

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Japanese (5JA03) Paper 01

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Reading and Understanding in Japanese

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 exam format. 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 Q2 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 the 'peaks and troughs' of difficulty pattern throughout. Teachers should remind candidates that more difficult questions 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 most candidates performed well in Q 1 and Q2. However, a surprising number of candidates did not know *いす* and *つくえ*.

The format for the kanji question, Q3, was a bonus for those who only know roughly how a kanji is pronounced. However, several candidates failed to realise the pattern in hiragana ending for Japanese names and did not take advantage of the clues. Teachers also 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.

In the new syllabus, candidates are required not only to know the meaning of a kanji but also of pronunciation as in Q4. It was clear that some candidates were not prepared for this.

On the whole, candidates performed well in Q5, Q6 and Q7. Candidates should be reminded to write their answers clearly using capital letters.

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 *よい* and *よかった*, and *します* and *しました*.

In the final question, candidates coped well on the whole. However, some failed to understand the context of the passage and fabricated answers based on a single word. Teachers must find strategies to improve students' comprehension skills as such questions may be found in future papers. Despite the clear layout, some candidates did not give two points to gain the 2 marks in sections (b), (d) and (e).

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

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