

2020 VCE Japanese Second Language written examination report

General comments

2020 was the first year this study was delivered according to the newly accredited *VCE Japanese Study Design 2020–2024* and examination specifications. It is important that students and teachers familiarise themselves with the [specifications for written examinations](#), available on the VCE Japanese Second Language examinations webpage of the VCAA website.

Students generally demonstrated a good level of preparation for the written examination and managed their time well to complete all sections of the paper.

Students who scored highly demonstrated a strong command of the language and an ability to comprehend and write with a high level of precision and sophistication. They responded to each question accurately and produced highly relevant responses across all sections.

In Sections 1 and 2, most students appeared to understand the general gist of the spoken and written texts, but some struggled to identify specific details, which were required in order to receive full marks. Also, inability to distinguish key points given in the texts often resulted in irrelevant responses. Lack of cultural knowledge and ability to recognise kanji words were other contributing factors to low-scoring responses.

In Section 3, most students demonstrated a good awareness of style of writing, text type features and *genkō yōshi* conventions to produce a piece of writing of an appropriate length to respond to their chosen topic. However, students are strongly advised to read the question very carefully as there was a number of well written responses that used sophisticated grammar and vocabulary but did not fully address the question.

Students are encouraged not only to develop their language skills but also to broaden their cultural knowledge by studying a wide range of written, spoken and visual texts related to the prescribed themes and topics and suggested subtopics in the study design.

Specific information

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

Part A – Listening and responding in English

In Question 1, students were required to demonstrate an understanding of general and specific aspects of the spoken text. While students generally understood the gist of Text 1 in which *ekiben* was discussed,

identifying and accurately conveying the required details in their responses was not always executed successfully.

Question 1a.

(o)bento/boxed lunch/packed lunch sold at train stations.

The concept of 'bento' needs to be explained as boxed or packed lunch rather than 'lunchbox'. A considerable number of students could not identify the specific detail 駅で売っている (sold at train stations).

Question 1b.

On the train.

While this question was generally handled well, some students misinterpreted ほとんどの人は電車に乗る前に駅弁を買う (most people purchase *ekiben* before they board the train), leading to an incorrect answer 'on the train or at the station before they board the train'.

Question 1c.

Ekiben containing famous and unique food of local/regional towns.

While most students were able to identify 'famous and unique', very few understood the whole phrase accurately: その町で有名でユニークな食べ物が駅弁にあって ... (the famous food unique to local towns).

Question 1d.

He travelled from Tokyo to Osaka on the train, bought *ekiben* three times and ate them on the train.

Many students misinterpreted 三回 (three times) and incorrectly answered 'bought/ate three *ekiben*'. Another misinterpretation was 'Osaka to Tokyo' for 東京から大さかまで.

Question 1e.

Send in an email about their favourite *ekiben*.

Most students understood that メール is referring to email.

Part B – Listening and responding in Japanese

In this part of the examination students were assessed on their understanding of the listening text and their ability to accurately convey appropriate information from the text in Japanese. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question. Students were marked holistically according to the following criteria:

- the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts
- the capacity to convey information and opinions accurately and appropriately.

They were not awarded separate marks for content and language. Responses that included the relevant information and were expressed clearly in Japanese were awarded full marks

In Question 2, students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the spoken text by conveying general and specific information in complete Japanese sentences using accurate and appropriate grammar, vocabulary and script. The responses could be given either in plain or polite form.

Question 2a.

神社やお寺に行って、新しい年／新年がいい一年／年になるようにおねがいます／いのります。(They go to temples and shrines to make a wish so that the new year will be a good year.)

'Going to temples and shrines' was conveyed well, but many students were unable to express 'wish/pray for a good year' accurately.

Question 2b.

70 パーセントぐらいの人が はつもうでをします／に行きます。(Approximately 70 per cent of people do/go to *hatsumōde*.)

A large number of responses did not include *ぐらい* and were not written in a complete sentence.

Question 2c.

神社の入口には「とりい」というゲートがあります。(There is a gate called '*torii*' at the entrance of Shinto shrines.)

There was some confusion with *神道* and *神社*, and the spelling of *とりい*.

Question 2d.

- 東京にあるゆう名な神社／(「めいじじんぐう」)に 家族と行きました。(She went to a Shinto shrine in Tokyo/(Meiji Jingū) with her family.)
- 家族みんなで 着物を着て行きました。(The whole family wore kimono.)
- 家でとくべつなお正月のりょうり／おせちりょうり を食べました。(They had special New Year food/*osechi* at home.)

Recognising the long vowel in *とりい* was not managed well, with the majority of students spelling this word as *とり*.

Question 2e.

Either one of the following:

- 家族にとってとても大切なイベントだと思っています。(It is a very important event for her family.)
- 日本人の一番大切な日だと思っています。(It is the most important day for Japanese people.)

Although the first and second options are related in context, the focus differs slightly between the two, and many students were unable to express their understanding clearly.

Section 2

Part A – Reading, listening and responding in English

In Question 3, students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the written and spoken texts by analysing and extracting relevant information to answer the questions. Students are advised to read the questions very carefully to understand the exact nature of each question, as many responses in this section included irrelevant and/or incorrect information.

Question 3a.

	How tourists organise their trips	Main destinations
Past	From Text 3A (reading) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• participate in tours (with tour guides)	From Text 3A (reading) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• famous towns
Present	From Text 3B (listening) Any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use the internet / YouTube• organise / plan their own trips	From Text 3A (reading) Any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• places in guidebooks• the countryside in Japan / (the natural environment)• places where you can experience Japanese lifestyle• places where you can enjoy nature

A number of students did not respond to 'main destinations (present)', instead listing the activities mentioned in the texts such as flower viewing, camping, homestay and calligraphy.

Question 3b.

People write reviews on their blogs and make videos for social media.

Question 3c.

Any six of the following:

- it is near/in high mountains (called the Japan Alps)
- there are many hot springs/(*onsen*)
- inconvenient because of lots of snow / it snows often (in winter) / because there are many mountains
- famous for skiing / ski fields / ski resorts
- (very) beautiful in summer
- can do camping and hiking
- in the natural environment
- country food looks delicious.

Some students did not accurately comprehend 高い山 (high mountains) and misunderstood it to be 高山 (Takayama), which is a popular destination in the Japan Alps for many Australian school tours to Japan.

Question 3d.

- Do flower viewing in spring.
- Rent/hire a kimono and take photos.
- Participate in calligraphy workshops.
- Learn kendo and karate in a dojo/training hall.

Lack of cultural knowledge and ability to recognise kanji words such as 花見, 書道, 着物 and 道場 resulted in less successful responses.

Part B – Reading and responding in Japanese

Students were required to demonstrate an understanding of the stimulus text(s) and to address the requirements of the task by conveying the relevant information from the text(s) that was appropriate for the audience and the prescribed writing style and text type.

The reading text included a visual stimulus. High-scoring students were able to successfully incorporate information from the visual stimulus into their response.

Student responses were assessed holistically according to the assessment criteria and the expected qualities published in the examination specifications on the VCAA website. The criteria for this section are:

- the capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts
- the capacity to convey information and opinions accurately and appropriately.

Students were not awarded separate marks for content and language accuracy; however, language accuracy was an important expected quality that was considered in the assessment. A number of students provided lengthy responses beyond the scope of the task, and some included additional information that was irrelevant.

Question 4

The task set for Question 4 was a persuasive email to a friend, explaining why they should attend a film festival. Students were required to produce a response of approximately 300ji for the specified audience, purpose, style of writing and text type.

Most students handled the task well and produced a response of an appropriate length in the required format with varying degrees of relevance, sophistication and persuasiveness. However, many failed to refer to the image of Toshiro Mifune and struggled to paraphrase the information drawn from the written stimulus text.

Students who scored highly were able to discern the key information from less relevant details given in the text, used their original interpretation to draw on ideas from the image and incorporated them all into a cohesive piece of writing. They also demonstrated a strong command of Japanese to accurately convey original meaning with minimal reliance on the language in the stimulus text.

Some sample ideas on the use of the image are as follows:

みふねとしろうが えいがで着た けいさつかんのコスプレを しましょう

このしゃしんの ぼうしを かぶって行きませんか

このしゃしんで分かるように みふねとしろうは まじめそうで ハンサムだから。

The following is an example of how the key information can be expressed within the word limit in the required format of a persuasive email:

XXX さん

今日は。じつは 12 月にある「みふねとしろう えいがまつり」の土曜日のチケットを 二まいもらったんですが、いっしょに行きませんか。

みふねとしろうは せかいてきに ゆうめいなはいゆうで、今年 は かれが生まれてから 100 年目のとくべつな えいがまつりなんです。このしゃしんも まじめそうで すてきでしょう？ それに、トップスターなのに ふへいを言わないで、だれにでも しんせつだったそうです。みふねは シュークリームを作るのが とくいだったので、毎週土曜日のコスプレデーに みふねのえいがのコスチュームを着ていくと、シュークリームが もらえるんですよ。だから、私達もこのしゃしんみたいなけいさつかんのコスプレをして 行ってみましょう！

来週の土曜日はどうですか。へんじを下さい。

YYY

(298 ji)

Section 3 – Writing in Japanese

Students were given a choice of four questions in Section 3: personal letter, informative speech, evaluative article and imaginative story. They were required to produce a response of 400–500ji in Japanese to one of the prompts.

Students are advised to read the chosen question carefully to ensure the content is relevant, take time to plan their ideas, and proofread their work with care and attention to detail to minimise inadvertent errors. Students who scored highly conveyed significant and original information relevant to the task, which was integrated effectively in the required style of writing and text type. They demonstrated a strong command of the language to express their ideas with a high level of accuracy and sophistication.

Question 5

This was by far the most popular choice. The task was a personal letter to a Japanese friend, in which students were asked to explain what summer activities their family can do with her when she visits Australia. Some common ideas were going to the beach, barbecues, camping and special summer events. Some students did not address the task and wrote about activities that were not specific to summer or what Australian people do in general rather than focusing on what their family can do with the visitor.

Question 6

This was another popular choice, but many students did not score well on this task. The task was an informative speech about how Australian students balance their use of the internet and social media with their studies; however, a considerable number of students wrote an evaluative piece discussing the pros and cons of the internet and social media. Those who did address the task suggested ideas such as using control apps, switching their mobile off while studying, devising a personal schedule for technology use as well as rules at home and school.

Question 7

The task set in this question was an evaluative article to discuss the differences between cultural festivals in Japan and Australia. While the question specifically states ‘あなたが行ったおまつりでとてもちがうと思った事’ (differences you noticed at the festival that you went to), many students failed to make comparisons in reference to the festival they had attended and instead wrote about occasions such as Christmas and New Year in general.

A small number of high-scoring responses discussed specific aspects of the festival such as costumes, types of activities and people’s behaviour, as well as comparing the different causes for celebrations in Japan and Australia.

Question 8

The task set in this question was an imaginative story for young children about a deer in Nara. Very few students attempted this task, but those who did generally managed to tell the story well with an engaging narrative.