

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/01
Speaking

Key messages

In order for candidates to do their best and to avoid being penalised through no fault of their own, Teacher-Examiners would do well to read this report along with all the other supporting documents such as the Syllabus and Mark Scheme before preparing candidates for the examination and before conducting it.

Centres are advised that candidates are not allowed to read their presentation topic from a prepared script in *Section 1*.

Candidates should also follow the instructions in the Mark Scheme and Syllabus with regard to making reference to the culture of a Portuguese-speaking country. Some candidates lost marks because in *Section 1*, they did not present a topic that included specific reference to the culture of a Portuguese-speaking country. Candidates could also improve by asking Examiners at least two questions in *Sections 2* and *3* in order to receive marks for seeking information and opinions. Centres should train learners to do this.

General comments

Some centres followed the instructions in the Mark Scheme and Syllabus, and the examination was well conducted. Other centres could support candidates better by encouraging candidates to ask the Examiner questions, for example. Examiners should familiarise themselves with the examination instructions and Mark Scheme so that candidates are not penalised.

As regards the sound quality of the recordings, some centres sent samples where the sound was too low to hear either the candidate or the Examiner. Examiners should ensure that the sound is loud and clear enough before conducting the examination, and they should check the recording afterwards.

Examiners are reminded that they should signal each Section of the examination and they should follow the timing specified in the Syllabus.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

In this Section, in order to present their chosen topic, candidates may prepare a cue card (such as a postcard) in the target language to remind them of the main points they wish to make in their presentation. This can be brought into the examination room. Candidates may also bring a limited quantity of illustrative material, such as maps, diagrams, statistics, pictures or short articles. However, centres are reminded that a script of the presentation is not allowed.

Good candidates were well prepared for the exam and presented topics which included reference to the culture of a Portuguese-speaking country. These presentations consisted of an introduction, development, conclusion and not only facts, but also opinions. Some examples of interesting topics were 'Violence in Brazil', 'Pollution in Portugal and Brazil' and 'Tourism in Portugal'.

Other candidates could improve by including reference to the Portuguese-speaking world. As per the Mark Scheme, marks for Content and Presentation are halved if no such reference is made. Some of the topics that should be avoided are, for example, 'Shopping centres', 'Life in urban and rural areas' and 'Family' unless reference is made to the culture of Portuguese-speaking countries. Candidates should also avoid content which is too basic such as simply talking about themselves and their family.

In this Section, candidates should spend no more than 3½ minutes presenting their topic and they should not be interrupted by the Examiner.

Section 2

Some Examiners conducted this part very well and they asked pertinent and open-ended questions about the candidates' topic presentations, which encouraged candidates to engage in interesting discussion. They also invited candidates to ask them questions. These should be relevant to the topic under discussion with a high level of accuracy using a range of question forms. Examiners should avoid giving lengthy comments or asking long questions so that candidates have time to express themselves. The best questions were open-ended and avoided asking about more than one topic at a time.

This Section should last between 7 and 8 minutes during which time candidates should not continue presenting their topic.

Section 3

Candidates fared better if Examiners asked them about a variety of topics using pertinent and open-ended questions. Candidates should have the opportunity to discuss at least two or three topics. Some of the topics selected were travelling, parents and education, future plans and music.

In this Section too, candidates can achieve more marks by asking the Examiner questions and centres should ensure that candidates are aware of this. Examiners should not ask candidates to choose a topic to talk about as it is the Examiner who should decide on the questions. Once again, Examiners should avoid making long comments or asking lengthy questions so that candidates have as much time as possible to speak and give their opinions, and the best questions should deal with only one topic at a time so that candidates can order their ideas and answer appropriately.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

Candidates are advised to practise for this paper by reading widely and writing regularly in the language.

Using past papers for practice also allows candidates to become familiar with the different types of questions and to understand what is expected in their answers in order to gain maximum marks.

General comments

The two texts concerned the experiences of students on two different types of exchange programmes. The questions on the paper gave candidates the opportunity to display a range of vocabulary and expression in their answers, to paraphrase and summarise ideas.

Most candidates seemed to be familiar with the layout of the Paper and were able to write answers to all of the questions.

Most candidates had a fair to a very good level of expression in the language. Candidates who read carefully to find answers to questions in the texts and who used a range of expression and vocabulary, rather than 'lifting' directly from the texts themselves, tended to do well in the paper as a whole.

Attention to accuracy of grammar and use of accents and correct word endings also attracted higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

This question required candidates to find a word or a phrase in Text 1 which had the same meaning as the definitions given in (a) to (e).

(a) – (e) Most candidates were able to answer this question. Candidates should write only the word or words from the text that the given word in the question could replace.

Question 2

This question required candidates to re-express sentences from the text beginning with phrases provided in the question.

(a) – (e) It was clear that many candidates had practised exercises of this type in preparation for the examination. Questions on the paper ranged from requiring the use of the passive voice, reported speech, the use of the subjunctive after certain verbs, to fronting (moving a clause from one position in the sentence to another).

On occasion, for example in (c), candidates introduced a new verb in order to deal with the sentence transformation. When this did not change the essential meaning of the sentence, it was accepted. Generally, it is simpler to work with the verb given in the original sentence and simply change its form if necessary.

Question 3

This question assessed candidates' ability to use paraphrase in Portuguese in order to describe and explain their answers to the comprehension questions.

- (a) – (g) Candidates who attempted to use their own expression in answer to questions were rewarded in the 'quality of expression' mark, as were candidates who were able to answer clearly and concisely. Candidates did well if they answered the questions correctly and were selective in their wording, avoiding writing overlong answers or relying too heavily on 'lifting' complete phrases from the text.

Section 2

Question 4

This question assessed candidates' ability to use paraphrase in Portuguese in order to describe and explain their answers to the comprehension questions.

- (a) – (g) Questions in this second text tended to require more interpretation and processing by the candidate in order to answer them. The question was answered well by candidates who were well prepared and knew that, as for **Question 3**, they should avoid 'lifting' entire phrases and that they should attempt to answer concisely in their own words.

Question 5

Candidates were required to write a maximum of 140 words for the summary and the personal response.

- (a) In the summary of 100 words, candidates compared and contrasted the two types of student exchanges and the impact on their lives. Candidates who were particularly successful in this part of the paper showed their ability to select information, which was entirely relevant to the summary task, and use their own words skilfully to compare and contrast the two different groups of students and their exchange experiences. It was also important not to add too much specific detail about individual students' experiences in order to keep within the word limit.
- (b) Many candidates had interesting points to make about their own choices of student exchange. The shared topic of the texts proved to be relevant and interesting for many candidates.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/03
Essay

Key messages

In order to receive a high mark in language in this examination, the following points are important:

- Being accurate, which means writing using correct grammar, accents and punctuation. Native speakers should revise grammatical rules before taking the examination.
- Avoiding repetition of words. A good essay should show extensive vocabulary and a good sense of idiom. It is important to check the essay for repetition of vocabulary before handing it in. In order to avoid repetition of words, learners should use a variety of synonyms.
- Using complex sentence patterns with different conjunctions.

In order to receive a high mark for content in this examination, the following points are important:

- Answering the question that is being asked and paying attention to the key words in the question. Include these in the answers.
- Organising ideas in clear paragraphs. An essay consists of an introduction, development of ideas, and a conclusion. It is important to brainstorm ideas before writing so that these are coherently organised, argued and structured.
- Writing a detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated essay.

General comments

When preparing for an examination, it is essential that the learner studies grammatical rules, use of accents and punctuation in order to achieve a high mark. Native speakers of Portuguese also need to revise these in order to write an essay which shows confident use of complex sentence patterns with extensive and varied vocabulary.

As regards content, it is important to highlight the key words in the question and answer it fully with detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated examples. It is also necessary to brainstorm the topic before writing and organise it in clear paragraphs. One paragraph needs more than one sentence. Sign post words are also important to organise the writing such as 'firstly', 'secondly', 'in addition', 'to conclude' etc.

Learners are reminded that legibility is important to convey the message clearly.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Learners had to explain what is necessary to have a good interpersonal relationship. Many good pieces of work contained detailed examples of what it entailed. These were organised in clear paragraphs with a wide variety of vocabulary. Others needed to contain a detailed development of the topic and avoid repetitive ideas.

Question 2

This question required the learner to address both parts of the question: whether to punish criminals or to rehabilitate them. Many good essays covered the topic fully with clear examples, and there was a variety of complex structures and vocabulary. Others could improve by varying their vocabulary and making their handwriting clearer so that the context was easier to understand.

Question 3

Although most learners wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of the introduction of robots in the world of work, some others forgot to read the question properly and did not include the world of work. It is important to highlight the key words in the question so that the answer reflects what is required. Very good pieces of writing contained an introduction, one paragraph with advantages and examples, another paragraph with disadvantages and examples, and a fourth paragraph to conclude the arguments.

Question 4

A good number of responses showed an understanding of how to maintain peace in the world. They were organised in clear paragraphs and each one stayed on topic with examples. A few wrote about wars in most of the essay, but mentioned 'peace' only in the last paragraph. Learners need to refer to the question when they are writing in order not to digress from the topic.

Question 5

Some excellent responses were clear about the causes and consequences of pollution in the learner's country. There were clear paragraphs with an introduction, a paragraph about causes and consequences, another paragraph containing the same with different opinions and a conclusion. These were coherently argued and generally accurate as regards language. Others could be improved by being written in a less clumsy or laboured way, although many responses of this type did have some degree of accuracy. Some other responses had consistently simple or pedestrian sentence patterns, and these received a low mark.