

Frequently Asked Questions

IGCSE Portuguese - Foreign Language (0540)

Are there any changes to the syllabus?

In June 2007 and thereafter all candidates must attempt all three sections of Paper 2, Reading and Directed Writing. Please see syllabus for details.

In June 2008 and thereafter the word-limit for each of the compositions on Paper 4, Continuous Writing, will be 130-140 words. Candidates should be encouraged to keep within these limits.

What resources are available to support this syllabus?

The following resources are available:

- Defined Content Booklet (provides guidance on the topic areas, vocabulary and grammar/structures which are tested on the question papers).
- Past Papers (June 2002 onwards).
- Principal Examiner Reports.

Are students allowed to take dictionaries into the examination room?

No. This is an IGCSE Language examination and dictionaries are not permitted.

Is IGCSE Foreign Language Portuguese available in the November session?

No. It is available in the June session only.

I have a candidate who has been preparing for the Extended level papers, but I'm not sure how s/he will perform on the day. What should I do?

You can enter your candidate for Extended level as all Extended candidates are graded twice, once on their performance as Extended candidates (with Paper 4) and once on their performance as Core candidates (without Paper 4), and are awarded the higher of the two grades they achieve.

I have a candidate who is really struggling to make progress in Continuous Writing, but is doing well at Speaking and Reading? What should I do?

Why not enter your candidate as a Core candidate. They will attempt and be able to gain credit for marks gained on all three sections of Paper 2. This will allow the candidate to concentrate on the skills with which s/he is making progress and still allow him/her to achieve a grade C.

May Core candidates choose not to attempt Section 3 of the Reading and Directed Writing Paper?

In June 2007 and thereafter all candidates must attempt all 3 sections of the Reading and Directed Writing paper. Candidates who choose not to attempt Section 3 may be forfeiting marks that could help them achieve a better grade.

I have heard that some of the candidates that sit this paper are native speakers of Portuguese and I am worried that my foreign language speakers are being judged against what a first language speaker might achieve.

You don't need to worry. The level of performance achieved by a native speaker candidate will be off the top of the scale of what is expected from candidates taking this examination.

Must I be accredited by CIE before conducting and assessing the 0540 Speaking test?

Accreditation from CIE is not required in order to conduct the IGCSE Foreign Language Speaking test. However, if you are new to the syllabus, you will benefit from undergoing Distance Training, and in the interests of your candidates we recommend that you do so.

What is the period for conducting the Speaking tests?

The Speaking test period for the May/June session is 1 March-30 April.

When will I receive the materials for the Speaking test?

The materials for the conduct and assessment of the Speaking test are sent out in February for the May/June examination. They are sent out on the basis of Centres' Provisional Entries. If your Centre has not made Provisional Entries, this may result in you not having the necessary material to carry out the Speaking tests at the specified time.

What is the deadline for submitting cassettes, Working Mark sheets and MS1 mark sheets to CIE for moderation?

Marks and cassettes for moderation must arrive at CIE no later than 15 May for the May/June session. However, once you have completed your tests, you should despatch marks and cassettes for moderation as soon as possible. Don't wait until the end of the examination period before sending us these items.

May I record my Centre's speaking tests onto CD rather than onto cassette?

You may. But this must be a standard size CD and recordings must be at 'normal' speed.

Who marks the Speaking tests?

It is the responsibility of the person conducting the Speaking tests to mark them. The tests should be marked as they are being conducted. Examiners should mark the 'live' candidate and not a recording.

How should I go about choosing someone to conduct the Speaking tests at my centre?

Ideally, a teacher at the school should conduct the Speaking tests. Where this is not possible and it is necessary to look for someone outside the school, you should look for someone who is fluent in the language, preferably with teaching experience and with experience of conducting other oral examinations. It is important that the person appointed takes the time to familiarise him/herself with the requirements of the examination before conducting any 'live' Speaking tests. The examination syllabus can be sent to the examiner to read before the day of the examination and contains useful information on how to conduct and assess the Speaking test. On the day of the examination, you should arrange for the examiner to arrive at the Centre 1-2 hours before conducting and assessing the first Speaking test, in order that s/he can prepare the role-play situations and read through the other instructions contained in the Teachers' Notes Booklet.

What happens to my (Centre's) Speaking marks when they arrive at CIE?

When your recorded sample, working mark sheet(s) and moderator copy of the MS1 mark sheet(s) arrive at CIE, they are forwarded to one of our Moderators. The Moderator listens to your sample and looks at the marks that you have awarded to ensure that they are in line with the IGCSE standard. If your marks are in line, then they will not be changed. If they are not, then an adjustment will be made to bring them into line, e.g. the marks will be raised if you have marked your candidates severely, or lowered if you have been too generous. A report on your conduct and assessment of the Speaking tests will be sent to your Centre with the results.