

2020 VCE Japanese First Language written examination report

General comments

Most students were able to complete all sections of the written examination. However, there were some areas where many students could have improved their responses to the questions. The general comments below about the writing of Japanese characters and using punctuation, conjunctions and *genkooyooshi* paper are offered to assist students sitting for the examination in future years.

Japanese language characters

Students sitting for the Japanese written examination must be thoroughly familiar with *jooyoo kanji* (recognition) and *kyoouiku kanji* (production). This requirement is stated in the study design. Not all students were as familiar with this list as is required to excel in the examination.

Many students were also not as attentive in the writing of the *kanji* characters as they should be. For example, in the listening section of the examination, several students inaccurately produced the *kanji* character 競 in their answers, even though that character was used in the written question. Such mistakes are easily avoided if due care is taken and students have adequately practised examination techniques.

The inaccurate rendition of other *kanji* characters included the following: 希待→期待, 無験→無駄, 精身→精神, 指適→指摘, 講入→購入.

Students are permitted to have a hard copy Japanese dictionary with them and consult it in the examination. They are encouraged to use the dictionary when they are unsure about the rendition of specific Japanese characters, including *kanji*, *hiragana* and *katakana*.

Punctuation

Japanese punctuation includes various written marks that are not found in the English language, and English punctuation includes marks not found in Japanese. Students studying both languages tend to inappropriately conflate the two modes of punctuation, with some students doing so in the examination. Students should take special care with punctuation.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words or groups of words that connect other words, phrases or clauses in sentences. They assist with the flow of the language. Many students did not use conjunctions effectively in the examination (some did not use them at all), with the result that the language tended to be stilted.

Genkooyooshi

Using *genkooyooshi* writing paper is an invaluable aid to assist students with the writing of characters and with the spacing, paragraphing and punctuation of all forms of Japanese writing. Students should use and continually revisit the rules for the use of this paper in their studies of the Japanese language.

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 a reading of Text 1. The associated Questions 1a. to 1e. were designed to test the capacity of students to understand general and specific aspects of the spoken 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, but some struggled to distil the information required to answer Questions 1b., 1d. and 1e. In Question 1e., some students misunderstood who was talking to whom.

Careful listening to the reading of texts, and the judicious taking of notes while doing so, is an important skill that can be much improved through constant practice.

The answers below provide indications of what answers should have included. English translations of the indicative Japanese texts are also shown.

Question 1a.

An example of a correct response is:

- 全国の高校生が俳句の創作力と鑑賞力を競う大会
 - High-school students from all over Japan compete in their creativity and interpretive ability of *haiku*

Question 1b.

An example of a correct response is:

- (熱い戦いを通して、) チームの仲間と青春すること
 - (Through the heated battle,) making great memories with teammates
- 新しい出会いがあること
 - Meeting new people
- 今の時代に必要なスキルを磨けること
 - Brushing up skills needed in today's society

Question 1c.

An example of a correct response is:

- 与えられた (決められた) 題をもとに俳句を作って/作る (発表する)
 - Make *haiku* based on the given topic and present it
- (お互いの句について) 質疑応答をする or 相手の句についての感想を述べる
 - Ask questions about each other's *haiku* and respond to them, or state your interpretation of your opponent's *haiku*
- 審査員が採点をする/採点をして勝敗を決める
 - Judges score / determine the winner

Question 1d.

An example of a correct response is:

- 俳句を作ることは、意外と簡単だった（割と自然にできた）
 - Making *haiku* was unexpectedly easy (it was done relatively smoothly)
- 一方、質疑応答（相手の句を理解して、足りないところを指摘して、さらにその指摘に応えること）が難しかった
 - On the other hand, questions and answers (understanding the opponent's *haiku*, pointing out what it was lacking and responding to the criticism) was difficult

Question 1e.

An example of a correct response is:

ちいさんはみいさんの句の、「まぼろし」という言葉からくるミステリアスさを評価した

- Chi-san praised the mysteriousness of Mi-san's *haiku*, found in the word 'illusion'
- 季節感の欠如を指摘した
 - He pointed out the lack of a sense of seasons
- みいさんはちいさんの句の、初日の出の静けさと群衆の喧騒の対照性を評価した
 - Mi-san praised the contrast found between the quietness of the new year sunrise and noisiness of crowds
- 奥深さの足りなさを指摘した
 - She pointed out its lack of depth
- 二人ともお互いの句をほめた上で、足りない点を指摘している
 - Both praised each other's *haiku* as well as pointing out what they were lacking

Section 2 – Reading and responding

Section 2 required students to read Texts 2 and 3 and then answer Question 2 in Japanese.

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

- 食品ロスとは何か述べ、それが起こる理由・原因に言及している。食品ロスの説明、それが起こる理由・原因
 - Information about food loss problem : explanation/summary/outline of food loss/cause/reason
- 日本の（日本人の）消費活動の問題点について述べている。又は、消費者としての行動の問題点について述べている。
 - Refer to the problems of consumption activity of Japan/the Japanese and/or refer to the problems of the action of consumers.
- これからの消費者としての理想的な態度について述べている。
 - Refer to tendency and future of the ideal attitude as food consumers.
- 食品運搬や食品メーカーや飲食業界などの改善点について述べている。
 - Mention a refinement about food distribution, food makers and/or food industry in Japan.
- 食品廃棄を自分の身近な問題として提起している。
 - Bring up food loss as a familiar problem.

Most students identified at least some of the relevant points from the two texts in their answers.

High-scoring responses identified all five points and presented them logically, were appropriately structured, used accurate text type and correctly used the *genkooyooshi* manuscript paper.

Lower scoring responses were often not able to identify the specific points noted above and were not appropriately structured, particularly in terms of paragraphing. As a result, the writing tended not to flow smoothly, and the meanings of the sentences were not clear. Some responses inappropriately included a lot of content from the text of the question.

Good responses to Question 2 require practised preparation. Students need to be proficient in reading and analysing text, identifying key words, summarising content and paraphrasing expressions, and then presenting the result in a structured and logical order.

Section 3 – Writing in Japanese

Section 3 required students to write a response to one of five questions (Questions 3 to 7).

Question 3 was the most popular selection among students. It required students to write an essay about the advantages and disadvantages of working from home for an assignment that was to be submitted in the social study class at school.

The remaining options required students to:

- write a speech for a high-school students' speech contest about the benefits and problems of developing and using self-driving cars in Japan (Question 4)
- write a letter to the Japanese Minister of Education about the merits and problems of using English proficiency tests that are organised by private companies for university entrance requirements (Question 5)
- write diary entries over two days about a holiday program for primary-school children for which they were a volunteer leader – the entries needed to include some experiences that assisted primary-school students to overcome challenges and to use those challenges in their growing-up journey (Question 6)
- write a story about a magical creature that students may have drawn in a primary-school art class. The story was to be submitted for judging in a local community story contest (Question 7).

Several questions required students to identify and write about the advantages of a given scenario and to set these against the disadvantages of that scenario. Students who scored well in this endeavour identified and described a good balance of advantages and disadvantages. Their responses tended to be clear and logically structured, using words and phrases that were relevant and appropriately descriptive. Lower scoring responses tended to be less balanced, concentrating too much on either the benefits or drawbacks without adequately canvassing both perspectives. Where these students did address both perspectives, the disadvantages tended to be listed as merely a negation of the identified benefits, rather than raising separate substantive perspectives.

The questions that required diary entries or stories about magical creatures called for imaginative writing. Students who chose these topics needed to be careful to use the appropriate word forms, writing styles and tenses. For example, diary entries should be in plain form, with sentences ending in *だ・である* to denote present tense. Some students inappropriately used both the plain form and polite form for these entries, with sentences ending in *ます・です*. Students who wrote about magical creatures should have followed the writing style and text type appropriate for the telling of a story.

Teachers are reminded to refer to the Japanese First Language Study Design for information and guidance about the main characteristics of common text types and the main characteristics of the different kinds of writing.