

Japanese (continuers)

2011 Assessment Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

JAPANESE (CONTINUERS)

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OVERVIEW

Assessment reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

2011 was the first year of Stage 2 moderation for school assessment, which required teachers to consider closely their way of designing and assessing tasks in order to provide students with the opportunities to demonstrate higher-order learning across all the performance standards. The third assessment design criterion (interpretation and reflection) was the most challenging for teachers.

The design of the assessment tasks was vital as it provided students with the opportunity to show evidence of their learning in relation to all of the assessment design criteria and specific features, as described by the performance standards. Students must address all of the assessment design criteria in each of the assessment types.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

There are three types of assessment that need to be included in the folio: interaction, text production, and text analysis. There should be a minimum of three tasks and a maximum of five. All of the folios presented for moderation included the correct number of tasks.

Interaction

The design of the assessment should specify a context, purpose, and audience. This information should be clearly outlined on the task sheet. The design of the interaction tasks also need to give students sufficient opportunity to respond to questions and not just a present long response that is more of a presentation than an interaction. The interaction task should allow opportunity for spontaneity and give students the opportunity to initiate and sustain a conversation as described in the higher grades of the performance standards. Some tasks simply required students to write the text of a conversation and read it out, which did not fulfil the requirements of the assessment design criteria.

There is a time limit of 5–7 minutes given for the folio interaction, but some interactions exceeded this time limit. This is considered a breach of rules and in the interest of fairness for all students teachers are reminded that students must adhere to the published conditions.

Text production

This assessment type was addressed quite well overall by all of the moderated schools. The biggest concern again was the task design, which must allow students the opportunity to achieve an A grade for ideas and expression.

The design of the assessment should specify a context, purpose, and audience. This information should be clearly outlined on the task sheet.

Some tasks required students to respond to a stimulus text. Teachers are advised to consider the design of these tasks so that students' responses avoid duplication of information and expression used in the stimulus text.

Text analysis

The text analysis task design should allow students to provide evidence of their learning in relation to the interpretation and reflection assessment design criteria, which suits this assessment type. Some of the tasks presented for moderation this year simply required students to extract information from the text; this did not allow them to show their ability in language analysis, or to achieve at the highest level. Specific prompts or questions related to the analysis of language must be given to help students to address this criterion.

The choice of text was also very important for the text analysis tasks. Some texts did not provide enough detail and language structure to analyse and reflect upon in any detail. There were also texts that were extremely difficult and beyond the scope of the subject outline requirements.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

There are three assessments for the in-depth study: an oral presentation, a written response in Japanese, and a reflective response in English.

All of the assessment design criteria must be addressed over the three tasks.

Task design was again vital in allowing students the opportunity to achieve at the highest levels of the performance standards.

As stated in the subject outline, the three assessment tasks must differ in context, audience, and purpose. The response for the oral task cannot be the same as the response for the written task. Some information/examples/data may be appropriate for both tasks, but the response must be different. Some students presented a written piece which was almost identical to their oral presentation.

The choice of topic is very important as students must be able to reflect upon culture, values, and beliefs. A place in Japan (e.g. Hiroshima) might not lend itself as easily to reflection and comparison as a topic with a strong cultural base like kabuki or geisha.

The reflective response in English is a key opportunity for students to address the interpretation and reflection assessment design criterion in the in-depth study. The task must be a true reflection and not just a recount of or narrative about students' experience of their topic. Some of the English pieces, although very well written, included no reflection at all, only factual and informative writing.

Some of the tasks for the reflective response in English provided a large number of prompts/questions for the students. It may be better to focus the questions so that the students can show more depth in their reflection.

All of the three assessment tasks in the in-depth study have a word or time limit which must be adhered to. Failure to do this is a breach of rules and may result in students not showing sufficient evidence of their learning against some of the assessment design criteria.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Component 3: Examination

Oral Examination

One hundred and fifty-nine students presented themselves for the Japanese (continuers) oral examination this year. There was large variability in student ability, with students achieving either at the high or low end, and less in between. For the conversation,

approximately 30% of the candidates achieved an A grade, while 14% received D+ or lower.

The polarisation of marks was more significant in the discussion in which 25% of students achieved A– or higher, while the same proportion of students received D+ or lower. As has been the case in past years, the students' marks were more heavily distributed towards the lower end in the discussion.

Section 1: Conversation

Overall, students performed well in the conversation section. Many students were able to handle simple questions with a good degree of confidence and fluency. Less successful students, however, could only handle more predictable questions and were unable to go beyond short or minimum responses. The more successful students were able to move comfortably beyond prepared answers and spontaneously elaborate on their initial responses by giving reasons, opinions, and impressions.

Examiners' comments revealed that there was a tendency at times for students to 'take over' the conversation. Those students recited prepared sentences, about things that were not necessarily relevant to the question asked. Some students did not listen to examiners' questions fully and directed the conversation too much. It was also evident this year again that some students responded only to a familiar keyword in the question and jumped into a prepared but irrelevant answer. Although it is often in students' interest to try to maintain the conversation and avoid being asked more difficult or probing questions, learning detailed information by heart and presenting it as a 'speech' is strongly discouraged.

Good listening skills are essential for to be successful in this section. It is recommended that students start to practise listening as early as possible as it takes time to develop such skills. Some suggestions for success in this section include:

- Listen carefully right to the end of a question paying particular attention to tense, aspect, and mode. (Remember the meaning of a Japanese utterance is typically determined in the end of the sentence.)
- Avoid presenting a 'speech'; conversation should be an interaction between a student and examiners.
- Learn to use あいづち effectively in order to maintain the natural flow of conversation.
- Do not rely solely on predictable questions.
- Develop strategies to deal with unexpected or more difficult questions.

It also came to the examiners' attention that some students did not differentiate between formal and informal ways of asking for help/clarification. Students should be able to use formal expressions such as すみません rather than ごめん, and もういちどおねがいします instead of もういちど.

With regard to linguistic (grammatical and structural) expressions, many students did not cope sufficiently well with questions that used more complicated structures (e.g. a relative clause). They also showed a lack of confidence with interrogatives such as どう、どんな and どうして. The confusion of tense (in verbs and copula です/ます) was very common this year again. Some students did not respond with complete sentences, limiting their answers to one or two words. The most successful students, on the other hand, showed a mastery of complicated sentence structures, including a range of subordinating conjunctions (e.g. ~から/ので、~たら、~時、~ても). It was pleasing to see that some students comfortably used a variety of verb forms (e.g. ~たことがあります、~つもりです、~たいと思います、~からです), which in previous years had been reported as difficult for students to deal with.

Pronunciation was generally good, and yet common errors which appear year after year did so again. Some examples include:

- confusion between similar vowels, as in えいが/えいご; あに/あね; おにいさん/おにさん; まだ/まで; かわいい/こわい
- confusion between similar consonants, as in かもく/かぞく/かがく.

'Foreign accent' or phonetic interference from a background language was often evident in students' pronunciation and intonation, but it was very rare that a foreign accent by itself seriously impeded the clarity of utterances.

Other linguistic features that were often not known or were confused included:

- particles
- 'because' sentence (The conjunction から mistakenly preceded the 'reason clause'.)
- numbers and counter suffixes
- tense and time words (e.g. 来年…しました。今朝…行きます。)
- ほか as in, for example ほかの日に..., and ほかになにか言いたいことがありますか
- use of English.

Section 2: Discussion

Compared to the conversation, students in general were less able to cope linguistically with the discussion of their in-depth study topics. Some students, however, were well prepared and spoke very well on demanding topics. It was evident that many students relied too heavily on memorised answers to be able to discuss beyond what had been rehearsed. A few students could say nothing at all except what they had learned by rote.

Most students had researched their topic in some detail if not in depth. The most successful students showed evidence of good research and were able to provide thoughtful and convincing comments and opinions in response to various questions. Other students could have pursued their research much further. Students who were less successful in this section had not even practised an explanation of their dot points in the in-depth study outline form. Many students seemed to find interpretation and reflection (specific features IR1 and IR3) questions quite difficult. More comments and suggestions for practising these questions are included below.

The choice of topic is crucial to a successful performance in the discussion. Teachers should ensure that students' topics are manageable, interesting, and sufficiently challenging to discuss in the final examination. While it was pleasing to see many students passionately talk about the topic of their own choice and interest, it was quite obvious when students had not chosen the topic themselves, as they tended to lack the interest and ability to comment independently with opinion. Examiners commented that some topics were too broad (e.g. festivals in Japan) or too 'easy' (e.g. Japanese schools) to allow students to go into depth in discussion or demonstrate their research. Also noted was that some students had chosen topics that were too difficult for them to comfortably discuss in Japanese and hence recited memorised sentences from books and other sources without understanding what they were saying.

Also extremely important is how the main points are presented on the in-depth study outline form. The dot points should provide information to enable examiners outside the school to instantly understand the focus of the study and facilitate the discussion effectively. Teachers are encouraged to supervise and give guidance on how students present their dot points on the outline form well before the examination.

Students and teachers are reminded that the 1-minute introduction speech is only optional and is not assessed. If students have decided to give an introduction of their in-depth study, they should do so in as short a time as possible so that they can use relevant information and expressions in response to questions, thus maximising the opportunities to actually engage in the discussion, which is assessed. Also, students

should not give a long 'speech' when asked to explain what they have learned about a dot point. They should say a few relevant things and then wait to take part in a more natural discussion.

Grammatical accuracy and range of expressions were generally very good in rehearsed parts of answers, but there was little flexibility when less-predictable questions were asked and students had to change the sentences they had memorised. Particularly this year, many students lacked the language skill to deal with questions relating to interpretation (IR1) and reflection (IR3). See below for some suggestions and guidance.

Interpretation (IR1) questions for the discussion are mainly to examine:

- how insightfully and clearly a student interprets and explains the content and context of the texts he/she used for the in-depth study
- how effectively a student gives evidence or example(s) from the texts to support his/her interpretation.

Questions may be heard as:

- どんな本を読みましたか。それについて少し教えてください。
- その本のいちばんたいせつなポイントは何でしたか。
- それはどんな本ですか。

In answering these questions, students should present their interpretation of meaning in the text(s) by identifying and explaining:

- the content of the text(s) (general and specific information)
- the context, purpose, and targeted reader/audience
- the concepts, perspectives, and ideas represented in the text(s).

Reflection (IR3) questions for the discussion are mainly to examine to what extent a student has learned:

- about culture, values, beliefs, practices, and ideas of Japanese people from the texts used and his/her own values, beliefs, practices, and ideas in relation to those expressed in the texts used for the in-depth study
- from his/her experience of doing an in-depth study.

Some related questions may be:

- in-depth study の勉強をして、日本の（人々、文化、社会、習慣、価値観 など）について何を学びましたか。
- in-depth study の研究の前と後であなたの（かんがえ方、いけん）はどうですか。かわりましたか。
- 日本の・・・と、あなたの文化の・・・をくらべて、どうですか。ちがいますか。
- in-depth study の勉強（経験）はどうでしたか。
- どのくらい研究しましたか。研究はうまくいきましたか。
- このトピックについてもっと知りたいことがありますか。

Students should then present their reflection on:

- how Japanese cultures, values, beliefs, practices, and ideas are represented or expressed in the text(s)
- their own values, beliefs, practices, and ideas in relation to those in the texts studied
- their own learning.

Generally, use of support objects such as photographs from the Internet and fluffy toys or plastic figures of anime characters did not add much. To make a significant impact on their marks, students should be able to provide more than just an explanation of what the object is.

Written Examination

There was a wide range of marks achieved across all sections of the written examination. Overall, section 2, part B (Reading and Responding Part B) and section 3 (Writing in Japanese) were handled the best. What was noticeable in recent years, including this year, is that many students performed poorly in the simpler information-extraction type questions. It is a clear tendency that students have weakness in understanding texts whether by listening or reading. Apparently, lack of knowledge of basic vocabulary seems to be one of the main causes. Although mechanical memorisation of de-contextualised words and phrases tends to be unpopular and is not taken very seriously these days, it is still absolutely necessary that students learn (i.e. memorise) a comprehensive set of basic words relevant to the themes and topics appearing in the subject outline.

Section 1: Listening and Responding

In general there was a fair understanding of the texts and the questions/tasks posed. Students were adequately able to identify and analyse information in a general sense but lacked the ability to pick up finer details of the texts. Some very basic features such as days and times were often misunderstood. In preparation for the listening section of the examination, students should develop a good understanding of basic vocabulary and should be trained to pay careful attention to details in texts. Full understanding of the questions and tasks is also essential. In more open questions, it is very rare that students are asked to simply provide plain translation of a text. They should be prepared to give more interpretive and/or analytical answers that demonstrate a deeper understanding of the text. It is also recommended that in the classroom students be exposed to a wide range of text types including poems, songs, and stories.

Q. 1: It was quite surprising that this simple conversation proved to be one of the most difficult questions. Despite the simplicity in language and content of the text, there was confusion about the customer's decision regarding his faulty red phone. Many students incorrectly thought that the customer had swapped it for a black one. Only 25% of students achieved full marks for this question.

Q. 2: Most students were only able to pick up one or two pieces of relevant information from the text which was not sufficient to obtain full marks. The most difficult details to correctly pick up were: change of departure time, what to bring to the excursion, and what happens if the weather is bad. Many less successful students did not even seem to understand the purpose of the telephone call. Only 20% of students achieved full marks.

Q. 3: Only 12.5% of students achieved full marks for this question.

Q. 3 (a): This question was generally answered well, but many students missed full marks by making errors with the finer detail such as times and places.

Q. 3 (b): This question was done well.

Q. 4: For the majority of students this was the easiest question. Forty-five students (28%) achieved full marks. Both Part (a) and Part (b) were handled well. 'Why...?' and 'How...?' questions, however, were at times answered with inaccurate and/or insufficient details. Confusion of おとうと and おとうさん was also evident in a number of students' answers.

Q. 5: This was the longest listening text (approximately 3 minutes). The text was a Japanese (Okinawan) folk tale told by an old woman for her grandson. The most successful responses demonstrated a good understanding of the context of the story, details of the content, and the message or lesson that the story could convey to/teach the listeners. The text proved quite challenging for many students.

Q. 5 (a) (i) and (ii) were the simplest questions for this text, and students answered well by adequately describing what Kijimuna looked like and what his special talents were.

In parts (b) and (c), there was a significant division of marks, with strong students understanding all or almost all of the text and others getting close to no marks.

Q. 5 (b): This question aimed to assess how well students could summarise and explain part of the story. Good answers successfully stated how Kijimuna annoyed the old man and what the old man did to get rid of Kijimuna from his life.

Q. 5 (c): This question required students to go more deeply into the story and interpret the message or lesson(s) that one could learn from this old folk tale of Okinawa. There was a variety of good answers well supported with appropriate evidence from the text. Thirteen students achieved full marks here.

Section 2: Reading and Responding

Part A

This section clearly discriminated the students' levels. Those who successfully read the texts and understood the details of the texts, expressed their understanding clearly and concisely, while those who understood the texts only partially gave vague or incorrect answers based on their guess or personal knowledge. Overall, students demonstrated general understanding of the texts, but many did not show comprehensive understanding of details in the text.

In preparation for the reading and responding section, teachers are encouraged to incorporate a wide range of language texts from various sources so that students can become familiar with texts of different styles, topics, and purposes, and of different linguistic difficulty/complexity. Answer techniques (e.g. including all relevant information and supporting an answer with relevant information from the text) should also be taught by teachers and understood by students.

Q. 6: The score distribution was broad. More than 17% of responses scored 7/7 or 6/7, while another 17% gained no marks. There were great differences among the responses that scored somewhere in between. The mean score was 3.01/7.

Q. 6 (a): Many responses did not include all the relevant information. Quite a few responses indicated that the author was a student.

Q. 6 (b): The majority of responses did not include all details. A typical insufficient answer simply stated 'her teacher' or 'her Japanese teacher'. To get full marks students needed to give a comprehensive answer such as 'her former teacher of Japanese from 30 years ago'.

Q. 6 (c): Some students thought that author was writing to her teacher to tell her about life in Japan.

Q. 6 (d): This question was not handled very well. Many responses did not identify the relevant linguistic features in the text and explain their use.

Q. 7: The scores varied: 15% of responses scored 7/8 or 8/8, while 13% gained no marks. The mean score was 3.74/8.

Q. 7 (a): A large number of students misunderstood the expression '8年生から5年間日本語を勉強しています' and believed the author was a Year 8 student who studied Japanese for 5 years.

Question 7(b) and Question 7(c) were generally well done.

Q. 7 (c): Quite a few responses did not successfully present a comparison between the authors' learning experiences but simply summarised or listed the main points of each text, and this was not necessarily relevant to the task.

Q. 7 (d): Responses to this question seemed to be based on assumption rather than a precise interpretation of the texts. Many stated that both authors agree that it is best to teach Japanese through the use of pop culture, which was not necessarily the case with

Text 6. Also, many responses did not include the fact that both authors say that the traditional aspects are also important.

Text 6 and Text 7 were about learning and teaching Japanese and it was one of the most familiar topics for the students. Nonetheless, many responses lacked accuracy in interpretation, and there were many instances of short, insufficient, and unsubstantiated responses. Overall, more careful and thorough attention to the text's linguistic details was needed.

Part B

Q. 8: The stimulus text this year was of a comparable degree of difficulty to last year, and most students seemed to understand the context and the content. However, others did not grasp the specific aspects of the text that they were expected to respond to. The marks were widely distributed.

Ideas (I1): Relevance

The main points were:

- Jun's birthday
- Change of mind/plan
- Small budget and seeking a job in Australia
- Travelling around Australia by motorbike
- Parents not knowing about Jun's decision/plan.

Of the points listed above, Jun's birthday and his/her plan to come to Australia were picked up in most responses. The least mentioned point was the motorbike trip, but this was not an important point. In the original text, Jun seeks opinion and advice from Chris (the reader) about his/her decision and future plan, and this was the main and the most important point to respond to. Successful responses gave thoughtful advice/opinion with reasons to support. Less relevant responses neglected the more important component in the text and often only commented generally on Jun's trip (plan) to Australia. Although Jun's trip is a valid point to respond to, by itself, it does not demonstrate full comprehension of the original text.

Ideas (I2): Depth of treatment of ideas, information, or opinions

Successful responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of the original text and gave clear, relevant, and thoughtful opinions and advice, which were often well elaborated and supported with reasons. It was also pleasant to see some students had come up with very original and interesting ideas and opinions and also added extra details (e.g. subject of the email message) to their answer. Many students could understand that Jun had not discussed the trip to Australia with his/her parents and suggested that he/she should do so, which was well done.

Expression (E1): Capability to convey information accurately and appropriately

Students in general demonstrated the ability to use a range of complex expressions. Accuracy was lacking in many less successful answers, although most answers, whether strong or weak, contained some linguistic errors.

Common errors were:

- verb and adjective conjugation (esp. past tense)
- use of 行く and 来る
- locative particles such as に、で
- basic kanji errors
- katakana words spelling
- ならない as ある – negative.

Expression (E2): Coherence in structure and sequence

Most responses were well structured and sequenced.

The use of linguistic cohesive devices such as conjunctions (e.g. それから、そして、けれども) and deictic words (e.g. そちら、ここ) was often absent or problematic. Students are encouraged to incorporate these expressions so they can use the writing space more efficiently.

Some less successful responses included a lot of irrelevant content either created or copied straight from the original text, wasting the space for writing more relevant content. Students are advised to familiarise themselves with techniques to effectively present opinions and advice while referring to the relevant information in the original (stimulus) text.

Section 3: Writing in Japanese

Students in general performed very well in this section. The two choices of questions were almost equally popular, with question 9 being chosen by eighty students (51%) and question 10 by seventy-eight students (49%). The means for each question were also close.

Ideas (I1 Relevance and I2 Depth of treatment)

Q. 9: Most responses were sufficiently relevant to the question. Successful responses were very persuasive letters of advice that provided useful information and interesting examples from students' own knowledge and experience about selecting and keeping a pet. Many less successful responses were still relevant to the task, but lacked depth. Good answers often referred to and wrote well about the 'possible impact on lifestyle'.

Q. 10: This question allowed students relatively more freedom in deciding what to write about. Some students' responses were of outstanding quality, reflecting their sense of humour and creativity as well as their excellent linguistic skills. Many of the less successful responses consisted merely of a recount of their day without technology and did not make very clear connections to the 40 Hour Famine. In a few instances students merely copied the prompt text and added very few words of their own. Successful answers provided detailed description of the writer's experience shared with his/her host family, and discussed the meaning of the 40 Hour Famine and how it affected the people who had participated in the event.

Expression (E1): Capability to convey information accurately and appropriately

Questions 9 and 10: The very best responses demonstrated a thorough knowledge and understanding of grammatical structures, a wide range of vocabulary and kanji, correct tenses, and used a variety of connectives to join phrases and clauses. Most responses contained very familiar structures that had probably been mastered in the early years of language study and did not include the full range of expressions and structures available to students from language study at senior secondary level.

Errors in particles and verb/adjective endings were quite noticeable. Some examples include:

- 家でいました (家にいました)
- さんぽをいきます (さんぽに行きます)
- 大きいとうるさい (大きくてうるさい)
- やすいのペット (やすいペット)
- あらない (ない)
- tense confusion in common verbs and copula (-です/-でした).

The following grammar and expressions were frequently used and used well:

- conditional たら
- verb+ほうがいい
- comparison AよりBのほうが

- から and ので
- v たり v たり
- v なければなりません.

Less successful responses that demonstrated an attempt to use complex structures, often included a direct translation from English and ended up with inappropriate expressions. Katakana words were often spelled incorrectly.

Students are asked to take more care with their handwriting. Markers commented that they had difficulty understanding some answers because of illegible handwriting. For example, い、り、と、て、う、ら、つ、ぬ、ね were commonly written incorrectly or in a style that is very hard to read. Some errors in script tend to be long-term errors that are best corrected early in a student's study of Japanese.

Expression (E2): Coherence in structure and sequence, and observation of text-type conventions

Questions 9 and 10: This was an aspect of the task that was well done. Most responses were well organised, used paragraphs appropriately, and included an introduction and a conclusion. It is strongly recommended that students use more lexical devices such as conjunctions and deixis to create a text of better and more sophisticated structure and sequence.

Except in a few careless instances, responses included the conventions appropriate for the text-type.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

When sending in student work for moderation, teachers are advised to read the requirements or watch the videos on the SACE Board website (see 'Advice on Preparing Stage 2 Materials' under Related Links on the subject page). Moderators must be provided with a copy of the approved learning and assessment plan and a task sheet for each task so that the requirements are clear. If there have been any changes to the original learning and assessment plan, then an addendum also needs to be included. Very few addendums were sent in for 2011 moderation.

All work should be packaged by student, not by task although separating the two assessment types (folio and in-depth study) is expected. Drafts do not need to be included.

If there is a reason that a piece of work could not be sent in for moderation, this needs to be clearly stated on the 'Variations in Materials for the Sample for Final Moderation' form (now called 'Variations — Moderation Materials') and sent in with the moderation sample.

When there is more than one school in an assessment group, teachers are advised to collaborate in all aspects of the assessment process. Although this takes time, the closer that teachers work together and share an understanding of the performance standards, the better the outcome for the whole student cohort.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Although generally teachers have a good understanding of the standard, and the assessment decision of the students' achievements by teachers is overwhelmingly fair, there were some inconsistencies in the understanding and interpretation of the performance standards.

There were a large number of A+ grades awarded for school assessments. Teachers are asked to use discretion when giving this grade and are reminded that during moderation all students on a particular grade level are confirmed or adjusted consistently.

Teachers are encouraged to clearly decide which of the performance standards are being assessed in each task. For some tasks, it may be better to assess fewer criteria in order to give the students the opportunity to address the performance standards in more depth.

There were some cases where the performance standards were not applied properly. For example, if students get full marks for extracting information for a text analysis task, this does not mean they should get full marks for analysis of language too.

The task design is vital and should give students the opportunity to achieve at a high level, while also allowing the teacher to clearly differentiate between levels of student work.

Teachers are to be reminded that although the drafting of summative assessment tasks is allowed, there should be no correcting of summative work by the teacher. The work submitted for moderation must be the students' own work.

Chief Assessor
Japanese (continuers)