

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/01
Speaking

Key Message

Please ensure that the administration and the paperwork required for the speaking exam is done according to the instructions in the syllabus in order to comply with the regulations of the examination.

General Comments

In **Section 1**, candidates speak about a prepared topic that is required to refer to the Portuguese-speaking world. In both **Sections 2** and **3**, candidates need to ask the Examiner questions to receive a mark for 'Seeking Information and Opinions'. If candidates do not ask the Examiner questions, the Examiner needs to prompt the candidate to ask him/her questions. This is essential, otherwise the candidate cannot score any marks for 'Seeking information and opinions' and will lose 10 marks in total. Centres are reminded to highlight this to candidates prior to the examination.

Examination technique

Some speaking examinations were not conducted according to the instructions in the syllabus. Examiners and Centres are reminded that in the 3½ minutes in **Section 1**, candidates have to focus the presentation on a topic based on the Portuguese-speaking world/culture. Candidates should not talk about general topics such as education, urban and rural life and sports, and just mention the Portuguese-speaking world at the end. If the topic as a whole is not about the Portuguese world, the candidates' marks will be halved. Timing of the examination is also important and the time allowed for each part of the examination is clearly specified in the syllabus. It is recommended for Examiners to use a timer which helps to stick to the stipulated timings.

Most Examiners had prepared the examination carefully and asked pertinent open questions. However, Examiners are reminded to avoid long answers or questions as candidates need all the time available to express themselves. Also, Examiners are reminded to turn off their mobile phones when conducting the examination.

It is good practice for the Examiner to signal the beginning of each new Section of the examination. This helps the candidate to be prepared for the next section as well as the Moderator to time the different sections of the examination. Examiners are reminded that the examinations have to be recorded up to the end and must not be stopped beforehand.

Sound and CDs

Most Centres sent good samples of recordings with clear sound. However, some Centres sent recordings with very low sound this year and candidates or Examiners were often not clearly audible. Please ensure that all recording equipment is checked before the start of the examination.

MS1 form

Some Centres did not send the MS1 form. When completing this form, please ensure that the number in the units row is clearly written. The marks should also be written in the slot for 'Marks'.

Working Mark Sheet

Examiners are reminded to transfer the marks correctly from the Working Marking Sheet onto form MS1.

Arithmetical errors

Centres are reminded that it is vital that marks are added up properly. Centres are responsible for ensuring that the additions are double checked by a second person.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Topic Presentation

Centres prepared their candidates well and most candidates presented topics that reflected the culture or heritage of countries where Portuguese is spoken. Some good topics were for example tourism in Portugal, football in Portugal, pollution in São Paulo or the economic crisis in Brazil, Mozambique etc.

For candidates to achieve good marks in this section, the whole topic should be about the Portuguese-speaking world and it should be presented in no longer than 3½ minutes. If the topic does not reflect the Portuguese-speaking world, the candidates' marks should be halved.

Centres are recommended to guide candidates to avoid generic or vague topics such as *football*, *the environment* or *sports*. In order to score on the higher bands, candidates need to present a full and well-organised coverage of the topic which is difficult to achieve with very generic topics.

Section 2 – Topic Conversation

In this Section, Examiners should develop the candidates' presentation topics by asking them questions. Examiners are reminded to ask questions about the candidates' presentation. In addition, this Section should last between 7 and 8 minutes. Please ensure this Section is properly timed.

Candidates can only score the marks for Seeking information and opinions if they ask the Examiner questions. If candidates do not ask the Examiner questions in this Section, the Examiner must prompt them to do so. Candidates will not be penalised for being prompted.

Section 3 – General Conversation

Again, Examiners are reminded that candidates can only score the marks for 'Seeking information and opinions' if they ask the Examiner questions. Please make sure that in future sessions, all candidates ask the Examiner questions. As it was mentioned in **Section 2**, candidates will not be penalised for being prompted in **Section 3** either.

Examiners are reminded that in this Section, the questions should be about a topic or topics different to the candidates' presentation topics which were presented in **Section 1**. This section begins with questions about the candidates' interest and background, and then moves quickly on to a more mature conversation discussing more abstract and/or current issues within the general topic areas. Please consult the Mark Scheme on how to conduct this part.

Some of the topics that Examiners asked questions about were: *hobbies*, *future plans*, *sport*, *free time*, *School*, *sports*, *food*, *daily routine* and so on.

Please ensure that this Section lasts between 8 and 9 minutes and not longer than the stipulated time.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/02
Reading and Writing

Key Messages

To score full marks in this paper, candidates had to demonstrate that they had read and understood the texts and could express themselves clearly.

General Comments

Most candidates coped well with most questions. However, as in previous years, quality of language is an area for improvement. Many candidates were not able to demonstrate a sufficiently accurate command of the Portuguese language and were at times unable to express themselves clearly. They were very unsure of spelling, grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and semantics. Many candidates simply lifted material and made little or no attempt to adapt it to their answers.

For future sessions it would be helpful if candidates ensured that their writing was legible and their work was well presented, leaving sufficient space between answers for the Examiner's use.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

There were some good answers but a number of candidates struggled with this question. Precise answers were required to gain full marks. Majority of candidates answered **(a)** and **(b)** correctly. Incorrect answers included: **(c)** *formação*; *início*; **(d)** *sobrados*; *grande escala*; **(e)** *rica cultura*; *um importante*.

Question 2

In this question, candidates had to demonstrate their knowledge of grammar. This proved to be challenging for many candidates. Answers should not contain spelling mistakes and should have correct accents where applicable. Candidates should avoid including any unnecessary details. The only changes to be made to the sentences are those required by the new introductory words. In this exercise, candidates must ensure their answers are clear and legible. Accuracy is crucial in this task and candidates have to make it very clear which spelling and accentuation is used in their answers.

- (a)** Many candidates omitted the part with the verb “erguer” and many did not know the correct spelling of the various forms of the verb.
- (b)** Many candidates wrote “foi repelida” and “por a” appeared several times.
- (c)** Many candidates did not know the noun “quebra” and some did not spell “invencibilidade” correctly.
- (d)** Most candidates answered correctly.
- (e)** Many candidates omitted “para aquele espaço” and many wrote “deram” instead of “deu”.

Question 3

Most candidates coped well with this question. However, many candidates lost marks as they did not attempt to use their own words in their answers and quoted extensively from the text. Sometimes candidates' answers were based on their knowledge of Portuguese or Brazilian history rather than the content of the text.

- (a) Most candidates gained the mark for “Padrão Português” but many missed the other two details required, even though they included other information from the first paragraph.
- (b) Many candidates failed to mention that Salvador had been the capital of Brazil. “o Salvador” appeared frequently as did the name of the city and Brazil written with lower-case initial letters. The verbs in the answer should have been in the Past and not the Present tense.
- (c) Many candidates simply lifted most of the appropriate paragraph and made no attempt to use their own words or adapt the material to give a sensible answer. Some candidates did refer to “os mais ricos” and interpreted “a gente miúda” as “a classe média” or “os mais pobres”. Most candidates left “pescadores and marinheiros” unchanged.
- (d) Most candidates gained full marks, although many seemed not to realise that “símbolo da justiça e da independência da cidade” was the third detail.
- (e) Most candidates answered well. A wrong detail was “Poderiam assistir a filmes sobre o escritor”.

Section 2

Question 4

Again, most candidates coped well with this question but Accuracy and Quality of Language continued to be neglected. Weaker candidates had problems with the use of the definite article before China and Macau.

- (a) Most candidates answered well. Some were not sure whether the “padrão” was placed in “Rio das Pérolas” or at the port of Tamau. A few interpreted “as armas” as weapons.
- (b) Most candidates answered correctly.
- (c) Most candidates answered well. Many did not gain a mark because they did not state what the threat or the situation was.
- (d) Most candidates answered correctly.
- (e) Most candidates gained full marks having included four details in their answers. Some wrongly interpreted “cobiça” as “interesse”.
- (f) Most candidates answered well, although some missed the detail “respeitou-se o modelo da cidade portuguesa”.

Question 5

Most candidates adhered to instructions regarding the word count, but there were some who wrote well in excess of the recommended word count.

- (a) Most candidates coped well with this part of the question and included full details. Weaker candidates did not attempt to write interesting answers and often either repeated details using exactly the same words used in other parts of the paper or included details they knew from their general knowledge of Portuguese or Brazilian history. Candidates are reminded that no credit is given for material extraneous to the texts. This question offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the texts and their ability to express themselves in their own words. Teachers and candidates are advised to bear this in mind when preparing for this examination.
- (b) Most candidates gave good answers and most tended to opt for Macau.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/03

Essay

General comments

Regarding the content used in this year's essays, many candidates wrote detailed and coherently argued essays. Most candidates organised their essays in clear paragraphs with pertinent examples. Stronger candidates showed good grammatical control and a variety of structures, confident use of complex sentence patterns and extensive vocabulary.

Weaker candidates did not answer the question, but wrote about the topic in general. There was also little evidence of candidates brainstorming the question before writing their answers.

Candidates are reminded to write between 250 and 400 words. The main points to be improved are punctuation, accentuation and spelling. Candidates need to be aware that they lose many marks if their essay does not present good control of these.

Here are some examples of candidates' mistakes and also some good examples.

Punctuation

Some good examples were: 'Por outro lado, a vida na cidade é testemunho de ...', '... praticamente todas as famílias têm uma viatura, mas não existe trânsito pesado.' (Commas should be used when a sentence starts with signalling words and before some conjunctions). Another example is: 'A Internet, em específico, possibilita o acesso a uma imensa quantidade de informação, o que, apesar dos benefícios óbvios, também traz algumas complicações ...'

Weaker examples are: 'A diferença entre a população rural e a urbana, não se refere, apenas ...' should be 'A diferença entre a população rural e a urbana não se refere apenas ...', 'Ambas, são diferentes...' should be 'Ambas são diferentes...'. (The subject should not be separated from the verb by a comma). Other examples were: '... ficam mais tempo em casa. O que é um grande contributo para ...' should be '... ficam mais tempo em casa, o que é um grande contributo para ...'. 'Também quando á emergência é mais rápido contatar alguém, outra situação é quando você tem um amigo ...' should be 'Também quando há emergência, é mais rápido contatar alguém. Outra situação é quando você tem um amigo ...'. Commas should not be used when there are two full sentences.

Candidates should focus on the accuracy of their writing and they should study the rules of punctuation.

Accentuation

In order to access high marks candidates need to avoid making any persistent errors regarding accents (placed incorrectly or missing).

Examples of missing accents: '... jovens que queiram ingressar na universidade tem mais escolhas.' should be '... jovens que queiram ingressar na universidade têm mais escolhas.' The subject is in the plural form, so the plural form of the verb 'ter' in the present tense is 'têm'. Some other examples were: 'países' should be 'países', 'duvida' should be 'dúvida' (it needs an accent to differentiate from the verb).

Examples of wrong use of accents: 'sociedáde' should be 'sociedade', 'jà' should be 'já', 'hà' should be 'há', 'hávera' should be 'haverá', 'álto' should be 'alto', 'mantér' should be 'manter'.

Spelling

Some candidates wrote as they speak. For example, 'melhor' should be 'melhorou', 'torno-se' should be 'tornou-se', 'stabilidade' should be 'estabilidade'. Some other examples are: 'oge' instead of 'informação' instead of 'informação', 'preguioso' instead of 'preguiçoso', 'Se o governo almentase os preços ...' instead of 'Se o governo aumentasse os preços ...'.

Spelling is important when writing an essay and candidates should be more careful and double check their essays for spelling mistakes before handing them in.

Vocabulary – First language interference

Some examples from candidates' essays: 'vecinos' should be 'vizinhos', 'naturaleza' should be 'natureza', 'pero' should be 'mas', 'escuchar' should be 'escutar', 'gran cantidad' should be 'grande quantidade', 'lejos' should be 'longe', 'uno' should be 'um', 'siendo' should be 'sendo', etc.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a very popular question; many good essays were well illustrated and coherently argued. Good candidates discussed how technology affects couples, children, adolescents and families. Stronger candidates gave good examples and wrote in clear paragraphs. There were some coherently argued essays that explained how different types of technology such as television, computers and the Internet have affected human relationships.

Weaker candidates wrote about technology and did not explain how it affects our relationships. Less able candidates wrote long sentences with incorrect or no punctuation. They often did not give examples and tended to be vague in their answers. These should be avoided.

Candidates should demonstrate an extensive vocabulary and avoid repetition of words in order to score high marks.

Question 2

This was also a very popular question, but most candidates did not answer both parts of the question. Candidates should have written about the illnesses and stress in cities, and also about happiness and wellbeing in towns.

Candidates are reminded to brainstorm the question before answering it in order to help them to focus on the question and to answer it appropriately.

Question 3

This was a popular question with strong candidates giving a range of detail and examples in their essays. Good candidates wrote that the government should encourage free-time activities through posters, advertising on television, opening sports centres etc. However, some essays were unspecific and vague and did not mention what the government should do. Weaker candidates did not organise their essays in paragraphs with a clear introduction, development and concise conclusion.

Candidates should make sure that their handwriting is legible and be aware of phrases to organise their writing such as: firstly, secondly, in addition, etc.

Question 4

Most candidates answered the question appropriately. Some candidates wrote that it is better to negotiate because wars do not bring peace. Weaker candidates wrote about war and completely forgot to respond to the question.

Question 5

Good candidates discussed the question with clear examples and organised paragraphs. However, some candidates did not answer the question and wrote about pollution, problems with acid rain and sulphur dioxide. To score a content mark on the higher bands, candidates need to answer the specific question. Furthermore, the vocabulary in some essays was repetitive and no attempt was made to show a variety of words or expressions.

Recommendations

As mentioned above, punctuation, accentuation and spelling were the major problems that need to be addressed by native and non-native speakers of Portuguese. The rules of spelling and punctuation need to be studied by candidates before taking the examination.

In the majority of essays, there was no evidence of brainstorming the topic before writing the essay. It is extremely important to organise ideas, avoid repetition of opinions and vocabulary, and to write in clear paragraphs. Centres should prepare their candidates to do this.

When preparing candidates for the examination, centres should help the candidates by focussing them on answering the question instead of writing about the topic in general.