

PORTUGUESE

Paper 9718/01

SPEAKING

General comments

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. Before beginning examinations, examiners need to ensure that conditions are suitable – that they are conducting and recording examinations in as quiet a room as possible and the Centre is organised to prevent accidental disruption.

Examiners should satisfy themselves that the recording system is adequate: remembering that an examiner's voice tends to be more dominant, they should make sure that the tape recorder or microphone is positioned to favour slightly the candidate rather than the examiner, though it is vital to be able to hear the questions an examiner asks. Examiners both external and internal should be provided with correct candidate names and numbers and should use these to introduce each candidate at the beginning of his/her examination.

Cassettes need to be labelled to show the Centre and syllabus details and the order in which candidates appear on each side (that is, recording order, rather than numerical order) – this makes the task of moderation much simpler, as particular candidates from the sample can then be located more easily.

Examiners should make sure they are familiar with the timings of the examination: 3 to 3½ minutes for the candidate's Presentation (uninterrupted by the Examiner, unless the candidate is clearly unable to continue without assistance), followed by 7 to 8 minutes of Topic Conversation and 8 to 9 minutes of General Conversation, giving a total time of approximately 18 to 20 minutes. Examiners should signal clearly to the candidates when **Sections 1, 2 and 3** finish and start.

In order to avoid disruption to candidates and the loss of parts of an oral, the examination of a candidate should **not** be split between two sides of a cassette, so a maximum of **two** examinations should be recorded per side of a 90-minute cassette, and only **one** per side of a 60-minute cassette). Before despatching the examination material, examiners should check that all candidates forming the sample have actually been recorded and are audible.

For each candidate, a mark should be entered in each column of the Working Mark Sheet. Each mark corresponds to one of the elements of the mark scheme, so there are 3 columns relating to the Presentation and 5 columns for each conversation section. The last column for each conversation section should record the marks awarded for asking questions: where candidates do not ask any questions, even when prompted to do so, a zero (0) must be recorded in that column. Additions should be checked and marks transferred to the MS1.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Topic Presentation

The selection of topics was varied and interesting, ranging from *Os Jovens*, *As drogas* to *O desporto*. Most Centres are accustomed to the need to relate topic presentations to the Portuguese world and culture in some way. A few candidates only give a brief nod to the requirement, but still a small minority seem entirely unaware of the requirement – teachers should make sure that all candidates know about this, and realise that a lack of appropriate reference may cause their marks for content/presentation to be halved.

Candidates are reminded that they should choose topics that provoke a discussion which can be developed in **Section 2**. Presentations should be spontaneous: candidates are allowed to bring a cue card with the main points on it or to bring illustrative material, but they are not allowed to read a script of their presentation.

Section 2

Topic Conversation

In this section, Examiners will limit their questioning to the candidate's chosen topic and not move onto other topics.

Candidates should be prepared to ask questions to the Examiner in this section and if they do not, the examiner should prompt them to do so. If candidates do not ask the Examiner any questions, they should not be awarded any marks.

Section 3

General Conversation

This is often a difficult area for both candidate and examiner. The examiner needs to find a topic of interest for discussion and is likely to begin with something straightforward, everyday and well within the candidate's capabilities. At A/AS level, however, it is inappropriate to continue asking questions about school routine, the weekend, holidays, all of which would be very suitable for a conversation at IGCSE level. However well candidates respond to this kind of question, it is unlikely that they will score marks in the top bands of the mark schemes, since this type of question is simply not appropriate at this level. Conversation should move on rapidly from this kind of question, so that the candidate is challenged to express ideas and opinions, and develop them as far as possible. The examiner needs to be prepared to engage with the candidate in this, otherwise this is not a conversation, but merely a formulaic series of questions and rote answers.

It is not expected that examiners will try to cover every area studied during the course, but two or three topic areas, discussed in depth, will give candidates opportunities to show what they are capable of. In a Centre with several candidates, candidates should not all be asked the same questions: they will all have different areas of interest, and the examiner needs vary the topic areas accordingly. Examiners should not necessarily view responses given by candidates as "right" or "wrong" - candidates are entitled to express their own opinions and should be given the opportunity to do so and defend their points of view. The aim on the examiner's part should be to establish a natural conversation, and as for the candidate, he or she should not restrict him/herself to simple sentence answers, but should be prepared to develop those answers. The candidate who restricts him/herself to short, accurate responses, relying on good comprehension and accuracy, is also restricting the marks available for responsiveness, and providing information and opinions, since there is a limited amount of language which can be assessed.

In this section too, candidates are required to ask questions, and though many did so, quite a number did not, and some who were prompted to do so said they had no questions to ask. Candidates should be reminded that there is a total of 10 marks allocated to asking questions, 5 in each conversation section, and if they do not ask questions when prompted, they are throwing away a possible additional 10 marks. Where candidates do not ask questions in one or other conversation sections a **zero** should be recorded in the final column of the Working Mark Sheet for that section – marks cannot be awarded where no questions are asked.

Conclusion

Overall, the vast majority of Centres tried hard to conduct the examination as the syllabus requires and worked on giving their candidates every possible opportunity and eliciting the best responses from them. Candidates had usually researched their topics well and were able to give a good account of themselves. Centres and candidates alike should be congratulated on their commitment and performance.

PORTUGUESE

Paper 9718/02
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.

PORTUGUESE

Paper 9718/03

Essay

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General comments

All Questions in the exam were answered. An improvement from last year is that more candidates answered the Question that was asked and did not write about the subject heading.

The Examiner suggests that Centres provide candidates with the Examiner's report from the last year so they understand what is required to achieve a good mark. This is important because candidates should study before taking the exam, even if Portuguese is their native language. One reason for this is that there were many candidates who wrote as they spoke. There was no idea that written language is more formal than spoken language and, therefore, that more formal vocabulary and grammar should be used.

Another point to highlight is the lack of knowledge about punctuation. Most candidates used punctuation wrongly.

There was generally a lack of accents or the incorrect use of accents in the scripts. This is another aspect that candidates should study before taking the exam.

Centres should give candidates a pre-test and guide them so that they are aware of their level of writing.

Some candidates wrote in very good Portuguese with organised paragraphs and the ideas were presented with well-illustrated arguments. They had a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Comments on specific Questions

Question 1

Some scripts were well illustrated with clear paragraphs.

Some candidates wrote for seven lines without any full stops and 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. They were well illustrated and structured and the candidates referred to the topic as they developed their ideas. However, some candidates made comments about the Question at the beginning of their writing and then developed it by writing about young people and their problems in general, forgetting to answer the Question properly.

Question 3

There were some good examples of how a country can be developed if the law is obeyed. Candidates illustrated their arguments by giving examples of other countries such as: Kosovo, Sudan, the Soviet Union, the USA, etc. The ideas were coherently argued and structured.

Weaker candidates did not mention whether countries can develop if the law is not obeyed. The arguments were not relevant and there was a limited capacity to argue. Some sentences were long with no full stops and this made these scripts difficult to read.

Candidates should answer the Question and not write about the topic 'Law and Order'.

Question 4

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

Some other candidates did not answer the Question. They wrote about living in the country and living in the city and did not mention results about the migration to big cities. Many candidates wrote about the reasons for, but not the results of, migration.

Some candidates wrote long paragraphs without a conclusion. In some scripts it was not clear where the paragraph started. Candidates should leave a space before they start a new paragraph. One candidate wrote fourteen lines without a full stop.

Some other candidates repeated the same vocabulary. Candidates should vary the vocabulary they use when writing. Again, writing is different from speaking.

Question 5

Some arguments were well developed in clear and well illustrated paragraphs. The candidates showed that they had brainstormed the topic before writing. There were some good examples about football players and some statistics about cases of drugs in Portugal. One candidate wrote that not only the government but also Schools, companies and important 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.

Some other candidates were vague when presenting their arguments. There was no evidence about how the candidates interpreted the theme of the international day against drugs.

As regards language, some scripts were difficult to read because paragraphs were long without the correct punctuation. One candidate wrote over the word limit of 400 words. Candidates should read the instructions carefully.

Question 6

Good candidates wrote about the two parts of Pablo Picasso's saying with good examples and clear paragraphs. The language of the good scripts 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. They wrote about the telephone and means of transport and some did not refer to Pablo Picasso's saying at all.

Some examples collected from the scripts.

Punctuation

This was a problem this year. Most scripts showed that candidates had little awareness of punctuation and the importance when writing to avoid ambiguity and incorrect meanings. Some candidates wrote between 6 and 23 lines without any full stops.

Some candidates separated the subject from the verb with a comma and this should never be done. Some examples: 'A vontade destes atletas de ganhar, foi tão grande ...' and 'Estes acontecimentos contra a droga, têm ...'. The verb was separated from the complement as in: 'Gostam de sentir, a energia.'. This should be: 'Gostam de sentir a energia.'

One example showed that the candidate had no idea of how to write complex sentences. An example is: 'Porque há países que tem leis mas não são respeitadas. Onde cada um faz o que quer.'

Spoken language

A large number of candidates wrote as they spoke. Some examples were: '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

These were also a problem. A large number of candidates did not accentuate words or did not use accent correctly. Some examples were: 'póderosos' for 'poderosos', 'e' for 'é', 'sêm' for 'sem', 'países' for 'países', 'influênciar' for 'influenciar', 'pais' for 'país' etc.

Accents are important and should be used because, for example, 'e' means 'and' and 'é' means 'it is', 'pais' means 'parents' and 'país' means country.

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. Some examples were: '... 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 dispocisão' 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.

Some poor examples were: 'Muitos do campo que foi para a cidade ...' for 'Muitos do campo 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. Candidates should be aware that the verb agrees with the subject and that pronouns should be used correctly.

Spelling

Some scripts were very weak with a number of spelling mistakes. Some examples were: 'talves' instead of 'talvez', 'xelente' for 'excelente', 'estudão' for 'estudam', 'começão' for 'começam', 'sussexo' for 'sucesso', etc.

Some candidates, whose native language is not Portuguese, made the following mistakes: 'difficil' instead of 'difícil', 'advantagens' instead of 'vantagens', 'diferente' instead of 'diferente', etc. These were examples of first language interference.

Singular/Plural

There were some mistakes such as: '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. In Portuguese adjectives have both singular and plural forms.

PORTUGUESE

Paper 9718/04

GCE Advanced Level, Portuguese

General comments

Most candidates coped well with the questions. It was clear that they had read the books, or had at least gone through a detailed analysis of some of them in class. They were aware of the plot and characters, although sometimes the names were changed. Some candidates were able to look beyond the immediate material and show some understanding of the author's intentions, focusing on some particular passages, being coherent in their explanations and choosing a detailed approach and adequate illustrations.

However, a large number of candidates tended to narrate the story of the book without linking it to the question. Some summarised the question in no more than ten lines after having been through a lot of unnecessary details. There were many answers that did not refer to the question asked or that simply did not bear any relation to it. Some responses were over-simplified and superficial. In the future, candidates should pay closer attention to the questions asked.

Unfortunately there were also some candidates who appeared to have simply memorised certain parts of the stories and then were not able to develop some important points. They produced very basic material without showing any understanding of the text.

Candidates should be reminded at the beginning of the exam to identify the questions they are answering. They do not have to re-write the whole question; they just need to write the number and letter for the chosen question.

A few candidates chose **Questions 1, 2 or 3 (a)** in **Section 1** but forgot that they had to answer both sub-questions **(i)** and **(ii)**.

Candidates should always make an effort to write legibly, and make sure their handwriting is clear, which is not always the case.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

In Section 1, most candidates opted for **Question 1(b)** about the evolution of *Teodoro in O Mandarin* but some failed to relate their answer to the question. The Examiner was expecting candidates to illustrate this evolution, to explain in which parts of the story this can be seen and why, with close reference to the text.

Questions 2(a) and **2(b)** were also popular amongst candidates and whilst candidates had few problems with **Question 2(a)**, they found **Question 2(b)** more challenging. There were three topics that candidates were expected to develop in **Question 2(b)**: love, family and money.

Section 2

In Section 2, many candidates answered **Questions 4(a)** and **6(b)**. In **Question 4(a)** the candidates were required to analyse the presence of destiny in every short story of *Nós matámos o cão tinhoso*. Some candidates only picked two or three short stories and did not exemplify their answer thoroughly enough. It was also clear that some candidates did not know the real story behind the characters, what they really represented and this also affected the quality of their answer.

Candidates answered **Question 6(b)** with accuracy and pertinence. The relationship between the two characters and the historical context of the time was analysed in detail. Some candidates related these two characters to the social, economic and political context of the time and compared their lives in an interesting way. The candidates that received lower marks were not able to illustrate properly the relationship between these two characters and they managed to write simple and superficial answers.