

FOREIGN LANGUAGE PORTUGUESE

Paper 0540/02
Reading

Key Messages

On the whole, performance in this paper was very satisfactory. The vast majority of candidates answered most questions correctly and demonstrated that they are able to understand and respond to written language to the standard required.

General Comments

Most candidates showed good understanding when responding to the exam questions and finished the exam within the allocated time.

As a preparation for the exam, it would be good practice for candidates to read a wide variety of both fiction and non-fiction texts (short stories, leaflets, brochures, diaries, etc.), as well as regularly complete a wide variety of vocabulary learning exercises. When answering the comprehension questions, it is important to read carefully to ensure that only the required information is extracted. .

Inference and interpretation are complex reading skills, and candidates should be taught these explicitly.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

Questions 1-5

The pictures were clear and the questions straightforward. The great majority of candidates answered these questions correctly.

Exercise 2

Questions 6-10

In this exercise candidates were required to sequence a series of statements according to the pictures given. Knowledge of vocabulary on the Minimum Core Vocabulary list is essential in order to perform well in this exercise. Most candidates answered correctly.

Exercise 3

Questions 11-15

Most candidates were able to answer these multiple choice questions correctly. Success in this task hinged on good knowledge of the vocabulary on the Minimum Core Vocabulary list.

Section 2

Exercise 1

Questions 16-20

It is important to read both the rubric and the sentences as the gaps can only be completed with one of the words given. A few candidates decided to use their own words, thereby losing marks. In addition to knowledge of the vocabulary given, candidates also had to read carefully as the clue to which word is needed to complete the gap is always given by key words in the text.

Sentence 16 was answered correctly by most candidates.

Some candidates chose the word 'cães/ cachorros' to complete sentence 17, but the text states clearly that 'infelizmente não aceitamos animais'.

Sentence 18 was also difficult for a number of candidates who assumed that 'Clube' meant visitors could do sport, when in fact the meaning was 'art club'. In order to get this right, candidates had to read on and know that 'desenhar' means 'to draw' and so had nothing to do with sport.

Some candidates chose the word 'vegetariana' to complete sentence 19, when the text clearly states that the restaurant serves 'pratos...com carnes regionais'.

A few candidates chose to use a variation of 'às 9 da noite' to complete sentence 20 instead of the correct word from the box.

Exercise 2

Questions 21-27

Most candidates had no problem extracting the correct answers from the text. It is important to read accurately to avoid making incorrect or incomplete assumptions. Question 23 required candidates to find an example of how they could pay less for the ticket, **not** how they could make attending the festival cheaper. Likewise, in Question 26, the candidates were required to give examples of two groups of people that like attending festivals – the answer had to be precise, i.e. 'pessoas mais velhas' not 'pessoas velhas', as the two have different implied meanings.

Section 3

Exercise 1

Questions 28-32

This exercise was probably the one that proved to be the most challenging for a lot of candidates. Many corrected statements that were, in fact, already correct, and some candidates did not offer any justifications despite identifying correctly which statements were false. Also, the rubric clearly states that candidates should **not** correct false statements by simply using the word 'não', but many still insist on doing it. The best answers used paraphrase or information extracted from the text.

In some instances, candidates identified the part of the text where the answer could be found, but then extracted a lot more information than was required.

Exercise 2

Questions 33-38

Candidates' answers to these questions indicate they found this text easy to understand and process. There were very few instances where candidates lost marks.

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Paper 0540/03
Speaking

Key Messages

Most candidates were well prepared for this year's Speaking test. They were familiar with the different sections of the exam and most of them performed confidently and competently in each section. However, there was a small decline in performance in the role play section. On the whole, high levels of communication skills were displayed by candidates. The best teachers/Examiners were aware of how to elicit the best performance from their candidates.

General comments

Examiners are reminded of the need to prepare in advance for the examination. Examiners should familiarise themselves with the structure of the paper to ensure candidates complete all tasks as indicated in the syllabus and teachers' notes. It is crucial that they read previous years' reports before the examination. These have detailed feedback and suggestions for improvement. It is expected that Examiners will act on the feedback given. Please keep in mind that in order to be able to access the full range of marks, candidates need to complete all the tasks set by CIE.

Administration

Recording

Recordings this year were mostly of excellent quality and there was an improvement from last year. All recordings were sent on CDs. Please package CDs well as many cases arrive broken.

The very few low quality recordings received were muffled. Centres are advised to check that all recording equipment is working properly and that recording quality is good before beginning any examination. Before submitting CDs, please check that all recordings are clearly audible.

The main aspect in need of improvement is the identification of individual recordings. Centres should ensure that each candidate's Speaking test is recorded onto a separate track and is properly identified according to the instructions provided in the Teacher's Notes booklet. Failure to identify each recording makes the moderation process lengthier and more complicated. It is worth reminding Examiners that once the examination has begun, the recording should not be stopped or paused between sections of the examination, but should run continuously.

Sample

Samples were mostly very well selected this year.

Centres are reminded that the cover sheet for the moderation sample must be completed and enclosed with the sample. 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. More addition mistakes were made this year than in previous years. It is also important to check that the transfer of marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1/CAMEO is correct. In addition, when completing the MS1, the final mark in figures must also be entered as well as shading the lozenges.

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

Comments on Specific Questions

Role Plays

The best role plays adhered strictly to the instructions given. In these cases, the examiners prepared carefully, gave the candidates the correct cues, kept to the five prompts given in Role Play A and in Role Play B, and did not create any additional questions or miss out any of the tasks. Whenever candidates failed to answer, these Examiners prompted them to make an attempt and gave them an opportunity to work for marks. Where a response was ambiguous, the Examiner prompted the candidate to clarify and possibly score a higher mark.

Despite some excellent role plays, a minority of Examiners' decision to create new tasks or leave out tasks entirely had a negative impact on marks. Some candidates, even very competent ones, lost marks due to missed out tasks. Marks cannot be awarded for missed out tasks, even if another task was created and completed. Marks can only be awarded for completion of tasks set by CIE so it is vital that Teachers/Examiners adhere to the tasks specified in the syllabus – this is done to ensure a level playing field for all candidates.

Where part of the task is for the candidate to greet or thank their interlocutor or to *Manifestar preocupação*, for example, and these are omitted, the maximum mark for the task is one. Some candidates struggled to express worry or impatience.

In some instances, marks were awarded even though tasks were not attempted or only partially completed. This was more noticeable when candidates were supposed to thank or express an emotion. On the other hand, sometimes marks were not awarded for correct short answers. Please note that three marks can be awarded for a one-word or 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 three points, while comprehensive answers with the wrongly conjugated verbs should not get three. No marks can be awarded if the Examiner offers options when it is not an options task. This happened several times.

Topic Presentation and Conversation

The majority of candidates had prepared their topic well and the candidates sounded natural and proficient. In a very small number of cases and Centres they sounded rather over-rehearsed/pre-learned and lacking in spontaneity. Please remember that candidates should not be reading from a script.

Presentations varied considerably in length, a few being too short, but many being too long, on occasion extremely long. The presentation and conversation together should not take over five minutes. The best topic presentations kept to the timings stipulated in the syllabus and were followed by open-ended questions on that topic for two to three minutes. It is important that candidates make their presentation without interruption (unless it goes over two minutes).

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 possibility for general conversation.

The best performances were from Centres where a natural and spontaneous conversation took place after the initial presentation of the topic. There were many instances of good examining which enabled candidates to work in different tenses and to give and justify their opinions. It is important that the Examiner asks questions which will allow the candidates to show that they can **use past and future tenses** accurately.

Teachers/Examiners are reminded that candidates, as well as Moderators, find it useful to be told when this section of the test is over and when the examination is moving into the General Conversation section, with a phrase such as *Agora vamos passar para a terceira fase do exame, a fase de conversação geral..*

General 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. The majority worked very hard to get the best out of weaker candidates, but a few cut the conversations short. Please try to keep within the time limit even with weaker candidates.

The best general conversations displayed the following features:

- they explored two or three topics in more depth - fewer well explored topics can be more productive than a series of unconnected questions;
- they provided candidates with opportunities to express themselves, using a wide range of vocabulary and tenses and more complex language and structures;
- the Examiner asked open-ended questions which elicited rich samples of language from candidates;
- the Examiner pitched questions at the right level and so was able to get a true reflection of the candidate's ability;
- candidates were given the opportunity to use past and future tenses accurately because the Examiner phrased the question in such a way as to specifically elicit that - when asking about the future, they tried to use the future tense in the questions, i.e. '*fará*';
- the Examiner avoided questions on family, school, holidays and free time and tried to explore different subject areas, giving the candidates the opportunity to respond to unprepared questions.

The best examples of interaction in this section lasted for about five minutes (which is the time given in the syllabus), and the conversations were structured to ensure that candidates had the opportunity to exhibit the range of vocabulary and structures required to score marks at the top of bands.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE PORTUGUESE

Paper 0540/04

Writing

Key Messages

- It is important that all the information requested in the instructions is included in candidates' answers.
- All candidates need to read carefully through all the sections of their work to check for mistakes. Care must be taken with interference from other languages. Many candidates need to check their work for mistakes such as *estaba* or *cuando*.
- Candidates should prepare for **Section 1** to ensure they are able to access the full range of marks.

General Comments

The level of preparation of many candidates was evident, both in the level of language and the way in which answers were constructed. It was apparent that many teachers had wisely familiarised their pupils with the new format of the exam as candidates responded appropriately in the different sections. Teachers would have been very pleased with their pupils' efforts as a large number of candidates ensured they answered the questions fully and wrote accurately.

The vocabulary task in **Section 1** was generally dealt with efficiently. It is important to make clear to candidates that the pictures show suggestions and that any reasonable response is acceptable. Five marks are awarded for the five answers that have the most accurate spelling and that are the most reasonable answers. There can be some tolerance regarding misspellings and correct use of accents; however, the candidates' answers must be an obvious attempt to write in Portuguese.

The new format of the exam progresses from the vocabulary listing task in **Section 1** to a simple writing task requiring candidates to express basic information in **Section 2**. The exam then goes on to the more demanding longer piece of writing in **Section 3**. Candidates who are not expected to perform so well in **Section 3** should get plenty of practice with the less demanding tasks in **Sections 1** and **2** so as to ensure they get the maximum marks available.

Candidates need reminding to pay careful attention to the instructions so that no-one loses marks by forgetting to include some of the requested information. Although it is rare, it is frustrating when stronger candidates miss out on content marks, despite a high score for verbs and other linguistic features. Checking all the content has been covered should be part of the editing process that all candidates should do in the final minutes of the hour given for the test.

It was clear that teachers had encouraged their pupils to paraphrase the wording of the instructions for **Section 2** and **Section 3**. The instructions create a realistic scenario for the candidates to react to and when candidates think about how to put this into their own words, they immerse themselves in this situation. This immersion consequently makes it easier for them to come up with ideas. By manipulating the language used on the question paper, candidates also boost their mark for use of verbs and other linguistic features as marks are not given for language that is taken directly from the instructions.

The majority of candidates stayed within the suggested length of 80–90 words for **Section 2** and 130–140 words for **Section 3**. These suggestions regarding the length of the answers are there to guide candidates to manage their time during the exam. It is expected that candidates can cover all the content adequately within these suggested limits and they should then have time to look back carefully through their work to edit and make the necessary improvements to raise their mark. If they continue writing much over the suggested length they may run out of time to check for mistakes and the content may contain more irrelevancies.

Organising their ideas for **Section 2** and **Section 3** into paragraphs helps candidates to ensure they cover all the content required. Paragraphing also leaves some space for any corrections or changes they may wish to make when they go back to edit their work. It is essential in the examination that candidates have not only

written as well as they can, but have also given themselves time for editing. This includes: correcting spellings, tidying up handwriting and making absolutely sure they have included all the information that is asked for. Producing one edited version with crossings out is a better use of time than trying to rush through producing both a rough and a neat final copy. Having said that, work obviously needs to be legible and handwriting should be as clear as possible. Candidates can be reminded that they can use the space on the blank pages of the answer booklet for writing out a plan, making notes or for checking spellings.

Checking carefully for spelling mistakes is especially important for candidates who also speak languages such as Spanish. Some common misspellings, which should have been avoided, were: *estaba, cuando, otra, casi, salir, ficaba, comenزار, and conocer*. Although these spellings can be understood by a Portuguese speaker and may successfully communicate the message intended, they do not earn language marks. Candidates also need to check the correct use of accents, especially on verbs and the correct agreement of verbs and adjectives (masculine/feminine and plural). Among the most common words to focus on are: *esta/está* and *e/é*.

There is no bias towards any variation of Portuguese, so candidates can write in European, Brazilian or African variations, or a mix of these, and both pre-*acordo* and post-*acordo* spellings are accepted. Candidates should choose the appropriate register for their answer, but there is a certain level of formality expected, which means that certain contractions or slang expressions do not earn marks.

The most successful candidates found the balance between writing succinctly and managing to expand on each and every one of the content points required. Descriptive language with explanations, justifications and points of view gives candidates the opportunity to show off what they know by using a variety of adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions. The strongest candidates showed minimal repetition of vocabulary and also managed to correctly use a range of grammatical structures and include usage of the subjunctive (*subjuntivo/conjuntivo*).

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

This task required candidates to list eight items that would be taken on a camping trip. The pictures gave ten suggestions and most candidates chose from these options; however, any item that could reasonably be expected on a camping trip was accepted. Candidates should be made aware of this as some wrote less than five answers and so missed out on marks. Articles are not required and there is some tolerance regarding spelling and accents, although marks are only awarded to words that are judged to be attempted Portuguese. Marks are not given to cognates when written in the original language, no matter how similar they are to the Portuguese word. If in doubt, candidates should think of another item which they can spell confidently and which could plausibly be included within the required topic. As stated above, European, Brazilian or African variations of Portuguese, or a mix of these are equally acceptable, and both pre-*acordo* and post-*acordo* spellings are accepted.

Section 2

Candidates had to write about a good friend; giving some basic information about the friend and their physical appearance, stating the friend's future work plans and the reasons for that choice and also giving some explanation about why they are such good friends. It was important to ensure all of the required information was given and some candidates had sensibly ticked off the items from the list as they wrote or while editing their work.

The order in which the information was written did not matter. Writing in paragraphs helped candidates to organise each part of their answer and probably helped many to make sure they covered everything in each of the four parts. In **Section 2**, marks are given for communicating the information required plus a general mark for Language. The organisation of the answer and its cohesion (or lack of) does not affect the mark for this section.

The instructions are quite open and candidates have a lot of flexibility in how they express their answers. For example the information regarding where the candidate's friend lives (*Diga onde mora o seu melhor amigo*) could be expressed in many different ways such as the name of the street, the neighbourhood, the city or even just the country. It could also be expressed with something as simple as stating that the person is the candidate's neighbour. Some candidates described their friend's home, while others related where they had both lived in the past and connected this with how they had met. The information for the third point regarding

what job the friend is going to do in the future (*Diga que tipo de trabalho ele/ela vai fazer no futuro*) could be expressed in a variety of ways, such as using *ele vai ser...*, *ela pretende ser ...*, *ele planeja ser...*, *ela será...* or *ele escolheu a profissão de...* It may be worth reminding candidates that the information given does not need to be truthful and so candidates should focus on writing what they are able to write in Portuguese instead of struggling to describe a real person. Having said that, the answers written by many candidates were quite touching and there were some lovely descriptions of friendships that would have surely moved the friends that were being described.

Section 3

Candidates choose one of 3 options and write approximately 130 to 140 words. The questions are designed to require candidates to write at least about 120 to 130 words in order to be able to give the minimum required information. If candidates are much below the word limit they have probably omitted required information and would lose marks for not covering everything needed. If candidates write much over the limit, they may have developed their answer more than necessary or they may have included irrelevant information. A well written and carefully written answer around 130 to 140 words will score well and candidates who write much more than this generally do not gain many more marks.

Question 3(a)

Writing a letter which dealt with a student doing an exam and which required a description of how to best prepare for the exam was the most popular option and candidates seemed to be writing from personal experience.

Many candidates managed to successfully avoid repeating the rubric by simply stating the information required or by paraphrasing the instruction. They avoided copying the phrase *...como a escola pode ajudar...* by writing information such as: *...é o tipo de apoio que a escola pode oferecer* or *pode procurar ajuda na escola, como, por exemplo...* This paraphrasing and manipulation earned language marks for many candidates.

The second part of this question was misunderstood or misread by some candidates. It may also have been the case that some candidates were simply writing what they expected to have to write and not what they were actually being asked to write. This part of the question asked candidates to describe their preparation for the exam (*descreva tudo o que fez para se preparar*). Many candidates mistakenly wrote with advice for their friend, instead of correctly describing what they did to prepare themselves. In fact, much of this advice was very sensible and teachers would feel proud that their wise suggestions have obviously been listened to over the years. However, describing this advice was not actually what was required and so it could not be rewarded with content marks. Needless to say, the advice to candidates in this situation would be to read the instructions carefully.

Candidates should be made aware of how the questions in **Section 3** may require them to use different tenses for the bullet points. For **Question 3(a)** it was necessary to use the past tense to describe how they felt (*como se sentiu quando você fez...*). Use of past tenses was also required for the second part of the question, which asks what they did to prepare for the exam (*descreva tudo o que fez*). This requirement to demonstrate a variety of tenses led to the most common problem, which was with the last part of this question. It asked for a description of what the candidate will do to celebrate the end of the exam (*como celebrarão o fim do exame*). Some candidates mistakenly interpreted *celebrarão* as a past tense and so they described how they celebrated and not how they would celebrate in the future.

As in **Section 2**, any way of expressing future plans is accepted. For example, if the candidate wanted to say that they would have a party, they could say: *...vamos fazer uma festa*, *...te levarei para uma festa*, *...sugiro uma festa*, *O que é que você acha de fazer uma festa?* or *...celebraremos com uma festa*. It is important that candidates are aware of (i) the format of the exam requires a mix of past, present and future tenses and (ii) even more importantly, that candidates can distinguish between a regular past tense (*celebraram*) and a verb expressing the future in the third person plural (*celebrarão*).

Nevertheless, many candidates dealt very well with this answer. Candidates wrote in an appropriate informal register and effectively described their emotions, experiences and plans. It was interesting to read candidates' reflections on the examination process.

Question 3(b)

There were fewer answers written in response to this question. Candidates described a variety of holiday destinations, some exotic, some which were special because of the attractions and some which were special because of the people the candidates were staying with.

This was a reasonably demanding question in terms of the content. Candidates had to demonstrate a good range of vocabulary with the nouns and adjectives necessary to describe the location as well as specifying a reason they liked it so much. They then had to use the appropriate past tenses to explain what they did last time they were there. More verbs in past tenses plus some topic-specific vocabulary were required to describe the accommodation. Finally, candidates had to express their future plans for their next holidays. As explained in the comments for **Section 2** and **Question 3(a)** any suitable way of expressing the future is rewarded.

Once again, it was apparent that careful planning was necessary to ensure that all the required content was covered. Candidates could also use the instructions as a 'tick-list' and tick off the items of content as they write about them. The best answers used a variety of past tenses (as explained in the comments for **Question 3(c)** below) and also referred to the emotions felt by the visitor. This personal touch was appropriate given that the context for the answer was an article for a school magazine.

Question 3(c)

This question gave candidates the chance to write about events in the past. Candidates wrote a story about losing their keys and mobile phone, which required them to use a variety of verbs in past tenses and gave them the opportunity to be more creative. Unfortunately, many stories were about robberies and muggings or about over-drinking, which were hopefully inspired by news reports and gossiping and not by personal experience. Nevertheless, many candidates wrote answers that scored well for Communication, for Verbs and for Other Linguistic Features.

It was in answers to **Question 3(c)** that there were the most mistakes resulting from interference from other languages, especially from Spanish. Whilst mistakes like *estaba*, *llamei*, *preguntei* and *siguiente* could be understood, they obviously did not earn language marks and so should be avoided.

Regarding the content, the best answers found a balance between the description of the evening's events, then the loss of the items and finally the family's reaction to the news. This could be achieved by planning the answer and would ensure that candidates did not spend too long on the build-up and then not give enough details about the loss or the reaction.

The sequence of events could adequately be described with all verbs in the past simple (*pretérito perfeito*) and as long as these past simple verbs were conjugated and spelt correctly a candidate could score well. However, the highest marks for Other Linguistic Features went to those candidates who used a variety of past tenses such as past continuous/progressive, past perfect and past conditionals/third conditional, for example: *Eu lembrei que um homem tinha se aproximado de mim naquela hora. Se eu soubesse que ia ter tanta gente, eu teria deixado o celular no carro.*

Describing the family's reaction with a mixture of past tense verbs and also adjectives was a good way to earn more language marks. This could be achieved with a sentence like *Quando terminei de falar, meu pai começou a rir mas minha mãe ficou enfurecida* or *Eu estava tão triste que comecei a chorar.*

Finally, it is worth reinforcing the point that Examiners only award marks for communicating the required content in good quality correct Portuguese, so candidates do not need to worry about how creative they are being. Neither do they need to worry about writing in a formal register as the context for all the tasks is quite informal. Candidates' priority in the limited time they have should be to follow the instructions precisely, write as well as possible and then check their work carefully.