Assessment Report

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Level 3 Japanese 2021

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Part A: Commentary

All the questions in the Level Three Japanese assessments are important. It is essential candidates realise there are no obsolete questions; each contributes to a full understanding of the texts.

It is vital that candidates read the questions and answer them directly, crafting understanding of the text specifically to the requirements. Answering questions is an essential skill, and uplifting the entire text without any changes does not show that the candidate has understood the text.

When answering in Japanese, it is important that candidates do not simply copy large portions of the text. They need to paraphrase, using direct quotes from the texts only as supporting details in their answers.

Understanding the context of the text is important and can give clues to implied meanings. Candidates who had cultural knowledge that related to the texts were better able to fully understand the context and could give more rounded answers.

Candidates who used their language skills to explain their answers and used the texts to provide details and unpack the implied meanings to justify their answers
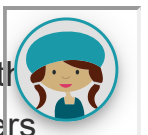
demonstrated that they had command of the language and good answering techniques.

Part B: Report on standards

91553: Demonstrate understanding of a variety of extended spoken Japanese texts

Examinations

The examination included three questions and candidates were required to respond to all three. All questions required candidates to apply their understanding of extended spoken Japanese texts. The questions covered the requirements of the 2021 assessment specifications, which were that candidates would listen and respond to recordings of three spoken texts with a total duration of up to 45 minutes, which they would hear as a whole and twice in sections. Candidates could make notes in the listening notes spaces provided.

Observations

Candidates who demonstrated cultural understanding throughout the texts by making inferences, produced successful responses. For example, in the first text, more successful candidates were able to interpret that the speaker felt embarrassed when he realised an elderly person had been standing next to him on the train, as in Japan it is good manners to give up your seat to a senior citizen.

Candidates who did well gave developed responses that used information from the passages. For the higher grades it was expected that candidates would use the information in the text to inform and guide inference and implied meanings. For example, rather than just translating, candidates were able to infer that in Japan it is bad manners to speak loudly while travelling on the train, and that it is good manners to give your seat to an elderly person rather than let them stand.

Candidates gaining Excellence were able to link this cultural aspect to the doctor's embarrassment. Equally, in the passage about Christmas, candidates gaining Excellence were able to pick up on the nuance that Christmas is celebrated in vastly different ways and in different climates all over the world, and that this diversity of cultural traditions is interesting.

The context of the text is also important when answering. Some candidates were not able to differentiate uses of the word 電気(denki) which can mean both light and electricity. As the text was discussing the physics exam and talks about it not being able to be seen with one's eyes, then based on the context, electricity is the correct meaning in this case.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- gave brief accurate answers based on the text, with some key points identified and communicated

- showed some understanding of Curriculum Level Eight language.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- gave brief answers with little detail from the text

- gave answers based on opinion and not based on the text

- showed misunderstanding of the purpose of the texts and/or the questions.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- provided detailed answers based on the text, including showing understanding of some complex Curriculum Level Eight language

- used details from the text to guide, inform, and justify inference and opinion

- demonstrated the ability to explain and justify inference, which was sustained across most parts of a question

- provided inference that was partly supported by clear and well worded translations of examples from the text.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- gave full detailed answers demonstrating a deep understanding of complex language and grammar at Curriculum Level Eight, including nuances

- used details from the text to guide, inform, and justify inference and opinion

- demonstrated the ability to explain and justify inference, which was sustained across multiple parts of a question

- provided inference that was well supported by clear and well worded translations of examples from the text.

91556: Demonstrate understanding of a variety of extended written and/or visual Japanese texts

Examinations

The examination included three questions and candidates were required to respond to all three. All questions required candidates to apply their understanding of written and/or visual Japanese. The questions covered the requirements of the 2021 assessment specifications, which were that candidates would read and respond to three written texts with a combined total of approximately 1600 kana representative of different text types.

Observations

Successful candidates avoided copying large sections of the text with only minor changes that did not answer the questions directly or use the information from the text to provide an explanation. For example, these candidates were able to identify that children who gained a connection with nature when they were children would grow up to think nature is important. Furthermore, they could also extrapolate that they would protect the environment.

Candidates performed well when they were able to use information flexibly from across the whole passage rather than working from start to finish. For example, in the question about why Masao was making a presentation, the answer was not merely to talk about the Ig Nobel Prize which he went to three years ago; this content was given in the question explanation. The best answers were drawn from the text; that he wanted to provide people with a way to relax in their busy lifestyles and give them an opportunity to laugh.

Using kanji, key vocabulary, and structures to interpret complex sentences was fundamental in understanding the text.

Determination of the subject of the sentence was important for understanding of the text. Using particles to decipher complex sentences and especially understanding the use of reported speech was important.

Candidates overall had a weak understanding of numbers, dates, times, and money. Emphasis on this content should be reviewed at Curriculum Level Eight.

Candidates were very unaware of simple place names such as Honshu and Shikoku; that rice planting was traditional in Japan; and that mochi is made from rice. This cultural knowledge is important and would make the text more understandable for candidates.

When providing implied meanings of the text, candidates must base this on the content of the passage and provide supporting detail to show they have a thorough understanding. The implied meaning alone does not guarantee an Excellence grade if it is unclear whether candidates have understood the exact meaning as well.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- gave brief answers with general statements about the topic

- showed an understanding of Curriculum Level Eight vocabulary and kanji

- showed an understanding of some Curriculum Level Eight structures

- identified some of the key ideas from the text, but did not always answer the question.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- wrote responses, but did not answer the questions

- gave answers that were brief and did not show general understanding of the text

- gave incorrect answers that showed a lack of understanding of Curriculum Level 8 vocabulary and structures.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- provided detailed answers that directly answered questions and identified key points from the text

- showed a detailed understanding of Curriculum Level Eight vocabulary, kanji, and structures

- showed a clear understanding of the text and an ability to back up answers by providing details from the text

- demonstrated that they grasped the meaning beyond the main ideas to provide some implied meanings.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- showed a full understanding of Curriculum Level Eight vocabulary, kanji, and structures

- provided detailed answers that were fully justified

- showed an ability to explain and justify inference across the paper as a whole

- supported inference with detailed information from the text

- answered directly, showing an ability to understand the purpose and intention of the text.

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Previous years' reports

2020 (PDF, 164KB)

2019 (PDF, 267KB)

2018 (PDF, 103KB)

2017 (PDF, 43KB)

2016 (PDF, 239KB)