

May 2014 subject reports

## Japanese ab initio

Overall grade boundaries

### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 14	15 - 28	29 - 46	47 - 59	60 - 71	72 - 83	84 - 100

Standard level internal assessment

### Component grade boundaries

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

## Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

Most of the IA forms were completed appropriately. However the following issues occurred, which should be corrected for future sessions:

- Some teachers filled in the IA form with no comments regarding the candidates' performance. It is important moderators know how the teacher assessed the candidate.
- Several centres uploaded the visual stimuli and the IA form together.
- Some centres did not use the correct version of the IA forms. Please ensure that you download the latest versions each session.
- Some recordings could not be played, and some were accompanied by an incorrect visual stimulus.

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

All of the work submitted was satisfactory and well-handled. It seemed that teachers had made a series of efforts to prepare for the internal assessment, as every candidate seemed to try hard to reach their maximum potential during the assessment.

Most of the teachers created an encouraging and supportive atmosphere to induce candidates to speak with confidence.

Recording time was on the whole within appropriate times; however some teachers did not follow the length of the examination specified for each part. Please check the Language ab initio Guide carefully.

The visual stimuli provided to candidates are required to be relevant to the Japanese culture, and therefore careful selection of visual stimulus is required. This is also needed as the topic of the visual stimulus and the written assignment should be different. When selecting the visual stimulus, please also make sure that no questions or descriptions of the stimulus are written on it.

Most of the recordings had smooth transitions between Parts 1, 2 and 3. However there were some recordings in which it was difficult to tell which part they were conducting. The oral examination should be conducted in a way that it is clear to the moderator when each part begins.

In Part 2, some teacher did not ask any question based on visual stimulus nor written assignment questions.

The teacher could give some hints to candidates when they are unable to respond to questions. However, unnecessary repetition of questions should be avoided.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A:

Most of the candidates were able to speak well with basic and some more complex grammatical structures and a range of vocabulary. In addition, they had good pronunciation and intonation. Some candidates had difficulties continuing without the teachers' help/support. They found it very hard to speak very simple sentences.

### Criterion B:

Most of the candidates were able to provide appropriate information and sustain the conversation. Few candidates needed their teachers to repeat questions frequently, but on the other hand, some good candidates made independent contributions to the teachers' questions. There were a few teachers who spoke noticeably more than their candidates, and occasionally the candidate's talk was interrupted mid-flow. This is not good practice.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should to collect and use more new visual stimuli for the examinations. The older ones may be used for practice.

Choosing suitable visual stimulus for candidates is important as some visual stimulus did not have many things to talk about, or have relevance to the topics studied. It is highly recommend for teachers to choose culturally relevant, and detailed, visual stimulus for practicing and for the actual oral assessment.

Please teach not only a variety of grammar and vocabulary, but also presentation techniques, using a structure of a good introduction, contents and closing sentences.

Teacher should try not to give too much help, give answers or correct candidate's Japanese when the candidates are unsure.

## Standard level written assignment

### Component grade boundaries

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

## Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

This is the second year of the WA and the basic procedures seem to be generally well-communicated between teachers and pupils.

There are still a few centres which either did not attach any sources or only included English-language sources and not any Japanese sources.

A few centres are still using the old cover sheets. Please ensure that you download the latest versions each session.

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

Many candidates produced reasonable work and chose interesting topics. Food, school life, holidays and festivals were popular. It is very important to choose suitable topics which can be easily compared and able to develop an opinion about.

The quality of the WA depends upon how well the teachers understand its requirements and can properly support their pupils. The following are examples of unsuitable WAs:

- 'Noodle dishes in Japan and (their home country)' is too limited to compare and deepen their thoughts.
- 'Bon Dance in Japan and (their home country)' is of the same origin and does not provide useful points of comparison to discuss.

Topics should be chosen that candidates can easily compare and contrast differences between Japan and their home country, and that they can explain at their language level.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A: Description

Most candidates provided sufficient factual information about the topic they chose, but a few simply wrote about the reason they chose that topic. They need to clearly understand what they are required to write in this part. All factual information should not be general and vague but give a relevant level of detail.

### Criterion B: Comparison

Many candidates successfully compared aspects of Japanese culture with their own culture, giving similarities and differences. Please note the overall length of the WA should not exceed 600 characters. If it is, only the first 600 characters will be assessed and the remainder excluded. Therefore candidates must be very careful not to write too much in this part. It is sufficient to provide two or three similarities and/or differences to gain high marks.

### Criterion C: Reflection

This part is an essential part of the WA. Some candidates failed to answer all three questions. Both teachers and candidates should understand these requirements.

The first question is 'What aspect of your chosen topic surprised you?' Useful expressions might include *bikkuri shimashita*, *hajimete shirimashita* and *ima made shirimasen deshita*.

The second question is 'Why do you think these cultural similarities/differences exist?' Responses such as 'Because the two countries are in Asia' or 'Each country is different' cannot gain marks. They need to demonstrate their intercultural understanding to gain a high mark.

The third question is 'What might a Japanese person find different about your chosen topic in your culture?' Expressions such as '*Nihonjin wa kono koto ni tsuite o odoroku to omoimasu*' or '*mezurashii to omou deshou*' may be useful here.

Some candidates used headings C-1, C-2, C-3 as titles or wrote a separate paragraph for each of these points and this may be a good way to ensure they do not omit one of these required elements.

### Criterion D: Register

Most candidates, correctly, used the *desu/~masu* register. A small number mixed the informal and formal register, which they should not do.

### Criterion E: Language

Overall, the majority of candidates demonstrated basic language skill, using simple sentences to write their WA. However, there were mistakes in the usage of the construction (reason) *kara*, and *A wa B yori* in sentences. They used the words the wrong way around, for example, ‘*~kara (reason) desu*’.

### Criterion F: Formal Requirements.

Some candidates did not provide a bibliography. Candidates should write their own bibliography, which means teachers should not give the same typed bibliography for some or all candidates from the centre.

The Japanese sources they attached were varied in length, some being only a few words whilst others were many pages. Some of these were well beyond *ab initio* level so it is curious how those candidates could make use of the information.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

To write headings: it may help the candidates become used to writing three main sections for their WA. Headings such as: A. *Setsumei*. B. *Hikaku*. C. *Iken*, might be considered.

To familiarise themselves with useful constructions for the WA, which may help them express their opinion effectively, such as:

- *~ wa ~ to chigaimasu.*
- *~ wa ~ ga chigaimasu.*
- *~ kara desu (explaining reason).*
- *~wa ~ yori.*
- *~ to chigaimasu.*
- *hitotsume, futatsumei ni.*

Appropriate sources: candidates and teachers should explore more to find appropriate sources which candidates can read and understand.

Effective choice of topic: teachers need to guide candidates to choose a suitable and effective topic.

Discuss cultural similarities and differences during lesson time whenever there is an opportunity to do so.

In each theme (Individual and Society, Leisure and Work, and Urban and Rural Environment) teachers should encourage candidates to think about their different aspects, which may help them to deepen their thoughts and make a plan for their WAs.

## Further comments

Please note that the Language ab initio Written Assignment has undergone review and a new specification will be in place from the May 2015 session onwards. Please ensure that you refer to the new **Language ab initio Guide (for first examinations 2015)**, published on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC), so that candidates are appropriately prepared.

## 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 - 17	18 - 22	23 - 27	28 - 32	33 - 40

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

- Text B Q11-13. Candidates needed to carefully read and understand the text and multiple choice(s).
- Text C Q18-21. Identifying true/false statements and giving the reasons for their choices. Although they gave the correct reason some did not tick the appropriate true/false box.
- Q25-28. Some candidates seemed to have difficulty answering these questions, which needed them to find the vocabulary items to match the meaning.
- Text D Q35-37. Some candidates did not understand how to answer. They filled in the gaps using sentences or phrases when the required answer was a word.

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

- Many candidates answered Text A well, using basic vocabulary items such as adjectives and the kanji for numbers which are used for times and prices.
- More candidates than usual correctly answered questions such as Q9 and Q29 with short sentences.

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

### Text A

Many candidates answered questions on this text well, but weak candidates often failed to answer Q5-8. They needed to know verbs such as *aku*, *shimasu* and *hairu*.

### Text B

Q11-13 seemed difficult for some candidates. They needed to clearly comprehend the text and the points such as where Yuko-san works and how she works. The key vocabulary items from the syllabus were *okureru*, *yaseru*, *owaru*, *heru* and *fueru*.

Q14 was well-answered. Weak candidates needed to know *ukaru*, *ochiru* and *goukaku*, which are included in the Individual and Society (Education) category in the Japanese Language Specific Syllabus.

Q15-17 were answered fairly well. Candidates who failed to answer correctly missed the words *itsu* (when), *nani* (what), and *donna koto* (what kind of thing).

### Text C

Q18-21 were some of the challenging questions and candidates needed to understand the instructions and to tick the appropriate true/false box. Some of them ticked the inappropriate box even though they had identified and given the correct reason. The key words were *katsu*, *shigoto ni dekiru*, *seikatsu dekiru*, *hantai suru* and *sansei suru* which can be found in Individual and Society (Education).

*Yokozuna* may be a new word for some candidates, but they should have been able to understand the meaning from the sentence 'Yokozuna is the strongest person of Sumo'.

Q22. Candidates needed to know the basic vocabulary items *taiju ga karui* and *omoi*.

Q25-28. Some candidates did not understand the instruction and answered in sentences.

Q26 was often incorrectly answered as *o-tousan*. Harumafuji's father was a policeman but *o-tousan* does not mean policeman. They had to find the words whose meaning is the same.

Q29 was answered well by many candidates, who may have noticed the phrase *nani ga shitai* giving them a hint, and answered using the *~tai* form of verbs in the text.

### Text D

Q30-31 required the candidates to recognise the words *youfuku*, *seifuku* and *dare to* as a hint.

Q32. The stronger candidates answered well but some candidates incorrectly chose option G.

Q33. Some candidates just wrote '*Keitai denwa*' but were not given a mark, as they needed to include the verb *kiru* to show they understood it was to be switched off.

Q34 asked the reason why these souvenirs are popular with visitors. Candidates who recognised the words *doushite* and *node* answered this easily.

Q35-37 were challenging for even the stronger candidates. Some wrote their answers in sentences and not with one word. Q36 was also often answered by giving a time such as 12.00, but a time word is grammatically incorrect here in this sentence.

Q35. The best answer was *daigakusei* but 10.30 and *jiyu* would also fit this gap so they were also allowed.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Practice with past exam papers to familiarise the pupils with the instructions of the questions. It is important to understand how to answer the gap-filling questions which use one-word answers, not in a sentence or phrase.
- The examples help the candidates understand how they are required to answer. They must look at examples and understand what type of questions they are.
- Candidates need to be trained to pay greater attention to interrogative words such as where, when or what in the questions.
- To study kanji, especially basic adjectives and numbers.
- To practice basic vocabulary items in pairs, such as *omoi* and *karui*, *ukaru* and *ochiru*.
- In the multiple choice questions where the appropriate letter is needed they should write that letter clearly – for example E's sometimes looked like F's or G's. Also some handwriting was difficult to read. Marks cannot be awarded if the answers cannot be read.
- If candidates need to correct what they have written, they should clearly delete their old answers and clearly write their new answer.

## Standard level paper two

### 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 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25



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

- There were instances of candidates misunderstanding the task.
- Many candidates had difficulty with the past tense of adjectives and joining two adjectives. They also mixed up present and past tenses, as well as the plain and polite forms of verbs.
- Some candidates did not write in the required format. For example, they wrote the newspaper article required in Q3 and the diary entry required in Q4 as a letter format.

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

- Candidates were generally well-prepared for Section A and were familiar with writing an e-mail and writing a card.
- Candidates were able to use basic vocabulary and grammar structures such as *ikimasu*, *tabemasu* etc. The more capable candidates demonstrated their usage of various structures such as *~to omoimasu* and *~tsumori desu*.
- Candidates were generally good at responding to the details in the questions, such as what they did and how they felt, using adjectives such as *ureshii*, *sabishii* and *tanoshii*.

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

### Section A

**Q1** asked the candidates to write an e-mail to a Japanese teacher about a trip with their families last week.

Candidates gave basic information about when and where they went and how they felt. They needed to give two pieces of information about the place they went to.

They used the basic letter style to complete this task using *Sensei e* and *(name) yori*.

**Q2** asked the candidates to write a good-bye card to their friend.

Weaker candidates did not understand this task, and instead wrote a card inviting their friend to a party. Some did not include any information about a present they bought, such as what it was or where they bought it. On the other hand, stronger candidates developed their ideas, for example explaining why they chose the present, and produced an interesting card.

Many correctly used words such as *kanashii* and *zannen* to express their feelings to their friend.

### Section B

**Q3** asked the candidates to write a newspaper article about their Japanese teacher.

Some candidates misunderstood the task and wrote a letter to their teacher giving a self-introduction.

Many candidates were familiar with the words *shumi* and *kazoku*.

Only the stronger candidates met the requirement of the newspaper article format, such as using a headline, a message for the readers and the writer's name. They produced highly imaginative and original work, describing their teacher using the connective form of two adjectives. The message for the readers was, for example, please talk with this teacher, or, I think that his lessons are interesting.

**Q4** asked the candidates to write a diary about their day visiting a nearby town which is different from their own.

They successfully wrote about where they went and what they did in the town – such as watching a film, shopping, eating out and playing sports. Many of them were also able to describe how they felt. However they must understand the format of a diary entry, which needs a date, and conclude with their feelings and reflections about the day. To gain higher marks they needed to explain the differences between their own town and the one they visited. To do this strong candidates used the comparison construction *~yori*.

**Q5** asked the candidates to write a speech for pupils of a junior high school.

Many of the candidates were familiar with writing about two or three school subjects, homework, tests and after-school activities, but writing these in a speech format seemed slightly difficult for some of them. To gain higher marks they needed to address their audience, using phrases such as *ganbatte kudasai*.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Please emphasise to the pupils that they must read the task carefully, including carefully checking the tense needed, as the instructions are there about what they need to write about.
- To gain the higher marks they need to demonstrate their ability to use the 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 *tatoeba*, *soshite*, *mazu*, and *tsugi ni*. *Demo* and *sorekara* are also often used.
- Practice writing in paragraphs and make an essay plan of about four paragraphs. For example in Q5, a speech opening (greeting and giving their name); details 1 and 2 (study subjects, lessons, difficult tests and enjoyable sports); and closing words.
- Please encourage candidates to become familiar with how many characters they usually write on a line, so they can quickly estimate the minimum number of lines they should write. If they write, for example, 20 characters per line, then Section A will be about 5 lines and Section B about 10 lines. Please note that spaces, punctuation marks and crossings-out do NOT count towards the total.