

Report on the Components

June 2007

1923/MS/R/07

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This report on the Examination provides 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.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Portuguese (1923)

REPORT ON THE COMPONENTS

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1923/01 LISTENING

General Comments

The overall performance of the candidates was very good. The exam allowed excellent opportunities for differentiation.

Many candidates did not attempt all the questions. Written answers were not always clearly expressed and some handwriting was not easily legible.

A few candidates did not demonstrate that they were ready to enter for this exam and perhaps they might have performed better if they had waited another year.

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

Administration

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

Some Centres did not ensure that scripts were sent in the order candidates appeared on the Attendance Register.

Some Centres sent scripts in envelopes from other awarding bodies.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercises 1, 2 and 3

Most candidates answered all questions correctly.

In Prova 3, Question 14, a few candidates chose A for their answers.

Section 2

This was generally well done.

Prova 4

Question 20: C was a popular wrong answer.

Prova 5

Most candidates gained a few marks in this exercise. Many lost a few marks, but there was no pattern to the wrong answers.

Many candidates who did not perform well elsewhere gained some marks in this exercise.

Section 3

This Section differentiated very well between the candidates.

Prova 6

Questions 26, 27 and 28 were generally well done. 'e' was a popular wrong answer for Question 28.

Prova 7

Very few candidates followed the instruction to give a one-word answer. Many candidates did not ensure their answers made sense. However, many gained full marks, whilst some did not attempt to answer one or more of the questions.

Question 29: Wrong answers included: *levar para casa, ler a medanha do cão, embarca*.

Question 30: Wrong answers included: *pata quebrada, corrente, sino, trainora, camera*.

Question 31: There were many correct answers.

Question 32: Most candidates answered correctly.

Prova 8

Many candidates, who did not score well in other exercises, did well here. Most candidates gained a few marks in this exercise. Many gained full marks.

Question 34: 'C' was the most common wrong answer.

Exercise 9

Very few candidates did not write one or more of their answers in English. Many did not express themselves clearly. A few did not attempt to answer one or more questions. Very few gained full marks in this exercise.

Question 38: Wrong answers included: "He done the pockets first then worked on the computer"; "He worked on the computer to see if the car worked".

Question 39: Wrong answers included: "They liked the site"; "They were surprised"; "He had been classified in the 10th places"; "They realised which car was his straight away"; "They knew what it was".

Question 40: Wrong answers included: "The director said he's a winner"; "By calling him on the phone"; "Andre won the company"; "Must be 1st prize"; "To tell that the price was won"; "The first premium was his"; "He was the first one in the French company"; "To tell him that his first premier was Andre".

1923/02 SPEAKING

General Comments

Examiners found that the majority of candidates performed very well this year but that there were a large number of candidates who did not seem to have been sufficiently prepared for the demands of the speaking test.

Some Examiners noted this year that many candidates appeared to be much younger than sixteen years of age and consequently did not always have sufficient maturity to cope with some questions, particularly those which aimed to elicit responses worthy of the highest marks. Even though some of these younger candidates, from a Portuguese-speaking background, had very good language ability, they would have benefited from waiting a year or two before taking the exam.

General Comments on the Conduct of the Speaking Test

In general the speaking tests were carried out efficiently, and candidates were given ample opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, however, there were some candidates who did not seem to know what was expected of them. It was clear that they had not had any formal preparation on how to tackle the test.

In a subject like Portuguese Teacher/Examiners are often conducting tests with candidates previously unknown to them. The fact is, therefore, that the OCR Examiners find tests in which it is clear that the candidates would have done much better if the Teacher/Examiner had prepared them – even just for a few minutes – before the tests.

As has been mentioned in previous reports, much can be achieved in a short period of time if the candidates are brought together and given essential advice such as what section 1 and 2 role-plays are and how to deal with the prompts; in the case of the section 3 role-play the most important piece of advice is that it is the candidate's responsibility to narrate the story outlined and that the Teacher/Examiner merely adds a few 'surprise' questions.

In the role-plays the Teacher/Examiner must always use the language given in the Teacher/Examiner Booklet. When Teacher/Examiners do not do this they often, unwittingly no doubt, give away the vocabulary needed by the candidate, thus depriving the candidate of the marks. The Teacher/Examiner is allowed to 'nudge' the candidate, but not to use any of the actual words that would become the correct response.

It is advisable to tell candidates that in the General Conversation they should aim to take control of the conversation and develop their responses to questions as fully as they can.

Teacher/Examiners should always aim to use a separate microphone, one not built into the machine, placing it in front of the candidate so that their voice is picked up as clearly as possible. It is less important to hear the Teacher/Examiner's voice as they are not being assessed. Many built-in microphones create a background whirring noise that, for candidates with quiet voices, prevents the Examiner from hearing everything they say. Then, as the machine is inevitably placed next to the Teacher/Examiner, the Teacher/Examiner's voice is heard more clearly than that of the candidate.

It is strongly recommended that the Teacher/Examiner check each and every recording immediately after each test has finished, to ensure that it has indeed been recorded. Teacher/Examiners should plan to record three candidates on each side of the C90 cassette. This is enough time to conduct the test, which normally lasts approximately 12 minutes per candidate. Teachers who are tempted to record four per side, if the test has been conducted correctly, will always find that there is not enough room to complete the fourth recording on the same side.

In connection with this, it must be stressed that at no stage during the recording should the tape be paused or stopped. It is detectable on playback and immediately arouses suspicions of malpractice.

Role-play Section 1

Department store

The second utterance was frequently omitted and candidates therefore missed the opportunity to gain two marks. Some candidates incorporated it into the first utterance and thereby obtained the marks.

In utterance 3, 'lift' was often not known.

Many candidates lost a mark in the final utterance because they said only *obrigado/obrigada* and then the Teacher/Examiner said *adeus* before they did.

In the café

This was generally performed well and no problems arose from this role-play.

Buying a train ticket

Few problems occurred with this item – if they did, it was usually in utterance 3 when candidates had to say what kind of ticket they wanted.

Role-play Section 2

In this Section the Teacher/Examiner is sometimes tempted to compose additional language, often with the best of intentions. Tempting though this is, the Teacher/Examiner must keep strictly to the text given. For example, *Estamos numa loja. Bom dia.* in the 'Looking for a job' role-play this year. Many Teacher/Examiners added to this and accidentally gave away key vocabulary for the first utterance with the result that the candidates concerned did not score any marks.

Booking a hotel room

This was generally well done although some candidates answered the Teacher/Examiner's question instead of using the prompt for utterance 3. In the same utterance it was quite common for candidates to ask *É muito caro?* which was not enough for 2 marks. Some candidates answered the Teacher/Examiner's question, sometimes by just saying *Não*, instead of using the prompt.

Looking for a job

As stated above, many Teacher/Examiners accidentally gave away key vocabulary for the first utterance with the result that the candidates concerned did not score any marks. It is for this reason that the Teacher/Examiner should never say more than what is given in the booklet.

In the third utterance some problems arose when candidates had not listened carefully enough and failed to understand what they were required to do: to state on which day they could work.

In the tourist office

This was generally performed well and Examiners did not report any problems.

Role-play Section 3

The Teacher/Examiner should give the candidates the opportunity to take control of this role-play themselves, and only interject to test whether the candidates can cope with some unexpected elements. These interjections should therefore consist of questions that develop what the candidates have just said and not of merely reading out the questions given within each picture frame. These latter questions are intended to give the candidates some ideas for their own narrative. Similarly, if the Teacher/Examiner fires off a series of questions at the candidate, then the candidate can only respond and so is unable to take control of the narrative.

Some Teacher/Examiners seem unsure about how to introduce this role-play. The advice is to keep to Portuguese from the beginning to the end of each test, so a simple *E agora, secção três* is enough for most candidates. Some prompting may be needed for a few candidates, who find this part of the test far more demanding than even the General Conversation. It is best to stick to the vocabulary given in the frames with the illustrations. Many Teacher/Examiners give a brief translation into Portuguese of the key phrases of the rubric and this is acceptable.

Examiners reported some excellent use of imagination on the part of some candidates.

Getting ready for a party

This was well done and most candidates had no problem describing the preparations. The role-play worked well and gave candidates ample opportunity to show their knowledge. Candidates who knew *trouxe* always gave a good impression.

Hotel in Copacabana

This narrative was generally performed well. Some candidates did not make a clear link between the meeting with new friends while taking their *almoço* and the evening spent at the hotel discotheque with them.

Concert in the park

There were some candidates who seemed to miss the point of the advantage of travelling by bike to avoid the traffic at the end of the concert. Quite a few had to be guided a little by the Teacher/Examiner so as to reach this conclusion.

General Conversation

Once again there were some Teacher/Examiners who mistakenly allowed the candidates to choose their own three topics. It is very likely that the candidates will score fewer marks when this happens because marks are given for talking about the topics specified in the Teacher/Examiner Booklet.

Candidates seemed to like the Self, Family and Friends topic best. On the other hand many had problems with vocabulary when talking about school and often resorted to English words.

Some Examiners reported that they felt that there were Teacher/Examiners who spoke too much during the General Conversation and that this prevented candidates from displaying their full knowledge.

If the Teacher/Examiner gives a succession of straightforward questions requiring responses only with simple sentence structures, then it is not easy for the candidates to demonstrate a wide range of structures in their responses. A glance at the mark scheme shows quickly how important it is that the candidates express opinions frequently – and explain the reasons why they hold these opinions.

It is not necessary to ask a full range of questions for each of the three topics. When this happens, the General Conversation always exceeds the five minutes allotted to this final section of the test. Simple present tense factual questions could be used first, followed by perhaps a change of topic and some questions that require a reference to the future and, finishing with the third topic, (if the candidate is good enough) a few more demanding questions that not only elicit references to the past but also require some thought and clear use of more complex language.

Over-long General Conversations can prevent some candidates from achieving the B or A grade that may have been possible for them. There is nothing to prevent candidates from demonstrating a wide enough range of vocabulary and structures at GCSE level in just five minutes, provided that the Teacher/Examiners are alert to what the candidates say and develop their questions accordingly. Some candidates tend to lose concentration as the minutes pass and either simply repeat the same structures or, worse, start to make mistakes more frequently than they did earlier.

Far more important is that the Teacher/Examiners should choose their questions very carefully during the conversation. This is a very skilful operation because it means that they must occasionally leave aside any questions they may have prepared in advance in order to coax full responses to any open question that the candidate may not have answered completely. Fortunately, a very large number of the Portuguese Teacher/Examiners have this skill and this is to the very great advantage of the candidates. However, a few Teacher/Examiners read through all the suggested questions given on pages 35 to 38 of the Teacher/Examiner Booklet and are content with any response, no matter how short.

The Teacher/Examiner's skill lies in carefully matching suitable questions from the booklet to each candidate so as to maximise the candidate's performance against the criteria.

1923/03 READING

General Comments

The exam did not seem to present many problems for the majority of candidates but unfortunately it was still apparent that some candidates had not had any formal preparation, and this was reflected in their performance. Centres should be cautioned against entering candidates simply because they appear to speak the language or because they have a Portuguese name.

Teachers who prepared candidates for this paper should be congratulated on their students' good performance and are well placed to 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. In the exercise that requires answers in the target language, huge chunks of texts were copied out when in fact a brief sentence would have sufficed.

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

Despite difficulties with individual questions (see below), most candidates showed that they had understood the tasks well and their answers showed understanding of the texts.

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

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

The majority of candidates achieved full marks in this exercise. Surprisingly, some candidates chose *elevador* as the place to buy a swimming costume.

Exercise 2

Most candidates gained full marks although some did not recognise *telejornal* and answered Q.8 with *concurros*. In general the exercise was answered correctly.

Exercise 3

There were no problems with this exercise.

Section 2

Exercise 4

Some candidates did not seem to understand that they should use the words given in the list provided and instead used their own words or words from the text. This shows some lack of familiarity with past papers. A more careful reading of the text and instructions is necessary.

Exercise 5

Most candidates answered accurately. Some confused the activities for Tiago and Diogo.

Section 3

This Section proved to be a bit demanding for some candidates, particularly Exercise 7.

Exercise 6

There were mixed results. In Q.26 some candidates opted for 'c', choosing a police story. In Q.27 some did not recognise the word *interactiva* and answered the question without reading the text. Some corrected their answer after a second reading.

Exercise 7

This was a more challenging text, intended to differentiate the candidates at the top of the mark range. Incorrect verb tenses and subject-verb agreements were not penalised and a wide range of possible answers was accepted. Nevertheless, most candidates failed to answer the questions correctly and only a limited number gained full marks.

Exercise 8

Generally the exercise was correctly answered. Some candidates did not read the whole text required to answer Q.40 and opted for answer 'B'. If they had read to the end of the text, they would have seen that 'C' was the correct answer.

1923/04 WRITING

General Comments

Overall performance was similar to that of previous years and the question paper remained of the same format and level of difficulty. It was, perhaps, disappointing to see fewer candidates gaining top marks than before.

It is not surprising that the vast majority of candidates are from native-speaker backgrounds (Portuguese, Brazilian, Madeiran, Angolan etc). Whilst many of these may be attending lessons with qualified teachers, it is also true to say that there are more candidates being entered on the basis of their nationality, regardless of whether they are capable of sitting an exam at this level. Many native-speaker candidates may be fluent speakers of the language, at home and with their peers; however, on paper their language often manifests itself in a phonetic transcription of the way they speak – this is often full of inaccuracies, and is very difficult for Examiners to decipher. Candidates also often write illegibly and sometimes in pencil, despite instructions for candidates to write in ink. There were a few cases where answers were predominantly in Spanish, or with a fair smattering of English words.

Many candidates do not judge the word limits very well, writing far too much, and losing marks along the way for failing to use a Past or Future tense within the word limits expected. An alarming number of candidates seem to think *eu foi* is the correct form of the verb, and many others also mis-conjugated verbs (*eu comeu* etc.). The list of errors does illustrate well the problems encountered when marking this paper: *temos uma piscina limbaixo, ela falava com os pães*, and *eu haxo que*, to name a few. Some evidence of texting-language is also starting to appear: 'k' for *que* is popular.

Teachers are again advised to continue their encouraging work with candidates, and in particular, to focus on the following areas:

- Increase awareness and accuracy of use of a good range of grammatical structures, in particular, wider range of tenses
- Encourage well thought-out expression of opinions, feelings and judgement of the situations candidates may have to write about
- Allow candidates to see past papers and have exposure to the type of exercises they can expect to find in the exam – ensuring they understand what will be expected of them.
- Practise past exam papers, writing to time, and writing to word-limits, in handwriting which allows Examiners the opportunity to read the work with ease, so that marks can be awarded where merited.

In Centres where candidates may not undertake Portuguese lessons as a matter of course, but are entered for this exam, it would be useful if a representative of the languages department could spend some time in advance of the exam explaining to candidates what the exam entails, to avoid the mis-answering of questions which often arises where there has been a lack of official guidance beforehand.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1

It is surprising how many candidates did not correctly write the school subjects. While it is still possible to score well on this exercise, as marks are awarded purely on the basis of communication (i.e. – most phonetic spellings are accepted), many answers were in other languages, including English. A number of candidates gave words depicting the pictures *globo*, *peixe*, etc, and some lost a mark by using the same word given as the example: *teatro*.

Exercise 2

A large number of candidates used the English word 'newsagents' in the first question, perhaps because the example used 'cinema' (despite the word being identical in Portuguese). A wide range of answers was accepted for the newsagents, including: *banca*, *biblioteca*, *loja*. In question 2, those who wrote *tomo* without an object drink or snack, did not gain a mark, as it made no sense on its own. Very few people spelt the word *piscina* correctly, but most gained the mark for communication because of their phonetic attempt.

Exercise 3

There were a number of problems with this exercise, many in common with previous years:

- Some candidates simply translated the 6 tasks, rather than responded to them (e.g. T1 *Diga como vai para a escola.*)
- Some candidates wrote their answers by the side of the Tasks, then in the space provided for the answer proper they went on to write small essays about their school, which had nothing to do with the required responses
- Some candidates missed out Tasks, or rolled some into each other, often overlooking all the required elements
- The majority of candidates did not know the proper terms, or used the English words for 'break' and 'lunch'. Some thought break meant breakfast. A large number could not accurately express a word for 'lessons' (common mis-spellings included: *alas*, *lessoens*, *licoens*)

Despite all of this, very many candidates gained good marks on this exercise.

Section 2

Exercise 4

As in previous years, many candidates wrote in excess of the word limit (90–100 words). The Quality of Language mark is assessed on the first 100 words approximately; consequently, if the use of a Past or Future tense falls after this limit, the candidate will not gain the marks for it. The use of tenses is a national criterion for achieving Grade C and above, and this Section is targeted at C-candidates. Some candidates did not answer the tasks appropriately, some using incorrect tenses, and, in common with previous years, some answered **both** questions.

Option (a): Some candidates wrote an invitation to a New Year party that had not yet taken place, thus ignoring the requirement to write in the Past. There was little imagination used in describing the party activities – most involved food, drink and music. Most candidates were able to give an opinion about the event. The last Task was often not well done, as most candidates simply said they would do the same next year, or have a party with better music etc. Answers to this option were generally less successful than answers to option (b).

Option (b): This question on holidays was the preferred option, and was answered competently by the majority of candidates.

The description of the holidays was attempted much better, and most candidates who chose this option fulfilled all the required Tasks well, gaining mainly 17–20 marks out of the total 20. Some lost a mark for not describing where they went, although some also gained here for lavish descriptions of the local scenery. One candidate went to *Santo Mé Principe*, and another visited the *Torre Feil* in Paris. Although most candidates wrote about a holiday visiting family in Madeira, Portugal, or Brazil, with fairly routine activities such as going to the beach, shopping and eating out, some included interesting aspects of their surroundings and what there was to do. Many gave good opinions and justified their feelings well. A good number, however, missed a mark on Task 4, where candidates were required to say what they would do on the next holiday: those who simply stated **where** they were going lost out – the question required either reference to an activity, place of visit, or reason to visit the place.

Section 3

Exercise 5

This year, the standard of writing in this section of the exam was poorer than in previous years; fewer pieces of writing stood out as inspiring, and the vast majority were routine, with little sparkle. Again, many candidates wrote over the word limit, and so, if their range of linguistic features were better towards the end of their writing, may have lost marks for Quality of Language. On the other hand, a large number also wrote too little, losing marks all round. It is important, in the preparation for this exam, that candidates are aware of the requirements, and are given opportunity to put these into practice.

Option (a), the national event, was mainly poorly executed.

The majority of candidates wrote about a sporting event. Many described a football tournament, and, whilst the description of the games themselves was quite well done, most of the other Tasks were left uncompleted. Some candidates wrote about an event at the school, such as a concert, or a craft fair, ignoring the instructions. The final Task, about participating in a similar event next year, was not well done, with most candidates simply saying they would, because they enjoyed it. The better answers in fact responded in the negative here, stating they found the event tiring, stressful, and too much work.

Option (b), work experience, was, by far, the most popular question.

Most candidates attempted this question quite well, although there was little variation: the common workplaces included shops, restaurants, and schools. However, there was also a judge's office, vet's, radio station and computer design studio. Large numbers of candidates missed a mark in Task 1 for omitting to say **why** they had chosen that work. Some cleverly said the school had chosen for them and that they had no say in the matter. Some candidates wrote about a job they were going to start, and one wrote about a careers interview. Unfortunately, attempts like these miss out on Communication marks. All candidates were able to describe what activities they undertook, and many also gave good opinions (positive and negative) about what they had done. The last task was often less well done, with many candidates simply saying that the work was/was not related to their future. Better answers expressed the link with more depth, with candidates giving reasons for their future careers.

It is important to remember in Section 3, that of the total 30 marks available, 20 of these are for the standard of language produced: 14 for Quality of Language (grammatical features/opinions/good use of vocabulary), plus 6 for Accuracy. Candidates should be encouraged to aim for clear, accurate and broad use of language throughout their studies, to enable them to access the top marks at this level.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Portuguese (1923)

June 2007 Assessment Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01 – Listening	40	33	29	26	22	19	16	13
02 – Speaking	50	41	35	30	26	22	19	16
03 – Reading	40	35	30	25	21	17	14	11
04 – Writing	80	70	63	56	46	36	26	16

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

Overall

	Max	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	190	170	149	129	110	91	73	55
Percentage in Grade		10.0	35.3	22.0	13.0	8.9	4.9	2.6	1.4
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		10.0	45.2	67.3	80.2	89.1	94.0	96.6	98.0

The total entry for the examination was 1475.

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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