

November 2013 subject reports

## Japanese B

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 12	13 - 25	26 - 43	44 - 57	58 - 72	73 - 86	87 - 100

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 11	12 - 23	24 - 41	42 - 56	57 - 72	73 - 87	88 - 100

### Higher level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The standard of the work ranged from satisfactory to good. All orals were suitable in terms of content and approach taken by the teacher.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A: Productive skills.

Most candidates were able to speak confidently, with a good range of vocabulary and accent. Some candidates used a range of grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions, but the weaker candidates could have been encouraged to use a wider range. Most candidates were able to speak with a touch of authenticity, but sometimes their language was too informal for

addressing a teacher. Candidates need to be reminded of the importance of using an appropriate level of formality - the language they pick up from films, for example, may not be appropriate for using to their teacher in an examination.

### Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills.

The conversations generally flowed coherently, although in some cases there was a tendency for the teacher to ask very few questions, and the candidate to give long monologues, even in part 2 when discussion is supposed to be taking place. (In other words, in the whole 10 minute conversation the teacher only asked a couple of questions, and the oral gave a sense that the teacher's questions were only there to allow the candidate to deliver their pre-learnt material). Candidates must interact with the teacher and participate in a genuine conversation. Candidates could also develop better skills for dealing with situations in which they did not understand the question.

### Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates need to be reminded to use an appropriate register when speaking to their teacher. The individual oral is a relatively formal situation, and whilst the use of *keigo* is not expected, talking to their teacher in very informal language is not appropriate.
- If candidates start a long monologue in the discussion (part 2), please stop them, and make sure that there is a genuine interaction. Candidates have already made a presentation in part 1, so they should not also be giving a long speech / presentation in part 2. Part 2 needs to be genuine conversation, with the conversation developing in ways that candidate may not necessarily expect. Please ensure that there is genuine discussion in part 2.
- Candidates could do with more teaching on strategies for participating in a conversation. At an obvious level this would include things such as asking for repetition and clarification, but the strongest candidates should also be able to use more advanced phrases / strategies such as "*Sono iken mo mochiron wakaru n desu ga, kojinteki ni wa...*" or "*Chotto chigau kanten kara kangaete miru to...*" etc.

### Standard level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

The photographs were generally well chosen by the teachers. However, there were some photographs without captions given.

A good range of work was submitted and IB Guidelines were generally followed. However, there were a few instances where candidates spent too much of their time only describing the photographs. The candidates should also express their personal interpretations and reflect on the culture they studied.

There were some instances of significant mark differences between the Individual oral and the Interactive oral activity. Should there be such differences please provide some explanation for this on the 2/BIA form.

Some candidates demonstrated 'near-native' speaking proficiency, and these candidates should have been encouraged to take the B HL, which is now also available in a November examination session.

## Candidates performance against each criterion

### Criterion A: Productive skills

Most candidates spoke using a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures expected at Japanese B SL Level. There were very little variation in sentence endings such as '*desu*' or '*deshita/mashita*'.

### Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills

Most candidates responded to the questions with spontaneous answers and some could give detailed responses. In order to attain higher scores, candidates should present both simple and complex ideas coherently, and engage in genuine and spontaneous conversation.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The IB Individual oral examination consists of two parts: Part 1 presentation for 3-4 minutes and Part 2 discussion for 5-6 minutes. Please ensure that the candidates are provided with these time-specifications prior to the examinations, and that teachers follow it during the recording.

Authentic conversations need to be held during Part 2 discussion. Please encourage the stronger candidates to develop their opinions and engage in a sustained discussion. Please give the weaker candidates sufficient opportunities to speak.

## Higher level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

All the work submitted was suitable, with the majority of the work submitted being strong or very strong.

Some centres appeared to still be using the old coversheet with no space for the examiner to write their marks on. Please ensure that the latest version is being used.

### Candidate performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A: Language

Most candidates used a good range of language, and were able to convey their intended meaning very clearly. They often used complex structures clearly and effectively.

#### Criterion B: Content

Some candidates lost marks under this criterion, as it was not clear what "use" had been made of the literary text. Some candidates just re-iterated the story. Others wrote pieces which were so creative, that the connection to the literary text was quite thin.

#### Criterion C: Format

Most candidates were able to write using the conventions of their chosen text type appropriately and correctly.

#### Criterion D: Rationale

Candidates' rationales were generally clear (2 marks), but not necessarily directly linked to the literary work. Quite often they missed out "how their aims have been achieved." (Language B guide, page 42).

### Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Please encourage candidates to write a good rationale. Often they have not linked their rationale sufficiently closely to the literary text, or have not stated how they have achieved their aims.
- Please remind candidates that the rationale and content together (criteria B and D) have more marks available than the language criterion (A). Quite often they seem to

be focussing on including lots of complex sentence structures, vocabulary and kanji at the expense of the content.

- If a modern, short story has been chosen as the literary text and it is reasonably easily photocopied, please include this with the candidates' work when they are sent to the examiner – this will help the examiner significantly. This is not necessary if the candidate has chosen a long novel, or if the literary text is easily available on-line e.g. as part of *Aozora Bunko*.

## Standard level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

All the work submitted was suitable, with the majority of the work being on the theme of environmental protection. The work ranged from average to excellent, with very few weak assignments.

Some centres appeared to still be using the old coversheet with no space for the examiner to write their marks on. Please ensure that the latest version is being used.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A Language

Candidates' language was generally adequate to convey their intended meaning. Some candidates tried very hard to include a range of complex structures, vocabulary and kanji. While this is to be commended, candidates should bear in mind that there are only 8 marks in total for language, whereas there are 10 marks available for content. Sometimes it seemed their time would have been better spent on reading the source texts to pick up information, rather than composing wonderfully difficult sentences. Some candidates received a 1 mark penalty under this criterion, as their assignments were too short.

### Criterion B Content

To score highly on this criterion, candidates have to do two things. Firstly, they need to fulfill the aim that was stated in the rationale. This means that their aim must be very clear in their own minds before they start writing, which often did not seem to be the case. Secondly, they need to make use of the source texts. Candidates were often weak on this. Sometimes they

simply copied large sections of the source texts, and sometimes they ignored the source texts and did a piece of creative writing.

### Criterion C Format

Candidates were generally very strong at using conventions appropriate to their chosen format.

### Criterion D Rationale

It was rare to award the full 3 marks in this criterion. Please see page 33 of the Language B guide. Candidates must state what the aim of their written assignment is, and how they are going to achieve these aims, with reference to the sources.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Please remind candidates that they should make use of the sources. In a topic like environmental protection, it is very easy for candidates to write from general knowledge rather than base their assignment on the source texts. This will cost them a lot of marks under criterion B.
- Please think carefully about the topic given to the candidates, and the source texts consequently chosen. While it may be attractive to choose a topic with which candidates are very familiar and comfortable, it does leave candidates very wide open to writing the whole piece from their own knowledge and imagination without using the source texts. This can lead to a candidate scoring 2 or 3 out of 10 for criterion B.
- Please feel free to adapt source texts to make them appropriate for B SL candidates. Generally speaking, sources just "copied and pasted" from the internet will be too difficult for a B SL candidate to read. Please use the IB published kanji list, or the paper I text booklets, when deciding which kanji to gloss and which to leave un-glossed. Please also be careful that the total length of the texts given to candidates is appropriate. Each source should be 300 - 400 words (Guide page 34), which is 600 - 800 characters in Japanese.
- Please make candidates aware that "How the aim was fulfilled" does not mean "I think I did this assignment quite well." They should write along the lines of "I used the statistics from source A, the woman's personal story from source B and the community declaration from source C".

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 26	27 - 35	36 - 43	44 - 52	53 - 60

## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Candidates seemed to have no particular difficulties with any text type, or any question type, on the paper.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates appeared well prepared on all aspects of the paper.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Passage A was about the increasing use of twitter.

Candidates generally answered the short answer questions 1 to 3 well, although question 3 was sometimes incorrectly answered as "You can tweet in your own time." Questions 4 to 7 required candidates to choose suitable headings for the various paragraphs, and these questions were generally well answered. Question 8 required candidates to choose 4 correct statements from a bank of statements; most candidates answered this fully correctly, but some chose C, which was incorrect.

Passage B was about a man who had created a miniature village from rubbish.

Of the short answer questions 9 to 12, question 10 was the hardest, with questions 11 and 12 being easier. Matching sentence halves (questions 13 to 16), and the multiple choice questions 17 to 19 caused no particular problems for candidates.

Passage C was about the debate over lowering the voting age in Japan.

The short answer questions (21 to 24) were reasonably easy, and well answered by candidates. Questions 25 to 28 were multiple choice questions: candidates found question 26, which required the interpretation of a causative phrase, difficult, and C was often chosen as an incorrect answer. Questions 29 to 32 required candidates to find the words corresponding to given definitions in the passage: candidates often find this exercise hard, and this year was no exception.

Passage D was the literary text.

Question 33 to 36 required candidates to complete gaps in a passage with given words; candidates sometimes chose the distractor on these questions. They need to choose a word that fits both grammatically and semantically. Questions 37 to 41 were of the "true / false with justification" type: candidates all seemed to know that they had to complete both the true / false box and the justification to get the mark, which was pleasing. Some candidates lost marks as they ticked the incorrect true / false box, although they had found the relevant part

of the text for justification. Questions 42 to 45, multiple choice questions on overall comprehension of the text, were generally well answered.

Passage E was about the potential registration of a couple of Japanese sites as world heritage sites.

Candidates did answer the questions by reading the passage, rather than from anything they may have seen in the media, which was pleasing. The short answer questions 46 to 48 were generally well answered, with only the weakest candidates offering answers such as "Mt. Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan" (presumably a guess from their general knowledge) for question 48. Questions 49 to 52 were multiple choice questions, and again generally well answered. Questions 53 to 56 were perhaps some of the hardest on the paper, with candidates being required to match words from the passage with words of a similar meaning.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates need continued practice in reading fast enough to get through the paper in the time allowed. Weaker candidates who may not get through the whole paper need to have planned their examination strategy.
- Candidates need practice of both reading *katakana* words and *kanji* compounds.
- Candidates need continued practice on defining new vocabulary items through the medium of Japanese.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 23	24 - 32	33 - 40	41 - 45

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The weaker candidates continue to struggle with the volume of reading required to get through the paper, but their examination strategy (really concentrate on the first two passages and get maximum marks there) does seem to have improved. Candidates continue to find the vocabulary questions hard.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates appeared well prepared across all question types and topic areas.



## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Passage A was about environmentally friendly cooking.

Candidates generally handled this passage well, with even the weakest candidates demonstrating understanding of the passage. There were no problems with question 1, which required candidates to choose the 3 correct statements from a bank of statements. Questions 2 to 4 required candidates to complete a passage using words supplied - the only question which caused significant difficulty was question 3, where there were two grammatically correct (*itte mo* and *ikanakute mo*) alternatives which would fit, but the candidates had to choose the one with the correct meaning. It was very pleasing that almost all of the candidates tried the short answer questions 5 to 8. Question 6 "What do you do with the meat?" caused difficulty for the weaker candidates, with answers such as "2 slices of ham and a sausage" or "Yes, there is meat" commonly given. Weaker candidates gave the impression that they had just read the word "meat", and copied out the relevant part of the passage, without really understanding the question.

Passage B was about the use of technology in sport.

Questions 9 to 12 asked for candidates to find words in the passage from given definitions: candidates generally find this a hard exercise, but seemed to have made a reasonable effort of the exercise this year. The multiple choice questions 13 to 15 were generally well answered, as were the short answer questions 16 to 19. A relative clause was needed to give a full answer to question 16 (the hotel where the athletes were staying), and the weaker candidates found this hard.

Passage C was about a refugee who had volunteered in Japan after the earthquake in 2011.

Again the short answer questions 20 to 22 were reasonably well answered, with the hardest being question 21, where many candidates offered "with his wife" as an incorrect answer. Questions 23 to 26 were of the "true false with justification" type: many candidates continue to lose marks on these questions as they do not follow the rubric - sometimes the justification is missing, sometimes candidates have not indicated "true" or "false". Please continue to drill candidates on how to answer this question type. In the multiple choice questions 27 to 31, the first two questions which tested referents were the hardest.

Passage D was about after school clubs and activities.

Questions 32 to 35 required two halves of the sentences to be matched: candidates were generally good at answering these. Questions 36 to 39 required headings (in the form of questions) to be matched to paragraphs: it was pleasing that candidates seemed to tackle this type of question better than in previous years. Questions 40 to 43 were multiple choice questions: question 42 seemed to be the hardest, possibly because candidates needed to recognize the passive to get the correct answer.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Please continue to encourage candidates to practice vocabulary through the medium of Japanese, and not just to always learn vocabulary paired up with their L1.
- Please remind candidates that for the "true / false with justification" type question, they need to both indicate "true or false" and give the correct justification to get the mark.
- There were some comments on the teacher feedback forms (G2 forms) about the use of *kanji*. In general, where one *kanji* in a compound is on the IB list and the other is not, the word is written in *kanji* with a pronunciation gloss over it. However, if both *kanji* in a compound are not on the list, then this word is written in *hiragana*. Where there are two *kanji* with the same pronunciation but different meanings (e.g. *tsukuru* for "make" or "create"), the *kanji* from the list is not used unless it is the correct *kanji* in that context. Grammatical words / endings (e.g. *to iimasu*) are increasingly being written in hiragana in Japan, and this trend is being followed.

## Higher level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 20	21 - 26	27 - 33	34 - 39	40 - 45

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Candidates generally had more difficulty with Section B than with Section A. They had difficulty in structuring a suitable argument, and organising their ideas in such a way as to build up the argument.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates appeared well prepared to write using a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

### The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Candidates who answered question 1 were able to explain the importance of the cultural activities associated with the school. They could have described these activities in greater detail, although they did pick up on the nuance of the question and explained how this helps children to develop their self awareness as Japanese people. Sometimes the text types got confused and ended up as a speech rather than pamphlet.

Responses to question 2 were generally disappointing: on the one hand, the costumes in the fashion show were not described in great detail, whilst on the other hand, neither did candidates explore the idea of tradition and continuity in fashion. They should spend some time thinking of ideas and organising these ideas before starting to write.

No candidate answered question 3 or 5.

In question 4, the review for a school newspaper article text type was generally well handled. However, the content of the writing was sometimes disappointing, with some candidates neither giving basic information about the book / film, nor being able to give a detailed opinion on the film.

In section B, candidates were generally weak at structuring the argument. Quite often, after their introductory paragraph they would start on an example; but then they got distracted onto the example and ended up digressing.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates need to be trained to think of ideas, and then organising these ideas into a coherent plan before starting writing. This applies to both section A and B.
- Candidates need to include detailed, relevant supporting details in section A.
- Candidates must write in paragraphs.
- Candidates need to write in a suitably formal register. Sometimes they wrote very informally, as though they were speaking to friends.

## Standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

No area appeared particularly difficult for candidates.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates appeared well prepared on all areas of the programme: no topics seemed to cause particular difficulty. Candidates had clearly been well prepared to use a range of grammatical structures, vocabulary and *kanji*, and were very well prepared on the conventions of different text types.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1 asked candidates to write a publicity pamphlet for an international concert that they were putting on with their classmates at school. Some candidates lost marks because they failed to understand the question - either they did not cover the international aspect, or they did not describe who was performing what kind of music. They therefore did not have sufficient material to write about and so tended to invent international food stalls or fashions shows etc. and wrote about those.

Question 2 asked candidates to write about a Japanese festival. Many candidates who chose this topic had clearly studied Japanese traditions and customs in detail, and knew a lot of unusual vocabulary and facts that they included in their articles. The most popular festival chosen was the New Year celebrations. Although candidates were strong on description of the festivals, they were weaker on reflection and writing about what they had learnt about Japanese people through the festival.

Question 3 asked candidates to write a blog from their hospital bed, reflecting on their illness and the kindness of their friends. Most candidates who tackled this question seemed to lack imagination, or a strong "angle" to their piece. The pieces therefore tended to be fairly pedestrian. The blog format, however, was very well done.

Question 4 asked candidates to write a letter to their Japanese teacher, from a trip abroad with little money. Some candidates failed to understand the details of the question and just wrote about a holiday abroad. Few were able to combine both the "having a great time abroad" and "need to work for money" aspects of this question.

Question 5 asked candidates to speak about the benefits of computers to elderly people. Out of the 5 questions on the paper, this question was generally the best tackled in terms of content, although it was only the very top candidates who were able to fully see the issues from an elderly person's perspective: many of the middle band candidates wrote things along the lines of "Facebook is great" with no thought that the elderly person may have never heard of Facebook. The speech format was also well handled, with many candidates able to use rhetorical devices very effectively.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates seem to handle the various conventions for the different text types really well, so please continue teaching them as you are.
- Please encourage candidates to learn and use *kanji*. Some candidates write using a very good level of grammar, but then write "*ikimasu*" in hiragana.
- Please encourage candidates to read the details (the full nuance) of the question and respond to it appropriately. If they just write about the general topic area, they are unlikely to score high marks in criterion B (Message).
- Candidates give the impression that they approach paper 2 with a mental list of grammatical points to include (indeed, quite often this list is on page 1 of the answer sheets). Whilst this will help them achieve good marks for Criterion A: Language, the content often seems to be lacking in thought, and thus they score poorer marks on

Criterion B: Message. Please encourage candidates to think through, and plan, the content of what they are going to write. An interesting perspective and full details will score good marks on Criterion B (Message).