

PORTUGUESE (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

Paper 0540/02

Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

In both the reading and writing elements of the paper candidates will perform better if they read the instructions and questions carefully.

General comments

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.

All candidates attempted the whole exam and timing of their work was not an issue this session.

Overall, the paper was successfully tackled by most candidates. 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 candidates are exposed to a wide variety of reading material;
- Instil an attentive approach to reading and practise reading for detail;
- 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

These questions were well answered by most of the candidates.

P5 There was a choice of 3 digital clocks and the candidates had to choose the correct one among 4 options: 13:30, 15:15, 15:20 and 15:30. The last clock, option D, was the correct one. Very few candidates chose option A, 13:30.

Exercício 2 - Perguntas 6-10

The majority of the candidates performed very well.

Only few candidates had problems with P 6 as they confused a dress with a shirt and with P 10 where some chose a dress instead of trousers.

Exercício 3 - Perguntas 11-15

In general, these questions were well answered with most candidates gaining full marks on this exercise. A very small percentage lost marks on one or two questions but there was no pattern to their errors.

Exercício 4 - Pergunta 16

Candidates performed much better on this directed writing task this session than in previous sessions. A few candidates did not relate the text to the pictures and therefore missed marks. Candidates who did relate the text to the pictures did, for example, not pay attention to the date, the means of transport or the type of accommodation. Instead they wrote, possibly, what they would have liked to do or wrote an email about something else.

Section 2

Exercício 1 - Perguntas 17- 23

In general candidates performed very well in this exercise. Only some candidates did not answer these questions correctly.

P17 did not pose any difficulties.

P18 (i) and (ii) did not cause any problems.

P19 Very few candidates responded 'rice, pasta and bread' and lost the mark.

P20 and 21 did not pose any difficulties.

P22 (i) and (ii) Candidates lost a mark if they wrote 'bicicleta' without a verb 'andar de bicicleta'.

P23 (i) and (ii) were generally answered correctly but very few did not mention 'a good rest at night and gave another response such as 'being healthy'.

Exercício 2 - Pergunta 24

Candidates performed well on this writing exercise and their essays were pleasing to read. Most candidates wrote the correct 80 – 100 words, which has been an improvement compared with previous years. A considerable number of candidates did not explain why the job was interesting. The most frequently given advantage was earning a good salary whilst the disadvantage for the majority was not having enough time for the family.

The quality of language was acceptable but the majority of candidates stayed with present, imperfect and preterite tenses.

A number of candidates from Spanish speaking countries seemed to have forgotten that they were answering a Portuguese exam and wrote the whole essay in Spanish.

Section 3

This section discriminated between stronger and weaker candidates successfully. The texts and the language were more complex in this section. Better candidates were able to find the right answers whilst weaker candidates experienced difficulties to score the marks in this last section of the question paper.

Exercício 1 - Perguntas 25 – 30

Some candidates answered all the questions correctly; others just briefly read the text and did not pay enough attention to detail. The True/False exercise that requires correcting the false statements, caused problems to some candidates. Some changed all the statements, including the correct ones.

Question 25 was mostly answered correctly. The justifications were generally fine.

Question 26 More candidates chose true than false as the answer. Justifications were appropriate.

Question 27 was generally answered correctly.

Question 28 This statement was correct. However, quite a number of candidates did not pay sufficient attention to detail in the text and believed the answer was False.

Question 29 was mostly tackled very well and candidates corrected the statement appropriately.

Question 30 Out of all the questions in the exam this seemed to be the most difficult question for candidates. But many candidates chose the right answer and were able to provide a correct justification.

Exercício 2 - Perguntas 31– 40

This last text was the most difficult text in this paper. It required a higher degree of comprehension than the other texts. Consequently, many of the questions were answered incorrectly and often reflected a superficial reading of the text.

Questions 31, 34, 38, 39 and 40 gained the marks in general.

Question 32 attracted a variety of answers, some half correct. It was pleasing to see candidates to whom this was plain sailing. The answer required the idea that, in England, he encountered a variety of dancing styles and techniques, not just one, although classical ballet was the main one.

Question 33 The answer to this question was focused on the great difference between Classic and Samba that are poles apart. Most candidates concentrated on the rigidity of ballet.

Question 35 asked to characterise both dancing styles but not many candidates succeeded in doing that. The majority only mentioned one of them and for this reason many lost marks.

Question 36 Only few candidates gained full marks for a reason similar to the previous question. The question asked how the dancer used both influences when on stage. Candidates tended to describe either the classical ballet's strict techniques or the freedom and emotion of samba.

Question 37 This was a question about what fascinated the dancer about the creation of a contemporary dance. Many candidates were very close to the correct answer but although candidates mentioned foreign dances, they did not say what the dancer did like about them.

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Paper 0540/03

Speaking

Key messages

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 papers 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. Please note that in sections 2 and 3 of the examination, Examiner should ask questions which will allow the candidates to show that they can use past and future tenses accurately.

General comments

Recording

Most recordings on CDs were of excellent quality. However, some were unclear or were too low and both candidates and Examiners were not always clearly audible. Some recordings sent on cassettes were of very poor 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.

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 that both the working mark sheet and the MS1/CAMEO are sent to Cambridge.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

The role plays were generally well conducted. In this section, 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.

Some Examiners were not sufficiently well prepared, and simply read aloud what was written on the Role Play cards, rather than acting out the Role Plays. Some actions from the part of the Examiner might be needed in order to make some task clear. In Role Play A, for example, when the candidate is supposed to

thank the interviewer, it is much more clear if the interviewer pretends to hand the candidate a glass of water or the fruit, or says “Aqui está a sua água/fruta.”

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

In terms of assessment, sometimes marks were awarded 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.

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 be spontaneous and 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. 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 possibilities 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 having 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”.

The majority of candidates performed well in this section, with many candidates making a confident attempt at the topics chosen by the Examiner. 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.
- Allow the conversation to flow (and not be 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

The vast majority of candidates were obviously well-prepared for this examination. It was evident that candidates knew what was expected of them and that they followed the instructions and managed their time well. Teachers had clearly told many candidates of the importance of covering all of the required points of each question and of trying to write the suggested 130 to 140 words. Marks are awarded for each and every point of the rubric and most candidates successfully covered them all, within that word limit of approximately 140 words. 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.

All variations of Portuguese are accepted – whether Brazilian, European or African, as are both pre- and post- *Acordo* agreement spellings. Furthermore, the differences in lexis and grammatical structures between European and Brazilian Portuguese have been taken into account, with no bias towards any one variation.

General comments

In order to gain full marks for Communication, candidates needed to make clear reference to all the points in the rubric. Nearly all candidates were obviously writing their answers for an imaginary target reader, which is important as their answers made sense and were fully informative for their imagined audience. A small number of candidates treated the instructions as their introduction and their marks were lower because of this. Other weaker candidates managed to get the Communication marks by simply copying the rubric and changing the verb forms, pronouns, etc., although they did not earn language points for any of the language that they had lifted directly from the rubric. For better marks candidates are strongly encouraged to paraphrase the rubric. By starting with their own words it also gives them a sense of belonging and ownership of the situation that they are creating themselves. Indeed a great number of candidates successfully immersed themselves in the situations that they were describing, which helped them to use the persuasive, emotive, humorous or even passionate language that ensured higher marks. Unfortunately even a few strong candidates missed out on the opportunity to excel by taking the easy option and lifting language from the rubric.

Although a lack of punctuation or paragraphing is not penalised in the positive mark scheme, stronger answers were generally well organised from sentence level to paragraphing. Many stronger candidates used a paragraph for each of the required communication points, which meant that they and Examiners could clearly see that the points had been suitably covered. Leaving a blank line between paragraphs also gave candidates some space for any corrections they may need to make while checking their work. The space on page 2 can be used for notes or planning or writing out words to check spellings.

Candidates should be writing at the highest level of language of which they have control. It was pleasing to see how many of the better pieces of writing showed a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures and avoided repetition. These better pieces also contained descriptions, explanations, justifications and points of view. This richer language earned these candidates more General Impression marks. Weaker candidates may benefit from practising the use of synonyms to improve their descriptions and learning set phrases containing subjunctives, which they may be able to slot in at an appropriate point.

Although teachers are sure to already be mentioning this, it must be said that some candidates' need to be reminded that their handwriting should be as clear as possible, so that Examiners can see the quality of what candidates have written. Future candidates would also benefit from being trained to go back and check what they have written, particularly paying attention to agreement of subjects and verbs and also checking for interference from other languages (false friends). A further recommendation, which could earn many candidates more language points in future, is the careful use of accents that are essential to distinguish

between words of different function or meaning, especially such common words as *esta* (this), *é* (is) / *e* (and).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a)

Requiring candidates to write a letter of application for a work experience placement offered many the opportunity to earn higher marks by showing awareness of the importance of register and the conventions of letter writing. However, candidates should not use their limited time and space to write addresses, nor do they need to worry overly about letter conventions. Beginning with *Exmo(a) Sr(a)* or *Prezado(a) Sr(a)* and ending with *Atenciosamente* or *Cordialmente* was ideal, but not essential. Some candidates excelled at paraphrasing of the rubric: *Você estuda medicina e, durante as férias, gostaria de fazer um estágio num hospital* with openings such as *Sou estudante de medicina e, na época das minhas férias, planejo* (or *planeio*) *estagiar no seu hospital*.

The rubric specified that candidates should explain the reason for their plans, which was essential for full marks. When asked to give personal information candidates should think about what would be necessary for the task they are attempting. Full postal addresses are never required and do not earn marks. Describing an experience that inspired them to choose a career in medicine was a challenging task, except for those who had got themselves into the role of a candidate of medicine. The same applies to the final point of describing plans post graduation. For this point, better marks went to those who said much more than just *Eu quero ser médico*. Unfortunately some candidates ran over the 140 word limit while writing about their experiences and consequently the Communication mark for their description of future plans could not be awarded.

Question 1(b)

Just as many candidates seemed to enjoy writing about their passion for caring for others in **Question 1(a)**, there were a great number of candidates who wrote with great enthusiasm about their love for the theatre. Stronger candidates filled their article with persuasive language, some even began with questions to their imagined target readers. Higher marks went to candidates who expressed the reason(s) for the previous drama group's break up using cohesive devices such as *devido a* or *por causa de* rather than just a plain and simple *porque* and who managed to demonstrate range of structure and vocabulary even on simpler points such as the time and place of the first meeting. This could be achieved through careful paraphrasing and then perhaps some description of the setting for the meeting and an explanation as to why the meeting would be there, such as *Podemos se reunir pela primeira vez na sala de inglês, que a professora gentilmente nos concedeu por compartilhar nossa grande paixão pelo teatro. Nosso encontro inicial será daqui a uma semana, na sexta, às três da tarde*. As well as earning the mark for Communication, this answer would have earned several Language marks for the variety of tenses, use of an infinitive, use of an adjective and adverb and synonyms to avoid repetition.

Candidates should read the rubric carefully and plan what they will be covering for the five Communication marks. In **Question 1(b)** for example there were only four bullet points, so it was necessary for candidates to make clear reference to the information that they would be starting up a new drama group. This information would be necessary for the article to make sense to any imagined target reader. The information should, of course be paraphrased and embellished to gain Language and General Impression marks.

The last point, regarding a way in which candidates would be able to participate was interpreted in several ways, from signing up on a sheet (*...inscrever-se na ficha ...* being better than *...anotar seu nome no papel ...*) to singing in a choir or painting scenery. Obviously more specific lexis was required for the most marks, although, once again some candidates' responses to this point went unrewarded as they were over the 140 word count.

Question 2

This question gave candidates the chance to be a bit more creative and a great number of candidates stretched themselves to write interesting, moving and even amusing accounts of a birthday surprise. There were a lot of very lucky 60-year-old ladies, who were treated to all sorts of lovely treats by candidates. The affection expressed for these neighbours was quite moving and it can only be hoped that candidates treat their teachers this well. On the other hand, there were unfortunately quite a few heart attacks and even a couple of deaths as well.

Describing the neighbour's reaction seemed to have been more difficult than describing the surprise. Whereas good control of narrative tenses could achieve higher marks for writing about the preparation for the surprise, the description of the reaction required more challenging vocabulary. The concept of *chocante* was not really an appropriate reaction to many of the generous surprises offered, and the adjective *surpreendida* was very rarely spelt correctly with two 'e's. It seems that many future candidates could boost their marks by preparing to describe a range of reactions and feelings.

Finding the balance between the amount of information about the surprise and information about the reaction within the word limit was also a challenge for many candidates. The best answers were clearly well-planned, often with good paragraphing and included explanations, justifications and points of view, rather than simply relating facts. There were some answers with lovely story-telling which, unfortunately did not achieve high marks because the information about the neighbour's reaction was well beyond that 140 word limit.