

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/01

Speaking

Key messages

To do well in this examination, candidates need to:

- research the topic they have chosen for their presentation, including their ideas and opinions rather than just relying on factual information. This should also aid in raising points for discussion for the Topic Conversation section.
- make reference to the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where Portuguese is spoken. Failing this requirement will have a negative impact in their total mark for Content and Presentation', as this will be halved.
- ask a minimum of two questions during the Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections; these should be relevant to the topic under discussion, and will avoid having their mark lowered, or not awarded at all – for 'Seeking Information and Opinions' (should only one question or no questions be asked, respectively).

General comments

The standard of performance was very good this year with a great variety of chosen topics ranging from family life and cultural matters to sports and environment.

Generally, most of the examiners were well prepared. Examinations were conducted in an orderly and professional manner, with examiners clearly introducing candidates and examination centres at the beginning of the recordings indicating the end/beginning of each individual section. For the most part, pre-established time allocations were adhered to.

Overall, examiners set a friendly tone during the examinations, which led to candidates being at ease and consequently performing better in their examinations. Examiners were engaged with the candidates' responses, posing relevant questions and offering pertinent observations throughout the length of the recording. Most candidates were able to answer questions fully and appropriately, with a wealth of different vocabulary and structures.

In some instances, sections were not always clearly introduced or were conducted as a long uninterrupted conversation, or as an interview style conversation – where the teacher would ask questions and the candidate would answer, or vice-versa. Some candidates were, for example, asked to introduce themselves on the recording, with no further introductions from the examiner, and no information other than the candidate's name and number. Where examiners were not engaged with the candidate or used closed-ended questions, candidates mostly gave brief, limited responses, costing them valuable marks.

Teachers/examiners are reminded that candidates are assessed in different aspects – and for quality of language –, separately, in each part of the test. It is vital that each section of the exam is clearly introduced, as well as the centre and candidate name and number, and date of the examination.

In addition, examiners should endeavour to give candidates plenty of opportunity to expand fully on their answers, encouraging more engaging and meaningful interactions, and asking open-ended questions that candidates can relate to their daily life, past experiences or future plans. If a candidate appears uncomfortable or is unable to respond, examiners should sensitively shift the topic and offer alternative questions to provide the candidate with further opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do. Another beneficial practice would be to show genuine interest in the candidate's responses and respond appropriately, rather than moving on too quickly to the next question. This approach helps maintain a natural flow of conversation and allows candidates to perform with greater confidence.

In terms of administration, centres must ensure that the Working Mark Sheets are accurately completed using the electronic file provided by Cambridge. This is to avoid problems with handwriting and possible arithmetic errors in total mark calculations.

Comments on specific sections

Section 1

It was noted from candidate's voice projection and confidence shown, that most of them were fully prepared in advance to make a good, well organised and structured presentation on a chosen topic. They included not only factual information but also well-developed ideas and personal opinions, successfully linking their chosen topic to a country where Portuguese is spoken. Furthermore, they spoke in a lively and engaging manner, sounded motivated and invested in displaying secure knowledge of facts, while ensuring, to the best of their abilities, that they used the correct pronunciation, appropriate intonation and accurate use of language throughout.

Candidates are reminded that they need to make reference to the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a Portuguese-speaking country. There were still a few candidates who – regardless of how knowledgeable they were or how well they conducted their presentation – had their marks for presentation halved because they did not respect this requisite.

Candidates should refrain from memorising their presentations or taking too many cues to the exams room, as doing so may constrain their delivery and result in a performance that lacks spontaneity.

In this part of the examination, the examiner should clearly state the candidate's number, full name, syllabus code, and the date of the examination. This section should last no more than three and a half minutes, and the examiner should not interrupt the candidate during this time.

Section 2

Overall, candidates sounded motivated and invested in providing information and opinions while paying attention to the accuracy of their speech. In most cases, these candidates had prepared their presentation well, so had no trouble answering the questions asked by the examiners. They showed good understanding and were able to respond clearly, adding personal details and opinions to develop their answers.

Candidates who achieved higher marks were able to respond confidently and fluently to spontaneous, natural questions, using accurate and appropriate language. Those who asked at least two relevant questions, arising from the conversation, were eligible for full marks in the Seeking Information and Opinions criteria. The few candidates who only asked one question (or no questions at all) from the examiner missed on those full marks, having low or no marks awarded here.

Candidates must ask the examiner at least one simple question, in order to be awarded minimum marks. Examiners are reminded that if a candidate does not ask questions spontaneously, they should provide encouragement by prompting with phrases such as 'is there anything you would like to ask me?', ensuring that candidates are given plenty of opportunities to fulfil the requirements for maximum possible marks. Examiners who actively engaged with the candidate's chosen topic and responses, helped to create a supportive environment in which candidates could perform at their best.

In some examinations, the required time limits were not respected, which is something examiners should take into consideration in future series.

Section 3

In this section, candidates should be able to discuss at least two or three different/new topics in greater depth. Examiners who asked a variety of open-ended questions, relevant to candidates' experiences as students, created opportunities for them to demonstrate their linguistic ability. Most candidates responded with confidence and natural fluency to a range of topics, expanding beyond the original question, expressing personal opinions, while also asking questions of the examiner – and were awarded higher marks. They showed no difficulties with comprehension and were able to respond to and develop even to unexpected topics, while sounding motivated and invested in providing information and opinions, and paying attention to the accuracy of their speech.

Topics such as family life, leisure activities, food and healthy eating, travelling, future aspirations, suggested improvements to their school, experiences prior to joining the current school or country, use of technology, sports, and music enabled candidates to engage fully and perform at their best.

In some cases, however, the correct structure of the examination was not respected, with some candidates bringing topics to be presented and/or discussed during this last section of the test, as well as some candidates making detailed references to the content of a specific book, with the examiner occasionally asking questions. Some candidates referred back to the subject of the Topic Conversation – either by own initiative or prompted by the examiner and lost valuable marks for repeating material.

There were instances where timings were not respected, and candidates were not prompted to ask questions from the examiner. Candidates can achieve more marks by asking relevant questions during this section. Examiners should avoid making long comments or asking lengthy questions so that candidates have as much time as possible to show what they know and can do.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

To do well in this paper, candidates need to:

- use their own words and avoid copying sentences from the passages
- pay attention to gender agreement, verb tenses and the use of the subjunctive mood
- use a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures
- read each question carefully and be mindful of word limits where specified
- proofread their answers to ensure accuracy in spelling and punctuation.

General comments

Overall, candidates performed well demonstrating their ability to understand and respond to both texts. They were also able to give their own opinions demonstrating their language skills.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates performed well in this question. Weaker responses omitted words or copied phrases from the passages.

Question 2

(a) Most candidates performed well in this question. Weaker answers did not use the passive form properly.

(b) There were a variety of good responses to this question.

(c) Weaker responses contained omissions which changed the meaning of the sentence.

(d) Weaker answers omitted the words 'optar' or 'adquirir'.

(e) This question required candidates to use the subjunctive mood. Weaker answers included 'É provável que refeições preparadas em casa usam...', which is grammatically incorrect.

Question 3

(a) Successful responses used their own words and a variety of grammatical structures. Weaker responses changed the order of the sentences leading to errors.

(b) Successful responses used their own words. Weaker answers wrote about the benefits of making changes to our cooking habits instead of explaining why it would be easy to change them. They also copied sentences from the passage.

(c) The main issue when answering this question was rewriting the sentence 'o enfraquecimento da transmissão de habilidades culinárias entre gerações'. Successful responses wrote 'habilidades

culinárias foram deixadas de ser transmitidas de geração em geração', which conveys the same idea.

(d) Lifting was the main issue with this question especially with the sentence '*uma sensação de união*'. Successful answers substituted '*sensação*' with '*sentimento*'. Other successful answers replaced nouns with verbs. For example, they included '*as famílias ficam mais unidas*'.

(e) Successfull answers combined two ideas: '*desenvolve a autonomia e aumenta a confiança*'. Some candidates changed the word '*confiança*' to '*autoconfiança*', which was acceptable. Merging the ideas as in '*desenvolve a autonomia e confiança*' was also an acceptable way of answering this question. Weaker responses included '*valorizar a cultura local*', which was not the focus of the question.

(f) Successful answers changed the word '*local*' to '*da região*', '*do lugar onde você mora*', and similar alternatives. They also changed the verb form '*prestigiando*' to '*prestigia*'.

Question 4

(a) Successful responses provided all the required details. Weaker answers focused only on one detail.

(b) Weaker responses included '*O tempo investido é como pôr dinheiro no banco*'.

(c) Weaker responses could not find the link between investment and health. They focused on the notion of time invested overlooking the health benefits.

(d) Weaker responses copied whole sentences such as '*funcionários saudáveis são mais produtivos*' and '*poupam muitas despesas às empresas*'.

(e) Successful responses included four details. Weaker answers omitted one or two of them. They also substituted '*depender de*' with '*depender no*', which is grammatically incorrect.

Question 5

(a) Most candidates performed well in this question. Weaker responses exceeded the word limit and did not use their own words to answer this question.

(b) Most candidates performed well in this question. Weaker responses did not follow the instructions and included cooking and keeping fit.

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/03

Essay

Key messages

To do well in this examination, candidates need to:

- use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- use a wide variety of verb tenses, complex sentences, linking words and synonyms to avoid repetition.
- revise grammar rules before taking this exam.
- pay attention to the keywords to answer the question that is being asked.
- write a detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated essay.
- organise their ideas in clear paragraphs. An essay consists of an introduction, development of ideas and a conclusion. It is very important to brainstorm main ideas before writing so that these are coherently organised, argued and structured.

General comments

Good responses were detailed, well-illustrated, relevant to the question and structured in clear paragraphs. They used signpost words such as firstly, in addition, in conclusion, etc to organise the writing.

It is important that candidates study or revise grammatical rules, punctuation and the use of the different pronouns in Portuguese language.

Weaker responses deviated from the question and lost marks for Content. Candidates should highlight the key words in each question and answer it fully with detailed, relevant and well-structured examples and opinions.

Candidates are reminded that they should only answer to one question. Legibility is important to convey the message clearly.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates were asked to write about how school-sponsored events could influence our interactions with the community.

Most candidates were able to present good ideas with relevant examples. Weaker responses deviated from the question and focused on social events in general rather than the school-based ones.

Question 2

Candidates had to write about their thoughts on the energies and healing powers of natural stones and crystals.

There were very few responses to this question.

Question 3

Candidates had to write about whether a four-day work week could be more profitable for everyone and support their ideas on this topic. This was the most popular question. Successful responses showed deep

knowledge about the topic and used complex grammar structures and wide range of vocabulary. There were extensive essays with a variety of examples from different cultural contexts.

Weaker essays deviated from the topic by writing about salary structures and lost marks for Content.

Question 4

Candidates had to give their opinions on whether single-sex schools were more advantageous for learning than mixed schools.

This was also a popular question. Weaker responses did not support their ideas and deviated from the topic by focusing on issues such as bullying and harassment.

Question 5

Candidates had to give examples on how sustainable agriculture could help preserve the environment.

Successful responses were well-structured with clear paragraphs and original ideas. They used a wide range of vocabulary and grammar structures. These were coherently argued and generally accurate responses.