

Report on the Components

June 2006

1923/MS/R/06

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All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

The reports on the Examinations provide information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

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CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

GCSE Portuguese 1923

REPORT ON THE COMPONENTS

Unit	Content	Page
1923/01	Listening	5
1923/02	Speaking	8
1923/03	Reading	12
1923/04	Writing	14
*	Grade Thresholds	16

1923/01 Paper 1

General Comments

The overall performance of the candidates was good. The level of difficulty of this year's paper was appropriate and the exam allowed excellent opportunities for differentiation.

Very few candidates did not follow instructions with regard to the number of boxes to tick or in which language to write their answers.

A few candidates seemed to have been entered early for this exam and perhaps they might have fared better if they had waited another year.

Some candidates wrote their answers in pencil. Candidates are expected to write in blue or black ink. Centres should ensure that candidates follow this procedure.

Some did not enter their details as instructed on page 1 of the question paper.

The spelling of many candidates' names did not match with those printed on the Attendance Registers.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercises 1, 2 and 3

Most candidates answered all questions correctly.

In Prova 3, a few, instead of entering the appropriate letters on the list, simply put a cross on each picture (for which no marks were gained as there was no link to the names), or wrote their answers in full and/or linked the name to the picture.

Section 2

This was generally well done. Occasional marks were lost, but not on any one question in particular.

Prova 4

A few candidates did not attempt to answer question 16-19.

Question 20: A few candidates ticked picture A.

Prova 5

This was generally well done.

Question 25: All candidates were awarded 1 mark because of the problem on the tape. This did not affect candidates' performance elsewhere in the exam.

Section 3

This Section differentiated very well between very good candidates and the top few.

Prova 6

Questions 26, 27 and 28 were generally well done.

There was no pattern to wrong answers.

Very few candidates did not attempt these questions and/or wrote more than one letter for questions 27 and 28.

Prova 7

Many candidates answered all questions well, but many did not attempt one or more of the questions and many answered all questions incorrectly. Many did not ensure their answers made sense.

Question 29: Generally correct. A few candidates did not attempt to answer. Wrong answers included: “entra”; “janelas”; “recebeu um nome”; “um caixa”; “escada”.

Question 30: Generally correct. Some candidates did not attempt to answer. Several candidates just wrote “segurança” without qualifying it. Wrong answers included: “dormindo”; “segundos andar”; “seguranças”; “10º2 andar”; “11 andares”; “um menino a dormir”.

Question 31: There were many wrong answers. Several candidates did not attempt to answer. The most frequent wrong answer was “mãos e pés”. Other wrong answers included: “o chefe da polícia”; “os bens”; “só jóias”; “uma sacolha”.

Question 32: The best candidates gave the idea of violence, using a verb, as in “fazer mal” and “maltratar”. Some candidates did not attempt to answer. Wrong answers included: “acordar”; “adormecer”; “arma jóias e dinheiro”; “perigo”; “ver de dia”; “violar”.

Prova 8

Many candidates did not perform well in other exercises, but did well here. This exercise began to show very clearly the very best candidates. Few gained full marks. Very few did not attempt to answer one or more of the questions. Very few gained no marks at all.

Question 33: ‘A’ was the most popular wrong answer.

Questions 34 and 35: Generally well answered.

Question 36: ‘B’ was the most common wrong answer.

Question 37: Generally well answered. ‘B’ was the most common wrong answer.

Exercise 9

The very best candidates answered all questions very well, not leaving out the details required at this level. Very few gained full marks in this exercise.

Many candidates did not attempt to answer any question. Many answered all questions incorrectly. Several candidates answered in Portuguese. Many answers were almost unintelligible.

Question 38: Some candidates did not attempt to answer. Wrong answers included: "The team will train the club"; "They will benefit by winning because they are a team"; "They will give medical staff"; "They will earn new stafe"; "Arsenal is giving a part to the Portuguese"; "It will be fantastic"; "They will borough the team"; "They will get money for them".

Question 39: Many candidates did not attempt to answer. Wrong answers included answers given for question 38 and also "skills"; "Visit Portugal regularly"; "Use professional coaches".

Question 40: Many candidates did not attempt to answer. Wrong answers included: "They will visit Arsenal in finally of player"; "They are going to be the festival of London"; "Participate in competition"; "The equip will participate in one show"; "Doing a concert"; "They will go to England for the Summer".

1923/02 Paper 2

The examiners felt this year that the standard of work was generally very high once again. The majority of candidates, coming from a native-speaker background, spoke fluently and with a very good range of vocabulary and language structures.

However, candidates quite often lose marks on the role-plays through a lack of English or simply because they have not been instructed on how the test proceeds. It is often the candidate's fault, though a significant number would have scored more highly had they studied their role-play tasks more carefully and prepared their utterances properly.

This year there was a large increase in the number of candidates. It became evident from the speaking tests that many of the new candidates were from Portuguese-speaking backgrounds but that they lacked adequate preparation for the exams. There was also a large number of new teachers conducting the speaking test. Some of these were not only inexperienced but also, unfortunately, seemed to have made insufficient effort to prepare. The Teacher's Booklet contains enough advice to enable the inexperienced teacher to conduct the test in such a way as to allow all candidates to achieve their potential.

There is also a significant group of adult learners of Portuguese as a foreign language. They tend to be well-prepared and make a good attempt at the test, usually scoring quite well in the role-plays.

The administration of the tests can cause problems, although the guidance given to centres is clear. The most common errors were not sending mark sheets (or not filling in the shaded boxes) and inadequate filling-in of cassette labels. It is important that the examiner should know which candidates' work is on which side of the cassette, and in which order. This should be made clear so that the examiner knows who is on the tape before they listen to it.

It does unfortunately occur — rarely, but not entirely uncommonly — that the recording of a candidate does not take place. It is understandable that, in the stressful situation that both the candidate and the teacher/examiner find themselves, sometimes the tape runs out or the tape-recorder's record button is not pressed. The only way to be certain that this nightmare event does not happen is to make a check. It is, therefore, good practice to replay the final seconds of each recording on conclusion of each test. If there has been a problem, then the test has to be done again at a later time (and, of course, from a different booklet).

General Comments on the Conduct of the Speaking Test

It is sometimes very obvious that the candidate does not understand what they have to do. In order to avoid this situation the teacher/examiner should always, especially if they do not know the candidates, see them before the recordings start and explain in as much detail as possible what they have to do. They often need help in knowing how to use a third-person prompt such as 'Ask your friend if he/she is going to the party'. Candidates who respond to this with *Seu amigo vai ...* are not communicating properly and cannot expect full marks. Another piece of essential advice for teacher/examiners who do not know their candidates is to urge them to respond fully in the general conversation section. Brief responses are very unlikely to score top marks.

The teacher/examiner should keep to the script given in the Teacher's Booklet for role-plays in Sections 1 and 2. There were cases this year in which the teacher/examiner invented additional language and, rather than helping to make the candidates feel in a 'more real' situation (which was presumably the intention), the candidates actually scored fewer marks. This was due partly to the confusion caused in the mind of the candidates who were waiting for the opportunity to present the next utterance, and partly because the teacher/examiner forgot to prompt the candidates for the next specified utterance. Unnecessary extension of the role-plays is of no benefit to the candidates.

Under no circumstances should the teacher/examiner re-phrase their prompts in such a way as to give away key vocabulary to the candidates. This is made clear on page 9 of the Teacher's Booklet.

It helps to allow the test to run smoothly and thereby assists the candidates if only Portuguese is used throughout. When making the transition from one section to another the teacher/examiner could say *E agora a segunda (terceira) secção*. The handbook does not in fact guide the teacher/examiner on what to say at the beginning of the Section 3 role-play. Most teacher/examiners begin by saying something on the lines of *Vai falar dum dia que passou no campo (com um cão, etc.)* and this seems to work very well. Without such links in Portuguese some candidates are not sure as to when they should begin.

Role-play Section 1

Buying food

'Something for a sandwich' was almost universally misinterpreted, but responses such as *uma sandes de galinha* would gain both marks. Similarly, *Tem alguma fruta?* was also fully rewarded even though the prompt was expected to produce something on the lines of *Quero uma maçã*. Many different words were produced for 'bag', the most common being *saco* and *sacola*. A significant number of teacher/examiners overlooked the fourth utterance.

Job in hotel

This role-play ran very smoothly and there were no problems with it.

Phoning restaurant

This was well done — presumably well practised by adult learners particularly.

Role-play Section 2

Teachers should remember that in this section a greater level of language knowledge is expected than in Section 1: a tense other than the present and a greater degree of precision of use of language is always expected.

Talking about a party

Some examiners added *Sabes que ...* at the beginning of the first prompt, which probably helped candidates on this occasion because there were some candidates who seemed confused and were slow to start this response.

Buying a coach ticket

Many candidates forgot to ask for a *return* ticket and a surprising number had difficulty in finding a suitable way of asking what time the coach arrives.

Problem in clothes shop

This was usually done well but many candidates forgot to say that they did not like the T-shirt. Others combined the first two utterances, but this is perfectly acceptable (even though some teacher/examiners did not seem to like it).

Role-play Section 3

If the candidate strays off task it is perfectly permissible to bring them back. Some, for example, talked about a train journey (Booklet 1) or set the countryside walk in Lisbon. There is no need for this, so long as the teacher/examiner keeps the role-play in Portuguese.

A far more common problem is when the teacher/examiner dominates the whole role-play. There are questions printed on the candidate's sheet, but they are there for the preparation period before the test starts. Their purpose is partly to allow the candidate to think through what they will need to consider in their narration of the events shown in the pictures. The teacher/examiner should also think of additional (and therefore unexpected) questions, which will allow the candidates to respond appropriately.

Walking in the countryside

The best candidates added nice touches such as the different animals they saw or expressed an opinion about the beauty of the sunset.

Walking the dog

One of the features of the mark scheme that allows the examiners to award the highest mark of eight is the ability to make imaginative additions to the outlined story. The most talented candidates were able to think of reasons why they ended up taking the dog for a walk in the first place. Clearly, some candidates used their preparation time wisely by thinking up good reasons for this. Among them, for example, was the idea that the friend wanted to go out to see a film at the cinema.

One surprise for the examiners was that few candidates were capable of expressing the feelings of the characters involved in the loss and subsequent recovery of the dog.

Journey to the airport

There were many interesting descriptions although some candidates struggled to say why there was a hold-up on the road. The best could find a way of saying that a lorry had overturned but such detail was not essential — *um acidente com um camião* was sufficient.

General Conversation

There was an increase this year in the number of teachers who ignored the four set topics which are given in the Teacher's Booklet for each of the candidate booklets. A large number, too, allowed the candidates to choose the topics; it must be the teacher who selects three of the four topics given.

It is particularly important, when choosing which questions to ask, to make sure that the candidates can refer to the future. Unless they have had serious problems in the Section 3 role-play, in which the candidates have continuously to describe past events, the general conversation may be the only part of the speaking test in which the candidates are able to refer to the future.

There is no requirement that candidates use the future tense in Portuguese, simply that they can use language to refer to future time. It is accepted that native speakers of Portuguese rarely use the future tense. The examiners look for use of constructions such as *quero ir* or *gostava de ir* or, of course, *vou ir*. All these uses of language give evidence of reference to future time.

All candidates have to show that they can refer to past and future events before they can achieve eleven marks for quality of language, according to the mark scheme published on page 39 of the Teacher's Booklet.

There were many excellent examiners who brought out the best in the candidates and guided them into the use of all tenses required. This is not easy to do, as candidates can

drift about with noticing what the teacher/examiner is trying to do. It can be stressful for the teacher/examiner to perform in this way. But they can be assured that all their hard work is greatly appreciated by examiner listening to the tapes, and ultimately, of course, by the candidate who gains a high mark.

There were a few teacher/examiners, however, whose input was excessive and candidates were not encouraged to speak at length. Sometimes teacher/examiners gave away key vocabulary and so candidates could not be rewarded for their own knowledge.

Another common weakness in examining which has recurred this year is reading out all the suggested questions from the Teacher's Booklet (pages 34-38) in a quick-fire manner, without allowing a genuine conversation to take place. It is the teacher/examiner's responsibility to create the conditions where such a conversation can happen — if the candidate is good enough.

Another reason for not using the suggested questions excessively is that there are only five minutes allowed for the general conversation. There is neither time nor need to use questions referring to all three tenses for each of the three topics.

In Booklet 1 of this year's test, for example, the teacher/examiner could focus on the following:

- Present tense questions on Self, family and friends
- Past tense questions on home life (What did you do last night, How did you help your parents last weekend)
- Future reference questions on the candidate's plans for next year at school or college

Some of the suggested questions come close to AS level in that they demand mature thought and points of view as well as knowledge of some the most complex language structures in the specification. Only the best candidates can cope with these and it is entirely unfair to use these questions with weaker candidates.

1923/03 PORTUGUESE READING 2006

General Comments

The exam did not seem to present many problems to the majority of candidates but unfortunately it is still apparent that some candidates did not have any formal preparation and this is reflected in their performance.

It is important that centres remind candidates to enter correctly their name, centre and candidate number to avoid problems. We noticed that a sizeable number of candidates write in pencil when it is clearly stated that they should write in pen.

The teachers that prepare candidates should be congratulated for their students' good performance and encourage future students to achieve even better results. As preparation for this exam, it would be good practice for candidates to read texts and questions carefully and only extract the required information. Chunks of texts were copied out when a few words would have sufficed on the exercise that requires answer in the target language.

Inference and interpretation play an important part in Section 3 and candidates should be prepared for that.

Comments On Individual Questions

Section 1

Ex1- Qs 1-5

The majority of candidates achieved full marks in this exercise.

Ex2-Qs 6-10

Most candidates gained full marks. In general the exercise was answered correctly.

Ex3-Q 11-15

The icons A & B in Q 12 seemed to lead to confusion. Few candidates pointed out that A or B could be the answer relating to their personal experiences. We accepted both options as correct.

Q14 and Q15 also had the wrong choices of options, probably based on individual preference instead of referring to what was written in the text.

Section 2

Ex4-Qs 16-20

Some candidates didn't seem to understand that they should use the words given in the list provided and they used their own words or words from the text. This shows some lack of familiarity with the exam paper.

Q18 was often answered wrongly the word, *tirando* being used instead of *pondo*, showing that the candidate did not understand the text.

Q19 posed problems to few candidates as their perception of a litre and a half was sometimes *pouca*.

Q20 *lavar*, was used instead of *dormir* and again showed that no attention was given to the text.

Ex5-Qs 21-25

Most candidates answered accurately. A small percentage showed lack of knowledge and vocabulary in Q23. Although they both talked about Christmas, only Carlos mentioned music.

Section 3

Ex6 –Qs 26-30

This exercise proved to be a bit difficult for some candidates. There were mixed results. In Q27 some candidates chose option b), as they answered the questions without reading the text. Some corrected their answer after a second reading. The best candidates achieved as expected.

Ex7- Qs 31-37

This was a more challenging text. Although, verb tenses and wrong agreements of subject-verb were frequent and a wide range of the vocabulary was accepted to fill the gaps, most of the candidates failed to answer the questions correctly. A limited number gained full marks.

Ex8 – Qs 38-40

Generally the exercise was correctly answered. Some candidates were confused by options A and C in Q39, maybe due to the emphasis given to both belt and jacket in the text. Most candidates scored full marks for this exercise.

Despite difficulties with individual questions, most candidates showed that they understood the tasks well and delved into the texts accordingly.

Praise goes to all the 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:

- Exposing exam candidates to a wide variety of reading material;
- Instilling an attentive approach to reading;
- Increasing awareness of structural features of the target language.

1923 / 04 Writing

General Comments

Whilst the general pattern of ability was similar to past years, the overall performance of the candidates was not very high. Very few candidates gained full marks. On the other hand, only a very small number left Section 2 and/or 3 blank. Those candidates either didn't understand the rubrics or they did not feel confident writing in Portuguese.

There is still a large number of candidates who sit this exam without having had any preparation or practice. They encountered difficulties and struggled especially in Sections 2 and 3. They showed low standards in spelling and a tendency to write as they speak.

It is also important that centres candidates be reminded to enter correctly their name, centre and candidate number to avoid problems. We noticed that a sizeable number of candidates write in pencil when it is clearly stated that they should write in blue or black ink.

Another problem is the handwriting: some scripts were almost undecipherable.

Many wrote far beyond the word limit and tended to lose marks, because they failed to use of future or past tenses within the 100 words. . Candidates should be prepared to give equal weight to each of the points requested in the tasks. Many had long introductions and failed to expand on the given points, restricting themselves to a simple sentence and so losing marks.

Quite a few candidates forgot they were answering in Portuguese and wrote a large proportion of the exam in Spanish or even in English.

Comments On Individual Questions

Section 1

Ex 1

It was surprising to see that very few candidates spelt the names of fruits and vegetables correctly. The pictures are there only for suggestions but most of the candidates restricted themselves to them. Some wrote in Spanish, Italian or even French.

Ex 2

Many variations of *cozinha* were written, often in Spanish.

The verbs were mainly correct but wrong endings for the first person singular were also frequent.

Ex 3

Some candidates still did not follow the rubric and wrote many more than 40 words. Some, fewer than the previous years, translated the bullet points instead of writing about them. Some misunderstood T5 and said what they could go out to eat or do. However the majority replied according to the instructions.

Section 2

Ex 4

Many candidates wrote many more than 90-100 words thus missing potential marks for Quality of Language because they did not use the past or future tenses until they were outside the word limit.

Option a) in this exercise was preferred. (Few candidates wrote about both options, not developing either.)

a) Some candidates wrote a long introduction about their friends and their attributes and had no space to develop the other points. Very few expressed their opinions about their choice of accommodation. They did say where they went last year but didn't talk about what they did there.

b) There was a wide spread of candidates that did not pay attention to the fact that they were to describe the place where they worked, and in T3 some used the present tense saying what they do with the money they would receive, missing the opportunity of using the future tense and therefore missing marks. Some wrote about their last job but didn't say what they did.

In both cases, the best answers were able to communicate a clear message and use the right tenses with confidence and ease.

Section 3

Ex 5

Option a) had more takers. Many who chose it clearly thought about it and some gave very imaginative and creative answers. Others, though, were very predictable using the idea of someone famous coming to the school. Few had interesting happenings during the concert and some good reasons to put forward the concert were also presented.

A fair number of candidates opted for question b). Most candidates performed well but there were some who omitted T2, giving no reasons for participating in the marathon. Many did not want to do the same the following year explaining that it was too demanding.

A frequent mistake was with "foi" instead of "fui".

Both questions offered plenty of scope for creative and imaginative writing. A few of the answers were written with admirable fluency and flair, and showed real style.. They were able to use a wide range of vocabulary and structure (some even using the subjunctive). Weaker candidates showed a restricted range of structures, resorting often to the repetition at frequent intervals of 'fomos + infinitive (fomos comprar/ fomos comer), limited use of different tenses - in many cases just the use of the present or the past - and use of irrelevant information, thus displaying lack of discipline and cohesion.

Teachers are advised to continue their excellent work giving particular attention to the following:

- exposing exam candidates to a wide variety of written material;
- encouraging a wide use of tenses;
increasing their awareness of structural features of the target language that will enable them to acquire a greater ability to actively use the language in written communication.

**General Certificate of Secondary Education Portuguese 1923
June 2006 Assessment Series**

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01 - Listening	40	32	29	26	22	19	16	13
02 - Speaking	50	41	35	30	26	22	19	16
03 - Reading	40	36	31	26	22	19	16	13
04 - Writing	80	70	63	57	47	37	27	17

**N.B. Component marks are scaled to a weighted mark out of 50.
Each component represents 25% of the overall award.**

Overall

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Percentage in Grade	11.9	36	24.9	11.23	7.1	3.8	2.4	1.2
Cumulative Percentage in Grade	13	47.9	72.8	84	91.1	94.9	97.3	98.5

The total entry for the examination was 1,184.

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