

GCE

Edexcel GCE

Japanese (8624/9624)

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Examiners' Report

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AS Unit 1 (6661) - Reading and Writing

The examination was broadly similar to previous examinations in style and content; candidates generally appeared very well prepared for the examination and familiar with what was expected of them. The overall standard achieved by the candidates was satisfactory to excellent. Candidates have been very well taught for the continuous writing section, and this year there was some evidence that teachers had put more effort into preparing candidates for the translation exercise, which was pleasing.

Q1 required candidates to write the pronunciations of certain kanji compounds in hiragana. Some candidates misunderstood the task and put the English meanings of the words (i.e. "map" and "post office") and so could not be awarded any credit. Of those who did attempt the question appropriately, some lost marks because they missed out the long vowel on the ゆうびんきょく, or because the よ was written as a large one.

Q2 was generally well answered; most candidates were familiar with the question type, and put single word corrections for the erroneous statements.

Q3 was attempted by most candidates, which was pleasing, as in previous years weaker candidates have missed out this question. The second half was better answered, with most candidates answering Q3(i) and Q3(j) correctly. Q3(b) and Q3(f) required candidates to put in the correct te/ta form of verbs; whilst most candidates recognised that a te/ta form was needed, far fewer were able to come up with the correct te/ta form. This area still needs more work by candidates.

All but the strongest candidates struggled with Q4, even though 3 out of the 4 kanji required were GCSE kanji.

Most candidates had no difficulty with Q5, which was pleasing. As this was a new question type to the AS level, it was anticipated that there may be some difficulties, but most candidates seemed to understand what they had to do.

Q6 proved more problematic, despite the fact that candidates only had to look at the meaning of the words, and not at the grammatical appropriateness (since they were all nouns). Presumably, candidates were finding it hard to read the full details of the passage to get the correct synonyms.

Q7 was attempted by most candidates, and there was widespread evidence that candidates had been well prepared for this question. Most not only attempted to answer the question correctly, but also made sure that they wrote in correct, full Japanese sentences to score the quality of language marks.

There seemed to be a slight rise in the standard of translation work (Q8), which was very welcome. Even the weakest candidates seem to have tried to write something. The third paragraph, with the double negative ('It is not that they don't have money') was difficult. Often candidates mistranslated this, and then went on to make the rest of the paragraph fit - i.e. they do not have money because they spend it all on drinking alcohol and buying bargain clothes. It cannot be stressed enough that candidates must be trained to analyse the grammar of the original sentence accurately - too many of them are still looking at the key nouns and then writing a beautiful piece of creative English to incorporate those key nouns.

The continuous writing (Q9) was generally well done. Most candidates were aware that they needed to include AS grammatical structures and kanji and made a good effort to do so. Many candidates demonstrated their knowledge of Japanese culture by naming various activities that the girls could do together in Japanese school.

A2 Unit 2 (6662) - Reading and Writing; Topics and Texts

The examination was broadly similar to that of previous years, and candidates seem to have no particular difficulty with any section of the paper. There was a slight improvement in the standards achieved by the very weakest candidates, with most of them at least trying to answer some of the reading comprehension questions on passage 1, and trying to write something for the translation, passage 2.

Section One

Passage 1

Most candidates answered in full sentences, although some native speaker candidates lost marks as they only gave single word answers. Q1 and Q2 were generally well tackled by candidates. Q3 was recognised as an “or” question by most candidates. Most candidates attempted Q4, although in some cases the grammatical construction of the sentences was so weak as to make it impossible to understand the meaning. Q5 proved difficult, with many candidates answering ひなんしてきました。 Or 体育館に来ました。 Q6 and Q7 were generally well answered. Quite a lot of candidates correctly answered ねこ for Q8. Q9 was generally well tackled. Some candidates lost the mark for Q10 as they purely copied out 本を読んでもらったり、いっしょに遊んでもらったりしています。

Passage 2

Most candidates attempted at least parts of this translation, which was pleasing. More candidates are looking to passage 1 for vocabulary support, and words like ひなん、不自由な生活、がまん had been picked up. Some candidates failed to translate the first couple of lines, or the names.

The “imagine” in line 4 proved problematic; it was not expected that candidates would know the word 想像, but a lot of candidates who tried to translate this using the verb 思う got themselves into all sorts of difficulties. “Each form” proved problematic for candidates whose native language was not English, as they took the meaning “shape, style” for the word form. “Pennies in jars” also proved difficult for these candidates. South East Asia was translated incorrectly by a surprisingly high number of candidates, who wrote two “direction” kanji, but seemed unable to remember which was north, south, east, west etc.

Section Two

Q1(a) was attempted by many candidates. Generally they had detailed knowledge about 2 places, but lost marks as they failed to compare and contrast. Q1(b) was only chosen by a few, but they had clearly chosen the question as they were sure of their knowledge; their responses were very detailed.

More candidates attempted the Meiji history questions this year (Q2(a) and Q2(b)), and in general, it was pleasing that the standard of answers was much higher than in previous years. Clearly candidates had studied this topic.

Q3(a) was attempted by many, but not always successfully. Far too many candidates wrote blandly that “Women used to work in the house but now they work outside of the house”, without going into any more details. If candidates are going to attempt the topic of contemporary Japanese society, they really must have detailed sociological knowledge. A similar criticism can be made of candidates who tackled Q3(b), although in general, they made a better attempt at having some kind of argument in their essays. However, often they were just unthinkingly critical of フリーター, and seemed unable to analyse it as a social phenomenon.

Many candidates had lots of ideas for Q4(a), which was good. A criticism would be that few of them bothered to structure their essays, and generally just put down a collection of thoughts. Q4(b) was poorly tackled, with many candidates just saying “Yes - Japan is famous for its four seasons”. Few seemed to have studied regional variations in the climate.

Q5(a) was very popular and generally well answered. Some candidates did not write about their favourite scene but gave an introduction to the whole story. Q5(b) was not tackled by many, but those who did, tackled it very well, with one or two outstanding pieces of clear, creative and incisive writing.

Many candidates seemed to enjoy answering Q6(a), and there were many well argued essays both for and against. The candidates clearly knew the story well, and were pleased to be able to give their own commentary on it. Q6(b) was also generally well attempted.

Q7(a) was generally rather superficially answered, with the story often not really being used to illustrate the points made. Q7(b) was generally well tackled.

Both Q8(a) and Q8(b) were reasonably well answered. Again, candidates seemed to enjoy answering Q8(b), where they could develop their own arguments about the story.

Please note that the 300 字 is a minimum. Some candidates seemed to be struggling to write 300 字 this year, and stopped at just over 300, whether or not they had written a good essay in response to the question. Many of the stronger candidates write considerably more than this, which is perfectly acceptable. Candidates should concentrate on writing a good, detailed response to the question, which will usually take them comfortably over the minimum 300 字 requirement.

Statistics

Unit 1 (6661) Reading and Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	100	59	50	41	32	24
Uniform boundary mark	300	240	210	180	150	120

Unit 2 (6662) Reading and Writing; Topics and Texts

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	140	91	78	65	52	40
Uniform boundary mark	300	240	210	180	150	120

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