

GCSE

Portuguese

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J736**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J036**
J136

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A831 Listening

General Comments:

On the whole, the exam paper was completed without many difficulties by candidates. Where there were issues, the main cause was that candidates wrote what they heard without reading the question carefully and answering each particular question. Some candidates also demonstrated that they understood the points in Portuguese but failed to transfer the information to give an acceptable response in English. These two issues could be addressed by preparing candidates more carefully and coaching them in following instructions in the exam and by teaching candidates the vocabulary lists so that they are able to provide good responses in English.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Exercise 1

Questions 1-5 were answered correctly on the whole. Images were clear and caused no obvious confusion.

Exercise 2

Questions 6-12 also caused no obvious problems as candidates responded well and accurately in the main.

Exercise 3

Here candidates began to falter and often their poor spelling/poor English let them down.

Q13 was generally OK, however incorrect responses included 'walking his bike', 'driving his bike' and variations of 'cycling' which were too far from the correct spelling.

Q14 – a large proportion of candidates gave the incorrect answer 'all around the city' because they heard this just before the correct answer.

Q15 – 'angle' was given as an incorrect response several times.

Q16 – Some candidates had trouble conveying the English meaning of *pão integral* and incorrect responses include 'seeded bread', 'whole bread' and 'integral bread'.

Q17 caused very few problems.

Q18 also caused few issues.

Exercise 4

Q19 – 'experiences' was given as a mistranslation of *experiencias*. A large number of candidates also gave the incomplete response by leaving 'lots of/ many' out of their answer.

Q20 caused no problem.

Q21 – *Recreio* has two meanings, so the fact that both 'break' and 'playground' were acceptable caused very few issues. Aside from this, incorrect responses included 'lunch time', 'playing area' and 'recreational area'.

Q22- *xadrez* caused some difficulties as it was mistranslated as 'draughts', 'checkers', and often misspelt as 'chest' and 'chez'.

Q23 – A few candidates answered 'different' instead of 'new'.

Q24 posed few problems for candidates.

Exercise 5

Q25 – no problem

Q26 a) and b) incorrect responses included 'jumping fireplaces'. Many candidates also missed this point altogether and answered something related to 'fireworks'. The second part of this question also saw some incorrect responses where candidates did not include 'run through the city' but answered 'holding hands' or similar.

Q27 – *Fogo artificial* was sometimes translated literally as 'artificial fire' or other incorrect answers. This has been the case in previous years' exams and should be addressed by centres.

Q28 – Incorrect answers included 'in lots of shops', but on the whole this was answered correctly.

Q29 a) and b) Some candidates translated *rio* as 'lake/ beach/ sea'. Others did not include the verbs which were required. The second part of the question was answered OK; incorrect responses include 'listen to musicals'.

Exercise 6

Q30-34 No major problems with this exercise. A large number of candidates incorrectly answered J instead of C in Q33. On the whole, candidates who had difficulty in exercise 5 performed better in exercise 6.

Exercise 7

Q36-39 On the whole this exercise was done well. Some confusion between Q36 and Q39 resulted in crossing out and arrows, but generally no problems ensued.

Exercise 8

Q40-45 tested candidates very well and differentiated between strong and even stronger candidates.

A832 Speaking

General Comments:

In general, there was evidence of carefully prepared examining with teacher/examiners conducting the Speaking tests well and guiding the candidates efficiently so they could achieve the best marks.

Most candidates were well prepared and were aware of what the test involved, producing information confidently and spontaneously without being prompted.

Preparation time was effectively used after teacher/examiners had taken time to explain to candidates what was expected of them. Well prepared Speaking Test Notes were a useful tool for the candidates while presenting their chosen topic. These forms are to be retained in the centre.

Candidates were gently guided through their tests by teacher/examiners who started by asking direct questions leading on to open-ended questions. With open-ended questions candidates were able to offer relevant information and to develop and justify their ideas and points of view using a variety of tenses and structures. A good balance of closed and open-ended questions is essential for candidates to produce the best quality content and communication. Weaker candidates were encouraged to do their best through sympathetic and supportive questioning.

To allow candidates the best use of their time, teacher/examiners kept their questions succinct. As candidates are assessed for quality of language separately in each part of the test, teacher/examiners encouraged candidates to use different tenses in both parts of the Speaking Test.

Speaking tests should be timed in Part 1 from when the candidate starts their presentation and in Part 2 from the start of the first answer.

Most tests were well recorded on a single track and both the candidate and the teacher/examiner were clearly audible.

Mark sheets, duly completed with the topic titles accompanied most of the recordings, to be externally marked.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Part 1 - Presentation and Discussion

Part 1 allows the candidate to choose any topic of their interest and, as a result, candidates showed great enthusiasm and knowledge in their Presentation.

Candidates presented their chosen and well prepared topics for 1 minute, without interruption. This was followed by the discussion where teacher/examiner offered the opportunity for candidates to express and develop their opinions using complex language features and a variety of structures, including consistent manipulation of verb tenses. Questions were re-phrased or changed as appropriate for each candidate.

Part 2 - General Conversation

Most teacher/examiners offered the candidates a choice of three topics from the list printed on the Random Order Sheet after completing Part 1 of the Speaking Test.

More fluent and confident candidates responded fully to all questions, expressing opinions and using relevant information when providing and developing justifications. Candidates were able to achieve higher marks when teacher/examiners asked questions that led candidates to use a greater variety of tenses and other verbal structures.

Weaker and less confident candidates were introduced to the General Conversation chosen topic with, initially, more specific questions as lead-in to more open-ended questions, where candidates were then able to show initiative and attempt to develop their answers.

Centres are reminded to:

- ensure that the examination room is quiet and free from disturbance
- complete and send the individual candidates' Speaking Mark Sheets with the CD and the attendance register, making sure the Topics for Part 1 and Part 2 are written on the sheets
- ensure that candidates' Speaking Test Notes are 5 bullet points, each with 8 words maximum and retain them in the centre.

Recordings should be:

- in mp3 format
- with a separate, labelled file for each candidate
- checked to ensure that they are audible
- carefully packaged.

Teacher/Examiners should:

- prepare carefully by carefully reading the Teacher Instructions booklet.
- encourage candidates to choose a Part 1 topic that really interests them and remind them that it can be about anything and does not have to be one of the OCR topics
- write the topic for Part 1 and for Part 2 on each candidate's Mark Sheet
- ensure that the timings are correct (5 minutes maximum for each part)
- be aware that timings do not include the information given at the beginning of each recording, nor the part where the examiner offers the candidates the choice of Part 2 topics
- allow one minute for the Presentation and not interrupt the candidate with questions unless the candidate stops talking
- offer candidates in Part 2 the choice of one of the three topics from the Random Order Sheet, in the correct order, as given on page 2 of the Teacher Instructions booklet
- ask questions on only one of the Part 2 topics.

A833 Reading

General Comments:

The majority of candidates showed good language skills when responding to the exam questions. There were however a small number that did not respond at all or responded inadequately in English.

Very few candidates achieved full marks but the great majority achieved 60% and above and very few went below the 50% mark.

The last exercises were designed to achieve differentiation. These were challenging to many candidates. Some translated literally from the Portuguese, which lost them some marks, and others just didn't attempt to write anything.

The teachers had done a very good job exposing candidates to a variety of texts to prepare them for this exam.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Exercise 1

Questions No. 1 – 5 Almost 100% of candidates gained full marks on this exercise. It didn't cause any problems.

Exercise 2

Questions No. 6 – 12 This exercise requires matching pictures to simple statements. A very few were confused with the words 'carros' in Q 6 and 'caros' in Q10 and a small number got Q11 wrong as they somehow chose G instead of B, where a male and a female character were holding hands.

Exercise 3

Questions No. 13—18 The multiple choice exercise was well received by the majority of candidates. They demonstrated good comprehension of the text. Q 16 caused a bit of confusion as they associated 'surf' with summer, not having read the text with care; in Q 18 some chose 'campsite', which wasn't mentioned in the text.

Exercise 4

Questions No. 19 -24 The candidates had to compare two texts and respond accordingly. There was an option for each person or for both. Some forgot that 'both' was also an option.

Exercise 5

Questions No. 25-31 This group of questions posed some problems. Some candidates whose command of English was less secure either failed to answer them or, instead, made a poor attempt at an answer.

Q 25 among candidates there was confusion over which school the word 'esta' referred to, and also they determined the size of the school by the number of students it had.

Q26 Answers were very close to what was expected.

Q27 The answer required size and colour but many only offered one and therefore lost a mark.

Q29 Evidence that candidates were not sure of irregular English comparative structure came in examples of 'badder' and similar words.

Q 30 Some candidates appeared to have misread or misunderstood the text and repeated 'the uniforms' and added 'they did not like them because they are ugly'.

Q31 Candidates became confused about the school and whom did it belong to. His/our/their were all used. Some exam technique skills would come useful in this instance.

Exercise 6

Questions No. 32 -37

This was another multiple-choice exercise that did not pose major problems and most candidates answered them correctly.

Qs 33, 34 and 36 caught out those candidates with a less secure knowledge of English.

Exercise 7

Questions No. 38-44

This exercise proved to be the most difficult in the whole exam, especially for those candidates with a weaker command of English or who didn't read the text with care.

Q38 Candidates did not deduce that 'they learnt a lot' from the first paragraph. A careful reading was required to gain this point.

Q39 Many candidates gave the answer as "the library", referring to the space and not to the amount of time they spent at the library.

Q40 A large number couldn't find the correct translation for 'ferramentas'.

Q41 Candidates found difficulty in assimilating the connection between Japanese and food and only a small percentage got this question correct.

Q42 There were lots of interesting variations, some too vague, e.g. 'have family from different cultures', etc., and some different translations of the Portuguese words to fit the answer, without success.

Q43 Too many candidates just wrote 'grandparents' but the answer required a verb to make the sentence complete.

Q44 Lots of candidates overcomplicated the answer to this question when it only needed the key word "Spain" to finish the sentence.

Exercise 8

Questions No 45-50

A small percentage of candidates decided not to tackle this exercise.

Q45 The idea of earning money needed to be conveyed: 'ganhar dinheiro/receber um ordenado/um salário', and many candidates failed to do so, by referring only to the work itself, such as 'trabalhar como au pair'.

Q46 Many candidates often failed to comprehend the underlying message that 'it is essential to...' and other omitted the accent on 'é' and did not link up with 'para'.

Q47 There was, for some candidates, a misunderstanding of the text. Too many could not use the past tense and seemed to focus on the volunteer work done by Erika, showing that they did not understand the text.

Q48 This question proved to be the most challenging question in the whole paper with the most wrong answers. To express that the male gender did not do the au pair job was very difficult for the majority of candidates. It was a testing question for the last exercise.

Q49 Most candidates answered well but a proportion failed to include an infinitive following the stem 'deve'. "Viver" was at times written as 'vivir', a Spanish interference, and not accepted.

Q50 The question was well answered. Few candidates wrote that 'they would learn more than in a classroom'

Despite all the difficulties, candidates performed well and the majority gained more than 50% of marks.

A834 Writing

General Comments:

It is evident that many candidates take pride in producing good quality work. There were many detailed pieces of writing which contained good examples of language used accurately. Each question covers one topic area and the task set varies from year to year. The mark for Communication is awarded for relevant material produced in response to the task title. Full understanding of the task is necessary and native speakers of Portuguese should make use of the dictionary to clarify any vocabulary needed.

There are still a number of candidates who answer more than two, and indeed usually five, questions. This paper requires two pieces of writing and this is an appropriate task to complete in one hour, allowing candidates to express and develop ideas and to pay attention to the quality and accuracy of language used. Scripts with two answers were more likely to be legible. This paper states that each response must be written for a different purpose. Many answers were written using interesting formats such as a letter or blog. Where a dialogue was offered, it tended to be repetitive and this affected the mark, although examiners also report seeing some very well thought out pieces.

This specification requires the expression and development of ideas. Where simple opinions, such as *gosto de...porque* were offered, the mark for Communication was unlikely to go above 6. Equally, the mark for a narrative piece was similarly restricted, but examiners saw some very detailed pieces which contained ambitious development. It is worth remembering that a piece of 150 words does not have the capacity for more than three or four well developed ideas. Many pieces of writing were neat and easy to read. Where this was not the case, candidates would be well advised to use appropriate punctuation so that the intended meaning is clear and the work can be assessed fairly.

Where there are no errors in basic language, candidates have access to a higher mark band for Quality of Language. Errors in frequently used words such as *há, é, está, estou, estive*, and confusion between *fui* and *foi* were evident in scripts at all levels. Errors in verb endings of all major tenses should be avoided. Many pieces of work with a significant number of errors in basic language meant that the mark for Quality of Language could not go higher than eleven. Where candidates used the dictionary to check the spelling of less common words, the number of errors was reduced significantly.

A piece containing a range of clause types, with consistent manipulation of structures and tense, will have access to high marks and candidates are advised to keep this in mind when planning their work, thus avoiding a lengthy piece of writing in the present tense.

Candidates are asked to produce two pieces of work, each of 150 words. There is a small degree of leniency when assessing the work for Quality of Language but all too often candidates who wrote long essays tended to deal with bullet points four and five outside this range and that part of the essay was not assessed. Often it contained the most sophisticated and ambitious language, in particular the use of *se + subjunctive*. A candidate who is aiming to reach A or A* should plan carefully, paying little attention to the first two bullet points so that they can focus on writing about the ideas in the last two bullet points and include the more sophisticated language.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Almost all candidates chose to use the bullet points.

A few candidates wrote in response to the topic area but most candidates correctly used the task title.

QUESTION 1

This was a very popular choice, although many answers contained narrative rather than opinions. Where candidates did provide opinions and development answers were often awarded high marks. However, examiners report a good deal of narrative and too much emphasis on the earlier bullet points, particularly the inclusion of lengthy lists of facilities in the area.

Bullet point 4 was particularly successfully attempted. Many candidates across the full range of ability provided good, detailed reasons why it is important for young people to have things to do in the area.

In response to bullet point 5, many candidates offered a suggestion of something new that they would like to see. Where this was developed to include reasons for the choice, many candidates raised the quality of their answer.

QUESTION 2

This was a popular choice. Many scripts contained a significant amount of information about the food and drink preferred by the writer and this was very often a detailed description of Portuguese food. Often it was factual but where opinions were offered, they generally enhanced the piece.

Many candidates expressed firmly held beliefs about a healthy lifestyle and were able to secure a good mark. Examiners report seeing a variety of subtopics covered, such as diet, exercise, sport and relaxation, all appropriate to the task title.

Responses to bullet point 5, although often well written, tended to contain factual advice. Where an additional opinion was offered this helped to raise the overall quality of the piece.

A number of native Portuguese speakers would have been well advised to check the meaning of the word "lifestyle" in the dictionary.

QUESTION 3

Many candidates chose to write in some detail about a music festival but there were some well thought out pieces about other festivals - religious occasions or local celebrations, for example - often written very sensitively from personal experience.

Where bullet point three was the focus of the answer it sometimes led to a narrative piece which would have benefitted from some inclusion of detailed opinion.

Bullet point four was particularly successful in allowing many candidates to give a well expressed opinion with some development as to their opinion on watching a festival on television.

QUESTION 4

The most competent candidates chose this task and were often able to write a detailed response using sophisticated language which would not have looked out of place on an A level paper. It was a very open question and many responses referred to life in a city in the Portuguese speaking world.

Often the writing appeared to lack opinions but many statements could be considered as points of view and, if developed, could contribute to a high score.

Examiners report seeing a variety of subtopics covered, including litter, traffic problems, overcrowding, air pollution and some discussion about places where smoking in public is allowed.

QUESTION 5

This was a popular choice. Where candidates made only a very brief reference to the first bullet point there was space for a significant amount of development in the later bullet points and consequently the opportunity to access high marks.

It was a very open question which gave rise to a variety of responses referring to learning something new, often an educational venture but equally likely to be a skill learnt at a youth club or knowledge passed on by an older family member. In these cases the writing was often very sensitive and allowed for a range of emotions to be expressed.

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