

Report on the Components

June 2008

1923/MS/R/08

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a unitary awarding body, established by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the RSA Examinations Board in January 1998. OCR provides a full range of GCSE, A level, GNVQ, Key Skills and other qualifications for schools and colleges in the United Kingdom, including those previously provided by MEG and OCEAC. It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers.

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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this Report.

© OCR 2008

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

GCSE Portuguese 1923

REPORT ON THE COMPONENTS

Component/Content	Page
1923/01 Listening	1
1923/02 Speaking	3
1923/03 Reading	7
1923/04 Writing	9
Grade Thresholds	12

1923/01 Listening

General Comments

The standard of the paper was comparable to previous years and the overall performance of candidates was good. Most candidates demonstrated that they had understood what they heard.

Some candidates did not follow instructions regarding the number of boxes to tick and in which language to write their answers.

Some candidates did not ensure their handwriting was immediately legible and in Exercise 9 many candidates wrote excessively long answers. It is important that candidates write legibly and refrain from writing unnecessarily long answers.

Many candidates did not express themselves clearly in either Portuguese or English. Very often, there was interference from other languages in answers that should have been written in Portuguese, and sometime answers in English included Portuguese words.

Individual Questions

Section 1

Exercise 1: Questions 1–5

Few candidates failed to gain full marks for this exercise.

Question 3: Some candidates ticked B (vegetables) instead of C (salad bowl).

Exercise 2: Questions 6–10

Most candidates answered all questions correctly.

Exercise 3: Questions 11–15

Most candidates answered all questions correctly.

Section 2

Exercise 4: Questions 16–20

Most candidates answered all questions correctly.

Question 18: A few candidates ticked the wrong picture.

Exercise 5: Questions 21–25

Most candidates answered all questions correctly.

Questions 23 and 25: Some candidates ticked the wrong box. There was no pattern to the wrong answers.

Section 3

Exercise 6: Questions 26–28

Most candidates answered the three questions correctly. There was no pattern to the wrong answers.

Exercise 7: Questions 29–32

Candidates were required to fill the gaps with a suitable answer in Portuguese. A few candidates answered in English. Many candidates wrote non-Portuguese words in their answers.

Report on the Components taken in June 2008

Question 29: Most candidates answered correctly. Many did not know the correct spelling of *países* and frequently were unsure of the correct spelling of Portuguese words.

Question 30: Most candidates answered correctly. Some candidates did not know the correct spelling of *doze*.

Question 31: Most candidates answered correctly. Some used a verb which was not appropriate, such as *usar* (on its own), *viajar*, *comprar*, *associar*, *transferir* and *aplicar*. Other wrong answers included *ascocina*, *infericacias* and *qual quer*. Some candidates did not answer the question.

Question 32: Most candidates answered correctly. Wrong answers included: *estudar*, *student'* and *estudianto*.

Exercise 8: Questions 33–37

Many candidates answered all questions correctly.

Question 33: Option B was a popular wrong answer.

Questions 34 and 35: Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 36: A few candidates ticked option C.

Question 37: A few candidates ticked option A.

Exercise 9: Questions 38–40

The rubric required candidates to write their answers in English. A few answered in Portuguese and so unfortunately gained no marks. Some candidates did not attempt one or more of the questions. As mentioned above, many candidates did not express themselves clearly and/or did not ensure their handwriting was legible.

There was no pattern of wrong answers. Many answers were excessively long and included incorrect or irrelevant details. This meant that many candidates lost marks in this exercise because, when there is a list of answers, examiners mark only the **first** one. However, those who carefully read and answered the questions rather than translating the whole response were justly rewarded.

This exercise differentiated the best scripts.

Question 38: Many candidates answered well, but many referred to the weather conditions.

Question 39: Many candidates answered well, but some referred to architecture and tourist spots. Several had misunderstood *o quotidiano* and thought Fernando photographed Indians. Many did not express themselves in clear English and wrote, for example, “day a day things”, “during the day things”, “of our day things” or simply “the day”, for which they did not gain a mark.

Question 40: Many candidates did not attempt an answer. There were many incorrect answers because candidates had heard the word *aperfeiçoar* and assumed Fernando wanted to be a perfect photographer. Many answers were wrong because candidates did not know how to convey ‘postcards’ and used terms such as “posts”, “booklets”, “cards”, “posters” and “paper cards”.

1923/02 Speaking

Introduction

The number of candidates increased again this year. Judging from comments made by candidates during tests, it was apparent that these candidates were not from English but from Portuguese-speaking backgrounds, often from African countries. In fact, it is clear that candidates now come from a very wide range of Portuguese-speaking countries.

There are still many candidates who are from an English-speaking background or from European countries other than Portugal. Many of these were extremely well prepared and achieved outstanding marks and due praise must also go to their teachers.

Unfortunately, some examiners reported that a lack of preparation often prevented candidates from a native-speaker background obtaining a mark commensurate with their linguistic ability. Some candidates, although fluent in the language, did not perform well because a variety of tenses was not used, the language they used was too basic generally and the topics in the general conversation were not developed. These candidates would benefit from preparation/practice so that they are clear about what is expected of them in the test.

It has been stated in these pages before that, even when the teacher/examiner does not know the candidates and he or she has only met them for the first time just before commencing the speaking tests, there are still a few things that can be done. It does not take long to explain how the role-plays work and that, in the general conversation it is the candidate who should do almost all the talking.

The most unfortunate candidates were those whose English was so weak that they did not understand the rubrics and instructions. In these cases there is nothing that the teacher/examiners can do during the tests because to help them understand the role-play instructions would be an infringement of the examination. Centres should obtain a past paper in advance of the tests (perhaps, if necessary shortly before they start) and the teacher/examiner should run through the format of the papers with the candidates.

General Comments on the Conduct of the Speaking Test

Once the tape starts, the teacher/examiner must leave it running (with no pauses) until the end of the test. Pauses are easily detected on playback and leave the teacher/examiner in danger of accusation of malpractice. Examiners reported instances this year of the tape being stopped, sometimes at the end of every section of the test for certain candidates.

A large number of Centres did not send in the individual mark sheet for each candidate or did not fill in the required details on the mark sheet. All sections shaded in grey should be completed.

Teacher/examiners should not be tempted to change the script for the first two role-plays from that printed in the Teacher/Examiner Booklet, unless of course the candidate needs to be brought back to a position where they can continue with the role play and achieve some marks. In certain cases, such as when the candidates take a wrong direction, it is the responsibility of the teacher/examiner to bring them back on course.

Unfortunately, however, some teacher/examiners changed the script for no reason and this usually led to candidates being distracted and losing potential marks. Sometimes the teacher/examiners themselves then became distracted and the candidates lost further marks.

The general conversation should be about five minutes long. This may not seem long enough for the candidates to display a wide enough range of language and structures to obtain maximum

Report on the Components taken in June 2008

marks but the teacher/examiners should remember that linguistic quality is assessed over the whole test, including all three role-plays. Good candidates have often given sufficient evidence for a very high mark even before the general conversation begins.

The teacher/examiner should choose three general conversation topics which must be taken from the teacher's booklet on the page following the Section 3 role-play. It is advisable that the teacher picks the three topics and fills in the mark sheet with these titles in advance of the test. Not only can the teacher decide the order in which to use the three topics but also the level of difficulty to focus on for each of the topics.

Role-play Section 1

Food shop in Oporto

Many candidates asked for more than one item and they frequently combined the first two tasks. It was unfortunate that many teacher/examiners forgot to wait for the candidates to do the fourth task before telling them how much they had to pay. Sometimes the teacher/examiner would guide the candidate without giving the answer away, but often the teacher/examiner would just carry on, which meant the candidate lost the opportunity to score a mark here.

Job at the airport in Salvador

Very few candidates experienced difficulty in coping with this role-play. A very small number did not manage to think of a place in the airport where they could work or could only use an English word such as 'shop' or 'car park'.

The final utterance, requiring the candidate to find out how much money would be paid proved to be well within the scope of candidates. A simple question word such as '*Quanto*' was all that was needed.

Going out with your friend in Faro

This role-play worked well.

Role-play Section 2

Candidates are expected to show more knowledge of language structures in this section. The tasks are intended to require candidates to demonstrate the ability to refer to a time other than the present. This may be a past tense or a reference to the future. The latter, in Portuguese, does not have to be literally the Future Tense because this is not a tense that is commonly used when making a reference to the future. However, it is expected that a candidate at this level knows how to use a form of the verb to make a clear expression of meaning: for example, *Vou ir ao cinema* or *Quero ir ao parque*.

Talking to your Portuguese friend in his/her home

Utterance 4 often caused a problem as the candidate would go quiet once the teacher/examiner said *Pois, obrigado/obrigada*.

On the phone to your Portuguese friend

There were a few occasions in this role-play when the teacher/examiner added to the script, sometimes thereby supplying language which the candidate should have produced. For example, when the teacher/examiner did not give the candidates much time to begin the first utterance and quickly added: *Quando é que vens?* The candidates then merely had to say one word, and consequently lost a potential mark when they might easily have been able to say this for themselves.

Utterance 3 was often answered using the infinitive (as, indeed, was the following one), which meant that the candidate failed to show a full response to the task set on the card.

As a response to the teacher/examiner's prompt for the fourth utterance many candidates chose to reply directly to the question by saying, for example, *eu gosto de jogar futebol*. This was perfectly acceptable, of course.

Souvenir shop in Coimbra

Many candidates did not carry out the first task set on the role-play card, which was to explain that they have a problem with the plate (etc). They sometimes began the role-play by inventing a problem or carrying out the task which appears as task 2 (saying that they did not like the colour).

One teacher/examiner changed the prompt to utterance 4 to *Pode voltar?* which prevented the candidates from scoring a mark because they simply answered *Sim, posso*.

Role-play Section 3

The purpose of this type of role-play is to find evidence of the ability of the candidates to narrate a series of events using past tenses. There is also the opportunity for the candidates to put forward points of view and to say why they hold these points of view –justification. This is why each illustration contains a series of prompts in Portuguese: they are there to help the candidates prepare their account during the fifteen-minutes before the test takes place.

Some teacher/examiners used the prompts as a way to turn the role-play into a sort of question and answer routine. This prevents candidates from taking control, so the teachers should prepare by thinking of their own 'surprise' questions which they can then use sparingly. It is the candidate who should dominate in this role-play and it is their voice which should predominate.

Where teacher/examiners asked too many questions the candidates lost control of the narrative and often slowed down to a stop.

A day you spent at the seaside

Candidates seemed to find the notes and pictures easy to follow, although very few candidates mentioned that they had made new friends; many said they were with family or friends. Many candidates used the word 'barbecue' to describe *churrasco*.

How you spent last Saturday

The notes and pictures proved to be easy to follow.

On a school excursion

The notes and pictures proved easy to follow.

General Conversation

It is expected that the teacher/examiners allow the general conversation to last no more than five minutes. In practice, conversations ranged from twenty-five seconds to twenty-five minutes. Five minutes is ideal because the candidate (and the teacher/examiner) will not become tired and lose concentration. It is quite possible to cover a full range of question types within this time because it is not necessary to move from easy questions to top-of-the-range open questions in each one of the three topics. Some topics like 'Self, family and friends' lend themselves to being the first, easy topic and others like 'Holidays' and 'Free time' are more suitable for past and future time references, detailed accounts and a few carefully expressed opinions backed up by rational justification.

A few less experienced teacher/examiners used the sample questions at the end of the teacher booklet extensively and ran through every single question for each topic, evidently not listening to what the candidates said and thereby not allowing a genuine spontaneous conversation to develop.

Report on the Components taken in June 2008

There was a lot of use of closed questions, to which candidates only had to say “yes” or “no”, as the teacher had used the verbs and necessary language. This did not give candidates the chance to use the language examiners were looking for.

Another common weakness of candidates from a Portuguese-speaking background was the unwillingness of candidates to develop their response to questions. Sometimes this must have been due to a lack of knowledge of vocabulary and structures but examiners reported that many candidates who coped well with the role-plays were noticeably reticent during the general conversation.

On the other hand, some strong candidates used complex language accurately and took great care over pronouncing and intoning clearly. It was clear that their teachers had prepared them extremely well for their test.

Of those candidates for whom Portuguese is a completely foreign language, lower-scoring candidates usually struggled with forming past tenses or other structures where they had to cope with verb-endings. These candidates were more successful when talking about their personal details, daily routine and free time activities.

In the ‘School life’ topic, many of the candidates had difficulty in expressing names of subjects, school-related words, and free time activities in Portuguese and it was quite common for them to use English words instead.

1923/03 Reading

General Comments

The exam seemed to be well-received and seemed to be accessible to the majority of candidates but unfortunately there was still evidence of a lack of maturity which was a real problem for some candidates who were perhaps too young to take the exam. Others did not seem to have had any formal preparation for the exam and this was reflected in their performance.

Centres should be cautioned against entering candidates who are too young or entering candidates simply because they appear to speak the language or because they have a Portuguese name. To gain full marks, a reflective and mature attitude and an analytical approach are required, especially in Section 3.

The teachers who prepared this year's 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 focus on only extracting the required information.

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

Section 1

Exercise 1: Questions 1–5

The majority of candidates achieved full marks in this exercise.

Exercise 2: Questions 6–10

Most candidates gained full marks.

Exercise 3: Questions 11–15

In Q11 some candidates did not identify icon A (lamb) with Spring and ticked C as the correct answer (leaves falling from a tree).

Q15 was not answered by a large number of candidates possibly due to the cross over all three options. It is a style which has been used in the past without problems.

Section 2

Exercise 4: Questions 16–20

Generally well-answered but some candidates still used their own words to answer the questions instead of using the vocabulary from the box as was required by the task.

In Q18 some chose *comprar* instead of *levar* which was the correct answer.

Exercise 5: Questions 21–25

The majority had 100% correct. A few chose Sandra for Q23, not understanding the difference between wanting to be rich and not spending money and some got the names the wrong way round on Qs22 and 24.

Section 3

Exercise 6: Questions 26–30

This was the exercise where some candidates encountered difficulty in the exam. It differentiated the best candidates. It was a longer text and some candidates seemed to have not read carefully and chose the wrong options.

Report on the Components taken in June 2008

Various answers were given for Q28 and in Q30 some gave A as the correct response because those candidates had not read or understood *concorrem uns com os outros* and made assumptions about the correct answer and got it wrong.

Exercise 7: Questions 31–37

This was another challenging exercise where there was a need to understand the text and so differentiated the candidates at the top of the scale. Some candidates gave the same answers to a few questions or left some questions unanswered. Even though examiners accepted wrong verb tenses, wrong subject-verb agreements of and a wide range of suspect vocabulary, a large number of candidates failed to answer the questions correctly. A small number gained full marks. Most candidates answered Qs35 and 36 incorrectly, showing that they did not understand the sentences. Few altered their responses after a second reading.

Exercise 8: Questions 38–40

Generally the exercise was answered correctly and some candidates showed maturity and appeared to have thought through the options carefully. It seemed that some native speakers perhaps struggled with the English here and found this exercise difficult.

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

Praise goes to all teachers who brought out the best in their candidates. Teachers are advised to continue their excellent work giving particular attention to the following:

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

1923/04 Writing

General Comments

Most candidates came from a Portuguese-speaking background and it was pleasing to see the work done by those who used the tenses and persons required by the tasks and were creative in their responses, showing evidence of competence in each section of the test.

The paper as a whole seemed to be very successful with very many Section two and three pieces written with genuine enthusiasm.

Many candidates wrote over the limit, particularly in Sections two and three, ignoring the instructions given on the question paper, and in some cases failed to use past and future tenses. It is vital that teachers should emphasise to their pupils that they should read the instructions carefully and above all, not go beyond the maximum number of words stated.

Few candidates failed to finish the paper.

Candidates should be reminded to write in ink – a small number of candidates wrote in pencil. Some answered *both* alternatives in Sections two and three.

Section 1

Exercise 1

Almost every candidate scored highly in this part of the test. Some, perhaps carelessly, wrote words in the wrong language such as 'telephone' or 'chapeau'.

Exercise 2

A number of candidates did not successfully use the first person of the verb. Examiners look for evidence that candidates can form this person so *dormo* was accepted for the communication mark (but was not credited for the accuracy mark). Words like *dorme*, *caminha* and *lava* were not accepted.

Exercise 3

Most candidates performed really well, answering each point clearly.

The first task, stating when the match is, was sometimes omitted.

A common error was to use the English word 'ticket' in task five.

In task 6 many candidates described the food but forgot to mention the other part of the task, which was to say that it was at the match.

Section 2

A common weakness was to ignore the specific bullet points given in the task. Once candidates latched on to the basic idea of the piece, they often neglected the matter of relating certain of the sub-tasks in the correct tense.

Alternative (b) was answered more successfully than (a) as most candidates used the right tense and adhered to the sub-tasks more closely.

Exercise 4 (a) *uma doença*

It was surprising how many candidates told of very serious illnesses such as cancer or HIV. Others referred to unexpected problems such as obsessive compulsive disorder. Most, of course, gave an account of a severe cold or a bout of flu, which was what examiners had expected.

There was some misunderstanding of task three where quite a few candidates said how they felt while they were ill instead of how they feel about being ill.

Exercise 4 (b) *um casamento*

Some candidates were carried away by their enthusiasm, perhaps influenced by a recent family wedding of their own, and did not keep on task. A common mistake was to write about the wedding entirely in past tenses.

Task 2 required the candidates to write in past tenses so those who treated the task as one where they were to say what preparations they were going to make lost marks here. However, as they were adding details about the wedding it contributed to the mark obtained for task 1.

In task 4 the candidates should have given a description of the present. Many merely stated what they were going to buy. If, however, they said why they chose this item, then the task was considered to be fulfilled. It was disappointing when candidates wrote that they did not know what they would buy, since they were not fulfilling the task (which could have been a simpler linguistic task).

A car was a very popular wedding present (rich pupils!).

Section 3

It is important to stress that the candidates should read the instructions carefully and carry out the actual tasks which are set.

Occasionally candidates vastly over-write and when the third or fourth sub-task requires a past or future reference, they may not have used – within the 150 words limit – one or other of the tenses required for more than two marks for quality of language.

The examiners are instructed to read the whole piece in order to allocate marks for communication, and so the candidates referred to above may well have obtained the full ten marks for this category. However, they may easily have lost the opportunity to score high marks for quality of language and accuracy because only the first 150 words are assessed for these categories. The total marks for quality of language and accuracy are twice the value of the marks for communication.

Exercise 5 (a) *atividades ecológicas*

Many excellent pieces were written on this question, although some wrote about activities which they intended to organise in the future.

Exercise 5 (b) *uma pessoa famosa*

This question was the more popular of the two. In particular it was good to see that in weaker scripts, candidates clearly enjoyed imagining themselves being someone famous and very many succeeded in communicating lots of ideas, even if poorly spelt and limited in the range of language used. However, even where their imagination surpassed their language capabilities, they managed to do a good job.

There were some very good and sometimes moving pieces on this question.

Many of those who chose to be a famous footballer seemed to get carried away and did not always do themselves justice. For example, many did not think carefully enough about the exact tasks they were set: to convey a memorable day (task 1) and to relate in detail one incident that occurred during this day. Unfortunately, many accounts turned out to be match reports in which the candidate scored a winning goal. Often, when this happened, the candidates forgot to complete the final task.

It was interesting that very many of the candidates who wrote about their life as Beyoncé or Cristiano Ronaldo concluded that they would not, in fact, like to be their idol. The commonest reason was that they believed a private, family life to be far more valuable.

Some candidates misunderstood slightly the first task in writing about *o dia mais memorável da minha vida*. Others drifted into writing an account of the famous person's life.

The fourth task was often the only opportunity taken by candidates to refer to the future and it was sufficient for candidates to copy correctly the word *gostaria* and they were able to qualify for marks higher than two for quality of language (assuming, of course, that earlier in the piece they had successfully produced at least one correctly written example of a past tense). This, combined with a highly attractive title, may well have helped some of the weakest scripts to score a higher mark.

Grade Thresholds

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Portuguese (Specification Code 1923)
June 2008 Examination Series

Component Threshold Marks

Component	Max Mark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
01 – Listening	40	35	31	28	24	20	16	12
02 – Speaking	50	41	35	30	26	22	19	16
03 – Reading	40	36	31	27	23	19	16	13
04 – Writing	80	71	63	56	46	36	27	18

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

Overall

	Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Overall Threshold Marks	200	191	174	152	134	114	93	76	59
Percentage in Grade		11.3	37.2	24.9	10.9	7.8	3.8	1.8	0.6
Cumulative Percentage in Grade		11.3	48.5	73.4	84.3	92.1	95.9	97.7	98.3

The total entry for the examination was 1696.

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity



OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2008