



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

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

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Introduction

The format of this exam is now familiar to all and there were many excellent responses, both in terms of content (CC) and language (LKA). As can be expected at this level, use of 原稿用紙 was generally correct, with 'small letters' and punctuation in the right place.

Overall, spelling in katakana, the use of appropriate time adverbs, and inclusion of 'simple' kanji that can almost be guaranteed to be useful whatever the topic, were much improved on previous years. (For generic comments about these and other areas that candidates may need to be reminded about, please refer to the report for 2024's exam.)

Q1 (20 marks, choice of two options)

The best responses to this shorter writing task addressed each bullet point (BP) in turn, writing roughly the same amount for each point. About a third more candidates chose option (b) than option (a). Although the topic 'music' is probably more likely to be within their personal experience than 'earning money', some candidates found BP2 (a memorable music lesson) quite difficult to write about.

Option (a) – Earning money

There were too many 先生 and べんごし in candidates' responses for this to have been a parent's real job in all cases, but that, of course, does not matter. Candidates sensibly chose a job that they knew how to express in Japanese and had some familiarity with. Better responses developed the first BP by giving an opinion of that particular job, often expressing sympathy for parents with a demanding occupation.

Even though many candidates possibly had no experience of a part-time job, many used this as a way of getting money (BP2), a surprising number knowing the verb かせぐ. It was, however, very disappointing to find many candidates writing 'arubaito' in hiragana, even though it was clear from the piece overall that they had a good knowledge of katakana. (Perhaps teachers need to point out to their students that this is a word derived from a foreign language, even if it is unusually not from English.) Although it was not actually asked for, many candidates chose to say why a part-time job could be a valuable use of time; across the cohort, an impressive variety of reasons was offered: to earn money, to meet people/make friends, to gain workplace experience, to guide future decisions about possible employment.

Candidates who read the last BP properly (**where** you want to work) were in the minority: most candidates wrote about **what** they wanted to do. (Naturally you can argue that for some jobs the workplace would be obvious.) It was decided that responses talking about the type of employment rather than the place would be

accepted as valid for this BP. However, as a principle, candidates should be advised to answer the BP as it stands, naming a place of work would not have been difficult – びょういん、学校、会社、日本 etc.

Option (b) – Music

As in BP4 of option (a), examiners were lenient when judging the appropriacy of responses to BP1 here: many candidates said **where** they listened, or only said when **or** how, but not both, as the BP states. Many candidates were able to use katakana accurately here: スマホ、イヤホン、スピーカー. There were also a lot of successful renderings of スポティファイ!

BP2 was quite a challenging point to respond to, but as long as there was something clearly different from a 'normal' music lesson, then this was taken as an attempt to 'narrate and inform', with stronger candidates also managing to 'interest and give convincing personal opinions'. It was important here, however, that the setting for the incident was **a lesson**, whether as a group in school or individually with an instrumental/voice teacher. Writing about an experience of a musical performance was not seen as responding to the BP.

As with BP3 in option (a), candidates came up with a surprising range of reasons: always been important in my family, makes me feel 元気, offers comfort when feeling sad, allows me to express my feelings.

Perhaps because this is an event that happens at around the time the exam is taken, a surprisingly high number of candidates expressed a desire to go to Glastonbury. (It is also quite easy to write in katakana!) The word コンサート appeared frequently too, although it was not thought sufficient simply to say 'there is a concert....'; the candidate needed to say that they wanted to go (partly to fulfil the LKA requirement for a 'successful reference to...[a] future event[]').

Q2 (28 marks, choice of two options)

There was a marked preference among candidates for option (a) of the two longer writing tasks, although both had points that were either misunderstood or ignored by candidates.

Option (a) – Outside the classroom

In addressing BP1, not all candidates understood what was meant by a 'school event'. Those who wrote about their favourite club were judged to be not offering 'information relevant to the task', unless the club had arranged some kind of event for others to attend. The most popular event was Sports Day, with other events such as Culture/International Day or concerts also appearing. There were, however, relatively few interesting reasons **why** candidates liked these events, too many satisfied with saying 楽しいですから.

As with Glastonbury as an answer to BP4 in Q1b, there was a slightly curious tendency to use びじゅつかん as the destination of choice for a school trip. (Although the intention had been for candidates to write about a short, one-day excursion, accounts of longer trips abroad were also seen as valid.) Perhaps candidates wanted to write 'museum', but found びじゅつかん easier to remember? Some candidates neglected to answer the second part of the BP (what you learnt), which affected their CC mark.

The range of ideas offered for BP3 and the fluency with which these were written about in many cases seemed to indicate that candidates are often asked in class to come up with reasons for why certain experiences are valuable. Some candidates interpreted the BP rather too literally (ie on the playing field), but doing things such as playing sport were taken as a possible answer.

In answer to BP4, candidates were really required to say what they hoped **to do** in Japan, rather than simply state a fact, such as けしきがきれいです.

Option (b) – Using technology

Many candidates started their response by saying that they had a computer at home or that there were lots of computers in school, and whilst this makes a nice introduction in terms of the task shown in the rubric, it was not necessary in terms of addressing any of the BPs. (Good language in such sections was, of course, taken into account when deciding on a mark for LKA.)

For BP2, candidates told some interesting stories – often about helping friends with homework or sending messages to help locate lost pets – but in a few cases this was presented as a recurring activity ('I often....'), which meant that the opportunity to write in the past (and thus satisfy the need to use a variety of tenses as indicated in the LKA descriptors) was lost, despite the very clear framing of BP2 as a past tense event ('a time you used...'). Whilst examiners were strict about the need to vary tenses across the whole piece, there was less insistence on the medium of the message having to be social media; as long as helping others involved technology in some way, this was allowed.

It would seem likely that candidates who chose this option had already discussed the pros and cons of mobile phones in class, and thus some good ideas were included in response to BP3. Some talked about the dangers of being contacted by strangers or being cheated of money, whilst others focused more on the possibility of becoming too dependent on your phone or simply damaging your eyesight through overuse.

Q3 Translation (12 marks)

Although the sentences vary in length, it is not always the long sentences that cause the most problems; it was quite surprising how many (incorrect) time adverbs were suggested in short sentence 1 as a translation of 'often'.

Most candidates knew 'this year', but 'last year' once again was a source of error: either 先年 or きょうねん. The 'and' in sentence 2 was designed to show that candidates could link successfully, but it was disappointing to see how many candidates across the ability range made errors here. (Whilst dividing the clauses into separate sentences to avoid the problem would not have gained full marks, a translation that did this but had no other serious errors would have been placed in the top band of the MS.)

In sentence 3 candidates almost invariably used the past tense as required, but of those who used the ことができる structure, there was a high number who created the dictionary form はなする.

And finally,

Each year's paper inevitably points out different areas of vocabulary where candidates commonly make mistakes. These were the words that examiners noted were frequently used wrongly:

- あそびます: in both the long writing tasks students found occasion to use incorrect expressions such as ゲームをあそびます、サッカーをあそびます, equating the verb with the English word 'play'. It would be safer for candidates to think of this verb as meaning something like 'to have fun' in order to avoid this common error.
- more 'play' verbs, but this time for musical instruments (Q1b). Candidates need to be aware that, as for clothing (wear, put on), there is more than one verb in Japanese. (At least no one used あそびます in this context!)
- ならう was noticeably often confused with ならぶ, when candidates wanted to say 'learn'; presumably the verb まなぶ was also part of the confusion.