

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/01

Speaking

General comments

In general the Centres complied with the specified administrative procedures. The exams were sent in due time and most of the cassettes arrived undamaged. However, there were a few problems with the sound of some cassettes. The voices of the candidates tended to have a lower volume than the Examiners' and the volumes should be similar.

The main problem was in **Sections 2** and **3**. More than half the candidates did not ask the Examiner questions in these parts. If the candidate does not do so, the Examiner should invite the candidate to ask him/her questions. The Examiner's failure to do so can result in a loss of marks to the candidate in both Sections.

There were also some problems in **Section 1**. Candidates should present a topic that reflects a knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the language is spoken. If the candidate does not do so, his/her marks for Content/Presentation should be halved. It is advisable to read the Syllabus in detail, and, above all, to give candidates guidance on their choice of topic.

Problems and issues encountered in the process of moderation:

At the start of the Speaking test, it is the Examiner who should give the candidate's name and number. Candidates should not introduce themselves.

Conduct of the test

In **Section 1** the candidate should not be interrupted by the Examiner. The candidate should present the topic for no longer than three and a half minutes.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the candidate must present a topic that reflects the society or culture of a country where the language is spoken. If this is not done, the Examiner should halve the candidate's marks for Content/Presentation, as explained in the Mark Scheme. In **Section 2** the Examiner should ask questions to develop the candidate's topic. The Examiner should not ask questions about other topics. This should be done in **Section 3**.

Sections 2 and **3** are extremely important and candidates can lose 10 marks in total if they do not ask the Examiner questions. Good Examiners were well prepared, and either candidates asked the Examiner questions spontaneously, or the Examiner invited the candidates to ask questions.

It is inadvisable for Examiners to talk about their own lives, give over-long answers or make long comments. The candidate should be given the maximum amount of time to express himself/herself:

It is important that Examiners signal the different sections of the exam and say: 'This is **Section 2** of the exam.', for example. Some Examiners signalled the different parts of the exam and they were well prepared, asking pertinent questions in a variety of question forms. Examiners should, however, avoid asking 2 or 3 questions at the same time. They should ask one direct question and then wait for an answer. Some Examiners made the examination difficult for the candidate in this way.

Examiners should make sure they allow the time specified in the syllabus for the conduct of the speaking test. In one case, the oral lasted only approximately 4 minutes, to the detriment of the candidate. The whole test should last approximately 20 minutes.

Cassettes

The main problem was the background noise of some cassettes. At times the background sound was so loud that it was impossible to hear the candidates properly. Some voices were not clear and they sounded as if the candidates were distant from the microphone. In one instance when the candidate spoke, the sound of his voice became worse. Please remember that the candidate's voice should be clear. The microphone should be placed next to the candidate, and Examiners should conduct a mock exam and check the volumes on the cassettes before starting the real exam.

The task of the Moderator will be greatly facilitated if Centres clearly label both the cassette box and the tape, and also indicate on which side of the cassette the candidates' exams are recorded. It would be helpful if Examiners could rewind the cassette to the beginning. Cassettes should be wrapped well, to avoid the possibility of damage in transit.

Marks

Marks should be distributed in the appropriate slots in the Working Mark Sheet. It would be helpful if the candidates' names were put on the Working Mark Sheet in the same order as in the MS1. In addition, please write the candidates' numbers on the Working Mark Sheet.

Some marks allocated in the Working Mark Sheet do not correspond to the marks in the Mark Scheme. Care should be taken over this, and sections 8 and 9 of the Syllabus (available on the CIE website) can be referred to for guidance.

This year some centres committed significant arithmetical errors in calculating the total marks for the candidates. It is recommended that Examiners ask another teacher to check the addition of marks on the Working Mark Sheet before writing them on the MS1.

MS1

The slot for 'Marks' in the MS1 sheet must be correctly filled in.

Size of recorded sample submitted by the Centre

If there are more than 6 candidates entered for the Speaking test, recordings of 6 candidates' Speaking Tests are required. These should cover the whole mark range with marks spaced as evenly as possible from the top mark to the lowest mark. It is not necessary to send the recording of all the candidates: please refer to Section 9 of the Syllabus for guidance.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Good candidates made well-organised presentations with a good coverage of the topic. Ideas and opinions were included and the topics reflected a knowledge of the society or culture where the language is spoken. These presentations were lively and the candidates gave examples from their countries. Good topics were: '*the educational system in Portugal*', '*the theatre in Portugal*', '*football in Portugal*', '*sports in Mozambique*', '*crime in Brazil*' and so on.

Weak candidates frequently did not present a topic that reflected the culture or society of a country where the language is spoken, or included few ideas or opinions. In order to receive a good mark, candidates should give a lively and interesting presentation.

For the candidate to achieve a high mark, Centres should help by advising candidates to avoid general topics such as: '*work and leisure*', '*war and peace*', '*technology*', '*obesity*' and so on. These topics should be tackled only if candidates connect them to the culture or society where the language is spoken.

Candidates should not be interrupted at all by the Examiner during the presentation, and the presentations should last no more than three and a half minutes.

The candidates should not read their presentations, but they may prepare a cue card to remind them of the main points.

Section 2

The main problem of this part was that some candidates did not ask the Examiners questions. The Examiners should invite the candidates to ask him/her questions. If the candidate does not do so, he/she loses marks unnecessarily.

Some Examiners were very well prepared for this part. They helped develop the candidates' topics by asking pertinent questions. However, a few asked completely different questions to the candidates' topics.

Section 2 should last between 7 and 8 minutes. Examiners are advised to have a clock in the room so that they can adhere to the specified timing of the exam. Examiners should check timings in the Mark Scheme, and conduct the tests within the timings stipulated.

One Examiner failed to include **Section 2** at all, and so the candidate lost marks through no fault of his own.

Section 3

Here as well, the main problem was that some candidates did not ask the Examiners questions and therefore the candidates lost marks.

Good Examiners were well prepared and they asked a good range of open and closed questions. They also asked pertinent questions about topics such as: '*daily routine*', '*sports*', '*the family*', '*free time*', '*books*', '*pollution*', '*stress*', '*future plans*' and so on.

Good candidates responded promptly without hesitation and were able to guide the discussion. Weak candidates were slow to give answers and, quite noticeably, did not have sufficient vocabulary to develop some topics.

This part should last from 8 to 9 minutes, but this timing was sometimes not closely adhered to. One Examiner conducted this part in as little as 4 minutes, with a consequent effect on candidate performance.

Conclusion

I would like to thank the Centres for organising the exam and complying with administrative procedures.

Centres can help the Examiners by reading the Syllabus, and especially the Mark Scheme with them or by having a training session to explain the details of the exam. The three sections of the examination should be attempted and Examiners should adhere to the timing for each section of the exam.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

This paper worked as expected, and the majority of candidates were able to cope well with the demands it made. There were, however a number of linguistic aspects which affected performance: as in previous years, many candidates were unsure of grammar - agreement, tenses, gender of nouns, punctuation, use of capital letters and spelling in general, including of words borrowed from the texts.

Other factors occasionally affected comprehension of what candidates intended to communicate: some did not ensure that their handwriting was at all times legible. It is recommended that candidates should make an effort to produce legible text throughout their response to the paper.

In addition, sometimes candidates left no space between their answers. While not affecting their marks, this at times added to the difficulty in reading their scripts.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Most candidates handled this question without difficulty.

Question 2

Most candidates performed well, although there were some linguistic uncertainties:

at **(b)**, some candidates added *que* after *tanto*.

at **(d)**, some candidates were unsure of where to place the reflexive pronoun.

at **(e)**, Some candidates did not know the plural of *dom* and/or *natural*.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to attempt all parts of the question. However, many wrote excessively long answers and quoted extensively from the text. Candidates are expected to give the required number of details per question, using their own words as much as possible. It is worth bearing in mind that quoting at length but irrelevantly from the text, and giving more than the required number of details, may not demonstrate that the candidate has understood the text or the question.

At **(a)**, candidates often missed the fact that Telmo had a grant to study.

At **(c)**, sometimes the details were insufficient, as in simply: *o pai não estava muito de acordo* and *a mãe gostava da ideia*.

Section 2

Question 4

Again, most candidates performed well. The same can be said as with reference to Question 3 about unnecessarily long answers and excessive quoting from the text, and sometimes candidates lost marks because their answers did not include all the details required to respond adequately to the question.

At **(b)**, some candidates failed to mention that Caio had many fans or that he had won the platinum record.

At **(e)**, some candidates stated that he *consegue repor as aulas* but omitted to mention that he used to miss classes.

At **(f)**, some candidates failed to mention that Caio's new record will be shown on stage.

Question 5

(a) Most candidates did well in this part of the paper and their answers included relevant comparisons.

A few candidates described one of the artists and then the other, and it was not clear where the contrasts and comparisons were.

(b) Most candidates gave an interesting reason why they preferred either Telmo or Caio.

It was encouraging to see that in this session candidates generally paid attention to the stipulation about the number of words required.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/03

Essay

General comments

This year it was good to see that most candidates answered the question that was asked in the exam. This is an improvement from previous years, when students tended to reply to the question that they thought should have been asked. However, there were still a few students who wrote about the topic, but did not answer the question, and who consequently did not gain some of the marks available for content. Candidates should read the questions carefully and organize their ideas in response to the question before writing.

The best candidates wrote confidently, using complex sentence patterns with extensive vocabulary. These were generally accurate, with detailed and clearly relevant content. However, problems arose in general with punctuation, accentuation and spelling.

Weaker candidates tended to write more clumsy and simple constructions and texts. One important consideration which candidates need to be aware of is the importance of punctuation in conveying ideas appropriately. It is recommended that they should study formally the rules of punctuation, accentuation and spelling before taking the exam.

Few students showed evidence that they had made a plan and organized their ideas before starting to write, and this showed in the organization and layout of their texts. Some candidates were not aware that a good essay does not consist of 2 paragraphs only, and that they should organise their writing into more than 2 paragraphs with an introduction, development and a conclusion.

Most candidates wrote within the word limit of 250-400, but a few wrote over 500 words. Candidates are recommended to count the words as they are writing, so as not to exceed 400 words, and should be reminded of this before sitting the examination.

Handwriting is also important, and candidates need to remember that somebody else is going to read what they wrote; and that, if they wish to be understood, their handwriting should be legible.

It may be useful to consider some examples of common mistakes that should be avoided:

Punctuation

'O nosso país, e o mundo, vão ter que aceitar ...' should be 'O nosso país e o mundo vão ter que aceitar ...' and 'Turistas mais exigentes, preferem locais ...' should be 'Turistas mais exigentes preferem locais ...'. Candidates should neither separate the subject from the verb by a comma or the object from the verb. One example is: '...e poderá afectar amanhã ainda mais, toda a nossa sociedade.' should be '... e poderá afectar toda a nossa sociedade ainda mais amanhã'.

Commas should also be used before some conjunctions as in: 'Os jovens não são os mais afectados pois estes estão ...' should be 'Os jovens não são os mais afectados, pois estes são ...'.

Some good examples are: 'Em último lugar, ao convidarem novas culturas a desfrutar um pouco do seu país, os países menos desenvolvidos poderão ...' and 'Contudo, tendo em conta as dificuldades por que passam os países em desenvolvimento, será o turismo realmente benéfico?'.

Accentuation

Some candidates were not careful when writing, but they need to remember that accentuation is part of accuracy. Some mistakes are: 'tambem' should be 'também', 'pôvo' should be 'povo', 'pôr isso' should be 'por isso' and so on.

It is important to accentuate appropriately words which, if they are not accentuated, have another meaning. Examples which occurred this year are: 'e' which means 'and' and 'é' which means 'is', 'pais' which means 'parents' and 'país' which means 'country'.

Spelling

Spelling mistakes were frequent. A common type of mistake this year was: 'saltão' instead of 'saltam', 'gastão' instead of 'gastam' and so on.

Some candidates wrote in the way that they speak. Examples are: 'invez disso' instead of 'em vez disso', 'incinar' instead of 'ensinar', 'poluiem' instead of 'poluem' and so on.

Candidates whose first language is not Portuguese made errors such as: 'recyclagem' instead of 'reciclagem', 'commercial' instead of 'comercial', 'golf' instead of 'golfe' and so on.

Pronouns

The position of the pronoun presents a problem for some candidates. Examples are: '.. não dão-lhes muita importância...' instead of '...não lhes dão muita importância ...', ' eles tornarão-se...' instead of ' eles tornar-se-ão...', '...para impedir que o jovem torne-se ...' instead of '...para impedir que o jovem se torne ...' and so on. Some candidates tended to forget that negative words and the word 'que' attract the pronoun and, therefore, the pronoun should come before the verb.

Other examples are: '...ver-lhe vestida...' instead of the direct object '...vê-la vestida...', '...não os dão espaço' instead of the indirect object '...não lhes dão espaço' and so on.

Masculine and feminine

Candidates should reread their essays before handing them in, because mistakes occurred regarding genders. Examples are: '...a comida 'plástico'...' instead of '...a comida 'plástica'...', 'a planeta' instead of 'o planeta', 'Muitos dos avanços são boas.' should be 'Muitos dos avanços são bons.'

Singular and Plural

Some examples are: '...e ficamos mais elegante' instead of '...e ficamos mais elegantes', '...os pais dos jovens devem ser mais rigoroso...' instead of 'os pais dos jovens devem ser mais rigorosos...', 'Precisam estar mais livre.' instead of 'Precisam ser mais livres' and so on.

In other cases, candidates used the verb in the singular when it should be plural and vice-versa. Some examples are: '...todos dias que passa...' instead of '...todos os dias que passam...', '...existe muito menos árvores' instead of '...existem muito menos árvores' and so on.

Separation of words at the end of a line

This year there were few examples of separating words wrongly. Some examples are: 'tem-os' instead of 'te-mos', 'consta-ntemente' instead of 'constan-temente', 'fascin-antes' instead of 'fascin-tes' and so on. Candidates should remember that syllables should not be split. However, this problem could easily be avoided by always starting new words on a new line.

Capital letter

Although very few candidates mixed capital and small letters, it is important to avoid this mistake. Some examples are: '...RaRamente' instead of 'raramente', 'brazil' instead of 'Brasil', '...é muito Prejudicial...' instead of '...é muito prejudicial...', 'Na Minha Opinião...' instead of 'Na minha opinião...' and so on.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was the second most popular question answered by candidates.

In general candidates made comments about Mia Couto's quotation and they wrote in clear paragraphs with illustrations. Weaker candidates wrote in a general way and did not illustrate their ideas well.

Most candidates wrote about problems that young people face such as: bulimia, drugs, pregnancy, drinking, smoking and so on. Good candidates wrote what parents, the government and schools could do to help young people. Weaker candidates wrote in a sketchy way, without clear examples.

Question 2

This was the most popular question and most students wrote about the good and bad aspects of tourism in developing countries. However, weaker candidates did not always write about these aspects in a developing country. Candidates need to read the question carefully and always refer back to it while writing.

Good candidates wrote that the good aspects were the construction of hotels, more jobs available, more banks and shops and some gave clear examples about Mozambique or other developing countries. Some of the bad aspects that candidates wrote about were prostitution, extraction of ivory from elephants, high prices because of tourism, increase in criminality and so on.

Good candidates wrote an introduction, paragraphs with topic sentences and illustrations and a conclusion.

Candidates should avoid writing long sentences without punctuation.

Question 3

Most candidates wrote about how to avoid global warming with clear examples, but again a few candidates wrote about pollution and only towards the end of the essay did they mention what should be done about global warming. Some essays were disorganised and lacked examples.

Good examples of how to avoid global warming were: avoid using plastic bags, planting trees, turn off lights, avoid using cars so often, and so on.

Question 4

The few candidates who attempted this question clearly organised their essays with good examples. The type of advantages that candidates commonly mentioned were that scientific and medical advances are important to:

- fight bacteria and viruses.
- produce cleaner energy.
- provide food which can last longer

Question 5

Most candidates answered the question, but weaker candidates strayed away from the topic by writing extensively about obesity, or alcohol dependency and so did not answer the question directly. Many candidates wrote about food, but not drink.

Some good candidates wrote that a Mediterranean diet makes us feel calm, that vegetarians want to be in harmony with themselves and nature, and so on. Most candidates agreed that we are what we eat and drink.

Recommendations

Each year the same basic mistakes recur, and it may be that candidates could significantly improve their results if the mistakes detailed above, and how they can be avoided, were explained to them.

Centres should advise candidates of the importance of punctuation, spelling and accentuation in gaining higher marks. In addition, it is recommended that candidates should study Portuguese grammar before taking the exam and practise writing a variety of grammatical structures, including the use of linking words and the subjunctive. Candidates should try to use a wide range of vocabulary and avoid the repeated use of the same word. Reading widely about different topics is also a very beneficial activity in preparation for the exam.

Lastly, Centres are recommended to help candidates by emphasising to them that their essays should be planned before writing, and that they should adhere to the word limit.