

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/01
Speaking

GENERAL COMMENTS

Most Centres sent very good samples of CDS/cassettes with clear sound. Centres are reminded to check the sound-quality of the CD/cassette before sending it. Both voices the candidate's as well as the Examiner's, have to be clearly audible.

It is essential that the examination is conducted in accordance with the syllabus and that all Examiners strictly adhere to every detail outlined in the Mark Scheme when conducting the Speaking examination in order to not disadvantage their candidates.

In **Section 1** for example, candidates must present a topic about a country where the Portuguese language is spoken. Candidates who make no specific reference to the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a Portuguese-speaking country will have their mark for Content and Presentation halved. Consequently, topics such as 'video games', 'social relationships', 'experiments with animals' are general topics which should be avoided. Centres can help candidates achieve higher marks by explaining to them before the examination the requirement that their presentation topic has to reflect the Portuguese world.

Examiners are reminded to be consistent about the timing specified in the Mark Scheme for Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the examination. Please remember that Examiners must follow the timing specified in the Mark Scheme in the interest of fairness to candidates. Examiners are advised to use a timer in the examination room.

Examiners are reminded that in sections 2 and 3 five marks are allocated to Seeking Information and Opinions. Candidates who do not ask questions to the Examiner should be nudged to do so. Many candidates lost marks in both **Sections 2** and **3** this year because they did not ask questions to the Examiners or the Examiners did not prompt the candidates to do so. Some candidates lost up to 10 marks because they did not ask questions. Please also note that full marks for 'Seeking Information and Opinions' are only given if the candidate asks two questions with a high level of accuracy, using a range of question forms. Centres/Teachers can help their candidates to gain higher marks by training them to seek information and Opinions.

In some centres candidates lost marks this session because they were not given the opportunity to do **Section 3**.

It is important to ask only one question at a time, not a series of questions, to help the candidate focus on one subject and answer appropriately.

Some Examiners did not mention when **Section 2** or **3** started or finished. Please make sure that the start and end of each section of the examination are signalled.

Please also note that Examiners must avoid speaking at length because it is the candidates who are being examined and who therefore require all the speaking time available in order to score the best possible marks. Candidates should not be interrupted during their 3 ½ min presentation.

Comments about the candidate's performance should not be made by Examiners.

Please make sure that Mark Sheet 1 should be sent together with the candidates' recordings and that the slot 'Mark' is filled in with the candidate's mark in figures.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

As mentioned earlier, candidates can only receive high marks for their presentation if their topic reflects the culture of a country where Portuguese is spoken. One candidate presented a topic about Portuguese football, for example, and gave details about the team's present and past, and famous players. Another candidate talked about Cazuza, the Brazilian singer, and other appropriate topics were employment and unemployment in Portugal, tourism in Portugal and Mozambican food.

Weaker candidates often presented general topics with no reference to the Portuguese world, e.g. 'International Education', 'Relationships', 'Motocross'.

Section 2

Many Centres did not conduct this section according to the Mark Scheme. As mentioned above, many candidates lost marks because they did not know they had to ask the Examiner questions and also because the Examiner did not prompt the candidate to ask him/her questions.

Examiners are advised to use a clock or watch to time this section which should last between 7-8 minutes.

Section 3

Most Examiners did not follow the timing specified in the Mark Scheme. Many candidates lost marks because they were not aware that they needed to ask the Examiner questions and were not prompted to seek information by the examiners. In order to receive full marks for 'Seeking Information and Opinions', candidates must ask more than one question with high level of accuracy, using a range of questions forms. Questions such as 'And you, what do you think?' repeated two or three times do not receive full marks.

In general, Examiners asked questions about free time, future plans, sports, education, reading habits, television programmes etc. Controversial topics such as racism, Islam and terrorism, HIV and sexual relationships should be avoided.

The General conversation section might only cover two or three topic areas, possibly more if the Examiner has difficulty finding something the candidate is interested in, or can talk about.

Examiners are advised to use a clock or watch to time this section which should last between 8-9 minutes.

CONCLUSION

Many candidates lost marks because of problems with the conduct of the examination rather than as a result of poor speaking or listening skills. Centres should be aware that Examiners need to be familiar with the requirements and details of the Mark Scheme in order to not disadvantage the candidates and help them gain the marks they merit. It is also essential to give candidates appropriate guidance on choosing topics that refer to the Portuguese-speaking world whilst preparing them for the Speaking examination.

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 and accurately.

General Comments

The majority of candidates performed well on this paper. They engaged with the reading passages and were able to show good understanding of the information and ideas that these contained. Most candidates were able to show very good levels of comprehension in their responses to these questions.

Although most candidates coped well with text comprehension and were able to answer most questions, many candidates lost marks for Quality of Language. Where candidates did not score high or full marks for a question, it was usually because the answer they provided was not expressed clearly or did not demonstrate a sufficiently high command of the language. Candidates should be reminded to focus on accurate spelling – including of words lifted from the texts – and grammar. In order to score on the higher bands, their language has to be consistently accurate with only very few errors of minor significance; and more complex syntactical and grammatical structures are expected. This year in particular, many candidates showed strong interference from other languages, mainly Spanish, that had a significant impact on the quality of their language.

It is worth reminding candidates to ensure that their writing is legible and that their work is well presented, leaving sufficient space between answer.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

Most candidates coped well with this question.

Question 2

In this question, candidates had to demonstrate their knowledge of grammar. Most candidates coped well with most of the exercise.

- (b) Many candidates did not know the Imperfect Subjunctive of the verb *divertir*. “*diverti-se*” was an incorrect form.
- (d) Many candidates did not spell the Future of *tornar* correctly. “*tornará-se*” and “*tornara*” appeared frequently. Many were unsure of when to use the hyphen.
- (e) The grave accent was often omitted in “à”.

Question 3

Most candidates coped well with this question and, on the whole, the required details were included in most answers. Many candidates, however, lost marks on Quality of Language. The most common problems were errors in tense and verb forms, prepositions, punctuation and spelling.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, lifting answers from the text remains a common feature amongst the weaker candidates. It is important to remember that simply 'lifting' sections directly from the text, even if they include more or less correct information, does not demonstrate understanding and therefore does not score marks. Candidates must show that they can manipulate the text in some way (even in a minor way) to provide the correct answer. The rubric clearly states that candidates should answer ***sem copiar frases inteiras do texto palavra por palavra***. Candidates should try to express the relevant points using different vocabulary or structures. Even quite small changes or extensions to the original can show that candidates are able to handle both the ideas and the language.

Section 2

Question 4

Again, most candidates coped well with this question but Quality of Language continued to be the reason for losing marks. At **(c)**, many candidates gave lengthy answers describing the general role of clowns without mentioning what the public expected from the *Palhaço Pobre*. Candidates who quoted extensively from the third paragraph of the text, stating that "*o destino está em jogo*" and that the act was part of "*o xadrez do destino*" without giving any explanation were not able to score highly on Quality of Language. Candidates should be encouraged to answer questions using their own words as much as possible and avoiding direct quotations without providing an explanation that demonstrates understanding of the question and the text.

Question 5

In **Question 5**, candidates should realise the importance of the word limits as well as of the division into parts (a) and (b), as clearly set out in the rubric. A total of 90–110 words is the limit for the summary of specific points made in the original texts and a word count of 30–50 words for the response. Material beyond 120 words in part (a) and beyond 60 words in part (b) is ignored and scores no marks.

A large number of candidates wrote answers in excess of the word limit, sometimes by a large margin. Too often, good answers cannot be awarded any marks since the word limit has been exceeded.

- (a) Most candidates coped well with this part of the question and included full details. More attention tended to be given to the two clowns, as the text included a great deal of action and it seems to have caught candidates' interest.
- (b) Most candidates gave good answers. Candidates' choice was leaning more towards the second scene, although some candidates were of the opinion that both scenes were tragic. Good reasons, based on the texts, were given.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/03

Essay

General comments

This year there were some excellent essays with accurate punctuation and grammar, and demonstrating an extensive vocabulary. These answers showed a confident use of complex sentence-patterns. Very good candidates wrote in well-organised paragraphs with an introduction, paragraphs for developing the topic and a conclusion that summarised the previous paragraphs. As regards content, these essays were clearly relevant and well-illustrated.

Weaker candidates often wrote without clear paragraphs and the ideas were randomly expressed. Very few candidates wrote 11 or 12 paragraphs showing a lack of planning. A number of candidates this session did not illustrate their answers and, as a result, their essays were vague with only a few details.

In preparation for the examination, candidates are advised to study and revise the rules of punctuation and grammar. Candidates would benefit from improving their use of accentuation and punctuation. At times sentences were too long without a full stop, or essays were written with little awareness that some words needed to be accentuated.

Please note that it is of the utmost importance that candidates brainstorm their ideas before writing their essays. Candidates should be made aware that their ideas should be organised in clear paragraphs. This will help candidates to write in clear paragraphs with arguments that are coherent and well illustrated. Essays that have an introduction, two or three paragraphs to develop the topic and a conclusion usually score higher marks.

Here are some examples of common mistakes and some good examples from candidates' essays.

Punctuation

The verb was separated from the subject by a comma. Examples are:

- "... o dinheiro que o governo doa a estes edificios, é importantíssimo ..." should be "... o dinheiro que o governo doa a estes edificios é importantíssimo ..."
- "As notícias más, ajuda-nos ..." should be "As notícia más ajudam-nos ..." and so on.

Other examples of mistakes in punctuation are:

- "A desflorestação também é um dos fatores que dificulta bastante a conservação ao meio ambiente, todos os anos milhares ..." should be "A desflorestação também é um dos fatores que dificulta bastante a conservação ao meio ambiente. Todos os anos milhares ...". Candidates should avoid very long sentences.
- "Não têm trabalho mas têm que ganhar dinheiro ...". There should be a comma before the conjunction "mas". The sentence should be "Não têm trabalho, mas têm que ganhar dinheiro ...". It is extremely important to study the rules of punctuation.
- The object was separated from the verb as in "Existe também, outra dificuldade ...". This sentence should read as "Existe também outra dificuldade ...". These mistakes could be avoided by revising the rules of punctuation.

Some good examples were:

- "Como é óbvio, a educação em qualquer país ...", "No entanto, como referi anteriormente, tudo isto depende ...", etc.

Accentuation

Many candidates would achieve higher marks if they were more aware of accentuation. Some examples were: “ha” should be “há”, “manha” should be “manhã” (the meaning changes depending on whether the word has an accent or not), “... as pessoas tem de ...” should be “... as pessoas têm de ...” because the plural form needs an accent, but the singular does not, “sera” instead of “será” and so on.

Verb tenses

Here are the examples of very good candidates: “Seja o que for, se esta pessoa estiver em estressada, pode acabar...” (The subjunctive is used confidently.), “Ao verem notícias boas, as pessoas vão ...” (The personal infinitive is correctly used.), “... pois mesmo que não seja em Portugal, isto permitir-lhe-á a possibilidade ...” (The subjunctive is properly used after a conjunction and the future tense is also correctly used with the pronoun.)

Some mistakes were: “... talvez o número da população sem trabalho poderia descer para tem um trabalho ...” should be “... talvez o número da população sem trabalho pudesse descer para tem um trabalho ...” (The subjunctive should be used after “talvez”), “O lazer é uma atividade que possamos fazer...”. The subjunctive is unnecessary and so the correct sentence should be “O lazer é uma atividade que podemos fazer...”, “...antes que é tarde demais” should be “antes que seja tarde demais”. The subjunctive should be used.

There were also mistakes regarding the use of personal infinitive and some candidates forgot to use the plural form after “para”. For example, “... todos os humanos precisam de descansar para poder ter ...” should be “... todos os humanos precisam de descansar para poderem ter ...”.

Centres/Teachers are recommended to help candidates revise the use the subjunctive and other tenses before the exam.

Spelling

Weaker candidates wrote the following words: “sobessem” instead of “soubessem”, “subrivivir” instead of “sobreviver”, “máquina estam ...” instead of “máquinas estão” and so on. Candidates wrote some words as they pronounce them.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question about leisure was very popular and good candidates organised their essays in clear paragraphs with good examples. Many candidates mentioned the economic crisis and that, as a result of this, many people do not have time for leisure activities. Some candidates suggested companies should increase hours for leisure. Some others said that leisure is a luxury in our world nowadays.

Some weaker candidates wrote 8, 9 and even 16 lines without a full stop and some essays were not well illustrated.

Question 2

Candidates discussed this question about the news well and gave very good examples. They said people would not read the newspaper or watch TV if there were only good news. Others suggested that if there were more positive news, there would be less stress and people would feel happier. They also mentioned that we should hear bad news for us to be aware of what is going on and know how to react in bad situations.

The essay should be written in clear paragraphs and each paragraph should deal with one topic with examples. Candidates should not start a new line for every new sentence.

It is also important to avoid repetition of words. Candidates who aim to have a high mark should vary the vocabulary they use.

Again some sentences were too long without the correct punctuation. Some sentences were 16 lines long.

Question 3

Most candidates tackled the topic well, but a few wrote about conservation in general without mentioning what makes it difficult to preserve the environment.

Candidates wrote that most of the problems derive from people's unawareness of how to preserve the environment and that, as a result, forest fires were caused. Also, candidates said the government does not invest enough money because of the economic crisis and so people are not aware of what to do.

Question 4

Some candidates wrote 10, 13 and 14 lines without a full stop. Such long sentences should be avoided. A few wrote 11 paragraphs and in spoken language. Candidates should be made aware of the difference between spoken and written Portuguese prior to taking the exam. Some weaker candidates made many spelling mistakes using pedestrian sentence patterns.

This was a popular question and some good arguments were that young people are indecisive about their future, so schools should guide them for a job in the future. They also said that education should not only teach candidates to find a job, but should be more comprehensive and teach them literature, the arts etc.

Question 5

Not many candidates chose this question, but the ones that did stated that it was very important to preserve museums and galleries because they preserve culture, attract tourists, give jobs to people so that they can improve their lives, etc. Others said that due to the economic crisis, the money invested in museums and art galleries should be cut and instead it should be used to help the poor.

Recommendations

In general, Centres prepared candidates well for writing the essay.

It is important to be accurate when writing and also to use good and appropriate vocabulary to make the message clear. Candidates should write using a variety of sentence structures with good grammar. In order to achieve high marks, it is important to revise the rules of punctuation and verb tenses as well as to remember to use accents. The language needs to show a good grasp of grammar.

As regards content, as mentioned above, candidates are advised to organise their ideas before writing. The ideas should be clearly relevant to the question and well illustrated with good arguments and a conclusion.