

2019 VCE Japanese First Language written examination report

General comments

Based on an assessment of the 2019 VCE Japanese First Language examination, the following comments and suggestions are offered to assist teachers and students.

Most students were able to complete all sections of the 2019 written examination. However, many minor errors were made, particularly in the use of punctuation, in the writing of *kanji* characters, and in the use of *okurigana* suffixes (i.e. *kana* characters accompanying *kanji* to show grammatical functions of a word, which are often used for showing verb and adjective conjugations).

***Kanji* character writing**

Students must be able to write Japanese characters accurately, particularly *kanji* characters, but also character scripts in *hiragana* and *katakana*. This is a skill that can only be mastered with practice.

The following are some common mistakes made using *kanji* characters.

Intended English meaning	Correct <i>kanji</i>	Incorrect <i>kanji</i>
suppress	抑える	収える
spirit	精神	精心
poverty	貧困	貧因
level, degree	程度	定度
lend	貸す	借す
eating alone	孤食	狐食
examine, investigate	検討	検村・見当
sit down, take a seat	着席	差席
tool	道具	導具
activity, action	活躍	活役

Identifying key words

High-scoring responses identified key words in the questions and used them as a base on which to build relevant, logical, and appropriately structured and sequenced sentences, with accurately written characters.

Some students seemed to have difficulty managing their time and completing their answers. Lower-scoring responses tended not to be built around key words in the texts, were less focused, were not logically presented in carefully sequenced sentences, and often were not appropriately punctuated or paragraphed.

Genkooyooshi

The use of *genkooyooshi*, or manuscript paper, is particularly useful for practising Japanese punctuation and spacing when writing Japanese. Students are encouraged to use this paper.

Text type

Students should understand the need to use appropriate text types when responding to questions in Section 2 (reading) and Section 3 (writing). For example, when a question calls for writing a journal entry, a speech script, a letter addressed to a friend, an essay or a story, the response must demonstrate the characteristics of the text type and include all relevant information.

Writing in appropriate text types is a necessary skill that is refined with experience and practice, under the teacher's guidance.

Specific comments

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Section 1 required students to listen to Text 1. The questions about the spoken text were designed to test the capacity of students to understand general and specific aspects of the text and to convey information accurately and appropriately in their written responses in Japanese.

Most students were able to answer all questions in the section. Higher-scoring responses identified key information/words, which facilitated an accurate and well-formed response. Lower-scoring responses did not always identify key information, particularly in Question 1e., and tended to be less accurate and less focused.

Question 1a.

障害の種類や程度、運動機能などにより、14のクラスに分かれて競う・分かれている・分けられている。(Based on the type and degree of abilities and functional disabilities, athletes are classified into 14 different classes.)

Question 1b.

- 左腕の力を抑えたり、脚に角度をつけたりしている。(Restrain the force of her left arm and change the angle of her legs.)
- そうすると、真っ直ぐ泳げる。or 体の左右のバランスが取れる or 最短距離で泳げる。(So that she can swim straight, or the right and left sides of her body are well balanced, or she can swim the shortest distance.)

Question 1c.

- タイムが落ちていった。(タイムが悪化した) (Her time got worse and worse.)
- コーチに言われた通り泳げなくなって、怒られた。(She was told off by her coach because she could not swim in the way he wanted.)
- マニュアル通りに泳ごう(しよう)としていたから。(Because she tried to swim as in the manual/follow the manual.)
- 他の選手と同じように泳ごうとしていたから。(Because she tried to swim like others.)

Question 1d.

- 残されたものを最大限にいかす。(Make the most of what you have left.)
- 今ある片脚(左脚)と両腕(二本の腕)をどう有効的に使って自分独自のフォームを創り出す(生み出す、考え出す、作る)こと。(Use the existing one leg/left leg and two arms effectively, to create/produce your own original style.)

Question 1e.

- 一つのクラスの中にも、欠損箇所や麻痺の部分がそれぞれ違う選手がたくさんいる。(One class can have swimmers with different missing or paralysed body parts.)
- 色々な泳ぎ方をする人がいる。(There is a variety of impaired swimmers.)
- オリンピックの水泳とルールがほとんど同じ(The rules of Paralympic swimming are almost the same as those of Olympic swimming.)
- 体を補助する義肢も道具も使わない(Use no prostheses or devices that assist his/her body.)
- 一方で、オリンピック選手とタイムを競える選手もいる(Some para-swimmers are very capable of competing against Olympic swimmers in terms of time.)

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Section 2 required students to read Texts 2 and 3 and then answer Question 2. The question was designed to test the capacity of students to identify and synthesise information, write their responses accurately, present information in a structured and sequenced way, and use appropriate language and vocabulary, grammar, script and punctuation.

Question 2

The five key areas that students needed to identify in the two texts are summarised below, with an English translation.

- 子ども食堂の立ち上げを呼びかける案内について
 - 呼びかけ人のプロフィールに触れている
 - 会場の条件について触れている

(Information about starting a children's dining room: profile of the people who plan to start the dining room, desired conditions of the venue)

- 子ども食堂の説明、概要
 - 子ども食堂の(発祥から)これまでの経緯や規模について。2012年に東京で始まり急速に拡大した。
 - 背景には子どもの貧困や孤食
 - 子ども食堂とは何か「子どもが一人でも安心して来られる無料または低額の食堂」

(Explanation/outline/summary of the children's dining room: background and history from 2012 of the dining room; poverty of children, and orphaned children eating meals alone; definition of children's dining room, safe place for children)

- 子ども食堂の問題点
 - 人員の確保が難しい
 - 定期開催が難しい（突然に閉店する）
 - 開催宣伝が行きわたらないことがある
 - 会場が適切でないことがある

(Problems of children's dining room: difficulty to secure personnel, difficulty of regular hours, insufficient publicity, venues not always appropriate)

- 子ども食堂のあるべき姿についての提案
 - 来ている子どもを「来て欲しい子ども」と考える
 - 食堂という概念にとらわれず（本当に食事が必要な子どもがどうかにとらわれず）、放課後や休日に子どもが安心して過ごせる家庭以外の居場所と考える

(Suggestions for the ideal children's dining room: ensure that the child who comes is a child who is welcome; make it a place where any child can come after school hours and/or holidays/weekends, whether or not the child needs a meal)

- これからの課題
 - （民間の自発的活動で急激に増えた食堂なので）子どもの安全に関する法整備が急がれる

(Future issues: regulations about child safety need to be implemented urgently due to increased involvement of the voluntary private sector)

The points were included in the responses by most students, although the content for each of the points was often not sufficient for an adequate discussion. Higher-scoring responses identified and synthesised the key points, used the correct text type format, and sequenced them in a logical and appropriate manner.

Most students found the final point difficult. They were generally not able to identify the relevant key issue and were, therefore, not able to properly respond.

Lower-scoring responses did not identify key issues in the text and their explanations were not always relevant, clear or succinct. Some did not take into consideration the audience for their writing and consequently used an inappropriately informal writing style, such as *なんですよ* when emailing the owner of the coffee shop.

Section 3 – Writing in Japanese

Section 3 required students to write a response to one of five questions. The questions assessed students' capacity to write with appropriate relevance, breadth and depth, to structure and sequence their ideas appropriately, and to use appropriate vocabulary, script, punctuation and grammar.

Question 3 required students to write an essay for a local newsletter after evaluating the positive and negative aspects of the situation set out in the question.

Question 4 required students to write a speech script about the benefits and disadvantages of increasing foreign workers in Japan. This was the most frequently chosen question.

Question 5 required students to write an article for the readers' column of a newspaper about the introduction of a compulsory subject (programming) in the primary school curriculum in Japan. Students needed to evaluate the benefits and disadvantages of introducing the compulsory subject.

Question 6 required students to write an imaginative journal entry describing their own performance at an interview for a sought-after employment position.

Question 7 required students to write an imaginative story for a high school short story writing competition, beginning with a scene to do with finding a key and including mysterious events. This was the second most frequently chosen question.

Responses that demonstrated inaccurate characters were awarded lower marks. Responses that did not adequately address the key concepts in the task, and responses that did not demonstrate the characteristics of the required text type, were also awarded lower marks.

Some students failed to respond to the questions with adequate breadth and depth. For example, where students were required to identify and discuss the benefits and disadvantages of a given scenario, many did not adequately encompass all of the issues, or else they discussed in detail only one side of the position and left the opposing view either not discussed or underdeveloped.