive and logical interpretation of the text. All the information provided in the text (i.e. the table of data and the interviewer’s notes) is relevant and necessary to reach logical conclusions.

6(a) Although almost all students were able to deduce that Yumi was Student C because of sport/swimming connection, many students incorrectly identified the other 3. Many confused Kenji and Mika. The conclusion must be supported by explanation to be awarded marks.

6(b) Most students answered this question correctly.

6(c) Many students understood the question well and were able to give relevant and appropriate advice to Taku. Stronger students displayed comprehensive understanding of Taku's study and leisure habits, and included details from the texts. Less successful answers were rather opinionative and irrelevant to the text in question.

Question 7

The score distribution was broad. Approximately 16% achieved the score of 7/8 or 8/8, while the same proportion of students gained 1/8 or no marks. The scores in between were almost equally distributed. The mean score was 3.9/8.

7(a) Most students well understood the Japanese sentence in the question (米は日本人にとってとくべつな食べ物です) and referred to the Japan's long history of rice culture. Stronger answers contained specific facts from the text (e.g. 3000 years). Many students, however, missed to refer to the Japanese people's spiritual connection with rice and rice growing (e.g. traditional events, festivals, praying for good harvests).

7(b) This was a difficult question to obtain full marks. Successful responses should provide a comprehensive understanding and comparison of both authors' views about imported rice. Many students were able to determine that Author A had a negative attitude towards imported rice and that Author B was the opposite. But only some students could support their arguments with sufficient details from the text. Many missed to pick up the fact that imported rice is still hard to purchase due to it being consumed mainly by factories to make sake and sweets.

7(c) Strong responses identified the common observation shared by both authors, and gave sufficient supporting information from the text. Many students' responses, however, lacked accuracy in interpretation, and there were many instances of short, insufficient and unsubstantiated responses. Overall more careful attention to the text's linguistic details was needed.

Section 2: Reading and Responding Part B

Question 8

The stimulus text this year was of a comparable degree of difficulty to recent previous years, and most students seemed to sufficiently understand the context and the content. Students' linguistic skills in writing varied. Students must adhere to the word limit, as the task is designed for students to be able to provide a successful answer within the word limit. In Reading and Responding Part B, providing a relevant response to the stimulus text is more important than exploring the depth of ideas.

Ideas (Relevance)

While stronger students understood the context, purpose and audience (i.e. the recipient of the email), less successful students misunderstood the stimulus text in one way or another. Common misunderstandings which led to irrelevant content in the response are:

- thought Kim (not Kazu) was in trouble/homesick/lonely
- thought Kazu or Kim was coming to Australia in two months
- thought Kim was writing from Japan
- thought the camp was in the past
- did not show that Kazu had been absent from school for some time.

Although most students wrote about some relevant things, many at best wrote about someone's host family, something about food, and/or something about a camp. The strongest students were able to pick up the most relevant points from the stimulus text, and managed to give an appropriate response in the appropriate length.

Some stronger students who showed good reading comprehension skills and grammatical skills, however, needed to be more careful with length of their texts (word limit) and not to digress with creative (but less relevant) ideas.

Successful responses included Kazu's appreciation of Kim's worry, by explaining how he had been and thanking Kim for his/her concern (e.g. しんぱいしてくれてありがとう。ぼくはもう元気になった。)

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

Successful students demonstrated thorough understanding of the stimulus text and gave clear, relevant and thoughtful response, which were often well elaborated and supported with reasons. Stronger students were able to 're-work' the stimulus text effectively, combining information and expressions to create one's ideas and sentences. They did not just copy and paste ideas and expressions from the original text.

Expression (Capability to convey information accurately and appropriately)

There were a number of strong students who demonstrated very good accuracy and manipulation of a wide range of relevant grammatical structures. They were able to relate very effectively what they wanted/needed to convey. Weaker responses attempted to convey their messages but lacked the linguistic skills to do so. Many could not say to Kim, 'Please don't worry' (for example, incorrectly using しんぱいしなさい、しんぱくない、しんぱいしなくてください). Other unsuccessful examples include, sentences were structured based on English word order, use of tense and particles were inaccurate so meaning was significantly impeded/confused, or there were frequent errors in most basic spelling, grammar and kanji.

Common errors were:

- verb and adjective conjugation (especially in the past tense, as well as when to use the past tense)
- use of particles
- use of から/ので (appearing the wrong way around)
- use of だ (appearing in every sentence/phrase ending e.g. いいだ、おもしろいだ、行きたいだ)
- use of 行く and 来る (when to use which)
- basic spelling errors (often one letter missing)
- katakana words spelling
- kanji in the syllabus
- untidy writing, sometime indecipherable.

Expression (Coherence in structure and sequence)

Most responses were reasonably well structured and sequenced.

Use of linguistic cohesive devices such as conjunctions and words such as そちら、ここ was often absent or problematic. Students are encouraged to incorporate these expressions so they writing efficiently and effectively.

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 legibly 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’. There are many different ways to say, for example, why you have not been at school.

Section 3: Writing in Japanese

Overall this section was answered well. Question 10 was more popular being chosen by 60% of students but proved more difficult for students to achieve higher marks. Only 18% achieved an A grade score. Fewer students chose Question 9, but in general they achieved slightly higher marks with 26% achieving an A grade score and few falling below the score of 15 out of 30. Two main things contributing to lowering the overall score in Question 10 were 1) many of the Question 10 responses were lacking the focus on a ‘health-related incident’ (Relevance) and 2) many students did not demonstrate adequate linguistic knowledge and skills to describe a health-related incident (Expression).

It was also evident that some students’ answers (both Question 9 and Question 10) went over the appropriate length. The word limit of 350-400ji should be observed.

Ideas (Relevance and depth of treatment)

Question 9: Most responses were sufficiently relevant to the question. Successful responses were very fascinating essays vividly describing memories of their first Japanese language lesson. Stronger answers often included a memorable event or incident experienced in the first lesson and even displayed their good sense of humour. Many less successful answers were still relevant to the task, but were often rather monotonous descriptions of ‘normal’ Japanese lessons lacking excitement and/or ‘specialness’ that one could experience in the very first Japanese lesson.

In most responses, the writer’s emotions and feelings were not treated in depth. Many at best managed to include a simple phrase such as たのしかった. Only the strongest responses were able to effectively convey the excitement or nervousness of the first lesson. Also very few wrote about how they have developed Japanese language skills since then.

Question 10: This question allowed students relatively more freedom in deciding what to write about. Some students’ responses were of outstanding quality reflecting their sense of humour and creativity. Many of the less successful responses consisted merely of a recount of their travel experience and were lacking the focus on a health-related incident.

Successful answers provided detailed information and description of the writer’s experience (e.g. where you went and where you are now; how the incident occurred and how it impacted on your travel, what you did and/or are going to do). More limited answers misunderstood the question and wrote about, for example, travelling around Japan, home-

stay experience in Australia, health issues in some overseas country. Writer's feelings and emotions tended to be treated too briefly.

Expression (Capability to convey information accurately and appropriately)

Question 9 and Question 10: Although none of the responses were completely error-free, the most capable students demonstrated an excellent knowledge of grammatical structures and a wide range of vocabulary and kanji, correct tenses, and used a number of connectives to join phrases and clauses. Many other students tended to rely heavily on familiar structures that had probably been mastered in the earlier years of their language study and did not include the full range of expressions and structures available to students from language study at senior secondary level.

Particularly to be noted this year was students' weakness in basic vocabulary and grammar in the areas of health and sickness, and emotions and feelings. Many students' expressions of feelings and emotions were typically limited to the simplest adjectives (e.g. いい、たのしい、つまらない). When it comes to health and sickness, many students did not seem to have enough knowledge of necessary vocabulary and grammar.

Expressions in students' responses were often incorrect, ungrammatical or inappropriate in these areas of topics, as students resorted to the direct translation from English (or their first language), picked up words from dictionaries and put into their answer in a careless manner.

Basic linguistic errors were noticeable in this section again. Common errors included:

- confusion of tense in common verbs and copula (-です/-でした)
- inappropriate use of particles
- spelling of Katakana words, including 'オーストラリア'
- connecting expressions (use of conjunctions, verb/adjective conjugation).

Here again students are asked to take more care with their handwriting. Markers commented that they had difficulty reading some answers because of illegible handwriting. For example, い、り、と、て、う、ら、つ、ぬ、ね were commonly written incorrectly or in a style that is very hard to read. Some errors in script tend to be long-term errors that could have been corrected early in a student's study of Japanese.

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

This was an aspect of the task that was generally well done. Most students, except for a few who misunderstood the text type to produce, were able to organise their response well, using paragraphs appropriately and attempting an introduction and a conclusion. However, it is strongly recommended that students use more lexical devices such as conjunctions to create a text of better and more coherent structure and sequence.

Japanese (continuers)
Chief Assessor