

2021 VCE Japanese Second Language oral external assessment report

General comments

The 2021 Japanese Second Language oral examination assessed the *VCE Japanese Second Language Study Design 2020–2024* in accordance with the examination specifications. It is important that students and teachers familiarise themselves with the specifications for oral examinations, available on the [VCE Japanese examinations webpage](#). Students and teachers are also reminded that a [series of videos](#) has been produced to help with preparation for the oral examinations.

It should be noted that during the oral examination:

- students may be asked a variety of questions of varying levels of difficulty. Questions may also be asked in a different order from the one that students anticipate
- assessors may interrupt students to ask questions during either section of the examination; this should be regarded as a normal process in a discussion
- assessors may also repeat or rephrase questions
- normal variation in assessor body language is acceptable.

Students are to be congratulated for preparing well for the examination. Most students understood the structure of the oral examination. Students who demonstrated achievement of the assessment criteria to a high standard were able to provide relevant and detailed responses to the questions that were asked. They were able to engage in a natural conversation with assessors, responding with spontaneity and using repair strategies when required. Students who achieved in the middle bands of the assessment criteria needed some support and clarification, and needed the questions to be repeated. They provided sufficient information, but this information was not always sequenced well. Students in the low bands for the assessment criteria needed to revise a range of question words including: *だれ、どんな、いつから、どうして／なぜ、どうやって、どのようにして* (who, what, when, why, how) and had difficulty completing their sentences.

Generally, pronunciation, tempo and intonation were very good. Some errors were made in long and short vowel sounds, for example *学校、旅行、いっしょ* (school, travel, together) and in the pronunciation of katakana words, for example *オーストラリア、メルボルン* (Melbourne, Australia) and *サッカー* (soccer).

Specific information

Section 1 – Conversation

Section 1 of the examination involves a general conversation between the student and the two assessors about the student's personal world and their interactions with the Japanese language and culture as learners. It is an organic conversation about the student's personal world.

Generally, students were able to engage with the assessors and respond to a range of questions from 'The individual' and 'The Japanese-speaking communities' themes from the study design, often providing interesting information and insights into their world and interactions with the Japanese language and culture. When responding to questions about family, students should respond using words such as 父、母 (father, mother) rather than お父さん、お母さん (dad, mum). Errors in verb tenses, adjective agreements and particle use were also noted. For example, several students incorrectly used ～ことがあります (there is a). ～ことがあります should not be used with specific time words. For example, 二年前に行ったことがあります (I've been there two years) is grammatically incorrect and the sentence should be 二年前に行きました (I went there two years ago). Other vocabulary that students should revise includes つづけます、えらびます、兄弟、作家 (I will continue, I will choose, brother, writer). It is understandable that students will memorise responses as they prepare for the examination, but these should be delivered in a natural way and not too quickly, as speaking fast can sound over-rehearsed and rote-learned.

Section 2 – Discussion

Following the conversation, the student will be required to discuss their chosen subtopic and the supporting visual material that they have brought with them.

The specifications require the student to explore aspects of the subtopic, including information, opinions and ideas. It is important to carefully consider the choice of subtopic and supporting image when preparing for this section of the examination. Images that included rich information provided more opportunity for students to be able to offer a greater depth and range of information, ideas, opinions and reflections about the subtopic. While the quality of the visual stimulus was not assessed, students who selected images that were easy to share with the assessors found it easier to communicate their ideas.

Students are reminded that it is not the image that is being assessed – it is the quality of the discussion. Students should therefore select an image that adequately enables them to integrate that image into a discussion about their selected subtopic.

Students chose a variety of interesting subtopics for the discussion, including おべんとう (boxed lunches)、キャラ弁 (character boxed lunches)、へんなレストラン (weird restaurants)、ペットロボット (pet robots)、日本のおかし (Japanese sweets)、まんがのれきし (manga history)、高齢化社会 (ageing society)、おぼんまつり (Obon festival)、お正月 (New Year)、おせち料理 (New Year foods)、給食 (provided school lunches)、自動販売機 (vending machines)、コンビニ (convenience stores)、ごみの問題 (rubbish problems)、日本のアイドル (Japanese idols) and 温泉 (onsen).

It is important that students choose a subtopic that will allow them to sustain the interaction with the assessors for eight minutes. Students should familiarise themselves well with the subtopic they choose and be prepared for a range of questions. During the discussion, some students changed the subtopic quickly when they did not understand the question or had not prepared that particular aspect of the subtopic. By thoroughly preparing information about the chosen subtopic, students will be able to successfully interact with the assessors and sustain the discussion. Successful responses provided opinions and responded to hypothetical questions. Students chose an image that supported their subtopic and they referred to the image appropriately throughout the discussion, rather than simply describing it. Students are reminded that when preparing for the discussion, they should be able to explain any keywords associated with their subtopic.