2024 VCE Japanese Second Language oral external assessment report

Refer to the relevant [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) and [examination criteria and specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Languages-index.aspx) for full details on this study and how it is assessed.

Section 1: Conversation

What students did well

In the 2024 examination, students:

* engaged in a general conversation about their personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners. In general, students were familiar with the expected themes and subtopics from the study design, and they responded appropriately to most questions. They maintained the conversation by using appropriate あいづち (interjections) and repair strategies. Students are to be commended for their preparation for the conversation section of the examination. They were able to engage in a conversation with the assessors on a range of topics and provide interesting information.
* provided a range of relevant information, ideas and opinions at an appropriate depth. Students provided a range of relevant and interesting information in response to assessors’ questions. They were able to respond to questions on a range of topics: for example, family, hobbies, school and Japanese studies, trips to Japan, Japanese culture, part-time jobs and future plans. Even if students had not travelled to Japan or held a part-time job, they had prepared responses to address these questions effectively
* elaborated on, clarified and defended ideas and opinions. Students were able to use から (because) and ので (because) to indicate their reasons, and use と思います (to think) to indicate their opinions where appropriate
* demonstrated an excellent level of understanding by responding readily and communicating confidently and carried the conversation forward with spontaneity. The majority of students understood simple question words including 何 (what), だれ (who) and いつ (when), and question words that enable students to think deeper, including どうして (why), どんな (what kind of / type of) and どうやって (how)
* responded confidently and were able to advance the conversation, including the use of appropriate repair strategies as needed. Students who scored highly were able to move beyond single-sentence responses and carry the conversation forward by providing information that prompted follow-up questions from the assessors
* used appropriate expression, including pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. Students were generally able to pronounce short and long sounds accurately: for example, 学校 (school) and旅行 (trip/travel).

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* practise answering a range of questions to gain proficiency in advancing conversations. Students need to listen carefully to questions and respond appropriately. For example, some students responded to the question 今年の勉強はどうでしたか。(How was this year’s study?) by listing the subjects they studied. When the assessors asked 今年日本語のほかにどんな科目を勉強しましたか。(What subjects did you study this year other than Japanese?), some students answered日本語はむずかしいです。(Japanese is difficult). Some students guessed and provided irrelevant responses to the questions. Students need to continue to develop their understanding of a range of question words in Japanese, such as いつ (when), いつから (from when), だれ (who), 週に何回 (how many times a week), 何週間 (how many weeks), 何日間 (how many days), どう (how) andどう思いますか。(What do you think?)
* build confidence by practising interactions in the language. Students should practise their prepared responses aloud until they feel comfortable delivering them. This practice will improve students’ familiarity with sentence structures and vocabulary, which will help them to sound less scripted and enable greater flexibility in their responses. This familiarity will allow them to respond to unexpected questions in a more natural way
* practise using more complex sentence structures and syntax. Students tended to use familiar grammatical structures repeatedly. They are encouraged to use a wider variety of structures where appropriate: for example, relative clauses and making comparisons
* practise using repair strategies to advance the conversation when needed. As time is limited during the examination, students should use repair strategies quickly. For example, saying もういちど言ってください。(Please say it again) may not be helpful if the student did not understand the question. Instead, students should pick out the specific word(s) they did not understand and ask the assessors the meaning of those words. Conversely, they could say わかりません (I don’t understand) to prompt the assessor to ask a different question
* revise grammar. Students often confused the conjugation of い-adjectives with な-adjectives and the て form of verbs. Some students also incorrectly added the particle の between an い-adjective and a noun: for example, おもしろいの人instead of おもしろい人 (an interesting person). Some students also had difficulties using the と思います (to think) grammatical structure with adjectives. For example, they said むずかしいだと思います。instead of むずかしいと思います。(I think it’s difficult), and きれい着物です。instead of きれいな着物です。(a pretty kimono). Students should also be familiar with のほかに (other than)
* practise pronunciation, intonation, stress and tempo. The pronunciation of オーストラリア (Australia), メルボルン (Melbourne) and レストラン (restaurant) is still problematic for some students
* build vocabulary specific to their personal world and their interactions with the language and culture as learners. Students need to develop a wide vocabulary in Japanese and become familiar with common words used in the conversation section of the examination, such as 兄弟 (siblings) and (musical instruments). Some students confused the words 今年 (this year) with 去年 (last year) and 将来 (future) with 週末 (weekend). They should also focus on the correct use of particles, especially で and に.

Section 2: Discussion

What students did well

In the 2024 examination, students:

* demonstrated in-depth knowledge of their subtopic. Generally, students had researched their chosen subtopic well, and they provided a range of relevant information. Students who scored highly were able to lead the discussion by providing information that enabled assessors to ask appropriate follow-up questions. They had prepared sufficient information to engage in an 8-minute discussion with the assessors
* engaged in a discussion using relevant information, ideas and opinions. Students who scored highly were able to talk about their chosen subtopic from multiple perspectives rather than just stating facts. They were also able to express their opinion and provide solutions to address issues they raised Popular discussion topics for 2024 included the following: コンビニ (convenience stores), including ハイテクコンビニ (high-tech convenience stores) and いどうコンビニ (mobile convenience stores); (school lunches); (vending machines); まんが (manga); クラブ (club activities); ロボット (robots); ゆるキャラ (mascot characters); and 高齢化社会 (ageing society). New topics included オーバーツーリズム (overtourism), (unmarried by choice) and (kabuki).

Areas for improvement

In preparation for the examination, students could:

* choose an appropriate subtopic to suit their ability and interests, and an image that supports discussion about the selected subtopic. Students who chose more familiar topics, such as vending machines and convenience stores, generally performed well in the discussion section. They were able to engage more effectively and share their thoughts. In contrast, those who selected less familiar topics seemed knowledgeable but did not have the appropriate language skills to express their opinions during the discussion. This was particularly evident with students who chose historical topics. They often shared interesting factual information but were less fluent when conveying personal insights. Students are reminded that their image should be one photo only containing minimal language, and not a collage of photos
* prepare a wide range and depth of information, ideas and opinions with an original perspective on the subtopic. Although students were able to present a range of facts, not all provided ideas and opinions related to their subtopic. Some students were unable to respond to hypothetical questions such as, ‘What would you include on the school lunch menu if it was available in Australia?’ Students need to research their chosen subtopic from a range of perspectives to avoid responding with それについて勉強しませんでした。(I didn’t study that)
* convey information learnt from sources but also express an opinion with an original perspective on the subtopic. Students should prepare for common types of questions on all subtopics, including questions about history, positive and negative points, solutions, comparisons between Japan and Australia (or other countries), changes over time, and their opinions on various aspects of the subtopic. This will enable students to expand beyond facts relating to their subtopic, and enable them to talk about their subtopic from multiple perspectives
* use the image to support the discussion on the subtopic. Instead of waiting to be asked by assessors, students should integrate their image more effectively into the discussion. Many students described their images well but did not explain the connections between the discussion points and what was shown in the image. Students are encouraged to clearly link their discussion points to the visual image
* build vocabulary specific to the selected subtopic. Students should also understand the meaning of specific vocabulary or phrases related to their chosen subtopic, as some students had difficulty explaining key terms when asked
* choose topics that they can easily talk about. Students should consider how they will use the 8-minute discussion time effectively, and prepare enough information to sustain an 8-minute interaction with assessors.