

GCE

Portuguese

Advanced GCE A2 **H596**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H196**

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

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

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F887 Listening, Reading and Writing (1)

General Comments:

Candidates performed very well in closed question answers or in choosing the correct option. They used their linguistic skills and vocabulary knowledge appropriately to respond to the tasks 1, 2, 5 and 6.

In task 1 and 2, only a few marks were lost due to no response being given. In other cases, the wrong option was chosen.

In task 3, most candidates managed to understand the information from the text they listened to.

However, in some cases, they didn't give full answers as requested in the instructions. Most candidates used their grammatical and vocabulary expertise as well as translation skills correctly to respond to task 4.

On the other hand, where more sophisticated listening and reading comprehension skills were required, namely to identify information and paraphrase it, for example, candidates did not seem to respond so well to tasks 3 and 7.

In regards to task 8, generally candidates expressed themselves with good linguistic proficiency and quality of language. However, they did not follow instructions accordingly. In task 8a, some of them developed the ideas from the text, revealing their great judgement skills, even though that was not expected from them to the extent that some did not even refer to the text. Whereas in task 8b, they could have been more creative and identify specific reasons for having chosen a given ideal job. Instead of that, some of the candidates wrote about the characteristics of an ideal job, providing therefore an extension of task 8a.

Throughout the paper, the lack of accents in the responses has become noticeable. It is recommended that centres insist that these must be used as they are part of the spelling of the words. Finally, a great interference of Spanish has been shown in candidates' responses, especially where they have to translate into Portuguese (Q4) or in longer questions such as Q8(a) and Q8(b).

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.1

A vast majority of candidates got all of the answers correct. Only a few candidates left one or two responses without an answer. To get good marks, candidates needed to be exposed to authentic materials such as news or podcasts in order to improve their listening skills.

Question No.2

Responses that received full marks involved the ability of not only scanning through the text to get an awareness of the theme but also the skill to choose the best option by choosing the word according to the audio file they were listening to instead of choosing words that made sense. For example, a high number of candidates answered *terras* for m instead of *hoje*. Clearly making use of their common sense rather than paying attention to the audio file. On another note, for this type of activity it is also important that candidates know the gender of words as this would have helped them to make the correct decision.

Question No.3

Good responses automatically provided full answers as requested in the questions. Many excellent responses contained detailed information to all the questions. Other candidates need

to develop their answers more thoroughly and listen carefully to the recording in order to grasp specific information.

For example, higher ability candidates showed perfect understanding of the difference between *decades* and *centuries* as well as *length* and *width*. The benefit of the doubt was given to candidates who failed to express the adequate verb tense required to answer Q3(b). Many candidates answered with the present tense when they should have used any past tense. In addition, due to their short and therefore ambiguous answers, candidates lost many marks. For example in Q3(g) where they had to describe the location of the hotel, a large number of candidates only said *in a quiet place* and did not mention *of the city*, making it an incomplete answer. Centres are recommended to provide more opportunities for candidates to work on this type of exercises. Finally, many candidates found it complicated to convey the meaning of *avoiding the rainy season*.

Question No.4

To get full marks for this question, candidates needed to use their translation skills to identify specific words instead of translating the global idea. As stated in the instructions, candidates do not “have to translate word for word” however, candidates needed to include all the relevant details instead of providing understanding of the bigger picture. Candidates at Higher Tier were very literal and precise in the sense that they used *tomar banho no mar* or *ir ao mar* instead of *mergulhar no oceano* for *bathe in the ocean*. Furthermore, an outstanding knowledge of vocabulary of the topic of travelling as well as of conjugating verbs in suitable tenses was vital. Answers such as “pafulhetos” and “estação sem chuva” were accepted for communication but did not get marks for Quality of Language. In addition, formal register was needed for *please send me*. Furthermore, candidates needed to use different structures of Future tense and ideally the Conditional (*ficaria grato/a*) as well as the subjunctive (*se confirmasse*) provided that the concept of wish and intention was expressed. Finally, some candidates omitted some of the ideas.

Question No.5

Good responses at the Higher Tier automatically provided the only possible word to fill in the gaps in all answers.

Question No. 6

When candidates are encouraged to expand their vocabulary knowledge, they can often improve their performance. In this question, only higher ability candidates revealed a solid knowledge of vocabulary (they were able to perceive the difference between *esquecer* and *lembrar*) but also reading skills. Again, providing the contact with a wide variety of textual sources is important during the course so that they expand their vocabulary range. Also, to get full marks, candidates needed to be able to make the correct gender and singular/plural agreement of adjectives.

Question No. 7

Responses of the more able candidates were full and very detailed. Also, they were the result of the candidates’ reasoning since all the answers that evidenced lifted material from the text were given low marks in Quality of Language. Therefore, candidates should be encouraged to paraphrase.

Q7(gii) was a common error due to confusion between *quem* and *que*. This meant that some candidates answered *leite* rather than *pessoas conhecidas*.

Some answers were not answered at all, whereas others were so incomplete they lacked clarity and were ambiguous.

Finally, responses of more able candidates showed a tense agreement, ie, when questions were in the Past, candidates answered in the Past.

Question No. 8a

Responses of the more able candidates revealed an understanding of the task in itself (*Explique que cuidados são necessários*) but also the ability to paraphrase instead of commenting on the details from the original source. Candidates who gained full marks managed to convey the first

idea expressed in the source, which was knowing which job to choose. In addition, it is necessary that candidates stick to the word limit.

Question No. 8b

Some excellent responses contained detailed and specific reasons for choosing a given job. To achieve their full potential, candidates are advised to avoid using information from the source for Q8(a) as they will not be answering Q8(b) with that kind of references.

F888 Listening, Reading and Writing (2)

General Comments:

It is most pleasing to report that this year's A2 paper was done well by many candidates who had clearly been well prepared for the examination by their teachers.

In general, candidates did well when they:

- answered questions as instructed by the rubric;
- checked and corrected their responses;
- answered succinctly and within the recommended space or word limit;
- wrote in accurate Portuguese, with particular attention to verb endings;
- wrote in an appropriate register, avoiding informal speech and colloquialisms.

On the other hand, it was disappointing to see again this year rather too many scripts creating the impression that candidates had not read the instructions carefully. This was especially evident in Tarefas 4-6 and 8, where candidates were referred to specific paragraphs within the reading texts but where answers had clearly been sought elsewhere in the texts.

Once again this year there were answers to Tarefas 6 and 10 which were excessively long, usually containing irrelevant material 'downloaded' from the reading texts, suggesting to examiners that candidates did not really know what the correct answer might be but felt it was 'in there somewhere'. Such responses cannot be awarded the highest marks.

However, the most significant area of concern for examiners remains the too often poor quality of written Portuguese submitted by a significant number of candidates. This issue has rightly been raised in previous reports but bears reiteration here. With ten marks each in Sections A and B and a further 20 in Section C awarded for quality of language, it is incumbent upon candidates to ensure that they write clearly, accurately and precisely. Whilst it is recognised that there may be some candidates who do not routinely read and write in standard Portuguese, it should also be recognised that the A2 examination is one in just that: standard written Portuguese. Unfortunately, some candidates tend to 'write as they speak', with less regard for the norms of the written language than is acceptable at this level. For example, *ta* instead of *está* has no place in a formal essay of the kind expected in Section C. (And at this point it is worth drawing attention to the considerable number of candidates who omit the written accent from even the commonest of verbs, with *está*, *é* and *há* thus spelt incorrectly). There is still ongoing confusion over the spelling of the third person plural preterite, with some candidates writing, for example, *pararão* for *pararam* in Task 5c. This was sometimes the case even when the correct form of the verb appeared in the text or the question! As noted above, the written accents, too, continue to cause problems, and Centres are urged to impress upon candidates the need for accurate spelling.

Finally, it was heartening to see so many very good essay responses in Section C demonstrating a solid grasp of the topics under discussion. Essays responding directly to the question and containing appropriate, clear and reasonably detailed example material or case studies logically marshalled were usually well rewarded. However, essays containing little more than 'common sense' material, vague and generalised discussion with no real information, data, examples or case studies to support otherwise well-meaning but unstructured opinion could not expect to achieve high marks. The examiners were concerned by the attempt of some

candidates to ‘invent’ supporting evidence (eg there are, according to one candidate, 300 million people in Brazilian prisons). In a similar vein, some candidates tried unsuccessfully to get around the requirement in Section C to refer to a Portuguese-speaking country or community by simply mentioning Brazil or Portugal, for example, without showing that the information under discussion did, in fact, relate to that country. Once again, it is worth repeating that candidates must have specific relevant detail to score high marks.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Task 1: Listening

Most candidates did quite well with the four questions here, although examiners did note considerable variation in the quality of written English; in the worst cases, poorly expressed responses obscured meaning and could not be rewarded.

Almost all candidates answered 1(a) correctly.

In response to 1(b), some candidates struggled to express the idea of ‘delay’ or ‘delays’.

For 1(c) (ii), some candidates had difficulty expressing the idea that the electricity supply might be intermittent.

1(d) was generally answered well.

Tarefa 2: Compreensão auditiva

Again, this listening task presented few difficulties in terms of comprehension, although it did provide early indications of the limitations of spelling and lexis demonstrated by some candidates.

A particularly significant error was confusing emigration with immigration, with many candidates switching from *emigração* to *imigração* without appearing to appreciate the difference, even though questions (c), (d), (e), (f) and (k) all use words related to ‘emigration’.

Questions 2(a), (d) and (g) were correctly answered by almost all candidates.

Question 2(e) produced many responses with improvised spellings of *enriquecimento*.

SECTION B: Reading and Writing

Tarefa 3

This task appeared to be slightly more demanding for many candidates this year. Those who performed less well might have benefited from more practice in this kind of exercise. It is not enough to match halves of sentences to form merely plausible answers. The answers so formed must match the meaning of the text.

Tarefa 4

This task was well done by very many candidates although, as with Tarefa 3, prior practice in this kind of exercise would help.

Those candidates who performed poorly in this exercise were those who failed to read the instructions and tried to find synonyms outside of paragraph 3, or who missed the point that the words or phrases in the exercise could be substituted for their equivalents in the text. Thus many candidates who wrote *ceder* for 3(b) were on the right lines but failed to see that the whole phrase *estava a ceder* was needed to carry the meaning of *submetia-se*.

Tarefa 5

This task was also well done. Pleasingly, many candidates noted the need for the inflected infinitive in (a) and the preposition *a* in both (g) and (j).

Tarefa 6

Performance here was generally good, but too many candidates ignored the clearly stated rubric instruction to use their own words as far as possible and to avoid copying chunks from the text. Candidates who ignore this instruction cannot gain the highest marks for Quality of Language.

Tarefa 7

This task was a good discriminator, with the best candidates writing in clearly expressed, accurate and idiomatic English. There were, however, many candidates whose poor expression let them down.

Some items of lexis that caused problems were *conservação* and *em prol de* (incorrectly rendered as *in terms of* or *with regard to*).

Tarefa 8

This task was generally well done by most candidates. Some candidates unnecessarily wrote long sentences where a simple word or short phrase explaining the meaning would have sufficed.

Tarefa 9

This task was also well done by the majority of candidates. The requirement for subjunctives (*mantenha / garanta* or similar and *seja*) was noted by a pleasingly large number.

Tarefa 10

This task was generally well done. As with Task 6, candidates who simply copied from the text did not score highly for Quality of Language. This was particularly the case in question 10(a).

SECTION C: Writing

Following on from points made above, many candidates had clear ideas about their chosen topic and wrote with commendable insight and conviction. There were a good many well-structured and well-argued responses, which drew upon specific knowledge and examples or experiences. The best candidates wrote with flair and intelligence, demonstrating an appropriate breadth of vocabulary and accurate and persuasive language.

When candidates did not get high marks for this section, it was often because essays lacked structure and analysis, and made only superficial reference to a Portuguese-speaking country or community. Sadly, there are still significant numbers of candidates who are ill-prepared for this section and who have little more than a 'man-in-the-street' acquaintance with their chosen topic. It must be emphasised that candidates are expected to have carried out explicit, detailed study of the topic area and they are required to incorporate appropriate information and examples into their responses.

Pleasingly, the great majority of candidates wrote within the word limits recommended in the rubric.

Less pleasingly, poor spelling was a significant feature of very large numbers of responses.

Q 11: This was a popular title, but many candidates wrote with little genuine knowledge of the topic and were content to offer very generalised opinions on what to do with criminals. Good answers used specific examples (eg aspects of the Portuguese penal code) to develop convincing arguments.

Q 12: Again a popular title, but too many answers were less than convincing, with disappointingly generalised comment.

Q 13: Many good responses were written by candidates who clearly had knowledge and understanding of this topic area, and they were able to give examples of both community-led and government-inspired environmental initiatives. As noted above, specific details (eg genuine statistics, examples firmly rooted in specific towns or communities) are required.

Q 14: The wording of this question allowed candidates the opportunity to discuss any reasonable aspect of pollution and examiners were pleased to read some well-researched responses.

Q 15: This was a highly popular question and, unfortunately, many candidates displayed very limited insight, with only a few answers focusing clearly on the idea that technology might be leading us towards a more equal society. At this level, answers that did little more than suggest that mobile phones are putting more people in touch with each other simply do not reach the required standard. Given that the listening text for Task 1 was loosely linked to this topic area, it was surprising just how many candidates failed to explore the increasing accessibility of information via technology and the possibility or otherwise of a more equal society.

Q 16: There were very few answers to this title.

Q 17: Some interesting responses were elicited by this question, with enthusiastic endorsements of, for example, *Cidade de Deus* in evidence. Surprisingly, one or two candidates tried to answer this question with only minimal reference to any film!

Q 18: There were not very many responses to this question. Some showed genuine knowledge and understanding of their chosen political 'event', with recent political turmoil in Brazil the commonest choice. Examiners were, however, disappointed that some candidates were over-partisan rather than offer a more balanced approach. Nevertheless, as with Q17, it was gratifying to read responses rooted in specific knowledge and study.

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