

PORTUGUESE

Paper 9718/01

Speaking

General comments

The majority of candidates complied with the requirement of a topic relating to the Portuguese world, although some candidates chose general topics and did not talk about the culture or society of a country where the language is spoken.

In general the timing of each section was well observed by the Examiners, and they complied with the regulations. However, there were some cases in which the exam lasted for only 3, 5 or 6 minutes in **Section 3** rather than the specified 8/9 minutes, with the result that candidates did not have adequate opportunity to express themselves.

One part of the conduct of the exam that needs attention is the awarding of marks for 'Seeking information and Opinions' both in **Sections 2** and **3**. Candidates should ask the Examiner questions, and the Examiner should invite the candidates to ask him/her questions if they do not do this spontaneously. If no questions are asked by candidates, no marks can be awarded. Please refer to the syllabus and mark scheme for further clarification.

It was good that this year there were no arithmetical mistakes when adding up the marks.

Cassettes

The playback sound of most cassettes was good and clear with a few exceptions. One cassette had the wrong speed. In another, the sound was low. In one example the sound level fluctuated. In another example the cassette finished before the examination had come to an end, and the Moderator could not listen to **Sections 2** or **3**. Before sending the cassettes to CIE, Centres should check that:

- the sound level is consistent throughout the examination.
- the whole of the examination is recorded.
- the tape speed is correct.

Examiners

Examiners were well prepared for the exam and asked appropriate questions. However, some Examiners asked long questions and sometimes they asked two questions at the same time. Examiners should aim to use a mixture of open and closed questions.

It is important that the Examiners signal each section of the exam so that candidates are aware that they completed all three sections of the exam: examiners should also keep an eye on the timings for each section. Candidates should be stopped if they go on longer than three minutes in **Section 1**.

Mark Sheets

Centres should ensure that the Working Mark Sheet and the Internal Assessment Mark Sheet are sent to CIE. The marks should be broken down in the appropriate columns in the Working Mark Sheets, which show the total marks available for the individual sections.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Topic Presentation

There was a great variety of topics that dealt with cultural or social aspects of a country where the language is spoken. Some candidates presented their topic enthusiastically which tended to lead to high marks. Their topics consisted of an introduction, development and conclusion. Some topics of the better candidates were: 'Tourism in Brazil', 'Education in Portugal' with statistics, 'Sport in Portugal', 'Tourism in Alentejo', 'Women in Portugal', 'Education in secondary Schools in Portugal', etc. These topics included both facts and opinions, an essential combination for high marks to be achieved.

Weaker candidates chose very general topics and did not mention a country where the language is spoken. Some topics were very descriptive with few ideas or opinions and some presentations were pedestrian. General topics such as: 'Conservation' (a popular choice), 'Employment and Unemployment', 'War and Peace', 'Global Warming', etc should only be chosen where it is possible to identify a specific aspect and can be centred on a country where the language is spoken. If candidates do not mention a country where the language is spoken, their marks are to be halved (see mark scheme).

In this Section candidates should not speak for more than three minutes and a half, and the Examiner must then stop the candidates and ask questions. Candidates should not be interrupted during their presentation, which should last no more than three and a half minutes.

Centres should brief the candidates about an appropriate choice of topic. Candidates should be reminded that they should present their prepared topic and not read it (see syllabus: "Candidates may prepare a 'cue card' (about postcard size) in the language to remind them of the main points they wish to make, to bring into the examination room. Candidates may also bring in a limited quantity of illustrative material, which may include maps, diagrams, statistics, pictures and short articles. A script of their presentation is not allowed.").

Section 2

Topic Conversation

Most Examiners asked pertinent questions. Examiners should signal that **Section 2** is starting: candidates must not expect to continue their presentation in this section.

Centres should brief candidates about 'Seeking Information and Opinions'. Where candidates do not ask the Examiner questions, the candidate cannot score any marks. Examiners should feel free to prompt candidates to ask them questions. Candidates must ask more than one question relevant to the topic under discussion to receive high marks: this is made clear in the mark scheme.

In **Section 1** candidates should make sure that they have a good knowledge of the topic they have chosen, otherwise they will not be able to develop it in **Section 2**. Some candidates were very knowledgeable about their topic, but a few were not very confident about their topic and could not develop it to its full capacity.

Most candidates had a very good feeling for the language and developed their ideas fluently by using a wide range of grammatical structures with confidence.

Examiners should abide by the timing of this section, which is 7-8 minutes.

Section 3

General Conversation

Most Examiners were well-prepared for the exam. They chose their topics and prepared questions accordingly. There was a wealth of different and interesting topics. Some of these were: the media, war, food, family, music, unemployment, urban and rural life, tourism, plans for the future, TV programmes, etc.

As in **Section 2**, the candidates must ask the Examiner questions, and Examiners should invite candidates to ask questions. If candidates do not ask questions, they receive no marks and, unfortunately, there were several examples of this.

Candidates responded well to the questions proposed to them. Candidates developed their ideas well, had few problems of comprehension, with a good level of accuracy and feeling for the language. Stronger candidates used a variety of structures and vocabulary, and they were able to guide the discussion by offering and seeking opinions as appropriate.

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Paper 9718/02
Reading and Writing

General comments

As in previous years, most candidates coped quite well with most of this year's paper. Some candidates however were not able to cope with all parts of the paper and their answers and knowledge of the Portuguese language indicated that they were not quite ready to enter for this examination.

Candidates should ensure that their handwriting is legible and that any words copied from the question paper are copied correctly.

Some candidates demonstrated a poor knowledge of grammar – agreement, tenses, gender of nouns, spelling, punctuation, use of capital letters.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Most candidates answered all parts correctly.

- (a) A few candidates did not attempt this part. Common wrong answers included: *inseparável*; *protagonista*; *frensi*; *quieta*.
- (b) Common wrong answers included: *estreu*; *escolhida*; *atriz*; *acompanhar*; *subiu*.
- (c) The most popular wrong answer was: *independente*.
- (d) Wrong answers included: *desistir*; *divirto-me*; *duvida*; *sonhava*; *aceitar*; *capacidades*; *segredo*; *emprego*; *evitar*.
- (e) Most candidates answered this part correctly.

Question 2

Most candidates answered all parts correctly.

However, some candidates seemed not to understand the instructions and the example, and thought they had to write their own sentences and/or add other words instead of rephrasing those given.

The wrong answers quoted below point to many candidates' knowledge of Portuguese grammar and/or spelling.

- (a) Embora não... saber; seja; seija; saibe; sabo.
- (b) Antigamente... participou; participouse; participará.
- (d) Nós... imaginava-mos; imagina-mo-nos; imaginamos-se; imaginamo-la.
- (e) Caso... consigua; se conseguirem; conseguirá-se; consegui-se.

Question 3

Most candidates answered all parts well and included all or most required details in their answers.

Section 2

Question 4

Most candidates answered all parts well and most included the required details in their answers,

Question 5

Many candidates were unable to answer this question satisfactorily. Many candidates wrote well in excess of the required 140 word for parts **(a)** and **(b)**. Sometimes the answer for part **(a)** exceeded the 140-word limit and the answer to part **(b)** was written in over 100 words.

It is important that candidates adhere to the instructions and plan their answers before starting to answer this part of the examination.

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Paper 9718/03

Essay

General comments

There were some very good essays that showed a confident use of complex sentence patterns. They were generally accurate, well illustrated and coherently argued. However, in some essays the language was pedestrian with persistent errors, and the content was sketchy or unspecific. Some candidates did not answer the question in a relevant way, leading to low marks for content.

Candidates must not write using bullet points. They must write full sentences with linking words.

A major problem was first language interference both in vocabulary and spelling. Other candidates had difficulties with punctuation (particularly important as meaning can be impaired as a result of the misuse of punctuation). As regards spelling, some candidates wrote as they spoke, with very little awareness of correct spelling, even of common words. Grammatical mistakes were also common.

All questions were attempted.

Below are some common errors which occurred in the paper this year.

1. *Punctuation*

Candidates must not separate the subject from the verb by using a comma, eg 'Um debate constante, é se as crianças...' , 'Muitos pais, impõem o exercício físico...' , 'A guerra do Iraque, é uma guerra...' .

Some candidates used a full stop unnecessarily and separated an important phrase that was part of the sentence. Some examples were: 'Para resolver estes problemas em países. O governo é que deve convencer as pessoas ...' and '...devolver a saúde ao nosso planeta. Para que as futuras gerações vivam.'

Commas were not used before certain conjunctions eg '...pois se não tiverem o exemplo...'; '...mas quando não existe a mãe ...'

Candidates should study punctuation even where they are strong Portuguese speakers.

2. *Spelling*

Good spelling is essential when writing an essay, and candidates should pay careful attention to this aspect of the exam.

Here are some mistakes in spelling:

- Writing as the word is spoken: 'conviniente' instead of 'conveniente', 'facilment' instead of 'facilmente', 'podria' instead of 'poderia', 'intressa' instead of 'interessa', etc.
- Verbs written wrongly: 'gostão' instead of 'gostam', 'ajudão' instead of 'ajudam', 'têem' instead of 'têm', etc.
- First language interference: 'difficil' instead of 'difícil', 'commerciaies' instead of 'comerciais', 'offereçem' instead of 'oferecem', etc.

3. *Accents*

Accents are important in Portuguese because, if some words are not accentuated, they may have a different meaning, eg 'pais' and 'país', 'saia' and 'saía'.

Some candidates did not accentuate verbs followed by a pronoun correctly. For example, 'preguiça de fazê-lo' should be 'preguiça de fazê-lo', 'para ter-lo' should be 'para tê-lo', etc.

Some other examples were: 'familias' instead of 'famílias', 'Às vezes' instead of 'Às vezes', 'arvores' instead of 'árvores', 'havera' instead of 'haverá', etc.

Some words were unnecessarily accentuated. For example, 'analísármós' instead of 'analísarmós', 'aumentaram ás tensões' instead of 'aumentaram as tensões', 'demasiádo' instead of 'demasiado', etc.

4. *Prepositions*

There were prepositions missing as in 'começar fazer ginástica' instead of 'começar a fazer ginástica', 'não precisam gasolina' instead of 'não precisam de gasolina', 'pediu a minha mãe' instead of 'pediu à minha mãe', 'devido a falta de interesse' instead of 'devido à falta de interesse', etc.

Some incorrect prepositions were used as in 'Do outro lado' instead of 'Por outro lado', 'outras razões por praticar' instead of 'outras razões para praticar', 'O governo devia a começar' instead of 'O governo devia começar', etc.

5. *Pronouns*

Some candidates did not use the reflexive pronoun as in: 'pois desenvolverão com sucesso' instead of 'pois se desenvolverão com sucesso', 'faz a criança sentir alegre' instead of 'faz a criança sentir-se alegre', etc.

The pronouns 'todos/as' need an article after them. For example, 'todos países' instead of 'todos os países', 'todas pessoas de um país' instead of 'todas as pessoas de um país', etc.

Some other mistakes were: 'Eu sentia-se melhor' instead of 'Eu sentia-me melhor', 'alimentarem-los' instead of 'alimentarem-nos', 'não tratando-se de...' instead of 'não se tratando de ...', etc.

Some good examples were: 'Os filhos imitam-nos...', 'Abandonam-no ou dão-no', etc. The pronouns are correctly positioned and a hyphen is used.

6. *Capital letters*

At this level it is unacceptable to write the names of countries with a small letter.

Some candidates mixed capital and small letters and again this is unacceptable.

7. *Syllable division*

A few words were wrongly separated at the end of a line. Here are some examples: 'se-mpre' instead of 'sem-pre', 'independ-ente' instead of 'independ-ente', 'aguent-ar' instead of 'aguen-tar', etc.

8. *Masculine and Feminine*

Some articles were wrongly used. For example, 'o paz' instead of 'a paz', 'a problema' instead of 'o problema', 'um oportunidade' instead of 'uma oportunidade', etc.

Agreement of adjectives was absent in some cases such as: 'As pessoas são mais e mais pessimistico e agressivo...' instead of 'As pessoas são mais e mais pessimísticas e agressivas ...', 'uma guerra bom' instead of 'uma guerra boa', 'estes mortes' instead of 'estas mortes', etc.

Topics

Candidates should write the number of the question they selected on the exam paper.

Topic 1

The candidates scoring higher marks developed and explained their topic well and had sound arguments. Some contrasted a family with parents with a single-parent family. One candidate wrote about divorce and how this can affect children. Then he/she mentioned adoption and finished with a conclusion.

Weaker candidates repeated ideas and it was clear that they did not brainstorm their ideas before writing. It is essential to collect ideas and then divide them into appropriate paragraphs. Some candidates did not read the question properly and wrote only about having parents.

Candidates need to organise their writing in clear paragraphs with an introduction, development and a conclusion.

Topic 2

Some candidates wrote about sports in general, others wrote about obesity, and others wrote about health and fitness, but they did not answer the question. Good candidates gave several reasons why people go to the gym with good examples.

Topic 3

Good candidates gave several reasons why lowering salaries would not solve the problem of unemployment.

Weaker candidates did not answer the question. They tended to write only about the minimum wage, employment and unemployment in general, equality of women, etc.

Topic 4

This question was not very popular, however there were some very good opinions about Benjamin Franklin's saying. Some candidates mentioned the Second World War, the freedom of the slaves in the USA together with the resulting consequences, the war in Kuwait, etc. These answers were well illustrated and candidates received high marks.

Topic 5

Some good candidates answered the question by writing what countries should do to preserve the environment. Each paragraph contained a different reason with examples.

Weaker candidates wrote about conservation in general and did not write what countries should do. One candidate wrote only about rubbish, but not about what countries should do to deal with this problem. Some others mentioned what countries should do only in the last paragraph. One candidate wrote about global warming, and about where carbon dioxide comes from, but he/she did not answer the question.

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Paper 9718/04

Texts

General comments

The paper seemed to be within the range of candidates. Some candidates were able to look beyond the immediate material and show some understanding of the author's intentions, focusing on specific passages, demonstrating coherence, using a detailed approach and good illustrations. Others, however, had a tendency to narrate the story, overlooking the demands of the question.

For some candidates, there seemed to be an absence of planning - this was particularly apparent in **Question 1**. In the future candidates would be well advised to have an introductory paragraph outlining their approach to the question and communicating a clear understanding of its implications.

Unfortunately there were also candidates who appeared not to have understood the meaning of the book they had read, and produced very basic material.

This year all the questions were tackled with the most popular one being **Question 1**.

In general, candidates were able to write well. There was some evidence of influence of other languages and English, but it was easy to understand what was meant. Candidates should always make an effort to write legibly, and to make sure their handwriting is clear.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

In **Section 1** most candidates answered **Question 1a**. There was some difficulty in relating the answer to the question especially in **(ii)** where most candidates only mentioned the world of consumption and interest on money that the narrator saw on people's eyes after getting rich.

Question 2a and **2b** were also popular amongst candidates but some failed to explain the real meaning of the letters and why they were with Mariana in her apron, and the significance of this apron.

Question 3b was not totally explored by some candidates - there was much more to say about the title *Vidas Secas* than merely writing about the drought.

Section 2

In **Section 2** the majority of candidates answered **Questions 4** and **6**. The problem with **Question 4** (especially **4b**) was that it was clear that many candidates did not know the real story behind the characters and what they really represented which had an adverse effect on their answers. In **Question 4a** some candidates were unable to illustrate their answers with passages of the different short stories.

Question 6a was in general well answered and the village of *São Romão* was related to the political context of the time.