

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/01

Speaking

Again this year the Speaking examination was generally not conducted according to the Mark Scheme and, as a result, some candidates lost marks. Only one centre complied fully with the regulations in the Mark Scheme and these candidates received their marks fairly. Centres need to train their Examiners before the examination and refer to this report and the Mark Scheme for guidance. Candidates are being penalised through no fault of their own because many examinations are not being conducted according to the instructions.

Examiners should read the Mark Scheme about what to do in **Sections 1, 2 and 3** and about how to time each section accordingly.

Cassettes/CDs

It is important to check the sound before the start of the examination so that the candidate can be clearly audible. The candidate's voice should be louder than the Examiner's and the sound should be good for all candidates. Please make sure there is no background noise and that mobile phones are turned off before the examination starts.

Before you send the recordings to Cambridge, please check that the examination has been recorded accurately and audibly.

Most centres labelled the CDS and cassettes appropriately, but a few centres did not write the centre number or the candidates' numbers on the CD.

If possible, please record examinations recorded on CDs, not cassettes.

MS1 form

Some Centres did not send the MS1 form with the candidates' marks in the grid. Centres are reminded to send the form with the correct marks allocated to each candidate placed in the correct slot in the grid.

Working Mark sheet

There were numerous arithmetical errors this year, so please double check the marks before transferring them onto the MS1 form. In addition, please ensure that the marks are transferred correctly.

Marks

As many Examiners did not adhere to all the instructions in the Mark Scheme, candidates were not fully able to demonstrate their ability and consequently lost marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Topic Presentation

The presentation must demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a Portuguese speaking country. Centres should help candidates choose a topic that reflects the culture of the Portuguese speaking world. Candidates should not only mention the Portuguese speaking world briefly but the whole topic should be about one cultural aspect of the Portuguese speaking world. As a result, topics such as sports, global warming, tourism etc should be about the Portuguese speaking world. If candidates do not do that, their marks must be halved. However, some Examiners who did not refer to the Mark Scheme awarded candidates full marks.

Good candidates referred to the Portuguese speaking world throughout their presentation which was no longer than three and a half minutes. In **Section 1** candidates should not be interrupted by the Examiners. Examiners can only interrupt candidates after three and a half minutes. Candidates can bring a cue card to remind them of the main points they wish to make but are not allowed to bring a text or script they prepared into the examination room or read out notes.

Some good presentation topics were: "Domestic violence in Mozambique", "The Amazon forest", "Life and Cultural Heritage in Portugal" and "Tourism in each region in Portugal".

In **Section 1**, candidates should not introduce themselves. They should say the title of their topic and present it. Please refer to the Mark Scheme which does not suggest that candidates should introduce themselves.

Section 2

Topic Conversation

Again this year, as Examiners did not read the Mark Scheme in detail, many candidates lost 5 marks because they did not ask the Examiner questions and the Examiner did not invite the candidate to ask him/her questions. Please ensure that in future examinations this is not repeated so that candidates can have a fair result.

Section 2 should be a development of the candidate's presentation topic. Examiners should ask the candidate questions to develop his/her presentation topic and not ask questions about other topics. In **Section 3** the Examiner should ask the candidate questions covering a range of topics.

Examiners should signal when **Section 2** starts.

Although most Examiners asked pertinent questions about the presentation topic, some Examiners tested the candidate on the subject. This Speaking examination is not a general knowledge test. Furthermore, Examiners should avoid asking lengthy questions or making comments as this reduces the candidates' time to demonstrate their language skills.

Please ensure that this Section lasts between 7 and 8 minutes. Some examinations were too long and others too short. It is important to have a clock available in the room to ensure correct timing.

Section 3

General Conversation

Most Examiners asked the candidates different questions about their presentation topic which is the correct procedure. However, a few Examiners asked very difficult questions and candidates were unable to answer them. In this Section the Examiner should ask a range of questions and vary the topics. This section begins with fairly straightforward questions about the candidate's background and interests, and moves quickly on to a more mature conversation discussing more abstract and/or current issues within the general topic areas. Please consult the Syllabus and the Mark Scheme for further guidance.

Again in this Section when seeking information and opinions, many candidates lost 5 marks because they did not ask the Examiner any questions and Examiners did not invite candidates to ask them questions. Examiners must prompt candidates to ask them questions.

This Section should last between 8 and 9 minutes and again some examinations were too long and others too short.

Please ensure that this Section is also announced.

Conclusion

If Examiners do not adhere to the Mark Scheme, candidates lose marks and they are unfairly penalised. Many candidates lost 10 marks because they did not ask the Examiner questions in both **Sections 2** and **3** and the Examiner did not prompt them. Please ensure that in future examinations candidates are prompted

to ask questions as part of the conversation. In addition, Examiners should adhere to the timing of the Scheme.

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PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/02
Reading and Writing

Key Messages

To score full marks in this paper, candidates had to demonstrate that they had read and understood the texts and could express themselves clearly.

General Comments

Most candidates coped well with most questions. However, as in previous years, quality of language is an area for improvement. Many candidates were not able to demonstrate a sufficiently accurate command of the Portuguese language and were at times unable to express themselves clearly. They were very unsure of spelling – including of words lifted from the texts – grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and semantics. The interference of other languages, mainly Spanish, was evident. Teachers are advised to give their attention to this aspect of future candidates' work.

For future sessions it would be helpful if candidates ensured that their writing was legible and their work was well presented, leaving sufficient space between answers for the Examiner's use.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

There were some good answers but a number of candidates struggled with this question. Precise answers were required to gain full marks. Sometimes, words lifted from the text were spelt wrongly. At **(a)**, “*para trás*” was often omitted. Elsewhere, incorrect answers included: **(b)** *pertenecer*; **(c)** *Brasil*; *caso de sorte*; **(d)** *ao país*; *prestar assistência*; **(e)** *época*; *sorte*; *explica*; *disputado*; *vivia*; *pequena cidade*.

Question 2

In this question, candidates had to demonstrate their knowledge of grammar. This proved to be challenging for many candidates. Answers should not contain spelling mistakes, including incorrect accents where applicable, and unnecessary additions. Details should not be omitted in this exercise. The only changes to be made to these sentences are those grammatical and syntactical ones that the new introductory words elicit. Accuracy is crucial in this task and candidates have to make it very clear which spelling and accentuation is used in their answers.

Incorrect answers included:

- (a)** *Os guerrilheiros lutavam para ter a área.*
- (b)** *Ultimament ela sente se valorízada pelo a comunidade.*
- (c)** *Talvez foi um passado muito complicado.*
- (d)** *Era muito importante e isso magoa.*
“*do-ia*” and “*doí-a*” appeared sometimes.
- (e)** *Foi algo que eu tentei esquecer e ignorar porque eu agora tenho a minha vida aqui.*

Question 3

Most candidates coped well with this question. However, many candidates lost marks as they attempt to use their own words in their answers and quoted extensively from the text, especially for question (e). Little attention was given to Quality of Language. For sub-Question (d), candidates frequently failed to mention that Amélia's boyfriend was Brazilian.

Section 2

Question 4

Again, most candidates coped well with this question but Accuracy/Quality of Language continued to be neglected, even when material was lifted from the text. For sub-question (f), many candidates repeated "esperanças" and failed to mention that young refugees often do not have a word for 'future' in their language.

Question 5

Most candidates adhered to instructions regarding the word count, but there were some who wrote well in excess of the recommended word count.

- (a) Most candidates coped well with this part of the question and included full details. Some candidates wrote summaries of each text and did not attempt to compare and contrast the young refugees' experiences. Weaker candidates repeated details they had mentioned in their answers to this question as well as elsewhere in the paper, making no attempt to use different words. This question offers candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the texts and their ability to express themselves in their own words. Teachers and candidates are advised to bear this in mind when preparing for this examination.
- (b) Most candidates gave good answers, often comparing the experience of both refugees.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/03

Essay

General comments

Regarding the language used in this year's essays, good candidates showed good grammatical control using a variety of structures, correct punctuation, accentuation and spelling.

In regard to content, most candidates organised their essays in clear paragraphs with pertinent examples and with a variety of vocabulary. However, a few candidates did not answer the question, but wrote about the topic in general. There was also little evidence of candidates brainstorming the question before writing their answers.

The main points to be improved are punctuation, accentuation and spelling. Candidates need to be aware that they lose many marks if their essay does not present good control of these.

Here are some examples of candidates' mistakes and also some good examples.

Punctuation

Some good examples are: "Não é, então, uma boa ideia explorar-mos este novo país?", "Pessoalmente, acho que deve existir, como em tudo, um equilíbrio.", etc.

Weaker examples are: "Esta escasses, deve-se ao facto de ..." should be "Esta escassez deve-se ao facto de ...", "Estas escolhas podem, nem sempre agradar aos pais." should be "Estas escolhas podem nem sempre agradar aos pais." (The subject should not be separated from the object.), "Os pais sabem o que está certo, ou errado. Porque eles tem experiencia de vida." should be "Os pais sabem o que está certo ou errado porque eles têm experiência de vida.", etc.

Candidates should focus on the accuracy of their writing and they should study the rules of punctuation.

Accentuation

Some common mistakes are: "ninguem" should be "ninguém", "podería" should be "poderia", "duvida" (he/she doubts) should be "dúvida" (doubt), "água" should be "águá", etc.

Many weaker candidates showed little awareness of accentuation and, as a result, there were many mistakes.

Spelling

Some candidates wrote as they speak. For example, "duenças" should be "doenças", "quaz" should be "quase", "disfrutar" should be "desfrutar" and so on. Some other examples are "ezagerado" should be "exagerado", "pesoas" should be "pessoas", "precissar" should be "precisar" and so on.

Spelling is important when writing an essay and candidates should be more careful and double check their essays for spelling mistakes before handing them in.

Verbs

Good examples are: "Talvez não seja uma má ideia." (good use of present subjunctive), "... antes de iniciarmos a nossa busca ..." (good use of personal infinitive), "Por muito que gostemos de viajar ..." (good use of present subjunctive), etc.

Some common mistakes are: “Creio eu que a pessoa possa ...” should be “Creio que a pessoa possa ...” (The subjunctive should not be used.), “... nível de mentalidade que o jovem obteve ...” should be “... nível de mentalidade que o jovem obteve ...”, “... quando sejam adultos...” should be “... quando forem adultos...” (The future subjunctive should be used and not the present subjunctive.), etc.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a very popular question. Good candidates discussed in clear paragraphs whether the change to fast food has improved our lives, giving good examples. However, weaker candidates often wrote about fast food and did not explain whether the trend to have fast food has improved our lives or not. These candidates did not organise their writing in clear paragraphs. Candidates should brainstorm the question before answering it.

Some candidates wrote long sentences without correct punctuation. These should be avoided.

Candidates should count the number of words they write and should write within the word limit which is between 250 and 400 words.

Question 2

Good candidates wrote that campaigns should be launched to prevent diseases, the prices of medicines should be limited, doctors should be encouraged to work in developing countries and so on.

Other candidates wrote about lack of schools, uniforms for teachers and other topics not related to the question.

Candidates should be aware of phrases to organise their writing such as: firstly, secondly, in addition, etc.

Question 3

Good candidates organised their essays in clear paragraphs with an introduction, development about travelling inside the country and abroad, and a conclusion. They discussed both parts of the question. Weaker candidates wrote about tourism and did not answer the question or answered only one part of the question.

Question 4

This was a popular question with good candidates giving a range of good examples in their essay. They said that it is good for young people to make their own decisions, but young people also need their parents' experience and guidance. Weaker candidates were often vague and did not illustrate their answer well.

It is also important not to write too many paragraphs (some essays consisted of up to 14 different paragraphs). Candidates should organise their writing in 3 or 4 clear paragraphs, depending on the topic they choose.

Question 5

Few candidates answered this question. Successful essays explained how different ethnic groups bring new ideas and products, how people are more motivated to work and how there is the opportunity for someone to be a leader one day. Weaker candidates were often vague and did not answer the question how the world would benefit from equality of opportunities.

Recommendations

As mentioned above, punctuation, accentuation and spelling were the major problems that need to be addressed by native and non-native speakers of Portuguese. The rules of spelling and punctuation need to be studied by candidates before taking the examination.

In the majority of essays, there was no evidence of brainstorming the topic before writing the essay. It is

extremely important to organise ideas, avoid repetition of opinions and vocabulary, and to write in paragraphs. Centres should prepare their candidates to do this.

When preparing candidates for the examination, centres should help the candidates by focussing the candidates on answering the question instead of writing about the topic in general.