



**Comisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

Leaving Certificate Examination 2004

JAPANESE

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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This Report should be read in conjunction with the 2004 Japanese Examination papers and marking schemes, which can be downloaded from the State Examinations Commission website, www.examinations.ie

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Japanese as a Foreign Language within the Irish second level system

Leaving Certificate Japanese was examined for the first time in Ireland in 1998. From 1998 until 2004, the vast majority of candidates were native speakers, and the content of examination materials reflected this, particularly between 1998 and 2001. With the recent promotion of Japanese as a school subject, however, the number of Irish students of Japanese as a Foreign Language has risen, and both the syllabus and the examinations aim to teach and examine Japanese as a foreign language. At present, Japanese is taken for the Leaving Certificate as a two-year *ab initio* course in Senior Cycle. This year signalled a number of new departures for the subject within the Irish system: it was the first year when the revised syllabus was examined; it was also the first year when the majority of candidates were non-native speakers (though there had been a small number of non-native speakers in previous years); and it was also the first occasion when candidates actually sat the Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level Examination.

In common with most other modern languages examined at Leaving Certificate level, the examination tests oral and listening ability as well as reading and written expression. It was encouraging to note that many candidates, despite having had a short period of exposure to Japanese, were able to speak clearly and comprehensively about their lives and interests in Japanese and, for the most part, were able to deal adequately, both in reading comprehension and in written expression questions, with the three Japanese writing systems, *katakana*, *hiragana* and *kanji*. This is a tribute to the motivation and hard work of the candidates themselves and also the energy and dedication of their teachers. There are, of course, some areas that could be improved, which will be mentioned later.

1.2 Format of the Examination

The format of the Leaving Certificate examination in 2004 was consistent with that of previous papers. Both Higher and Ordinary levels had oral, written and aural components.

The Oral Examination at each level was allocated 100 marks and had three parts: a general conversation covering candidates' lives and interests both inside and outside school; a question which asked candidates to choose one of a number of topics written on a card and to discuss it, and the third part, which had two sets of pictures and encouraged candidates to compare and contrast the two topics illustrated.

Ordinary Level

The Ordinary Level written paper was worth 200 marks and tested reading comprehension, the ability to read *kanji*, and written expression. Candidates had to attempt all four parts. Parts 1 to 3 on the paper were reading comprehension exercises and part 4 tested written expression. In the written expression question, candidates chose one of three guided writing topics on which to write.

The Ordinary Level Listening Comprehension paper was 40 minutes long, was allocated 100 marks and had four parts, all of which had to be attempted. Candidates also answered all these questions in English.

Higher Level

The written paper at Higher Level was two and a half hours long, allocated 220 marks and consisted of five parts: the first three tested reading comprehension and the ability to read *kanji* and candidates' understanding of Japanese culture, while parts four and five tested written expression. Candidates had to attempt all five questions and the only choices offered were

in the written expression questions. There, candidates chose one of two topics in each part on which to write.

The 40-minute long Listening Comprehension examination was allocated 80 marks and consisted of four parts, all of which were answered in English

1.3 Numbers taking Japanese at each level and their overall performance

Ordinary Level

Three candidates sat the Ordinary Level paper in 2004, and their overall performance is indicated on the following table.

Japanese Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2004	3	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	100%					

Higher Level

28 candidates took Japanese at Leaving Certificate Higher Level this year, up from 8 candidates in 2003 and from 6 in 2002. For the first time, a majority of candidates were non-native speakers, studying Japanese as a foreign language. This is reflected in the broader spread of results in the examination overall, though the high proportion of A grades still shows the influence of native speakers on the results. It is encouraging to notice the relatively low proportion of lower grades, which may indicate the high level of motivation among students studying Japanese as a foreign language in Ireland.

While the number of candidates nearly doubled between 2003 and 2004, overall numbers of candidates remain low, and it is to be hoped that the number of candidates in Japanese continues to enjoy similar growth in future years.

Japanese Leaving Certificate Higher Level

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
1998	1	100%								
1999	5	80%		20%						
2000	4	100%								
2001	15	73.33%	13.33%	6.7%	93%	6.7%				
2002	6	66.7%	33.3%		100%					
2003	8	75%		25%	100%					
2004	28	46.42%	17.85%	14.28%	78.55%	17.85%	3.57%			3.57%

2.0 ORAL EXAMINATION

2.1 Introduction

The Leaving Certificate Oral examinations in Japanese were carried out with cooperation from the schools, and the vast majority provided very good conditions for the conduct of the examination.

The Oral Examination was common to Ordinary and Higher Level and was allocated 100 marks. The examination consisted of three parts: the first part was a conversation about candidates' lives and interests. The second part required candidates to choose one of several topics and to discuss it. The third part consisted of illustrations of differences between Japanese and Irish life and again required candidates to speak on these differences. Marks were awarded for communicative ability, appropriate use of language and for competence in using a range of structures and vocabulary.

2.2 Performance of Candidates

Candidates, in general, performed well in the oral examination, with the average mark being 69.5. In general, candidates were well able to speak about their lives, families, hobbies and interests in the general conversation, and demonstrated an ability to use a wide range of structures in order to speak about various topics relating to their personal lives.

The second part of the examination provided more challenge, with candidates being asked to speak on a topic in general and then to discuss it with the examiner. Most candidates did well in this section, though some might have made more of an attempt to develop the topic more. Practice of spoken fluency exercises in class might help in this regard, as might practice using phrases, for example, 「そうですね」 at the beginning of the response to a question, which, if nothing else, gives a candidate time to think of what he or she is going to say, while making an appropriate initial response to the question in Japanese. Some candidates could

also have benefited from practising strategies for use when they do not understand a particular word in a question.

The third part of the examination required candidates to compare and contrast aspects of Japanese and Irish life by discussing the topic of food. This was the most challenging part of the examination for most candidates, with vocabulary in particular presenting some difficulties. Another difficulty that seemed to arise was in the use of adjectives in general, and with their use in the past tense in particular: many candidates relied on one or two adjectives with which they described everything, and some seemed unfamiliar with the correct use of adjectives in the past.

2.3 Conclusions

- Candidates in general showed an encouraging ability (particularly since the vast majority of them had had such limited exposure to Japanese) to deal with a wide range of questions on topics of general interest.
- Another encouraging feature in most candidates' use of Japanese was their ease in using the appropriate terms to speak about their own family members, and to differentiate between those terms for their own use and the honorifics being used by the examiners to ask about candidates' families.
- Candidates with a personal interest in some aspect of Japanese culture were particularly highly motivated and spoke in detail and at length about their interests.

2.4 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Students should be encouraged to use as much Japanese as possible in the classroom in order to improve their communicative competence.
- The practice of a greater range of vocabulary, particularly adjectives, and their use in the past tense, in particular, is recommended.
- Students should be encouraged to practise speaking about pictures and general topics at greater length.

3 ORDINARY LEVEL AURAL AND WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

3.1 Introduction

In the Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level Aural and Written papers, marks were allocated as follows:

Aural Examination	100
Reading Comprehension	120
Written Expression	80

The Aural Examination consisted of four parts. Part A was an interview of a Japanese student visiting a school in Ireland. Here, personal details had to be used to complete a chart. There were also questions about how long he was staying and about his spare-time activities. Part B was a conversation in a restaurant where candidates had to complete a chart with the orders and quantities of food and drink ordered. Part C was a conversation about a new apartment in Japan and required candidates to label a plan of the apartment and to answer five multiple-choice questions about the apartment and the area around it. Part D involved listening to a discussion of a planned skiing trip and required candidates to fill in a chart with details of the trip and then to answer 6 questions about the trip in general.

The Written Examination, parts one, two and three were reading comprehension questions. Part 1 was based on a floor plan of a shop and required candidates to match 10 items in *katakana* with the correct floor. This tested the ability to read *katakana* and the ability to extrapolate the correct information from the floor guide. Part 2 was a diary entry, and proved to be more challenging. The first five questions on it required candidates to choose the correct reading of a *kanji* combination given in the passage, while the second five items required that the correct readings be written in *hiragana* for five other *kanji* combinations from the passage. Five comprehension questions followed. The third reading comprehension passage was a dialogue in a post office where a customer is sending various kinds of mail to foreign countries from Japan. Candidates had first to answer five True/False questions on the passage and then answer four comprehension questions. Part 4 tested written

expression. Candidates had to choose one of three topics on which to write an essay in Japanese. These dealt with family, friends and school life, and had to be at least 320 characters in length.

3.2 Analysis of Candidate Performance

Most of the Ordinary Level Candidates had quite strong receptive skills, and had high scores in the Aural Examination. In general, they found Part A and Part B quite easy and scored high marks. Part C, however, proved much more challenging: and questions given in a different order to the information on the tape proved difficult. In part D, times and dates were a little challenging, and candidates could have done better in both parts C and D had they read the question more carefully. On the written paper, candidates had difficulty handling the three different Japanese writing systems. This proved to be a challenge in the first reading comprehension passage, where candidates had to be able to comprehend *katakana* to answer the question at all, and their responses indicated that they had not fully mastered this system. While they were able to recognise the *kanji* in the second reading passage, their written responses to the next set of questions indicated that they had not really mastered *hiragana* and *katakana*. Candidates tended to answer the comprehension questions on the diary entry with one-word answers instead of elaborating, and so lost marks. In the third reading passage, candidates found the manipulation of information to deal with the True/False questions unexpectedly difficult. In the next part of that question where they were required to handle prices and numbers, they performed well.

Written expression proved to be the most difficult section of the examination for Ordinary Level Candidates. In general, candidates had difficulties with the three writing systems in Japanese, at times mixing one system with the other within one word, and having difficulty using げんこうようし 原稿用紙 correctly.

3.3 Conclusions

It is difficult to come to meaningful conclusions with such a small number of candidates, but in general, candidates would have benefited from more practice reading the *katakana* system. Some essays were not of an acceptable standard because candidates had not gained full mastery of the *hiragana* and *katakana* systems. Their receptive skill, particularly listening skills, were strong, however, and this brought their overall results up.

3.4 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Students should be encouraged to read the whole question in the Aural Examination in order to focus their listening better.
- Students would benefit from taking more notes during the Aural Examination.
- Listening practice in class should include tasks to be done in a different order to the information given on the tape.
- Students need more practice with both reading and writing *hiragana* and *katakana*.
- Students should be familiar with *katakana* for improved answering of reading comprehension questions using 外来語. They should be discouraged from writing equivalents above Japanese words in the passage in Roman script.
- Students should try to answer open-ended reading comprehension questions at greater length.
- Students should work on making better use of the げんこうようし 原稿用紙 provided for essay writing.
- Students should indent paragraphs one space and give a space to punctuation marks.

4 HIGHER LEVEL WRITTEN AND AURAL EXAMINATION

4.1 Introduction

Marks in the Leaving Certificate Higher Level Written and Aural papers were allocated as follows:

Aural	80
Reading Comprehension	120
Written Expression	100

4.1.1 Higher Level Aural

The Aural Examination had four sections: Part A was an interview with a Japanese student studying in Ireland. A table detailing his personal details and free-time activities had to be filled in. Part B was a conversation in a restaurant and involved filling in a table detailing the items and quantities ordered. The second part of that question had multiple-choice questions about details of the restaurant or food ordered. Part C was a conversation about a new apartment and required candidates to label all the rooms and to answer four questions on details of rent and what was inside and outside the apartment. Part D dealt with plans for a skiing trip and involved filling in details on a chart of the schedule as well as a daily schedule. The third part of that question involved answering questions about opening hours and prices at the ski resort.

4.1.2 Higher Level Reading Comprehension

The Higher Level Written Examination had three reading comprehension questions and two written expression questions. Part 1 was similar to the Ordinary Level paper in that it had information about a department store. Higher Level candidates had more tasks to perform with more challenging reading material. The first set of questions involved choosing the correct readings for *kanji* expressions used in the passage. The second part involved identifying on which floor certain products were to be found, and the third section had questions to be answered

about information like opening hours, days when the shop was closed and the cost of parking.

Part 2 was a reading comprehension passage about the life of, Lafcadio Hearn, the Irish-Greek writer on Japan. Candidates were required to answer 6 comprehension questions to answer and then to number in order a series of events in Hearn's life. The last part of the question required candidates to write the correct reading of *kanji* expressions from the passage in *hiragana*. Part 3 was a letter to a Japanese friend from an Irish student planning to go to Japan. There were 8 True/False problems on this passage and some comprehension questions. Section C of this question had questions to be answered in English about Japanese culture and language.

4.1.3 Higher Level Written Expression

There were two types of writing task tested on the Higher Level paper: the first, Question 4, asked candidates to write a short guided piece of at least 200 characters about either a sport or a country. Question 5 required candidates to write a longer piece of at least 320 characters on what aspect of Japanese Culture they would like to study or to write about why they were studying Japanese.

4.2 Performance of Candidates

4.2.1 Higher Level Aural

In common with Ordinary Level candidates, Higher Level candidates' reception skills proved to be quite strong. This is borne out by the average mark achieved overall: 61.6 marks. Part A was an example of this, as it seemed easy for most candidates, and the majority of them achieved full marks.

Though candidates performed well on Part A, Part B was more challenging. In this question, a number of people are ordering a meal and it presented few problems for some candidates, but some items spoken about proved elusive for other candidates. Since the questions posed followed the order of the conversation

on tape, this question was less challenging for most candidates, however. Part B section B, where more searching questions about details of the restaurant and the meals ordered were asked, proved a little more difficult, as questions were not in the same order as they were on tape. Candidates should perhaps make sure that they have read the entire question in order to focus their listening better.

Part C was the conversation about the new apartment. This was more challenging again, as cultural knowledge as well as listening skills was demanded by this question. In Part C, A, candidates had to label the rooms in the apartment, but many seemed to panic when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary, and neglected to make use of their real-world knowledge or common sense. Many did not realise that even in Japan, the smallest room in an apartment is quite likely to be the toilet, and that a long structure running the length of the apartment is quite likely to be the veranda. Part C, B asked more detailed questions about rent, location and what was near the apartment. Many candidates had difficulty with the big numbers in the rent, and many also lacked the cultural knowledge needed to handle the question about the number of *tatami* mats in one of the rooms. Some candidates had difficulty with vocabulary relating to location.

Part D also seems to have proved challenging for many candidates. Dates, times and numbers proved difficult for many and information asked for in a different order to that on the tape presented difficulty for many candidates. Many of these problems could be solved by reading questions more closely at the outset or by taking better notes when listening.

4.2.2 Higher Level Reading Comprehension and Written Expression

Question 1 section A of the Reading Comprehension tested candidates' ability to read *kanji*, which appeared in the passage. Encouragingly, most candidates seemed to have a firm grasp of these combinations, but 午前 and 南口 posed problems for some. This question proved to be quite a good test of *kanji* knowledge as results ranged from candidates having 4 of the 5 wrong to some having all correct. Question 1 section B tested *katakana* reading ability and this,

surprisingly, proved to be a problem for some candidates. Some candidates because of poor reading ability in katakana lost many marks. These candidates transliterated all the *katakana* words in the reading and so lost an inordinate amount of time as well. For candidates sufficiently familiar with *katakana* however, this question presented no difficulty. The same was true of question 1 section C, though many candidates lost marks unnecessarily by not reading number 5 carefully enough. Just taking the information from the reading was not enough as the reading passage gave the price for a half hours' parking and the question asked how much it would cost to park for an hour.

Question 2 was topical, since 2004 is the one-hundredth anniversary of Lafcadio Hearn's death. Question 2 section A was easy for most candidates as the questions were very direct. Question 2 section B was also well answered: candidates understood the reading and put events into order correctly for the most part. Question 2 section C tested reading knowledge of *kanji*. In this question it was surprising that many candidates mistook the reading of combinations such as 大学, 年間 and 6月.

Question 3 was the most challenging, though on the surface it looked easier than Question 2. As with the Ordinary Level paper, True/False questions presented difficulties for many candidates. Question 3 section B was easier, and gave candidates a lot of scope in their answers; though where students did not understand the crucial word 予定 there were problems. Section C dealt with culture, and was well answered in general. However, some candidates would have performed better if they had developed points made about Japanese culture in a little more depth.

4.2.3 Higher Level Written Expression

Question 4 was a guided writing question with similar numbers of candidates choosing each of the options. Most candidates did quite well on this question, but some could have made better use of the headings they were given within the question. The use of *katakana* in trying to write country names and the names of

sports or hobbies, proved challenging for some candidates who ended up writing them in Roman letters, which lost them marks. Others mixed the *hiragana* and *katakana* scripts within one word. Candidates should avoid writing their own names in these answers, and should perhaps be encouraged to have another name ready, and know how to write it in *katakana*. Candidates in general would benefit in writing tasks of this type by making more use of the ～て form when writing narrative or when telling a story, and their writing would have more sense of flow if they made more use of words like まず、次に、それから、そして and 最後に in essays of this type.

Question 5 tested similar skills but was a better test of writing skills, as candidates were free to write at more length and to structure the essay as they wished. In general, candidates made good use of vocabulary, but had problems using the ～て form when using more than one adjective.

4.3 Conclusions

- While the performance of Higher Level candidates was encouraging in general, some candidates could have improved their performance in the Aural Examination by reading the questions more closely, by using the questions to focus their listening better, and by taking notes as they listened. It is also important in listening to any foreign language not to forget common sense and real-world knowledge.
- Candidates' performance in the reading comprehension questions was strong in general, as they did not panic when faced by what might have seemed to be difficult passages and dealt intelligently with the questions asked. True/ False questions, however, were challenging for a number of candidates.
- Candidates would have performed better in *kanji* questions if they had had a thorough knowledge of all the readings of the 100 *kanji* prescribed for the Leaving Certificate. Ensuring that they have an adequate grasp of the use of *katakana* in particular would help with reading questions where import words are common. In particular, candidates should avoid transliterating passages of Japanese into Roman characters.
- In general, candidates dealt ably with the questions on Japanese culture. Here, and in the essay questions, many of them demonstrated a great enthusiasm for, and interest in, Japanese culture. Written expression questions were dealt with quite well, with some candidates writing fluent and well-organised essays. Others had beautiful handwriting in Japanese, which is very encouraging given their short experience of the language.

4.4 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

- Students should be encouraged to speak Japanese as much as possible in the classroom so as to improve aural and spoken skills.
- Students should be exposed to a wide range of reading material in order to develop their reading skills further and increase their range of vocabulary.
- Students should apply real world knowledge and common sense in dealing with listening problems.
- Students should practice taking efficient notes when practicing listening comprehension.
- Listening practice in class should include tasks to be done in a different order to the information given on the tape.
- Students would benefit from some additional practice closer to the examination of numbers, dates and times.
- Students should be sure that they are able to read *katakana* as well as write the names of countries, sports and pastimes. Marks will be lost for writing in Roman characters.
- Students should practice the manipulation of information given when answering reading comprehension questions. It is not always enough just to reproduce information from the reading passage directly.

5.0 Appendix 1

Exemplars of Standard: Ordinary Level

The following answers were written by candidates in the 2004 examination:

Question 4 (80 marks)

ウ 私の学校

- 学校が好きですか。それとも、きらいですか。それは、どうしてですか。
- 先生はどんな人ですか。
- クラスメートはどんな人ですか。
- 好きな科目は何ですか。
- 毎日、何時間勉強しますか。

(a)

私のがっこうがきらいです。私のがっこうはわるいです。わたしの先生はいいです。先生はせがひくいです。先生のめはねずみいろ。先生のかみはちゃいろとねずみいろです。私のクラスメートはばかです。私のクラスメートはちょっとせがながいです。私のクラスメートのめちゃいろです。わたしはすくがだいきらいです。わたしはれきしが好きです。わたしはにほんごがだいすきです。わたしとクラスメートはスパインゴがきれいです。毎日、わたしは5時45分におきました。それから、20分ぐらいジャフをします。6時15分ごろかぞくとあさごはんをたべました。わたしは7時にブスストップにいきました。わたしは8時30分のがっこうにいきました。わたしは5時にうちへかえりました。

Total 68 marks

(b)

私のなまいはキンです。17さいです。

南ダブリンすんです。

学校が好きです。私の学校はサンタムリアです。まい日8じかんをおきます。くるまで学校にききます。

先生の中はれきしの先生が一ばん好きです。

私の学校とてもきれいです。

ともだちが二います。ときどきげんかをしますかなか しです。

きょうねんイたりアで一キをしました。

学校はとてもおもしろいとおもいます。

日本ご 二ねんかん勉強をしました。

日本ごはむずかしですがたのしです。

6時間ぐらい勉強をしました。

日本ごとれきしが好きです。

Total 55 marks

6.0 Appendix 2 Exemplars of Standard: Higher Level

The following answers were written by candidates in the 2004 examination:

問題4 (200字) 40 marks

ア 好きなスポーツ

- 何ですか。
- なぜ好きですか。
- いつからしていますか。
- ^{だれ}誰としますか。
- 毎週何時間ぐらい^{れんしゅう}練習しますか。

(a)

私は「スラムダンク」と言う井上たけひこの漫画を読んでバスケットにきょうみをもちました。中学校の一年生のときにぶかつでバスケットをやり始めました。もちろんさいしょはへただったのですが友達といろんなれんしゅうをしてわざとかをみがきました。今は「カレスターチーム」のメンバーになることができました。毎週、水曜日と土曜日にそれぞれ二時間練習をします。明るいチームで友達もいっぱいいます。私はチームでは二番目強い人なので、かなりきたいされています。これからも楽しくやっけて行こうとおもいます。

Total 40 marks

(b)

私のスポーツの中で、私は空手が一番好きです。今、ブラウンベルトですが、まだまだです。

空手は楽しくて元気ですから、私は空手が大好きです。ときどき、外国で空手のコンテストをします。去年、アメリカのボストンで空手のコンテストをしました。むずかしかったのですが、楽しかったです。ボストンでかんこうしましたり、日光よくもしたりしました。

空手を始めました、八年になります。子供の時、空手が好きではありませんでしたが、今空手にきょうみがあります。

私は友達と空手をします。ナイールはグリーンベルトです。いしょうにうんどうをします。ナイールはうれしくておもしろい男の子です。

毎週六時間ぐらい空手の練習をします。火曜日と木曜日空手のクラスへ行きます。何時か、ブラックベルトになりたいです。とてもむずかしいかもしれませんが、これは私のゆめです。

Total 36

僕は空手することが好きです。チームスポーツがすきではありません、そして空手はチームスポーツではありません。空手の練習でいつも動いていつも心がドキドキするのがすきです。せんで自分のきでたたかうから、自分のスポーツです。10歳から空手しています。友だちといっしょにします。毎週日曜日と火曜日と木曜日と土曜日に練習をします。日曜日と土曜日で3時間をします。火曜日と木曜日で2時間をします。それで、8月に日本に行って、アイルランドのためにたたかう。それはゆめでしたが、今そはげんじつです！

Total 31