

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 them 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 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.

In **Question 14**, a few candidates chose B instead of A, possibly because of their own experience and they didn't read the text.

In **Question 15** the correct answer was B. A few candidates chose either A or C. Either they didn't know the vocabulary, or they didn't read the text carefully.

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 given words. 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 was needed to complete the gap was always given by key words in the text.

Question 16

Some candidates opted for *feiras* when it should have been *monuments*.

Question 17

Careful reading would indicate that *estacionar* was the correct response; instead *encontrar* and *conduzir* were the answers given by some candidates.

Question 18

A few candidates chose *feiras*, when *parques* was the right answer.

Question 19

Question 19 had answers such as *encontrar* instead of *reservar*.

Question 20

Question 20 was well answered.

Exercise 2: Questions 21–29

Most candidates extracted the correct answers from the text. It is important to read accurately to avoid making incorrect or incomplete assumptions.

Question 21

Question 21 required *participar num projeto interessante*. Some candidates answered *projeto para falar alemão* and lost a mark.

Questions 22, 23 and 24 were well answered, with most candidates scoring full marks.

Question 25

A number of incorrect responses were noted, including that the elderly couldn't speak German.

Question 26

A few candidates wrote *a organização IFA* and lost a mark.

Question 27

Some candidates answered '3', but did not account for *e um senhor*.

Question 28

Question 28 was answered correctly.

Question 29

Mostly well answered. A very few candidates incorrectly answered *sobre a vida da Camila*.

Section 3

Exercise 1: Questions 30–34

This exercise was probably the one that proved to be the most challenging for a lot of candidates. Many candidates corrected statements that were, in fact, already correct, and others 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 some candidates still attempted the questions in that way. The best answers paraphrased or extracted information 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.

Incorrect answers to **Question 34** included *quando fazia frio, ela mexia-se mais* instead of *ainda sofre com o frio*.

Exercise 2: Questions 35–41

Question 35

The incorrect answers were generally incomplete sentences.

Question 36

Some candidates gave incorrect answers such as *Hotel Estrela* or *da área do hotel*, instead of *locais*.

Question 37

Most candidates had success with this question.

Question 38

Most candidates confused *avó* with *avô* but didn't lose the mark. The mark was lost when the answer referred to *andava atrás do avó* instead *porque a avó queria*.

Question 39

Most candidates had success with this question.

Question 40

Some candidates didn't complete the answers and lost a mark.

Question 41

Occasionally the required the words *no estrangeiro* were missing and candidates lost a mark.

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Paper 0540/03
Speaking

Key messages

Most speaking examinations were conducted in accordance with the syllabus requirements and therefore gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability and score well on the mark scheme. However, the conduct of some Teacher/Examiners does not allow their candidates to access all areas of the assessment. Individual reports are sent to Centres with detailed feedback and suggestions for improvement after each year's examination. It is the responsibility of the Centre to make sure that their Teacher/Examiner receives the Moderator's Report. It is the duty of the Teacher/Examiner to follow the recommendations in the report to ensure that mistakes are not repeated from year to year.

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.

Teacher/Examiners should familiarise themselves with the structure of the paper to ensure candidates complete all tasks as indicated in the syllabus and Teachers' notes.

Recordings

Recordings this year were mostly of excellent quality. The very few low quality recordings received had interference noise. Centres are advised to check that all recording equipment is working properly and that recording quality is good before beginning any examination. Before submitting to Cambridge, please check that all recordings are clearly audible and complete.

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. Most Centres are failing to identify each recording. It is worth reminding Teacher/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.

Sample

A few Centres are still sending all the recordings when they are not necessary. Please refer to the Teacher's Notes booklet for specific instructions depending on the number of candidates in your Centre.

Centres are reminded that the cover sheet for moderation sample must be completed and enclosed with the sample.

Mark Sheets

Please 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. Many Centres are failing to write the final mark in figures.

Comments on Specific Sections

Role Plays

There was a small improvement in the performance in the role play section. However, some candidates, even very competent ones, lost between 3 and 6 marks due to missed out tasks. Marks cannot be awarded for missed out tasks, even if another task was created and completed. Teacher/Examiners are reminded that the creation of additional or alternative tasks is not in accordance with this assessment.

When candidates omit a task, Teacher/Examiners should prompt them to attempt it, to give them the opportunity to work for marks

Where part of the task is for the candidate to greet or thank their interlocutor or to '*Manifestar prazer*', and these are omitted, the maximum mark for the task is 1. Most candidates did this very well this year, but occasionally candidates were awarded marks when this task was not completed.

In terms of assessment, many Teacher/Examiners were quite lenient and awarded marks even though tasks were not attempted or only partially completed. Answers with the wrongly conjugated verbs should not get 3 marks. No marks can be awarded if the Teacher/Examiner offers options when it is not an options task. In a few cases the marks awarded for the whole Centre did not reflect the performance of the candidates. Please read the Teacher's Notes for detailed instructions on how to assess.

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. Please remember that candidates should not be reading from a mental script.

Teacher/Examiners are reminded to keep to the timings in the interest of fairness to all candidates. Candidates should be interrupted if they exceed the 2 minutes stipulated for the presentation. This presentation should be spontaneous and should then be followed by questions on that topic for 3–4 minutes. 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 5 minutes.

It is important that candidates make their presentation without interruption (unless it goes over 2 minutes). No marks can be awarded if the candidate is not given the opportunity to make a presentation. In general there was a good variety of themes, but a few candidates chose very ambitious topics for their presentations. This can make conversation very difficult and hinder the candidates' performance.

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

General Conversation

Teacher/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.*

The great majority of Teacher/Examiners created a good atmosphere during the exam where the candidates felt relaxed and seemed happy to contribute with their views. However, it is not in the spirit of the examination that the Teacher/Examiner should talk more than the candidate. The Teacher/Examiner should only say enough to engage the candidate.

The interaction in this section should last for about 5 minutes. If conversations are too brief, candidates do not have the opportunity to exhibit the range of vocabulary and structures required to score marks at the top of bands.

Areas for improvement:

- Teacher/Examiners should ask open-ended questions so candidates are prompted to answer with more than just single word replies.
- Allow the conversation to flow. The aim is to explore two or three topics in more depth. Fewer well explored topics can be more productive than a series of unconnected questions.
- Try to explore different subject areas and ensure that candidates are given the opportunity to respond to unprepared 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. When asking about the future, sometimes it is necessary to phrase the question in such a way as to specifically elicit that. Try to use the future tense in the questions i.e. *fará*. Questions such as *O que quer fazer quando terminar o estudo secundário?* will only elicit answers using the present, i.e. *Quero ir para a universidade*.

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Paper 0540/04
Writing

Key messages

- Care must be taken to deal with all parts of all the questions. Candidates must ensure they have responded to all parts of the task and not missed anything out.
- All candidates need to spend some time editing their work. This is especially important to avoid interference from other languages.
- It is important to demonstrate a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures and, when possible, to avoid the repetition of words from the instructions.
- Candidates should not need to spend time counting words. They should use the tasks in the questions and the space available as a guide to how much they need to write.

General comments

Candidates showed that they were well-prepared for the exam by dealing successfully with the demands of the paper and by clearly demonstrating their level of language. There was effective use of language and some creative, interesting responses.

Many candidates chose to develop their answers and to write more about certain elements of the question. This was excellent as it meant candidates had opportunities to show a wide range of vocabulary, verbs and grammatical structures. However, candidates must be careful not to lose focus on the task. It is essential that candidates cover all the bullet points in order to achieve full marks. By organising their ideas into paragraphs, candidates can ensure they cover all the content required. Leaving a blank line between paragraphs also provides some space for corrections or changes candidates may wish to make when they go back to edit their work.

Editing what they have written is a key element to success in this examination. Candidates need fit this into the time allowed for the paper. It was evident that some candidates had not edited or checked their work, although fortunately they were in the minority. This editing should include: correcting spellings; clarifying handwriting, and making sure all information listed in the question is included in their answer. Producing one edited version with is a better use of time than trying to rush through both a rough and a final copy. Having said that, it is important that work is legible and handwriting should be as clear as possible. Candidates can be reminded that they can use the spaces or spare pages in the answer booklet for writing out a plan or doing rough work, such as checking spellings.

The careful checking of spelling is especially important for candidates who also speak languages such as Spanish. Some common misspellings this year, which should have been avoided, were: *siguiente*, *cuando*, *estaba*, *habia*, *ficaba*, and conjugations of *comenzar*, and *conocer*. Although these misspellings can be understood and may successfully communicate the message intended, the misspelt verbs are not rewarded in **Section 2** and they also affect the mark for 'Other Linguistic Features'. Candidates also need to be aware of the need to check the correct use of accents and the correct agreement of verbs and adjectives (masculine/feminine and plural). High frequency words to focus on are: *esta/está* and *e/é*.

Candidates should try to avoid repeating common verbs, such as *tinha*, *tem*, *havia*, *estava* as each verb is only rewarded for its first use. Alternatives to these include *vi*, *vimos*, *fui ver*, *fomos ver* or candidates could add subordinate clauses with verbs such as *Achei bom que...*, *Notei que...*, *Gostei que...*, *Fiquei feliz quando....*

It is worth reminding stronger candidates that to achieve the best marks they should include a wide variety of grammatical structures, such as the subjunctive (present, imperfect or future), subordinate clauses (including relative clauses) and a variety of conjunctions. The strongest candidates showed a minimal

repetition of vocabulary and included descriptive language with explanations, justifications and points of view which gave them the opportunity to show their knowledge of Portuguese.

In the new format of the examination (since 2015), it is expected that candidates should use at least the minimum suggested number of words. However, it must be said that the quality of answers written is more significant than the length of answers and it is essential that all aspects of the task are dealt with. There is no benefit in writing exceedingly long answers. Candidates can use the space available in the answer booklet as a guide to how much they can write.

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 may not be rewarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

The vast majority of candidates scored the full 5 out of 5 marks for this question. It required candidates to write a list of 8 items which could reasonably be expected to be found in a kitchen. Most candidates sensibly based their answers on the suggestions shown in the pictures. But these are just suggestions, and examiners were open-minded in what they judged to be acceptable answers. Furthermore, there was some tolerance of misspellings and missing or wrongly placed accents, although the answers written had to be easily recognisable attempts at writing an item to be found in a kitchen. Articles were not necessary and any mistakes in articles were ignored when marking this question. Weaker candidates should be strongly encouraged to write a minimum of 5 answers, even if they are unsure about spelling or acceptability.

Question 2

This task required candidates to answer questions on the topic of free-time activities. Nearly all candidates were successful in providing plenty of relevant information using a level of language that was well above the basic, straightforward and generally accurate level that was required for full marks.

Most candidates answered the questions one-by-one and in order. This meant that they were sure to communicate all the necessary information that each of the questions asked about and so they did not risk losing any marks for missing content. This ordered approach also gave structure to their writing.

Question 2

Candidates need to be prepared to describe and explain why they might not be interested or why they might not have experience in the topic being discussed. Many candidates achieved this successfully with what they wrote in response to the last part of **Question 2** – explaining why they had no plans to change their habits or why they would not be doing any more exercise in the future. It is also worth reminding candidates that, if necessary, their response need not be true – they are being assessed on their ability to write Portuguese.

Short lists of information, such as favourite hobbies and sports played and healthy foods eaten earned many candidates Communication marks. Provided there was at least a limited range of verbs and mostly accurate grammar, many candidates also scored well for Language marks.

In this second question of Section One, there is some tolerance of misspellings and missing or wrongly used accents. The focus here remains on effective communication and thus the focus of candidates needs to be on providing plenty of information in response to the questions. Ideally, candidates should leave themselves time after **Question 3** to return to what they wrote for **Question 2** and make any necessary corrections or improvements so as to ensure maximum marks are earned here. As mentioned in the General Comments, candidates can use the space available as a guide to how much to write.

Section 2

Question 3

It is very important that candidates ensure they provide all the information listed. However, the expectations regarding the level of language produced are much higher in this section. As well as the accurate use of verbs, candidates are also rewarded for the range and accuracy of grammatical structures and the range and suitability of the vocabulary used. In this section, long lists of nouns such as favourite shops or restaurants or places visited are not rewarded. In order to score highly in Section 2, candidates need to be much more careful with spelling and the correct use of accents.

Many scripts were lacking in conjunctions or linking words. There were many opportunities in all three options for **Question 3** where candidates would have benefitted from using conjunctions such as *por isso*, *embora*, *enquanto*, *apesar disso*, or *mesmo que* to add cohesion.

Incorporating or lifting words or phrases from the instructions can scaffold weaker candidates' answers. Some candidates lifted the opening phrase for **questions 3(a)** and **3(c)** and only made minimal adaptations. However, candidates, especially stronger ones should be made aware of the drawback of doing this: no marks are awarded for lifted language as this does not demonstrate what candidates are capable of producing for themselves. It is important that candidates are prepared to paraphrase the instructions and this is expected from candidates who are aiming to score highly on this paper. Examples of how this can be done are given below.

- (a) This was certainly the most popular of the options in Section 2 and many candidates wrote interesting and plausible replies. Candidates wrote about excited crowds, discounts, new cinemas and an impressive range of shops and restaurants. This was counterbalanced with problems parking, traffic jams, excessive noise and an increase in crime rates.

The sequence of the bullet pointed tasks was followed by many candidates who wrote well-organised and cohesive answers. This strategy meant they answered all the tasks and gave their answers a clear structure. Stronger candidates managed to include a wide range of relevant vocabulary. Examples of this included alternatives for *dizer* to describe the opinions of other people regarding the new shopping centre: *meu pai reclamou que...*, *minha mae elogiou...*, *meus avós comentaram que...*, *meu irmão não para de falar que...* (this last example managing to use the verb *parar* and also the infinitive of *falar*).

Candidates managed their time effectively and were able to finish by including their plans for the following weekend, which was the perfect opportunity to show how well they could the future tense (or *vou* + *infinitive*, conditionals, or subjunctives).

Stronger candidates were able to paraphrase effectively and could introduce their letter by rewriting the instructions in their own words, e.g. *Na semana passada, um centro comercial foi aberto na minha vizinhança. Tem muitos restaurantes onde se pode comer de tudo e lojas para comprar tudo o que você quiser. Além disso, tem cinema para assistir aos filmes recém-lançados.* This example would have been well rewarded as it shows the candidate's ability to use various verbs, conjugated or as infinitives; the passive voice and even the future subjunctive. It also uses the conjunction *além disso* to link the sentences.

Nearly all candidates wrote in an appropriate style and used suitable letter openings and endings. However, it should be made clear to candidates that marks are awarded for what is written in response to the bullet pointed tasks and marks are not given to over-long opening sections that could have been memorised. Candidates should aim for a balance of establishing an appropriate tone for an informal letter or email but promptly getting stuck into dealing with the tasks. Similar advice applies to the ending, where candidates should ensure they have dealt fully with the final task and use a short but appropriate ending.

- (b) The least popular of the three questions, **Question 3(b)** asked candidates to write an article about environmental issues. Many candidates who chose this option managed to convey a passion for the topic and used a good range of appropriate vocabulary to write about a range of environmental problems and solutions. Once again, candidates sensibly used the sequence of the tasks to give their answers a cohesive structure and to ensure that none of the required content was left out.

Many of these articles put forward convincing arguments about why they believe it is the responsibility of all of us to protect the environment. The passionate level of engagement with the topic may have distracted some candidates from the need to demonstrate a range of grammatical structures. Answering the task in the second bullet point was an opportunity to use not only future tenses, but also conditionals or subjunctives.

- (c) Candidates generally wrote answers that seemed to be based on personal experiences and although there was no context given for the answer, the replies would have fitted well together in a travel magazine or blog. Candidates described exciting, entertaining and thoroughly worthwhile experiences.

The vast majority of answers included a good to excellent range of suitable vocabulary and were well-organised. Candidates followed the sequence of tasks to ensure full coverage of the tasks and they used the questions to guide them to use a range of grammatical structures. This meant they could use past tense verbs to describe the trip; present tense verbs, with the possibility of conditionals and subjunctives to describe the benefits and drawbacks and finally use future tenses to reflect on how the experience will help them in the future. The third task, which required candidates to write about the advantages and disadvantages of a school exchange trip was an opportunity, missed by many, to use expressions such as *Por um lado, ... por outro lado* or *Em contrapartida*.

Stronger candidates were able to paraphrase the instructions by beginning their answer in ways such as *Eu viajei para Espanha para melhorar meu conhecimento da língua. Sempre vou lembrar dessa viagem*. Note that this example uses the language from the question paper to initiate their flow of writing and to communicate some basic information about the topic. By rewording the instructions the candidate was rewarded for a verb in the past, two infinitives and a future.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that while creative, original or impassioned answers may be more enjoyable for candidates to write, it is the quality of the Portuguese used to communicate the information required that determines the candidate's grade. It is hoped that future candidates can benefit from the content of this report so that they are successfully able to show their full ability under exam conditions.