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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCSE In Portuguese (1PG0)

Paper 4 Foundation Tier: Writing in Portuguese

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Overview of the Examination

The writing paper constitutes 25% of the overall GCSE grade and is divided into four parts:

1. Picture-based task: Candidates need to cover two points based on a given picture. This section is worth a maximum of 12 marks, and the suggested word count is 20-30 words.
2. Writing tasks (Choice of two): Candidates have to cover four points, including referencing the future. This section carries a maximum of 16 marks, and the suggested word count is 40-50 words.
3. Writing tasks (Choice of two): Candidates need to cover four points, including referencing both the past and future. This section is worth a maximum of 20 marks, and the suggested word count is 80-90 words.
4. Translation task: Candidates have to translate 5 sentences into Portuguese, which is worth a maximum of 12 marks.

The suggested word counts are not strict limits; longer responses are considered for marking, but writing more doesn't guarantee more marks. Candidates were assessed on two aspects for the first three tasks: 'Communication & Content' and 'Linguistic Knowledge & Accuracy.' If candidates omitted key details in 'Communication & Content,' they couldn't score full marks in that category, but they still had a chance to earn full marks in 'Linguistic Knowledge & Accuracy' if their response was relevant.

To score well in 'Communication & Content,' candidates needed to address all the required details. Some candidates missed specific instructions or didn't notice the need to use particular tenses. Occasionally, some candidates wrote freely based on the task's introduction or provided unrelated information instead of addressing the bullet points.

The level of linguistic knowledge and accuracy required increased with each question. Question 1 only needed present tense and basic connected ideas (using words like 'and') for full marks. On the other hand, Question 3 demanded proficiency in past, present, and future tenses, extended sentences, and varied grammatical structures for full marks.

Notes on the 2023 Portuguese Foundation Writing Paper

It is evident that the examination centres had put considerable effort into determining the appropriate entry level for their students. Most of the students who opted for the Foundation tier were capable of attempting all the questions. However, some faced difficulties with the longer essay question (Q3), which is also included in the Higher tier.

The candidates who performed exceptionally well produced engaging and precise responses, showcasing a diverse range of grammatical structures. This proficiency allowed them to achieve top scores in both categories of the mark scheme, namely 'Communication & Content' and 'Linguistic Knowledge & Accuracy.'

Question 1

In Question 1, students were asked to describe a picture and express their thoughts on learning foreign languages to make friends. The majority of candidates performed well on this task, often concentrating on describing the picture and connecting it to the concept of learning foreign languages.

However, some more ambitious candidates went beyond the given scenario and used their creativity to associate the picture with another recent event. Unfortunately, a significant number of candidates struggled to understand that they were required to address both aspects of the question to receive full marks. Consequently, some students focused solely on either describing the picture or expressing their opinions about learning foreign languages, disregarding the other part of the question. This misunderstanding affected their overall performance on the task.

Question 2

In Question 2, candidates were instructed to write a response to a set of four bullet points that referred to both the present and the future. For part (a) of Question 2, candidates had to write a letter to the school's Principal advocating for a campaign to save abandoned animals. For part (b), they were asked to write an article expressing their perspective on their favourite subjects.

Overall, candidates responded to both options with relative success, and they enjoyed developing their answers. The strongest performers clearly addressed all four points specified in the task and even provided additional details for each of them. Most candidates effectively utilised the future tense or made references to the future, which was adequate for achieving high marks in this task. The ability to incorporate future-related elements played a significant role in their performance.

Question 3

In Question 3, candidates were required to respond to a set of four bullet points that encompassed the past, present, and future. Part (a) of Question 3 asked candidates to write an email to a friend about breakfast and healthy eating, while part (b) instructed them to write an article for the school's newsletter/newspaper about the end of the school year party.

Part (a) was the most popular choice among candidates, and the majority made a good effort in addressing all or most of the bullet points. Examiners enjoyed reading about candidates' descriptions of their breakfast. However, some candidates misunderstood the term "pequeno-almoço" (breakfast) and wrote about "almoço" (lunch) instead, resulting in losing marks for communication and content. This misunderstanding likely occurred because they did not read the English title "Breakfast" at the top of the page.

Part (b) was less favoured by candidates, but a substantial number of students still wrote about their past experiences and addressed all the bullet points. Some candidates failed to read the instructions properly and wrote about the "New Year's celebration," which was not relevant to the given topic.

The top marks for Communication & Content were awarded to candidates who elaborated on all four points and provided personal responses with justifications. For Linguistic Knowledge & Accuracy, candidates showed variable success in transitioning between different tenses. The highest category of the mark scheme called for the occasional use of complex language, and some candidates demonstrated this by employing the subjunctive and the personal infinitive in rare cases. However, general inaccuracies posed significant issues. Many candidates exhibited interference from English, such as using "asho" instead of "acho," and missing accents were commonly observed (e.g., translating "is" and "and" in the same way). Additionally, Spanish words were frequently used, which was not appropriate for the Portuguese examination.

Question 4

Q4 required candidates to translate 5 sentences into Portuguese. The difficulty level increased with each task and specific vocabulary was required, so only the best candidates could achieve high marks. Most candidates were able to score a mark on each task for a partial translation. In future, candidates should familiarise themselves with the vocabulary list on the specification, since all of the words used for this question are taken from there.

Advice for Candidates Preparing for Portuguese GCSE Foundation Writing

Carefully read and understand the questions: Before starting your response, take the time to fully comprehend what the question is asking for. Pay attention to the specific tenses required for each question. For example, Question 2 will always ask for the use of the future tense, while Question 3 will require both past and future tenses.

Avoid using words from other languages: It's essential to stick to Portuguese and refrain from using words from other languages like English or Spanish. If you come across a term you don't know, try to explain it in Portuguese or use synonyms. Be creative and find alternative ways to express yourself.

Familiarise yourself with past papers: Look at questions from previous exam papers to get a sense of what to expect in the actual exam. This will help you become more comfortable with the format and requirements of the writing tasks.

Practice developing ideas in different tenses: To excel in the exam, practice writing in the past, present, and future tenses. Work on constructing sentences that flow naturally and correctly use the appropriate verb forms.

Seek feedback and review: Have a teacher or native speaker review your writing and provide feedback. This will help you identify areas for improvement and enhance your writing skills.

Expand your vocabulary: Work on building your vocabulary by learning new words and expressions related to various topics. This will help you convey your ideas more effectively and demonstrate a higher level of language proficiency.

Organise your responses: Structure your writing clearly and coherently. Use paragraphs to separate different ideas and make sure your thoughts flow logically.

Practice time management: During your preparation, practice writing within the allocated time for the exam. This will help you get used to managing your time effectively during the actual test.

