

PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8684/01 Speaking

Key messages

To do well in this examination, candidates need to be given ample opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do. Teacher/examiners should also establish a positive atmosphere for the exam.

Centres are advised that candidates should conduct their presentation by covering a topic from a prepared personal research or own knowledge in **Section 1**, but candidates are not allowed to read from a script. In addition, candidates must never use pre-published texts as their own even though research about their topic of choice is highly encouraged.

In order for candidates to do their best and to avoid being penalised through no fault of their own, teacher/examiners would benefit from reading this report along with all the other supporting documents such as the Syllabus and Mark Scheme before preparing candidates for the examination and before conducting it. Some candidates lost marks because in **Section 1** they did not make reference to the culture of a Portuguese-speaking country. Candidates could also improve by asking Examiners at least one or two questions in **Sections 2** and **3**.

General comments

Competent and skilful examining is particularly important for the candidates to do well. Some centres could better support the candidates by encouraging them to fully research, prepare and practise their presentation, and to make sure they comment on the context of a Portuguese speaking country. This is important to set the tone of the examination and give the candidate a range of points to discuss during **Section 2**. Candidates should also be encouraged to ask questions to the examiner. Prior to the exam, Examiners should familiarise themselves with the examination instructions and mark scheme in order to better support the candidates.

In addition, centres are reminded that sound quality is an important part of the moderation. Some centres sent samples where the sound was too low to hear either the candidate or the Examiner. Examiners should ensure that the sound is loud and clear enough before conducting the examination, and they should check the recording afterwards.

Examiners should ensure open questions are used so that the candidates have opportunity to expand fully on their answer.

Examiners are reminded that they should signal each section of the examination and should follow the timing specified in the syllabus. The pause button should not be used during the recording of the speaking tests.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

In this Section, candidates must give a presentation on a specific topic from one of the topic areas in Section 3 of the Syllabus. They must prepare this in advance, and they must demonstrate their knowledge of this topic in the context of a country where Portuguese is spoken. A cue card can be brought into the examination room in order to remind candidates of the main points they wish to make during their presentation. Candidates may also bring a limited quantity of illustrative material such as maps, diagrams, statistics, pictures or short articles. However, centres are reminded that a script of the presentation is not allowed.

The best candidates researched their topic at length and in the context of a Portuguese speaking country. Their presentations seemed spontaneous, and they were clearly familiar with the topic. These presentations consisted of an introduction, development and conclusion. Some examples of interesting topics were 'Preservation initiatives in Mozambique', 'Tourism in Portugal' 'Education in Macau', 'Education and equality'.

Other candidates could improve by including reference to the Portuguese-speaking world. Centres are reminded that marks for Content and Presentation are halved if no such reference is made. Furthermore, candidates are encouraged to explore topics other than family life, their own ambitions and routines if they wish to make the presentation lively and interesting.

In this Section, candidates should spend no more than 3½ minutes presenting their topic, and they should not be interrupted by the Examiner.

Section 2

Some Examiners conducted this part very well by giving the candidates opportunities to engage in interesting discussion. They put the candidates at ease and asked pertinent and open-ended questions about the candidates' topic presentations. They also invited them to ask valuable questions.

Other Examiners, however, should be reminded that candidates should be asked questions which are relevant to the topic under discussion and should use a wide range of question forms. Some Examiners spent valuable candidates' time during this section to give their own opinion about the topic in discussion. This practice should be avoided. The Examiner should also avoid asking long questions. This is so candidates will have the time to consider the questions and have the time to express themselves. In addition, although Examiners are allowed to prompt the candidates to ask questions, they should not award marks for *Seeking Information* when the candidate does not ask any questions.

This section should last between 7 and 8 minutes during which time candidates should not continue presenting their topic. Examiners should also avoid asking personal questions, especially when this is not relevant to the topic in discussion.

Section 3

In this section, Examiners should give the candidates the opportunity to discuss at least two or three different topics, and not be asked questions which force them to repeat material. Stronger candidates were well prepared and able to discuss matters of current interest. Examiners asked them about a variety of topics using pertinent and open-ended questions.

Some of the topics selected were travelling, family life and education and plans for the future.

Examiners are reminded that candidates can achieve more marks by asking relevant questions during this section and that centres should ensure that candidates are made fully aware of this. Examiners should avoid making long comments or asking lengthy questions so that candidates have as much time as possible to speak and give their opinions. The best questions should deal with only one topic at a time so that candidates can organise their ideas and answer appropriately.

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Paper 8684/02 Reading and Writing
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Key messages

Candidates are strongly advised to practise for this paper by carefully studying past papers and accompanying mark schemes. In this way they can familiarise themselves with the different types of questions on the paper and gain a better understanding of what is expected in their answers to gain maximum marks.

General comments

The two texts dealt with gender stereotyping in employment and the issues encountered by those who choose a profession typically considered to be of a different gender.

The questions on the paper gave candidates the opportunity to display a range of vocabulary and expression in their answers while requiring them to paraphrase and summarise ideas.

Most candidates seemed to be familiar with the format of the paper and were able to write answers to all the questions.

Almost all candidates had a fair to very good level of expression in the language. Candidates who read the texts carefully and who used a range of expression and vocabulary rather than 'lifting' directly from the texts themselves, tended to do very well.

Attention to accuracy of grammar and use of accents and correct word endings also attracted higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

This question required candidates to find a word or a phrase in Text 1 which had the same meaning as the synonyms or definitions given in (a) to (e). Candidates should write only the word or words from the text that the given word or phrase in the question could replace.

Most candidates performed well in this question, especially in (b), (d) and (e).

Some candidates incorrectly wrote '*perspectiva*' for (a). A few included too much text, writing '*a ideia*', rather than simply '*ideia*'.

Conversely, in (c), a significant number of candidates wrote just '*igualdade*', '*pé de igualdade*' or '*em pé de*', none of which was sufficient to correspond exactly to the phrase '*na mesma posição*'.

Question 2

This question required candidates to re-express sentences from the text, beginning with phrases provided in the question.

In this question, candidates were expected to show manipulation of the language by fronting (moving a clause from one position in the sentence to another), changing the verb from the active to passive voice or changing a verb from the indicative to subjunctive mood and vice versa.

Candidates who had practised exercises of this type of task tended to do well, with **(d)** and **(e)** proving to be the most demanding. In **(d)**, many candidates did not realise that '*É pena...*' needed to be followed either by '*que*' plus a subjunctive or by the inflected infinitive, while in **(e)** a range of incorrect linking words or prepositions were offered after '*motivo*'.

Question 3

This question assessed candidates' ability to paraphrase in Portuguese to answer the comprehension questions.

Candidates who attempted to use their own vocabulary and expression were rewarded in the 'quality of expression' mark, as were candidates who were able to answer clearly and concisely. Candidates did well if they were selective in their wording, avoiding writing overlong answers or relying too heavily on 'lifting' complete phrases from the text.

Other candidates who had correctly identified the points from the text required for the correct answers lost marks by copying long phrases or clauses from the text rather than paraphrasing using their own words.

There was also a marked tendency amongst some candidates to repeat most of the words in the question before supplying their answer. Candidates are invited to study the model answers in the mark scheme to see how questions can be answered concisely and effectively.

Section 2

Question 4

This question assessed candidates' ability to paraphrase in Portuguese in order to describe and explain their answers to the comprehension questions.

The question was answered well by candidates who were well prepared and who recognised that, as for **Question 3**, they should avoid 'lifting' entire phrases and that they should attempt to answer concisely in their own words.

Question 5

Candidates were required to write a maximum of 140 words for the summary and the personal response. Almost all candidates kept to the 140-word maximum, with only a small number exceeding this. Similarly, almost all candidates recognised that their response to **part (a)** carried more marks than **part (b)** and divided their words accordingly.

A few candidates seemed to think that the 140 words applied to **part (a)** alone, and this sometimes meant that some, or even all, of their response to **part (b)** could not be considered.

- (a)** Candidates who were particularly successful in this part of the paper showed their ability to select information that was entirely relevant to the task and use their own words skilfully. It was also important not to labour any one particular point in order to keep within the word limit.

Basing their answers on the two texts, candidates were asked to explain how choosing a job considered typical of another gender might affect those choosing that profession. Some candidates tended to drift away from the points and evidence mentioned in the texts or misinterpreted some of the points made.

- (b) Most candidates mentioned very interesting and appropriate professions. However, a significant number did not engage with the theme of the two texts – the issues involved in choosing a profession regarded as ‘of the wrong gender’, so to speak – and so could not score very highly for this part of the question. For example, some candidates simply mentioned a particular job and said what they liked about it, with little or no reference to the gender theme. Such responses could not usually earn the highest marks. Candidates are advised to study the grid in the mark scheme to see how marks are awarded here.

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Paper 8684/03 Essay
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Key messages

In order to receive a high mark in language in this examination, the following points are important:

- Being accurate, which means using correct grammar, accents and punctuation. Native speakers should revise grammatical rules before taking the examination.
- Avoiding repetition of words. A good essay should show extensive vocabulary and a good sense of idiom. In order to avoid repetition of words, candidates should use a variety of synonyms.
- Using complex sentence patterns with different conjunctions and adverbs as well as a wide range of verb tenses.

In order to receive a high mark for content in this examination, the following points are important:

- Answering the question that is being asked and paying attention to the key words in the question.
- Organising ideas in clear paragraphs. An essay consists of an introduction, development of ideas and a conclusion. It is very important to brainstorm ideas before writing so that these are coherently organised, argued and structured.
- Writing a detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated essay.

General comments

When preparing for this examination, it is important that candidates study grammatical rules, use of accents and punctuation in order to achieve a high mark.

As regards content, it is important to highlight the key words in each question and answer it fully with detailed, relevant and well-illustrated examples. It is also necessary to brainstorm the topic before writing it and organise it in clear paragraphs. Signpost words are also important to organise the writing, such as, 'firstly', 'in addition', 'in conclusion', etc.

Candidates are reminded that legibility is important to convey the message clearly.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates had to explain how to reconcile study time with family life and free time. Many good pieces of work contained detailed examples of what it entailed. These were organised in clear paragraphs with a wide variety of vocabulary. Others needed to contain a detailed development of the topic and avoid repetitive ideas.

Question 2

This was the most popular question. Candidates were required to address both parts of the question pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of following a vegetarian diet.

Many good essays covered the topic fully with clear points of view and examples, and there was a variety of complex structures and vocabulary. Others could improve by varying their vocabulary and making their

handwriting clearer so that the context was easier to understand. Weaker responses only described what a vegetarian diet was.

Question 3

Most essays covered the topic fully with clear examples and a variety of complex structures and vocabulary. Stronger responses addressed both parts of the question: a good salary and job satisfaction. Weaker responses focused on the economy of the candidate's country of origin instead.

Question 4

This question was about how the government could help poor people to improve their socioeconomic conditions.

This was the least popular question. Stronger responses were organised in clear paragraphs and they were coherently argued. They used a wide range of vocabulary and more complex sentences.

Weaker responses only included current socioeconomic issues and did not provide further ideas on how to solve them.

Question 5

This question was about the measures that should be taken to improve the environment in big cities.

Most candidates addressed the question very well pointing out several ideas to reduce pollution and make the cities greener.

Stronger responses included the causes and consequences of pollution in the candidate's country. There were clear paragraphs with an introduction, a paragraph about causes and consequences, another paragraph containing the same with different opinions and a conclusion. These were coherently argued and generally accurate as regards language. Others could be improved by being written in a less clumsy or laboured way, although many responses of this type did have some degree of accuracy. Some other responses had consistently simple or pedestrian sentence patterns, and these received a low mark.