

FOREIGN LANGUAGE PORTUGUESE

Paper 0540/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Overall, the paper did not present many difficulties to the majority of the candidates. In general the exam was well received. The overall achievement of candidates was very good with some excellent performances from candidates who scored high marks. These candidates wrote succinct answers in idiomatic, highly accurate Portuguese.

Inference and interpretation play an important part in **Section 3** and candidates should be prepared for that.

Praise goes to teachers who have been able to bring out the best in the candidates. Teachers are advised to continue their excellent work giving particular attention to the following:

- Ensure that exam candidates are exposed to a wide variety of reading and written material;
- Instil an attentive approach to reading;
- Prepare candidates to extract only the required information to answer the questions;
- Prepare candidates to pay particular attention to what is asked in the icons of Ex 4, in **Section 1**;
- Increase awareness of structural features of the target language and
- Encourage a wide use of tenses and subordinate clauses in the writing exercise.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercício 1 - Perguntas 1-5

This exercise was well answered by most of candidates. Few did not know the Portuguese word for *apple*, 'maçã' and chose the option A which was for cherries.

Exercício 2 - Perguntas 6-10

The majority of the candidates performed very well on this exercise.

Only few had problems with P 7. For 'parque' they should have chosen option D 'É proibido apanhar flores ou plantas' but instead chose 'Não nade logo depois de comer' which related to P 10, *piscina*.

Exercício 3 - Perguntas 11-15

Generally the questions were well answered. Most candidates gained full marks on this multiple choice exercise.

Exercício 4 - Pergunta 16

Candidates performed much better on this question this session. Very few candidates did not relate the text to the pictures and therefore missed marks. Some candidates did not pay attention to the date and possibly did not know the Portuguese words for *swimming trunks* and/or *boat*. Many used the Spanish words for both.

Section 2

Exercício 1 - Perguntas 17- 24

In general candidates performed very well in this exercise.

Only some candidates did not answer these questions correctly.

P17 mostly was well answered.

P18 did not cause any problems.

P19 Very few candidates responded with the correct verbal tense.

P20 (i) and (ii). Almost everyone had at least 50% correct. Some candidates said that it was a favourite sport, others wrote the answer for P21, in one of the parts.

P 21 very few incorrect answers.

P22 Some candidates said that she was very good at skiing or wanted to learn to ski.

P23 generally correctly answered.

P 24(i) and (ii) the majority of candidates answered this correctly. Very few did not mention '*Serra da Estrela*', simply said she liked mountains or did not mention any mountains at all, simply split '*praticar e melhorar*' one in each option.

Exercício 2 - Pergunta 25

This writing exercise was generally correct and pleasing to read. The candidates wrote the correct 80 – 100 words, which has been an improvement. A considerable number did not explain the advantages and disadvantages. Many chose teachers as an advantage and food as a disadvantage and therefore did not develop the other two points that focused on those two choices.

The quality of language was acceptable but the great number stayed with present, imperfect and preterite tenses, very few on those three tenses and even less on other tenses.

A number of candidates from Spanish-speaking countries seem to have forgotten that they were answering a Portuguese exam and wrote the whole essay in Spanish which posed a great problem.

Section 3

This section differentiates between stronger and weaker candidates. A number of candidates struggled with the last exercises.

Exercício 1 - Perguntas 26 – 31

Some candidates answered the whole exercise correctly; others just briefly read the text and did not pay sufficient attention to detail. The True/False exercise with the option of correcting the false statements caused some problems. Some candidates changed all the statements, the correct and the incorrect ones. Others had one True, one False.

Question 26 was mainly right. Few candidates marked it False and justified it by saying that Lili wanted to work in a gym or a swimming pool.

Question 27 had right answers, but some candidates considered it True and did not, therefore, correct the statement.

Question 28 generally correct.

Question 29 quite a number of candidates considered it correct, False.

Question 30 mainly right.

Question 31 The majority answered this well.

Exercício 2 - Perguntas 32– 39

This exercise did not present many problems.

Questions 32, 33, 38, and 39 gained generally the awarded mark.

Question 34 attracted a variety of answers. It required the explanation that being a speaker of Portuguese opens up opportunities in developing Portuguese speaking countries such as Brazil, Angola and Mozambique. A considerable number of candidates left the answer incomplete saying simply that it opened up opportunities.

Question 35 asked to explain why Sergio did not want to leave his country. The answer was that he did not want to leave what was near and dear to him. Some candidates used the words but could not put them in a coherent sentence.

Question 36 Some candidates gained full marks. Others just said he wanted to find a job to earn money or simply to visit countries. The correct answer required *'to travel to other Portuguese speaking countries where he could live in the future'*.

Question 37

- (i) Mainly correct answers. Some chose what was important to Sérgio's dad, computing and science instead of foreign languages.
- (ii) The majority said that people needed the foreign languages to communicate but what was asked as a justification, was to facilitate the business.

The majority of the candidates answer the exam well and did not seem to have had problems in finishing the test. All candidates attempted the whole exam.

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Paper 0540/03
Speaking

General comments

Most candidates seemed well prepared for this year's Speaking test. They seemed familiar with the 3 different sections of the exam and most of them performed confidently and competently in each section. Examiners should continue to allow candidates to have access to past role plays to practice the foreign language and to familiarise themselves with the structure of the test. Likewise, Examiners are reminded to prepare in advance for the examination, referring to the Teachers' Notes booklet for details.

Recording

Recordings this year were mostly of excellent quality. Only four Centres returned recordings on cassettes and all of these were of much lower quality. Whenever possible please try to use CDs instead of cassettes. Centres are advised to check that all recording equipment is working properly before beginning any examination and then, before submitting CDs/cassettes, that all recordings are clearly audible.

Centres who record onto CDs should ensure that each candidate's Speaking test is recorded onto a separate track and is properly identified according to instructions in the Teacher's Notes booklet. It is worth reminding Examiners that once the examination has begun, the recording should not be stopped or paused between elements of the examination, but should run continuously until the end of that candidate's examination. This will also ensure that all elements of the examination are submitted.

Sample

For Centres with more than 16 candidates, it is important that recordings of the first 10 candidates in candidate number order are submitted as well as the recordings of 6 candidates spread as evenly as possible across the Centre's range of marks. This year a few of these Centres only sent a total of 10 recordings. Please ensure that the 6 candidates chosen across the range of marks are not among the first ten.

Centres are reminded that the cover sheet for moderation sample must be completed and enclosed with the sample. This year over half of the Centres did not include the cover sheet.

Mark Sheets

Centres are reminded that they should check additions carefully in order to avoid errors in the transfer of marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1/CAMEO. Also, when completing the MS1, the final mark in figures must also be entered as well as shading the lozenges.

Please ensure you send both the working mark sheet and the MS1/CAMEO.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

I am pleased to say that, compared to last year, Examiners seem to have taken more time and care to prepare for the role plays. Occasionally a few Examiners created new tasks or missed out tasks. Examiners are reminded that they should keep to the 5 prompts given in Role Play A and in Role Play B and that they should not create any additional questions or miss out any of the tasks in order not to confuse or disadvantage any candidate.

Examiners are reminded of the need for careful preparation of Role Plays in order to ensure that candidates are given the correct cues which allow them to attempt the required tasks. Please remember, when candidates omit a task, Examiners should prompt them to attempt it, to give them the opportunity to work for marks. Where a response is ambiguous, the Examiner should prompt to allow the candidate to clarify and possibly score a higher mark.

Examiners are reminded that some actions may be needed in order to make some tasks clear. In Role Play A, for example, the Examiner was supposed to hand the menu to the candidate. Not performing this action may have disadvantaged some candidates who did not see the need to thank the Examiner and missed out on two points.

Where part of the task is for the candidate to greet or thank their interlocutor or to 'Manifestar surpresa', and these are omitted, the maximum mark for the task is 1. Some candidates struggled to express surprise.

In terms of assessment, sometimes marks were awarded by centres even though tasks were not attempted or only partially complete. On the other hand, sometimes marks were not awarded for correct short answers. Please note that 3 marks can be awarded for a one-word / brief answer where that is correct and appropriate to the task – candidates are not required to use full sentences. Comprehensive answers with minor mistakes can get 3 points, while comprehensive answers with the wrongly conjugated verbs should not get 3.

Topic Presentation and Conversation

The majority of candidates had prepared their topic well, but in a few cases they sounded rather over-rehearsed / pre-learnt and lacking in spontaneity.

Candidates should prepare a 1-2-minute presentation on a topic of their own choice and deliver it without interruptions by the Examiner. This presentation should then be followed by questions on that topic for 2-3 minutes. Some of this year's presentations were sometimes too long whereas others were too short. The presentation and conversation together should not take over 5 minutes. Examiners are reminded to keep to the timings in the interest of fairness to all candidates.

In general there was a good variety of themes, but in a few Centres all candidates talked about the same topics: My Life, My School or Myself. These topics should be avoided as they severely restrict the scope for general conversation.

It is important that the Examiner asks questions which will allow the candidates to show that they can use past and future tenses accurately. This was a reoccurring problem in this section with most Centres and this disadvantaged some candidates who were clearly very good, but were only asked questions about the present, not being given the opportunity to show what they knew.

General Conversation

Examiners are reminded to indicate the transition from topic to general conversation very clearly, with a phrase such as "Agora vamos passar para a terceira fase do exame, a fase de conversação geral".

Candidates generally performed well in this section. Great effort was made by weaker candidates to engage in conversation. The great majority of Examiners created a good atmosphere during the exam where the candidates felt relaxed and seemed happy to contribute with their views. On the whole, Examiners had good examining technique, although a few issues did arise:

- Examiners should try to avoid asking closed questions which candidates can answer by saying "yes", "no" or single word replies
- It is important to pitch questions at the right level for a true reflection of the candidate's ability. On a few occasions questions were too challenging and candidates were lost and unable to comment. At other times, very able candidates were not given the opportunity to use vocabulary and complex structures that could have given them a higher mark.
- Allow the conversation to flow. Sometimes fewer topics can lead to more conversation. Three well explored topics can be more productive than a series of unconnected questions.

- It is important to provide candidates with opportunities to express themselves, using a wide range of vocabulary and tenses and more complex language and structures.
- Candidates must be given the opportunity to use past and future tenses accurately. Sometimes it is necessary to phrase the question in such a way as to specifically elicit that.

There was generally a good range of questions in the general conversation section. However some Centres based most of their questions on family, school, holidays and free time, often repeating the same questions from candidate to candidate and the conversations lacked spontaneity. Please ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to respond to unprepared questions.

The interaction in this section should last for about 5 minutes. The brevity of some of the conversations meant that candidates did not have the opportunity to exhibit the range of vocabulary and structures required to score marks at the top of bands.

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Paper 0540/04
Continuous Writing

Key messages

- No marks are awarded for Communication (content) or for language (accuracy and range) after the 140 word limit.
- The question must be read carefully so that all points are covered adequately.
- Candidates should take care to avoid mistakenly writing words from languages other than Portuguese.
- Handwriting is important as Examiners have to be able to easily recognise correct spelling and use of accents in order to award marks.

General comments

Once again it was apparent that candidates had been very well-prepared for this examination. Nearly all candidates were aware of what was expected of them and followed the instructions and managed their time well. Most candidates wrote within the suggested 130 to 140 words and had sensibly left time to check and edit their answers at the end. In order to do well, many candidates aimed for both accurate and ambitious use of language, using as wide a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary as possible.

The majority of candidates earned the full 5 marks for Communication by making clear reference to all the points in the instructions. It seemed to help many candidates to write their answers for an imaginary target reader, as their answers were in an appropriate register and were fully informative for that imagined audience. Successful candidates found the balance between fully developing each of the points in the instructions and not going over the word limit. There was, however, a high number of very strong candidates who wrote beautifully yet excessively. This meant that whatever they wrote about the last content point received no marks for content or language because it was over the word limit.

When candidates paraphrase words and expressions from the instructions so that their work starts with their own words it gives them a sense of ownership of the situation that they are creating. This helps them to write answers that are engaging and creative and in a wholly appropriate style. Unfortunately even a few strong candidates missed out on the opportunity to excel by taking the easy option and lifting words and expressions directly from the instructions. Other candidates did well by adapting the wording of the instructions by changing the verb formats, pronouns, etc. as appropriate.

Differences in vocabulary and grammatical structures between European and Brazilian Portuguese are taken into account, with no bias towards any one variation. All variations of Portuguese are accepted – whether Brazilian, European or African, as are both pre- and post- *Acordo* agreement spellings. However, candidates need to be wary of using informal or slang expressions when the task requires a more formal register.

Although a lack of paragraphing is not penalised, stronger answers were generally well organised from sentence level to paragraphing. Using a paragraph for each of the required communication points clearly shows candidates that they have covered all the points required. If a blank line between paragraphs is left, this gives some space for any corrections that candidates may need to make while they are checking their work. Many candidates had obviously planned their work carefully. The space on page 2 can be used for notes or planning or writing out words to check spellings.

Some candidates had written out a full draft and a final copy of their work. Judging by the quality of handwriting and accuracy of language it seems that a lot of these candidates were running out of time and had to rush their 'final version', some even making mistakes in the final marked version that were not present in the first unmarked draft. Given the time constraints it thus seems unadvisable to try and write a full draft and final version of the answers; however, if candidates do so, it is essential that they clearly identify which is the version to be marked. The draft copy simply needs a line across it to make this obvious.

Many answers were very well-written and contained descriptions, explanations, justifications and points of view. They showed an admirable range of vocabulary and grammatical structures with little repetition and contained forms of the subjunctive (*subjuntivo / conjuntivo*). All of this meant extra General Impression marks on top of the Language marks awarded. It is worth mentioning that lists of nouns, such as foods eaten, countries visited, or sports played do not earn any marks for language. Weaker candidates should not attempt to pad out their work to reach the 130 word limit. Instead, they would benefit from using synonyms of adjectives to enrich their descriptions.

Candidates should be encouraged to write legibly and avoid poor handwriting. While every effort is made to interpret candidates' work positively, it must be pointed out that in an examination situation candidates are only given marks for what is clearly correct. Tidying up handwriting should be part of the editing done in the last few minutes of exam time. Many candidates would also have earned more language marks by checking carefully for interference from other languages (false friends) such as *estaba* from Spanish. Another point to pay attention to is the accents that are absolutely necessary to distinguish between words of different function or meaning, especially such common words as *esta* (this) / *está* (is) and *é* (is) / *e* (and).

In summary, to maximise their marks candidates just need to follow the good advice given by teachers all over the world:

- Read the instructions carefully and think about the task;
- Make some sort of plan to cover everything required within the word limit and
- Check and edit carefully after writing.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a)

This option was less popular than 1(b), although responses were generally of an equally high standard and marks were as good for both options. This task required candidates to imagine they were going to spend a year abroad and to write a letter in response to an advert for a room in candidate accommodation. Communication marks were awarded for including at least three pieces of information about the candidate; explaining what type of room was required and why; describing a pleasant previous experience the candidate had had while living away from home and also for saying what plans the candidate had for their year abroad. The marks were awarded for any information given in response to the bullet points, regardless of how appropriate a landlord might consider requests for space for drum kits or tales of wild parties away from parental control! Nevertheless, higher marks were generally earned by candidates who had imagined themselves in the situation of someone applying for accommodation abroad and thus wrote a reasonable amount of relevant suitable information.

As regards the expectations for grammar and vocabulary, the first bullet point required three pieces of personal information. This was under-exploited by most candidates who simply gave facts such as name or age, when they could have earned more marks by giving (or inventing) information that showed more language knowledge, such as *Eu nasci em ...*, *Há 3 anos, eu moro ...*. The description of the room was an opportunity to earn marks by describing with adjectives, rather than just listing items of furniture, while the third bullet point required descriptive language and an explanation of the pleasant experience as well as a variety of correct past tense verbs. Ideally, candidates would have seen the word *agradável* (*uma agradável experiência*) as one that could easily be replaced by a synonym such as *positiva*, *enriquecedora*, *marcante*, *gratificante* or *produtiva*. The last bullet point obviously referred to the future and candidates could express their future plans in a variety of ways, such as *pretendo estudar*, *gostaria de aprender*, *vou aprimorar*, or *visitarei*. Unfortunately some candidates ran over the 140 word limit while writing about their plans and consequently neither the Communication mark for their description of future plans, nor any language marks for expressing the future could be awarded.

The formal context provided the opportunity to show awareness of the importance of register and the conventions of letter writing. Postal addresses, however, are totally ignored by Examiners and do not earn any marks, so should not be included. Neither is it necessary for candidates to use their limited time and space to write long formal openings or endings. Beginning with *Exmo(a) Sr(a)* or *Prezado(a) Sr(a)* and ending with *Atenciosamente* or *Cordialmente* would be ideal, but not essential.

Question 1(b)

Writing a letter about the family moving home was a very popular option. Many candidates seemed to be writing from personal experience, and the vast majority of letters were informative and entertaining and

written in an appropriate informal register. All in all, the letters were interesting and enjoyable to read. Candidates described a wide range of cities, using an equally wide range of language. Weaker candidates earned their communication and language marks with language such as *uma cidade grande, tem muitas atividades para fazer*, and *é muito agradável* or *a praia é bonita*, the last two of which seemed to show candidates were taking inspiration from the instructions for **Questions 1(a)** and **2**. These candidates got marks for the language lifted from the instructions for other questions, although of course higher marks were earned by those candidates who could paraphrase the instructions, and could use their own words to describe the situation created in the instructions. Stronger candidates were able to earn their communication marks and extra language marks with rich descriptive language such as *é a cidade mais linda que eu já vi, apesar de problemas de infraestrutura, antes de mudar eu imaginava que a cidade fosse maior*. As in option **1(a)**, the fourth bullet point required the candidate to refer to events in the future, and again, marks were given to any way of expressing future plans, such as *pretendo te levar, gostaria de ir, vou te mostrar, vamos visitar, iremos a, or passaremos uns dias*.

Most candidates did well with giving information about the city, explaining their reason for preferring to live there or describing the party they visited, and many candidates developed their answers with plenty of information. However, there were a high number of candidates, especially stronger ones who lost one communication mark and also language marks because all of what they wrote about their plans for the friend's future visit was over the 140 word limit. There was, in fact a considerable number of candidates who missed out on top marks just because of this final piece of information being unrewarded as it was over the word limit.

Question 2

The instructions for this question are less prescriptive, and require candidates to relate a series of events and a reaction to them. However, this does not mean that candidates should fail to use descriptive language as this demonstrates their linguistic ability and earns just as many marks as story-telling. In fact, the correct use of verbs required to tell a story in terms of tense choice, spelling and accents was a challenge to a considerable number of candidates. There were many examples of language that is 'almost correct', and mistakes that perhaps may slip by unnoticed in an oral exam, but that cannot be rewarded in a writing exam, for instance *estaba, correron, tambien, cuando* or *mis amigos*. Practice of spelling of common verbs in narrative tenses such as past simple, (*eu corri*), past continuous, (*eu procurava*), and past perfect (*eu tinha ido*) would be beneficial for a lot of candidates.

In the case of a few candidates the quality of writing for question two was noticeably lower than for question one. It is possible that this is a result of poor time management, with these candidates having to rush their second piece of writing.

The instructions told candidates to describe how they, the previous summer, had gone to the beach with friends and then become lost from these friends. The details required were a description of how they spent the day and how the friends reacted when they found each other at the end of the day. There was an entertaining variety of causes for getting separated from friends. There were amusing tales of footballs getting kicked so far into the forest that there was no way out, or teenagers totally forgetting their old friends when they catch sight of a handsome boy or beautiful girl and shocking tales of powerful sea currents, cruel 'friends' playing tricks, muggings and even attempted kidnappings. A lot of stories started off with going to get an ice-cream and not being able to spot friends on a crowded urban beach, while other candidates described epic journeys to deserted beaches.

It is to be hoped that candidates were not writing based on personal experience and that they were in fact enjoying the opportunity to be creative and let their imaginations run wild about what not to do on the beach. It is important that candidates do not become so carried away with their stories that they fail to follow the instructions. It was essential to follow the instructions and write about becoming lost from friends, relate to the day's activities and then describe the reaction on meeting at the end of the day. As with question one, some candidates, especially more confident ones exceeded the word limit and their descriptions of their friends' reactions at the end of the day could not be rewarded.