

# 2021 VCE Japanese Second Language written external assessment report

## General comments

Students generally performed well in the 2021 VCE Japanese Second Language written examination and the majority completed all sections of the paper adequately.

In Sections 1 and 2, most students demonstrated a sufficient understanding of the listening and reading texts, yet identifying specific details required to achieve full marks presented challenges for some. Responses that scored highly demonstrated a strong command of grammar, vocabulary and script as well as comprehension of the texts. In addition, the extended response in Section 2, Part B required skills not only to understand the context and specific information of the reading text but also to incorporate ideas from both the reading and viewing texts relevant to the task in the required text type.

In Section 3, the choice of questions included topics commonly studied in Units 3 and 4, which were familiar to students. This allowed them to present a good range of information, ideas and opinions in their responses. However, it is important for students to develop a response that addresses the exact requirements of the style of writing, text type, context and audience of the question and not rely merely on their prior knowledge or work, as this resulted in irrelevant responses in some cases.

In general, students are advised to consolidate their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and kanji expected at the VCE level and develop a good understanding of styles of writing, text type features and *genkō yōshi* conventions. Students should be prepared to apply the key knowledge and skills to a range of question types across all sections and not rely on pre-prepared responses.

## Specific information

Note: 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.

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## Section 1

### Part A – Listening and responding in English

In this part of the examination, students were assessed on their understanding of general and specific aspects of the listening text. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question.

## Question 1

Most students understood Text 1 reasonably well. However, identifying and accurately conveying information with the required details in their responses was not always executed successfully.

### Question 1a.

- Emily works from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm / noon.
- She can do what she likes in the afternoon.

Most students seemed to have understood the information regarding the morning but some lost marks for not including the times or details such as am and noon. A large number of students failed to mention what Emily does in the afternoon.

### Question 1b.

Any two of the following:

- He wanted to go shopping.
- He wanted to come to Australia.
- He wanted to save up for university.

Most students were able to identify the required information for this question. However, they are advised to pay closer attention to the tense and intended meaning of the question. ちょ金する (save money) was not understood correctly by some students.

### Question 1c.

- He could not study / do homework.
- He did not have much free time.
- The hourly rate was low.
- It was hard to remember the names of many things at the store.

Most students understood the gist of each point and the keywords, such as じゅく, クラブ活動, しゅくだい, ひまな時間, ときゅう (juku/cram school, club activities, homework, free time, hourly rate) and 名前をおぼえる (remember the name). However, a number of students misinterpreted the reason why Hiroshi could not study or did not have much free time, confusing the club activities and his part-time job.

### Question 1d.

- He got to meet various people.
- He got to eat new and rare desserts.

Some students had trouble answering the second point accurately, as they appeared to be confused by the three adjectives they heard in the sentence 'It was also interesting that I got to eat new and rare desserts'. This resulted in incorrect responses such as 'new and interesting desserts' and 'rare and interesting desserts'.

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

## Question 2

This question was generally answered well. However, students are expected to include kanji in their responses where possible. Noticeably, many VCE kanji were not used at all or written incorrectly. Students should also be able to write common, basic katakana words accurately. There were some consistent spelling errors with words such as コンピューター (computer) and スポーツ (sports).

It is very important to be familiar with the format of the written examination and follow the instructions for each section carefully. There were a few students who responded in the wrong language, thus receiving no mark, even though they appeared to have understood the text.

### Question 2a.

コンピューターの安ぜんな使い方についてです。(It is about how to use computer safely.)

Most students handled this question well despite spelling errors with 使い方 (how to use) and 安ぜん (safe).

### Question 2b.

スポーツをしたり、友だちとあそんだりした方がいいからです。(Because it is better to play sports and play with friends during breaks.)

Students generally responded well to this question, but some students were not able to use ～た方がいい (had better/it is better) correctly.

### Question 2c.

自分のお金でなおさなければなりません。(Students must have the computer repaired with their own money.)

Some students had trouble recognising the verb なおす (repair). In their attempt to deduce the meaning of this sentence from 自分のお金 (their own money), there were quite a few incorrect responses such as はらわなければなりません (must pay) or 買わなければなりません (must buy).

### Question 2d.

Any five of the following:

- 家でだけ使ってもいい。(You may only use social media and game sites at home.)
- 自分のじょうほうをほかの人に見せない。(Do not show your personal information to others.)
- プライバシーセッティングを新しくする。(Update your privacy settings.)
- 強いパスワードをセットする。(Set a strong password.)
- ゲームをする時、知らない人としない。(Do not play online games with people you don't know.)
- コンピューターは長い間使わない。(Do not use your computer for a long period of time.)
- いじめがあったら、先生に言う。(Tell a teacher if there is bullying.)

While students grasped the keywords and gist of each point quite well, a considerable number of students had difficulty accurately understanding phrases such as 新しくする (update), ほかの人に見せる (show others) and 知らない人 (people you don't know). Some relied on common knowledge of online security, resulting in inaccurate responses.

## Section 2

### Part A – Reading, listening and responding in English

In this part of the examination, students were assessed on their understanding of general and specific aspects of texts. The information presented in the response needed to be relevant to the question.

In Question 3, students would have been familiar with the topic of cherry blossoms as general knowledge in the context of Japanese culture, but the intricate meaning of certain words and expressions in the texts and the quite particular details required in the responses presented significant challenges for many students.

#### Question 3a.

It is a map/front that shows when the cherry blossoms are in bloom.

Few students were able to identify the accurate meaning of さくらぜんせん (cherry blossom front).

#### Question 3b.

- Akita on 8 April
- Aomori on 20 April
- Hokkaidō on 9 May

Many students were unable to interpret the intended meaning of the question and did not include the date for each location in their response.

#### Question 3c.

- You can see the beautiful cherry blossoms in bloom only for a short period of time.
- They usually last about a week, so everyone thinks they can only see the cherry blossoms in bloom now.

Few students managed to achieve full marks as they missed specific details that were required, such as *きれいにさいたさくらの花* (beautifully blooming cherry blossoms), *みじかい間だけ* (only during a short period of time) and *だれでもお花見をしに行きたくなる* (everyone/anyone would want to go and see the cherry blossoms).

#### Question 3d.

He feels happy as the weather gets warm in spring / when the cherry blossoms bloom.

#### Question 3e.

- It is very beautiful when many cherry blossoms bloom.
- The flowers are small, pale/light pink and pretty/cute.

A considerable number of students failed to interpret *うすい* (thin) in the context of the pale shade of pink and wrote 'thin pink' or 'thin and pink' instead. Also, very few students were able to make the distinction between cherry blossoms in general and 'when many cherry blossoms bloom'.

#### Question 3f.

##### Text 3A (Reading)

- It is part of Japanese culture.
- It enriches/decorates people's various memories.

- Japanese people have always looked forward to cherry blossoms blooming after a long winter.
- There is a lot of literature on cherry blossoms since the Heian period 1200 years ago.
- Entrance ceremonies are held and the new school year begins.
- Students graduate from school and start employment.

### Text 3B (Listening)

- There are various events.
- People start university.
- People start a new life.

### Texts 3A and 3B

- It is a season of hope/expectation and a new beginning.

Most students appeared to have understood the general gist of the reading and listening texts, but including the right combination of information in their response with the required details presented significant difficulties for many. Some students relied on their prior knowledge of the hanami culture and included information not mentioned in either text.

Some common mistakes were:

- 楽しみにしていました (they looked forward to) misunderstood as 'enjoyed' or 'was fun'
- しゅうしょくをしたりします (start employment) misunderstood as 'looking for a job'
- きぼうのきせつ (season of hope) as 着物のきせつ (kimono season)

## Part B – Reading and responding in Japanese

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

The reading text included a visual stimulus. Responses that scored highly incorporated information from the visual stimulus in their responses.

Student responses were assessed holistically according to the assessment criteria and the expected qualities published on the VCAA website. 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.

The length of the response specified in this section is approximately 300ji. However, it was possible to achieve a high score without exceeding the character limit.

In responding to the task in this section, students are reminded that independent wording is one aspect of the criteria. They need to develop skills to manipulate the language from the stimulus reading text to convey original meaning in their own words. Responses that scored highly incorporated relevant information and expressed the content with minimal reliance on the language in the reading text, while adhering to the requirements of the personal journal entry. These students skilfully included the information from the visual text as what they observed on their visit to Kōdōkan. Many responses had a tendency to be informative and lacked personal thoughts, feelings and reflections.

Some examples of information from the visual text were children practising against adults, bowing, wearing judo uniform and the framed calligraphy on the wall.

- じゅうどう着を着た子供たちが大人とわざのれんしゅうをしていた。(Children in judo uniform were practising the techniques with adults.)
- 白おびや黒おびをつけた人たちがじゅう道のれんしゅうをしているのが見学できた。(We got to see people with white and black belts practising judo.)

- 道場は広いたたみのへやで、大きくて白いマットがあった。(Dojo was a spacious tatami room with big, white mats.)
- 道場の中に書道の作品があった。(There was a work of calligraphy in the dojo.)

Sample response:

11月16日(火) はれ

今日えんそくでこう道かんという柔道の道場に行った。1882年にできた道場で、だれでもれんしゅうが見学できる。小さい人がわざを使って自分よりもっと大きい人にかつのをみて、おどろいた。かつためには、体も心も強くしないといけないらしい。白おびをした子どもたちが黒おびの大人におじぎをしているのを見て、れいぎを学ぶのもたいせつだと分かった。それで、自分も柔道をしてみたくなった。

後で と書かんに行って、柔道のれきしについて読んだ。柔道を始めたのは治五郎先生という人だった。体が小さくて、友だちより強くなりたかったから、柔道を考え出したそうだ。そして、1964年の東京オリンピックでも始まって、今は世界中で人気がある。今日はとても楽しかった！駅から近くていいし、夏休みにまた行ってみよう。(319字)

Tuesday, November 16th

Today I went on an excursion to a judo dojo called Kōdōkan. At this dojo built in 1882, anyone can see the practices. I was surprised to see a small person use technique to beat an opponent bigger than themselves. Apparently you need to strengthen your body as well as your mind in order to win. Seeing children with white belts bowing to adults with black belts made me realise it is important to learn etiquette. That made me want to try judo too.

I went to the library afterwards and read about Judo history. The person who started judo was Master Jigoro. He created judo because he was physically small and wanted to become stronger than his friends. It was included in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and has now become popular all around the world. It was a lot of fun today! It's close to the station too, so I will go there again during the summer holidays. (319ji)

## Section 3 – Writing in Japanese

In this part of the examination, students were given a choice of four questions: persuasive speech, informative essay, evaluative article and imaginative story. They were required to produce a response of 400–500ji in Japanese to one of these questions.

Responses that scored highly successfully conveyed significant and original information relevant to the task, which was integrated effectively into 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.

Most responses reflected the appropriate style, text type, features and audience specified in the task, but with varying degrees of relevance, comprehensiveness, sophistication and accuracy. As briefly mentioned at the start of this report, the essay questions included some familiar topics many students would have studied during Units 3 and 4. To some extent, this created an opportunity for students to present their in-depth knowledge. On the other hand, some students reproduced the work they had previously prepared for their oral discussion topic or outcome tasks, which did not address the question in many cases. This affected their mark quite significantly for this section.

### Question 5

Many students attempted this question. The task was a persuasive speech to the Year 12 Japanese class on environmentally friendly ways to commute to and from school. Some common ideas were walking, riding a bicycle, using public transport and carpooling to reduce carbon emissions. However, despite starting their response with an appropriate title and introduction, quite a few students digressed from the topic and wrote about sustainable activities at school or home such as recycling, reducing waste and saving water.

## Question 6

This was another popular choice handled well by most students. The task was an informative essay in which students were asked to explain Japanese food and its health benefits. Responses that scored highly described the conventional features or typical ingredients of Japanese food, some common Japanese dishes such as sushi, tempura and okonomiyaki, and discussed why healthy Japanese food is beneficial. As with Question 5, some students diverted from the task and produced a partially or entirely irrelevant response, writing about kyūshoku or general eating habits in contemporary Japan, which included fast food and non-Japanese dishes.

## Question 7

This was by far the most popular choice. The task was an evaluative newspaper article on the pros and cons of online shopping. Many students were able to draw on their own experience with online shopping in recent times. While some responses lacked depth and breadth with a limited range of repetitious ideas, high-scoring responses compared positive and negative aspects by providing examples and explanations and summarised their position clearly in the conclusion. Some examples of advantages were convenience, larger range and easier access to both local and international products and safety during the COVID pandemic. Disadvantages included issues with incorrect sizes, the discrepancy between online images and actual products, security of transactions, difficulty with return and exchange, the danger of scams and overspending.

## Question 8

Very few students attempted this question. The task was an imaginative story for primary school children, in which the author boards the bullet train from Tokyo and finds themselves in the future world of 2080. While most responses lacked narrative qualities and resulted in becoming an explanatory list of events, a small number of high-scoring responses saw the development of a clear storyline with impressive creativity.