

Written Examinations – Start Preparations Today–

While it has been said that companies employ people based “chiefly on their personal character,” the second most important thing that companies look at is your results on written exams and/or aptitude tests. Companies are not just looking at your academic ability or deviation scores, you will be also judged on your overall basic knowledge, common sense, analytical ability, and perceptiveness to see if you have potential to be a top personnel in their company.

For this reason, written exams are usually held in the earlier stages of the selection screening. Regardless of how high you have set your sights on a particular company, you may not even make it to the interview stage if you do not pass the written exams. Furthermore, as job hunting starts in earnest, you will be busy writing your rirekisho and ES, so you need to plan out your schedule to allow time for studying. Results vary greatly between students who have or haven't prepared in advance using the relevant materials and there is nothing as disappointing as failing at the written exam stage of a company due to lack of preparation. Therefore, prepare well in advance.

**Once again, in recent years, there has been an increase in improper conduct such as substitution of exam candidates in regards to taking these tests. As a result, more and more companies now conduct another written exam immediately prior to the final interview to check for discrepancies between scores. If they find major discrepancies between your scores, please be aware that you may then be dropped from further screening as a result.

1. Types of Written Examinations

Written examinations come in many different shapes and sizes. Below is a brief outline of the five most commonly used exams.

[SPI (Synthetic Personality Inventory) Examination]

This is the most commonly used exam and is used by companies regardless of what industry they belong to. This will consist of multiple choice Japanese and mathematics sections, with the possibility of an added personality test.

- Japanese: synonyms, opposites, kanji and comprehension
- Mathematics: addition, multiplication, division, graph reading, etc.
- Personality Test: between 300 and 500 simple yes/no questions. In order to get through as many of these questions as possible in the allotted time, you will only have a few seconds to answer each question. Don't spend time trying to figure out what the question is trying to find out about you. Answer with your first gut feeling and move on to the next question.

[General Exam]

General academic exams that test Japanese, mathematics and English ability. There are a lot of different types of questions. For example, questions about current events, common sense or business etiquette.

[Information Processing Exam]

This type of exam, used frequently in the IT industry, tests applicants on the simplicity of complex systems, arrangement of things in a logical and rational order, simple and efficient formulas, etc. This is mandatory for students applying to be System Engineers.

[CAB · GAB]

These are aptitude tests put out by SHL-JAPAN Ltd. The CAB exam is used not only by a large number of companies in the IT industry, but also by a wide variety of other industries and for non-IT job positions. The GAB exam is a more general exam used widely across many industries, but more commonly by companies involved with trading, investment and general research. There has been a trend for major companies to adopt these exams into their recruitment process, and because the questions are completely different to those of the SPI exam, you will need to prepare for these exams differently.

[Company Original Exam]

A company may give out its own original exam. This may include questions similar to an SPI exam or problems related to that particular company or industry.

[English Exam]

A lot of companies, including foreign and trade-related companies, make applicants take an English exam. Questions are usually related to the type of industry the company belongs to.

[Bloomberg Aptitude Test]

The BAT is an aptitude test developed by the Bloomberg Institute, an educational division of Bloomberg L.P. Unlike usual aptitude tests, scores are entered into a database, which then functions as a human resource database for companies searching for talent.

[WEB Test]

While a lot of WEB tests are created based on written paper exams, some companies choose to customize them, changing the number and type of questions included. Some even include a section to write your 志望動機 (Statement of Purpose). It is important to get a feeling for test-taking from an early stage by trying online practice tests offered by

companies. You might experience internet trouble or server errors when you take the tests so you don't want to leave it until the last minute. Give yourself plenty of time.

[SCOA (System for Career Orientation Assessment) – General Aptitude Testing System]

This aptitude test is created on the basis of psychology and statistics. It is being used by about 2,150 large corporations. It mainly tests language, math, logical thinking, English and general awareness and would require more specific preparations than the SPI.

2. Preparing for a Written Exam

The following 3 points are important when preparing for a written exam.

(1) Understand your current level

Knowing your own ability early on will mean you can thoroughly prepare for the written exams. There are reference books and workbooks for most of these exams so you can start preparing now!

There is also an SPI preparation course and mock exam you can apply for at the APU CO-OP book counter. CO-OP members can purchase books at a discounted price so please take advantage of this service.

(2) Do a lot of timed practice exams

One of the main points to remember when taking the SPI or a similar exam is that you need to try and answer as many questions as you can within a set period of time. When you are practicing questions, don't just go through them at your own pace. Time yourself and keep going through practice papers until you can answer the majority of the questions within the set time. A lot of liberal arts students seem to have problems with the mathematics section. Therefore, you need to put more effort in the sections you are weakest at.

(3) Starting early is the best preparation for written exams

Once the selection process is underway, you will be busy writing and submitting rirekisho and ES. Preparing for written exams early on will relieve some of the stress and give you more confidence as you proceed throughout the selection process.

An effective preparation process

Try a mock test and find out your current level



Start studying from unsuccessful areas first



As long as you manage to score above 70% and learn to manage your time, you will succeed !!

3. English Learning

With more and more companies expanding their businesses globally, English language skills play a significant role as an essential tool of communication. The requirements differ by industry and job type, but having advanced communication skills will certainly open up more career opportunities on a global scale. Having an impressive English language proficiency test score (TOEIC, TOEFL, etc.) will provide evidence of your proficiency and help you stand out among the other candidates. Particularly for international students, if English is not your native language, it will still be best to have these test scores as proof of your proficiency. In Japan, 600 or higher TOEIC score is expected for new graduates, while better paying jobs and favorable career advancement opportunities will require 750 or higher. You may also be exempted from the English test screening during the selection screening if you possess a good English language proficiency test score.

Improving language test scores requires time and effort. Therefore, start preparing as soon as possible and aim to have the highest possible test score before job hunting begins.

Examinations: Make sure to check the test dates and center locations that are most convenient for you and plan efficiently. Use mock exams and practice as many times as possible, so that you learn how to perform better and improve your score. Taking IP tests at APU will also help you in this process.

4. Japanese Learning

In order to work for companies in Japan and/or Japanese companies located abroad, for international students, demonstrating your Japanese language proficiency is the first hurdle that you must overcome. The most common Japanese languages proficiency test is the JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) that most companies recognize. You must pass at least the JLPT N2, or ideally, N1, to open up more career opportunities and be able to thrive within the company.