

PORTUGUESE

Paper 8684/01
SPEAKING

General comments

I would like to congratulate Centres on having organised the exam well. The recordings arrived in good time and most Centres labelled both the cassette and the cassette box. It is important to label both the cassette and the cassette box with details of the Centre, the syllabus number and which candidates are recorded on which side. There is no need to send more than one cassette from candidates to whom the Examiner has given the same mark.

In general the recordings were of a good quality with only a few exceptions. In some cases, there was a high background noise and it was therefore difficult to hear the candidate clearly. Centres should test the equipment before the exam starts and eliminate any extraneous noise. The microphone should be placed midway between the Examiner and the candidate facing slightly towards the candidate.

Only two candidates should be recorded per side of a 90-minute cassette, and only one candidate per side of a 60-minute cassette.

As regards the mark sheet, most Centres filled in the marks on the working mark sheet and carried out the subsequent transfer of these marks to the MS1 sheet correctly. However, there were two arithmetical errors in the calculation of the total marks, and one Centre did not fill in the thirteen boxes on the working mark sheet. The 13 boxes should have been filled in with the marks clearly allocated for each section of the exam. On the MS1 sheet, only one number should be underlined on the upper and lower line for each candidate, and the total transferred to the mark column.

Examiners should signal clearly to the candidates when **Sections 1, 2 and 3** finish and start.

Examiners should be aware of the requirements for the exam. It is important to read about marking and timing in detail before starting an exam.

Examiners should not correct candidates' grammatical mistakes during the exam, nor should Examiners test the candidates' general knowledge. The exam is not a general knowledge test.

Teachers should explain to candidates the details of the examination and their required contribution when preparing them for the examination. Many marks were lost as the result of a failure both on the part of the Examiners to control the examination in the correct way, and on the part of the candidates to prepare adequately for the examination's requirements.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Topic Presentation

The selection of topics was varied and interesting. However, candidates who talk about a topic such as *Os Jovens*, *As drogas*, *O desporto*, usually do not relate this to the Portuguese world. If candidates do not present a topic that reflects the contemporary society or cultural heritage where the language is spoken, their marks must be halved. Examiners should ensure that they understand the mark scheme.

Examiners should let candidates present their topics for no longer than three and a half minutes without interruptions, unless a candidate cannot continue with her/his presentation or the candidate talks beyond the stipulated time.

Candidates should choose topics that provoke a discussion which can be developed in a presentation. Presentations should be spontaneous and neither memorised nor written. Candidates are allowed to use a cue card with the main points on it or to bring illustrative material, but they are not allowed to read a script during their presentation.

Section 2

Topic Conversation

In this section, Examiners should ask questions about the candidate's chosen topic and not about a different one.

Examiners should read the mark scheme carefully because there are marks for 'Seeking information and Opinions' in the 'Comprehension and Responsiveness' part and also in the 'Range of Vocabulary and Structures' part. Examiners should invite candidates to ask the Examiner questions because marks are awarded for doing so. If candidates do not ask the Examiner any questions, they should not be awarded any marks.

In **Section 2** the Examiners should not let the candidate talk about his topic at length. The Examiner should ask the candidate questions about their chosen topic.

Section 3

General Conversation

It is the Examiner's duty to prepare a topic (or topics) and some questions based on the chosen topics for this section. It is not the candidate's responsibility to prepare a topic for this Section.

Again in **Section 3** Examiners should invite candidates to ask the Examiner questions. Some candidates were very well prepared for this part, but some others had their marks reduced because they did not ask any questions and the Examiner did not invite them to ask him/her questions. Centres should explain to candidates that there are marks allocated for 'Seeking Information and Opinions' and should always refer to the mark scheme before preparing their candidates for the exam.

It is necessary that Examiners choose a mixture of open and closed questions, but mainly open questions. In order to do this well, the topics and questions should be prepared beforehand.

Conclusion

All assessment should be done according to the mark scheme. It is of utmost importance that Examiners read the mark scheme in detail so that they comply with the exam's requirements and make sure that candidates are not penalised. I would like to thank all Centres for organising the examination and complying with the administrative requirements.

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Paper 8684/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

Most candidates performed generally well on this paper.

However, as in previous years, problems occurred in **Section 1 Question 2**, where candidates did not understand the instructions and in **Question 5**, where candidates answered well in excess of the required number of words.

Many candidates did not ensure their handwriting was immediately legible, or that the words they were copying from the question paper were spelt correctly. Candidates should also make sure that their work is fastened in the correct order before handing it to the invigilator.

The weaker candidates had difficulty with some parts of the question paper. They also demonstrated a poor knowledge of grammar – agreement, tenses, spelling, punctuation, use of capital letters.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Most candidates answered all parts correctly.

Question 2

Most candidates answered all parts correctly.

However, some candidates seemed not to understand the instructions and example. They thought they had to write their own sentences and/or add other words instead of rephrasing those given.

Several candidates did not use the Subjunctive in part **(d)**.

Question 3

Most candidates answered all parts well and included all or most required details in their answers.

In part **(b)** some candidates did not give precise details – e.g. *árvores* instead of *pinheiros*.

Section 2

Question 4

Most candidates answered all parts well and most included the required details in their answers. However, some candidates failed to check their answers carefully and gave answers that did not make sense.

In part **(b)**, *Foi triunfal porque faleceu no 26º aniversário* was a typical wrong answer.

In part **(d)** *Passava as noites conversando com os cães* was a typical wrong answer.

In part **(e)**, lengthy direct quotations did not demonstrate that the candidate had understood the text and *para o chá das 5* was not a complete answer.

Question 5

Some candidates were unable to answer this question satisfactorily and many candidates wrote well in excess of the required 140 word for parts **(a)** and **(b)**. Sometimes the answer for part **(a)** alone exceeded the 140-word limit.

Some candidates wrote about the differences between the two writers instead of their similarities. Some referred to the writers as *os dois escritores* and some answers made no reference to what was written in the texts.

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Papers 8684/03

Essay

General comments

This year all questions were attempted. It was pleasing to see that more candidates this year answered the question that was asked instead of writing about the subject heading in general.

Some candidates wrote in very good Portuguese with organised paragraphs. Their ideas were presented with well-illustrated arguments and their vocabulary and grammatical structures were varied and appropriate to the required level. However, others did not seem to fully understand what was required of them to achieve a good mark. Many candidates wrote as they spoke, not realising that written language is more formal than spoken language and, therefore, requires the use of a more formal vocabulary and grammar. There was also generally a lack of accents or a misuse of accents. This is another aspect of the grammar that candidates should study carefully before taking an exam. Another point to highlight is the lack of knowledge about punctuation. Most candidates used punctuation wrongly.

Punctuation

Many scripts showed that candidates had little awareness of punctuation and its importance when writing. Some candidates wrote between 6 and 23 lines without any full stops.

Some candidates separated the subject from the verb with a comma: *A vontade destes atletas de ganhar, foi tão grande ...* and *Estes acontecimentos contra a droga, têm ...*. The verb was sometimes separated from the complement as in *Gostam de sentir, a energia*. This should have been: *Gostam de sentir a energia*.

Some candidates had much difficulty in writing complex sentences: *Porque há países que tem leis mas não são respeitadas. Onde cada um faz o que quer.*

Spoken language

A good number of candidates wrote as they spoke: *sutaque* instead of *sotaque*, *... tá a matar...* instead of *... está a matar ...*, *num* instead of *não*, *dinheiro* instead of *dinheiro*, *... dia pois dia ...* instead of *dia após dia*, *Não estou dacordu* instead of *Não estou de acordo*, etc.

Accents

A large number of candidates had problems with accents. They omitted them altogether or, when they were present, they were incorrect: *póderosos* for *poderosos*, *e* for *é*, *sêm* for *sem*, *países* for *países*, *influenciar* for *influenciar*, *pais* for *país* etc.

The contraction of the preposition *a* with the article *a* also presented problems. Some candidates used it confidently, but others did not use an accent or used it wrongly: *... ajuda à eliminar...* instead of *... ajuda a eliminar...*, *... esta iniciativa à ser ...* instead of *... esta iniciativa a ser ...*, etc. The accent is not used with the infinitive. Some other examples: *a sua dispociação* instead of *à sua disposição*, *ir as compras* instead of *ir às compras*, etc.

Grammar

Some good examples were: *Embora se encontre paz ..., ... para não perderem o seu caminho ..., ... seja ele rico ou pobre ..., ... se forem alertados ..., ... embora saiba que o mal já está feito...*, etc. These candidates used the subjunctive, personal infinitive and linking words correctly and varied the grammatical structures.

Candidates should be aware that the verb agrees with the subject and that pronouns should be used correctly. A few mistakes worth mentioning: *Muitos do campo que foi para a cidade ...* for *Muitos que foram para a cidade ...*, *O computador e a Internet ajuda ...* for *O computador e a Internet ajudam ... ajuda eles a fazer amigos for ... ajuda-os a fazer amigos etc.*

Spelling

There were recurrent spelling mistakes such as *talves* instead of *talvez*, *xelente* instead of *excelente*, *estudão* instead of *estudam*, *começão* instead of *começam*, *sussexo* instead of *sucesso*, *difficil* instead of *difícil*, *advantagens* instead of *vantagens*, *diferente* instead of *diferente*, etc.

Singular/Plural

A few mistakes worth mentioning: *três mês* instead of *três meses*, *As pessoas são muito diferente* instead of *As pessoas são muito diferentes*, *Se as pessoas são pobre ...* instead of *Se as pessoas são pobres...*, etc.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Some answers were well illustrated with clear paragraphs. Some candidates, however, wrote several lines without using any full stops. Some others wrote as they spoke, without a clear idea that writing is different from speaking, and requires a more formal vocabulary and correct punctuation.

Question 2

Some scripts were written with appropriate and varied vocabulary. These were well illustrated and structured and the candidates referred to the topic as they developed their ideas. However, some candidates made comments about the chosen question at the beginning of their essay and then went on to write about young people and their problems in general, forgetting to tackle the original question.

Question 3

There were some good examples of how a country can develop if the law of the country is adhered to. Candidates illustrated their arguments by giving examples of countries such as Kosovo and Sudan. Their ideas were coherently argued and structured.

Weaker candidates did not mention whether countries can actually develop if the law is not adhered to. Their arguments were very often not relevant and they showed a limited capacity to argue. Some sentences were too long with no full stops and this made the scripts difficult to read.

Candidates are reminded to answer the question and not write about the general topic 'Law and Order'.

Question 4

This was a popular question and some candidates wrote about the results of migration to big cities with clear and detailed examples. The paragraphs were well organised and well structured. The language was complex with varied vocabulary and linking words.

Some other candidates, however, did not answer the question that was asked. Instead, they wrote about living in the country versus living in the city and failed to talk about the consequences of the phenomenon of migration towards big cities. Many candidates wrote about the reasons behind the migration, but did not write about the consequences of migration.

Some candidates wrote long paragraphs without any conclusion. In some scripts it was not clear where the paragraphs started and stopped. Other weaker candidates tended to repeat the same words throughout the whole essay. Candidates are reminded that they should try to vary their vocabulary when writing.

Question 5

Some arguments were well developed in clear and well illustrated paragraphs. Some candidates wrote that they had brainstormed the topic before writing. There were some good examples about football players and some statistics about drug cases in Portugal. One candidate wrote that not only the government but also the schools, the private companies as well as well-known people should take measures to reduce the consumption of drugs. The good scripts had very few grammatical mistakes and the range of vocabulary was varied.

The weaker scripts were vague when presenting arguments. There was also little or no evidence about how the candidates interpreted the theme of the International Day against drugs.

As regards language, some essays were difficult to follow because paragraphs were very often too long and the use of punctuation was haphazard.

Question 6

The stronger candidates wrote about the two parts of Pablo Picasso's saying, with good examples and clear paragraphs. For those, the language was accurate with good and varied vocabulary and with a good variation in linking words.

Weaker candidates wrote about 'Technological Innovations' but did not answer the question. Instead they wrote about the telephone and means of transport, and some failed to refer to Pablo Picasso's saying at all.