

## **PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE TEST - CIPLE A2**

The Portuguese language test level that is sufficient for nationality applications is known as A2 CIPLE. The level is around that of 'O' level/GCSE in the UK. It is run by the University of Lisbon and the local centre for the Algarve is the University of Faro where exams are held twice a year in May and November. If you prefer to do the exam in Lisbon, tests are offered more frequently. All test applications are made online a minimum of one month before the exam. The cost is 70 euros.

Non-EU citizens need the language test for permanent residency so if you are British and thinking about taking up permanent residency then my advice would be to do so before the UK leaves the EU.

To apply for a test:

<http://caple.lettras.ulisboa.pt/seasons/exams>

### **Preparing for the test**

It goes without saying that the amount of preparation you need to do is directly related to how much Portuguese you know already. However, I would advise anyone to take some formal lessons in order to prepare you for the questions you will meet in the exam. I could get by in Portuguese but signed up with an online tutor who teaches by the hour via Skype. Without that input I would definitely have failed as it's not enough to know the Portuguese but you need to be able to use it under extreme time pressure. I would also advise buying the book of model exam papers from this link below:

<http://www.lidel.pt/pt/catalogo/portugues-europeu-lingua-estrangeira/avaliacao-certificacao/exames-de-portugues-caple-ul/>

You will be expected to work in the present, simple past, historic past (imperfecto) and future verb tenses.

### **Resources for learning Portuguese**

Julie Dawn Fox has put together ideas and access to various ways to learn Portuguese, much of which is free.

<https://juliedawnfox.com/2014/04/07/learn-european-portuguese-free/>

One of the very best resources is [www.practiceportuguese.com](http://www.practiceportuguese.com). There's a small monthly fee for access to their many podcasts and another fee for access to their 'Learning Studio'. Both are more than worth the money and they are adding to the content of each site every month. The podcasts vary from interesting articles through to hour long lessons with tons of useful vocabulary, quizzes, expressions and so much more. The 'Learning Studio': [www.practiceportuguese.com/learning-studio/](http://www.practiceportuguese.com/learning-studio/)

concentrates on European Portuguese grammar, but in a fun way with questions and correct pronunciation.

Another useful site is [www.conversationexchange.com](http://www.conversationexchange.com). This is a website where you can 'meet' other language learners and swap help with English for help with Portuguese. It's free and interesting as you never know who you might contact. Most use Skype or some other face-to-face computer programme. It's a way of getting much needed conversation as most of us find it difficult to find Portuguese to converse with sufficiently in an everyday setting. It also sharpens up the written word if you chose to email or use instant messaging.

## **The Test**

Tests take place on Saturdays, so be prepared to either walk to a café for lunch or take a sandwich with you, as the Faro University canteen closes before the candidates break for lunch. How long you have for lunch depends entirely when you are timetabled to do your oral test. I was lucky and fairly close to the start of the afternoon session, but if you are unlucky you may have to wait until much later in the day. You are expected to be back for the test 15 minutes before your scheduled time. The schedule is available on arrival at 9am, so you can plan your lunch and travel but it's worth turning up a bit earlier because on my test day some of the candidates didn't come back for the afternoon session so gaps were filled with waiting students. I can only assume those that didn't return knew they hadn't done sufficiently well in the morning sessions.

The test is in three parts: reading and writing (1 ¼ hours); listening to conversations and answering questions (30 mins); oral face-to-face with an examiner (15 minutes).

I was asked to arrive at 9am and be prepared to stay until 6pm. This is because there might be high numbers of candidates. There were around 40 on my test day. Be prepared to only speak in Portuguese to the staff.

The first element of the test is reading comprehension and creative writing. The only things you are permitted to have is a pencil, eraser and a blue or black ballpoint pen. All bags, phones etc are held at the back of the classroom. You are permitted 1 ¼ hours and a clock ticks down for all to see.

Part two is the oral comprehension where there are a total of 25 questions in 30 minutes. Some recordings have five questions and each question has three possible answers, so in effect you have 20 sentences to read in one minute before the recording begins. The recordings can be one of a variety of situations and each is played twice but be aware that each comes complete with background noise so if a conversation takes place in a street then there are blaring horns, cars, trucks etc and speech is at the normal Portuguese rate. I found this test to be the hardest due to the pressure of the limited time between one text and the next. What I imagined to be time to consider my answers was in fact the time to read through the next question.

Part three is held in the afternoon and two candidates are teamed together. The first element is around 5 minutes, telling the examiner about you. It is not a question and answer session but a monologue, so this is something you can practice well beforehand. For the second element the two candidates are given a topic to discuss – we had to arrange a picnic. If you are unlucky enough to have a partner that dries up, the advice from my tutor was to keep talking and fill in those gaps yourself. In the final 5 minutes each candidate is given a topic to talk about by the examiner. I was given the choice of telling the examiner about the worst journey I had ever made or the difference between living in the UK and Portugal. I chose the latter. Everything is recorded for marking later.

After this each student is given a candidate number and a URL and asked to check the URL for the results in approximately 7 weeks. The certificate is available 3 weeks or so after that. 55% is the passmark.

Good luck!