

Japanese *ab initio*

Overall grade boundaries

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 15	16 - 30	31 - 46	47 - 60	61 - 73	74 - 84	85 - 100

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

Individual oral

Please ensure that the visual stimuli presented to the candidates are directly linked to the target culture. Words should only appear on the visual stimulus if they are a natural part of the scene, for example, shop or street signs. Any such words should be in the target language.

Introductions, even if they do not form an official part of the oral, should take place in the target language. The candidate should introduce himself/ herself in the target language giving name and candidate number.

Teachers are reminded to 'guide' students through the oral by informing them of when one Part is over and when another is about to begin.

In order that candidates can access the upper markbands for both criteria, teachers are encouraged to intervene if necessary and move the candidate on in order that the three parts are completed in timely fashion.

Teachers are reminded to ask the two compulsory questions on the Written Assignment after the description and follow-up questions on the visual stimulus. It is important to ask these questions because the student will possess the necessary vocabulary to handle both open ended and more direct questions on the Written Assignment and thus stands a better chance to access the higher markbands in Criterion B, interactive and receptive skills.

The style of questions chosen by the teacher is important and must be one which allows stronger candidates to access the upper markbands while allowing weaker candidates to feel comfortable throughout.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Most of the recordings submitted for Japanese *ab initio* were very well handled. However, some recordings had technical problems which required examiners to request for re-upload through the IB. It is always a good idea to check that the recordings have uploaded correctly.

The IAs were generally conducted successfully. It was evident that most candidates had been taught well and were able to use a variety of grammatical structures. However, some IA examinations were not conducted in accordance with the instructions specified in the new *ab initio* guide. Recording time of some IAs were too long and others were too short. In addition, a few candidates spoke for too long in Part 1 and as a result, another part of the examination was cut short. This could have been avoided if teachers were more aware of the time remaining during the recordings.

Teachers need to be considerate in choosing the type of visual stimuli which have many information relating to Japan and its culture to describe. This year, the visual stimuli chosen by teachers were based on the syllabus, and were more or less suitable for the internal assessment. However, some candidates referred to facts and detailed information on the theme of the visual stimuli; they neither created stories nor described the visual stimuli in Part 1. Others touched on the stimuli at the beginning but then went on to talk about an unrelated subject.

Furthermore, some teachers did not ask questions regarding the visual stimuli nor the written assignment.

Having said this, it should be reiterated that overall, the assessment was conducted very successfully in most cases.

Candidate performance against each criterion

It was evident that all the teachers took care to prepare their candidates for the internal assessment. That is, every candidate seemed to try hard to reach their maximum potential during the assessment.

Criterion A

Majority of the candidates used appropriate grammar and range of vocabulary. However, in some cases candidates needed to make more links to the visual stimuli when creating stories as some of them made no reference to this.

Criterion B

Most candidates were able to understand and answer the questions posed. Teachers on the whole were supportive and asked a range of different questions. In general, candidates achieved higher marks in Criterion B than in Criterion A as they were able to communicate with their teachers well and get their message across.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

It is important that candidates practise describing the visual stimuli in detail prior to the IA examinations. They should avoid telling stories which have nothing to do with the visual stimuli.

Some teachers use the same visual stimuli year on year. It is recommended that teachers increase the number of the visual stimuli they have to hand as it is important these remain unseen to candidates until the day of the examinations. Teachers should also ensure they select visual stimuli that are relevant to Japanese culture.

The copy quality of some of the visual stimuli was not good: they were poorly reproduced, and the images were not clear, which could affect candidate performance. It is therefore essential that teachers prepare the stimuli clear enough to help the candidates to make presentations in Part 1 with ease. This will also help examiners to follow the candidates' speech.

Candidates must be reminded to state their IB registered name and IB candidate number at the beginning of recordings.

Teachers are reminded that it is best practice not make to comments and/or interruptions when candidates are describing the visual stimuli; it tends to interfere with their speech and eventually detract from their effort to focus on the task.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 17	18 - 20

Written assignment

Choice of topic

The topic selected for the written assignment **must** come from the prescribed topics as detailed in the guide:

Individual and society	Leisure and work	Urban and rural environment
Daily routines	Employment	Environmental concerns
Education	Entertainment	Global issues
Food and drink	Holidays	Neighbourhood
Personal details, appearance and character	Media	Physical geography

Physical Health	Sport	Town and services
Relationships	Technology	Weather
Shopping	Transport	

Teachers should guide students to choose topics which are sharply focused and manageable in the number of words available (200 -300).

The topic should be clearly stated in the title of the written assignment. It is recommended that the target culture (country /countries) is mentioned in the title.

Students must select a target culture where the target language is spoken.

Teachers are reminded that the topics selected by students for the written assignment can overlap but each title **must** be different.

Presentation

The written assignment consists of:

- Title
- Description
- Comparison
- Reflection
- Bibliography

The headings (Description, Comparison and Reflection) should be used to structure the text. The three questions which form the basis for the section Reflection should also be written out fully.

All written assignments must be hand-written in ink.

When quoting from a source, almost all ab initio languages use the same convention of either speech marks or footnote notes:

1. ...and confirmed according to J Fotheringham: "cycling is as popular in Great Britain as it is in France".
2. ...and confirmed because cycling is as popular in Great Britain as it is in France.¹

Word count

The word limit **must** be respected. There is a 2 mark penalty in Criterion E, Language if less than the minimum number of words or more than the maximum number of words has been written.

¹ J. Fotheringham

For the purposes of the written assignment, a word is defined as having a space either side of it:

It's a shame that = 4 words

It is most unfortunate that = 5 words

Quotes, the headings of each part, the three questions (Reflection) are **not** included in the word-count.

Criterion specific comments

Description

It is important that factual information on the **target culture** be included in this section. Information given on the student's own culture will not be awarded marks in this section.

The factual information should emanate from the research conducted by the student. Justifying why this topic has been chosen is **not** considered factual information.

Comparison

A comparison may be made in a single paragraph using comparative language (*but, on the other hand, while, whereas, more than...*) or in two parallel paragraphs which treat the same elements in both cultures.

For the purposes of assessment, similarities and differences between the cultures chosen for the written assignment will be treated equally.

Reflection

All three questions must be answered.

Students should not include any information that has already appeared in the two preceding parts (Description and Comparison).

In the third question: *What might a person from the target culture(s) find different about your chosen topic in your culture(s)?* the student is being asked to consider the chosen topic not in the context of the target culture but in his / her own culture from an "outsider's" point of view.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Considering this session is the first for WA, the candidates generally offered reasonable work. The quality of the WA does, of course, depend upon how well the teachers understand the requirement and can thus support the candidates.

Candidates chose a good range of topics such as "Food and Drink" and "Education" from the Individual and Society section; and "School Life and Uniform", "Holidays" (Christmas and Summer Holidays), and "Sports" from Leisure and Work, all suited to *ab initio* level.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Description

Most candidates provided sufficient information to describe their chosen topic, but a few did not understand what the section “Description” needs to include, and wrote about the reason why they chose the topic, but this was not relevant. Candidates and teachers need to clearly understand that the Description section should include a few items of factual information about their chosen topic.

Criterion B: Comparison

Most candidates successfully explained comparisons between Japanese culture and their own culture, giving similarities and differences. On the other hand, if they allocate too large a proportion of the overall length of the WA to this, it is easy for them to exceed the maximum number of characters. Candidates must understand that if the character limit is exceeded the assessment will be based on the first 600 characters they have written and exclude the rest. This will mean that a part, or all, of their following element Reflection, may not be fully assessable.

Criterion C: Reflection

Candidates also need to clearly understand that this section requires them to include answers to the following three questions:

- i. *What aspects of your chosen topic surprised you?* The stronger candidates used the expression “bikkuri shimashita” correctly and effectively. Other expressions that might be useful could include “omoshiroi to omoimashita”, “kono koto o hajimete shirimashita”, and “ima made shirimasen deshita”.
- ii. *Why do you think these cultural similarities/differences exist?* The stronger candidates successfully analysed why and communicated their reason, for example, “Because the climate/population is different” using the construction “~no ho ga ~ yori”. Some candidates, however, had failed to think deeply and simply wrote “Because the countries are in Asia”, or, “Each culture is different”.
- iii. *What might a Japanese person find different about your chosen topic in your culture?* The candidates need to have good skill with vocabulary and expression to answer this well. It may help them to better answer this section if they incorporate expressions such as “Nihonjin wa odoroku deshou”, or “...mezurashii to omou deshou”.

Many candidates tended to forget this third point in their answer. Some candidates wrote C-1, C-2, and C-3 as titles, or wrote a separate paragraph for each of these points, and this may be a good way not to accidentally omit one of these required answers.

Criterion D: Register

Most of the candidates used the formal desu/~masu register. A small number of them mixed the formal and informal register, which they should be avoided.

Criterion E: Language

Mistakes in the usage of the constructions “A wa B yori” and “(reason), kara” in sentences were noticeable. If these are used the wrong way round, for example “kara, (reason)” the opposite meaning is conveyed, or the sentence is illogical.

Criterion F: Formal requirements

All candidates must write their WA in Japanese, and sign the cover sheet. The WA must be completed in ink.

A bibliography in standard format should be included with references to all sources. Some candidates did not provide a bibliography, or they sometimes omitted details of the titles and posting/publication/issue and viewed dates.

The Japanese sources they attached were varied in length, some being only a few words whilst others were many pages.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

To write headings: it may help candidates to be used to writing three paragraphs in their WA, perhaps by using headings such as:

A. Setsumei.

B. Hikaku.

C. Iken.

To familiarise themselves with useful constructions: This might include ~ wa ~ ga chigaimasu; ~ kara desu (reason); ~ sono riyu wa ~ kara desu; ~ wa ~ yori; ~ to omoimasu; It may also be beneficial to practise how information / quotations should be introduced in footnotes and the main text, using, for example:

“ “ (quotation marks)

“Mr X said that...”

To discuss with candidates about cultural similarities and differences during the class: If there is an opportunity to discuss similarities and differences from each theme (Individuals and Society, Leisure and Work, and Urban and Rural Environment), it may encourage them to think about various aspects of their chosen, or potential choice of, topics both inside and outside the classroom.

Effective Choice of Topic: The purpose of the WA is to compare aspects of Japanese culture and the candidate's culture. A small number of candidates chose the topic “Japanese Restaurants in (the candidates' home) Country” and simply described this. They did not compare and contrast anything, simply giving a straightforward description of the restaurant. If they choose this topic they should make comparisons between Japanese restaurants and

non-Japanese restaurants. Teachers need to guide candidates to choose a suitable and effective topic.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 18	19 - 23	24 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 40

General comments

Candidates need to write their answers legibly. Some handwriting is very difficult to read.

When candidates want to correct what they have written in the small answer boxes they should clearly delete their old answer, and clearly write their new answer next to it. If they overwrite the original answer with the new one, it is sometimes impossible to determine what they have written. In such cases, the mark cannot be given.

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

- Finding the vocabulary items that match the meaning.
- Identifying true/false statements and giving the reason for their choice.
- Short answer questions.

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

- Multiple-choice questions.
- The candidates were generally well prepared for reading the Kanji for numbers.

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

Text A

Many candidates answered this well, but weaker candidates had difficulties with Q4-8.

Q9 asked “doko de” for which “Hotel” and “Sushi shop” were the correct answers. There was no necessity to answer with whole sentences. Some candidates answered “arubaito”, which was incorrect.

Text B

Q10 was generally well-answered.

For Q11, some candidates incorrectly chose Option C, perhaps because they did not understand the word “saijitsu”.

Q12-15 tested their knowledge of vocabulary items. Some of the candidates wrote in sentences, not with one or two words. Q14, especially, seemed difficult and “o-miyage” or “shashinshu” were incorrectly chosen.

Text C

Q20 was often incorrectly answered as option D.

Q21-23 needed the candidates to understand the instructions. They need to tick the appropriate true/false box. Some of them ticked the wrong true/false box even though they had identified the correct reason. Both parts need to be correct in order to gain a mark.

Q24-26 needed the candidates to read the instructions carefully, which contained key words such as “Ichinichi sensei” in the body of the text so that they do not waste time and effort in reading the wrong part of the text to find the answers.

Text D

Q27 was difficult for the weaker candidates, but correctly answered by the stronger candidates. Option B “100% cotton socks” was often incorrectly chosen, as the word “hakanai” was missed, and Option E was also incorrectly chosen as the key phrase “Juusu wa dame” was missed.

Q29 needed them to notice the word “ototoi”, which means “two days ago”. A commonly incorrect choice was Option B “last year”.

Q30-33 needed them to fill in the gaps, using one-word answers, not full sentences.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Practise with past exam papers is recommended.
- Where candidates need to write the words or phrases from the text in order to answer questions they must be careful to copy accurately.
- Candidates should read the instructions very carefully so they can understand when they should answer with one word, for example gap-filling, and when they should answer in sentences.
- Candidates need to pay more attention to interrogative words in the questions, such as “where”, “when” or “what”.
- Some instructions indicate which part of the text they have to read to find the answer. Teachers should train the candidates to read the instructions very carefully so they do not waste time and effort in reading the wrong part of the text in search of the answer.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

General comments

There were a few candidates who answered two questions from Section A instead of one, and a few who answered all five questions. The coversheet and the rubric clearly stated that they need to answer ONE question from Section A and ONE question from Section B. Please note that starting this year each question in Paper 2 is allocated its own page.

It is important that they always read the coversheet and the rubric to understand how they need to answer.

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

- There were some cases of candidates misunderstanding the task.
- It seemed to be difficult for most candidates to produce the Speech for Section B question 4.
- Many candidates had difficulty with the past tense of adjectives and joining adjectives together.

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

Most of the candidates were able to use basic sentence structures and vocabulary, but with some errors with particles within the very basic sentence structures. The more capable candidates demonstrated usage of various structures, such as ~ to omoimasu, ~ tsumori desu, etc.

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

Section A

Q1 asked the candidates to write a blog about a film they had been to that day.

Candidates gave basic information about the film, but some candidates forgot to write when and where they had seen the film. The blog page would be more convincing if it includes a message for the readers.

The stronger candidates were able to express their impressions in detail by using a range of adjectives effectively.

Some candidates talked about what they did before and after the film, but this information was not relevant to the task.

Q2 asked the candidates to write an e-mail to their friends about a party.

Most candidates dealt with this fairly well. Many of them gave good explanations of when, where and what kind of party it would be, including the sort of activities there would be there. However, most candidates did not mention what sort of things would be necessary for the party. The stronger candidates mentioned and developed ideas such as “please bring your favourite CD”, or, “please bring some sweets as food might be short”.

Section B

Q3 asked the candidates to write a letter to apply for a part-time job at a restaurant.

The stronger candidates organised a letter with a well-structured answer containing their self-introduction and their reason for seeking a part-time job. Some weaker candidates misunderstood the task and wrote about their visit to a restaurant.

Q4 asked the candidates to write a speech to their classmates about helping elderly people living alone.

This task appears to have been challenging for candidates and was the least-chosen task. Many candidates simply wrote a description of their grandparents. Only a few strong candidates were able to attempt this task and provide relevant information, addressed to their audience in a Speech format including appropriate opening and closing expressions.

Q5 asked the candidates to write a school newspaper article about the day they guided a Japanese tourist around their town.

Many of the weaker candidates misunderstood the task and simply wrote about taking the tourist around their school, or to a film.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Please emphasise to the candidate that they must read the task carefully, including checking the tense needed, as there are instructions there about what they need to write about.

To gain the higher marks they need to demonstrate their ability to use slightly more complex constructions, such as ~ nagara, ~ tari, ~ suru koto, ~ no ato de, and the explanatory reason use of ~ kara, ~ no de, and ~ to omoimasu. They also need to be able to use simple connectives such as soshite, demo, and sore kara.

Practise writing in paragraphs and make an essay plan of about four paragraphs, for example, an opening, details 1 and 2, and a closing paragraph.

Familiarise them with various text types and what is required for each, such as using a title for an article; greeting words for a letter or an e-mail; and opening and ending sentences for a speech. Consideration of a wide range of published text types would also help.