

Portuguese

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J736**

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

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

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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

Most candidates coped well with most aspects of the examination. Relatively few answered questions in Portuguese and very few left questions unanswered, which is a big improvement on previous years.

Multiple-choice questions were generally well answered. Some candidates did not seem to have a good enough command of the English language to respond to exercises 3, 4 and 5, where they were required to write short responses in English.

Candidates were often unable to express Portuguese colloquialisms in English. Stronger candidates were able to shine in these three exercises, as they understood and conveyed the required level of detailed response, showing a sound understanding of the Portuguese.

Exercises 1 and 2 were well answered by most candidates. Q8 saw few candidates tick picture C instead of A.

Exercise 3 was generally well answered.

Q13 – ‘food’ was mostly qualified, as required. A variety of adjectives were accepted.

Q14, 15 and 16 were generally well answered.

Q17 – Quite a few candidates left out the verb which was required.

Q18 – Most candidates gave a full answer.

Exercise 4 differentiated weaker candidates from the stronger ones.

Q19 saw a few wrong answers, as some candidates were too vague, giving answers such as ‘since infancy/infant school/ primary school’ as an incorrect rendering of *infancia*

Q20 – Many candidates were vague and gave insufficient detail in their response.

Q21 was mainly well answered.

Q22 – Many candidates answered ‘for four years’ instead of ‘four years ago’.

Q23 – ‘fireworks’ generally appeared as part of the answer. Wrong answers included ‘fire shows’ and ‘artificial fire’.

Q24 was generally well understood, with a variety of answers being accepted, such as ‘returns/goes back/goes home/leaves Madeira’.

Exercise 5 seemed to cause the most difficulty among candidates.

Q25 – The required answer involves the idea of ‘learning’ combined with ‘working’.

Q26 – Weaker candidates omitted ‘otherwise/or else’.

Q27 was generally well answered.

Q28 – Many candidates did not include ‘change’ in their answer.

Q29 – Quite a few incorrect answers were given, including ‘well-educated’ as a literal rendering of ‘*bem-educado*’. Many vague responses were also given here, such as ‘be nice, kind, gentle, communicate well, be well-behaved.’

Q30 – Quite a few candidates gave one piece of advice correctly but missed the finer detail in the response ‘not to stay only for the money’.

Exercise 6 was generally well answered.

Q31 saw quite a few candidates answer H instead of B.

Exercise 7 was generally completed well. Very few candidates used their own words here or answered in Portuguese, and the majority followed the rubric.

Q38 – The opinion was sometimes given as ‘study economics’.

Q39 and Q40 – Some candidates changed the opinions around.

Exercise 8 differentiated well between very able candidates and less able ones. Q41, Q42 and Q43 caused the most problems for candidates.

Q41 was often answered incorrectly, with A and C almost equally given as wrong answers.

A832 Speaking

General Comments

As in previous years, there were many examples of excellent examining by well-prepared teachers with enthusiastic candidates. These candidates understood what was expected of them and many confidently produced high quality language and developed their ideas.

Almost all candidates depend on the teacher asking appropriate questions, showing an interest in, and responding to what they say. Most fluent Portuguese speakers still need guidance and careful questioning to encourage them to develop their ideas fully and to use a variety of tenses and structures. The way in which the teacher poses questions influences the way the candidate answers; open-ended questions encourage the candidates to justify their opinions and points of view and to develop their ideas.

Effective planning by many teachers ensured that their candidates were offered differentiated questions. Some candidates responded well to sympathetic examining, with closed questions at the beginning to give them confidence, leading on to more open questions. Other candidates thrived on more open questions. Short questions enabled the candidates to focus on their responses. The less said by the teacher, the more time the candidate has to produce both the content and quality of language to gain marks.

Part 1 and Part 2 are marked separately, so in each part of the test it is important to ask questions about past and future events and to allow candidates to develop and explain their ideas without interruption. The topic-based questions in the Teacher Instructions may be helpful but should not be recited as a question and answer session.

Part 1 Presentation and Discussion

The most successful presentations tended to be those where the candidates had chosen a topic that they found particularly interesting. As a result, they conveyed genuine enthusiasm and considerable knowledge.

For Part 1, the candidate can choose to talk about anything. The choice is not restricted to the OCR topics. This year, for example, one candidate chose 25th April as his presentation and spoke passionately about how it changed Portugal. Another talked about video games on Steam platform, how good they are for socialising and how important the games industry is now.

Teachers should reassure candidates that they do not need to rush through the presentation, as the discussion gives them the opportunity to expand. Some candidates make their presentation so fast that individual words can be difficult to hear.

Teachers sometimes have not had an opportunity to meet the candidates before the day of the test. They should, in that case, speak to each candidate before the test to explain what is expected. This would ensure that preparation time can be used productively.

When a presentation was mainly a narrative, some teachers chose questions specifically to encourage candidates to express opinions and develop ideas.

Some presentations were mainly in the present tense and used only simple structures. Teachers could help their candidates achieve higher marks by asking discussion questions that require the use of a variety of tenses and structures in their answers.

Part 2 General Conversation

Confident candidates tended to respond very well to open questions, which provided them with the best opportunity to justify opinions and develop ideas and use a greater variety and range of language structures and tenses. Some teachers started with a few closed questions to put nervous candidates at ease before progressing to more open questions to encourage candidates to demonstrate their language skills.

Many teachers managed to make this part of the test a genuine conversation and gave the candidates opportunities to respond fully and to use a variety of tenses and structures. Centres are reminded to read the Teacher's booklet for further advice before starting the examination and to ensure that both parts of the test are announced and carried out.

The administration was generally satisfactory.

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:

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

Teachers should:

- prepare carefully
- 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

The Reading Paper was well received. Over 70 % had 40 marks and over, out of 50. Teachers have to be congratulated for their work. Most candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to the tasks. Some did not read the rubrics and used their own words; they therefore did not gain marks.

The multiple-choice Exercises 2 and 6 suited many candidates.

Exercise 1 – Qs 1-5

This exercise was done well.

Exercise 2 – Qs 6-12

Most candidates managed these questions very well. Few in Q12 opted for option A, (Dad worked in a factory) when the text says that he had his office at home.

Exercise 3 – Qs 13 -18

In this exercise some candidates did not read the rubric. They had to select the words from the box but instead used their own words and lost marks that way. A significant number did not know the word 'abroad'. Q17 was often answered with 'money' instead of 'time'.

Exercise 4 – Qs 19 – 24

There were very few wrong responses.

Exercise 5 – Qs 25 – 31

The need to answer these questions in English caused difficulties for many candidates whose command of English was not very secure.

Q26 The answer was 'look after' and several candidates added 'tidy up/ do the cooking/ looked after his mum and his brothers' when the sentence already ended with the words 'his brothers'.

Q27 The word 'oil' appeared with many different spellings.

Q30 caused some difficulty in spelling 'medicine' and also a large number of candidates said that Ricardo was going to the chemist to pick up his aunt.

Exercise 6 – Qs 32 -37

This multiple-choice exercise suited many candidates who had a lesser command of English and they scored high marks.

Exercise 7 – Qs 38 – 44

Many managed this exercise well. This exercise tested a spread of abilities and helped to differentiate between the candidates. The difficulty was transferring into English what many candidates wanted to say.

Q38 required mention of 'always playing/ at home/ constantly' and some candidates gave a response which was part of the same paragraph from the text but was not in line with the part of the sentence that was crossed out.

Q40 was quite challenging and very few candidates answered it correctly. They provided diverse answers such as 'last century/ last decade/ when she got money/ when she was a child/ young'. These also referred to time and were part of the relevant statement in the text.

Q41 was frequently answered incorrectly because candidates failed to include the word 'only'.

Qs 42 and 44 were well answered.

Q43 Candidates gave very creative answers to convey the right answer, 'musicians'.

Exercise 8 – Qs 45 – 50

This exercise was a good discriminator and the candidates who struggled in English felt a bit more confident replying in Portuguese, but not everyone was able to convey the correct responses. A fair number demonstrated difficulties completing the sentences, which required them to be able to interpret the text and the sentences from the text.

Q45 Some candidates did not read the sentence carefully enough and simply added what was next in the text.

Q46 Candidates may have based their answers on their own experiences and confused 'lá' (Portugal) and 'cá' (United Kingdom) and lost a mark.

Q47 some candidates mistook the word 'tempo' for *time*, instead of *weather* as referred to in the text.

Q48 demanded 'divertiu-se' before 'imenso' but, possibly because of a more complex interpretation of the relevant part of the text, candidates provided diverse incorrect answers such as 'frio imenso/ gelado/ deslizar pela colina/ usou luvas e cachecol'.

Despite the fact that most candidates answered Q49 correctly, a number of them answered with 'vestir tanta roupa'.

In Q50 some candidates transcribed sentences from the text but did not make 'inverno' the subject, as was required by the sentence.

Despite difficulties with individual questions, most candidates showed that they understood the tasks well and drew information from the texts accordingly.

Praise goes to all the teachers who have been able to bring out the best in the candidates. Teachers are advised to continue their excellent work giving particular attention to the following:

- exposing examination candidates to a wide variety of reading material;
- instilling an attentive approach to reading;
- increasing awareness of structural features of the target language.

A834 Writing

General Comments

Examiners reported that many candidates take pride in producing good quality work. There were many pieces which were written with a good deal of sensitivity and expertise.

A major problem since this specification began in 2010 has been the number of candidates who respond to more than two questions. Their standard inevitably suffers, as each piece is below the quality which could have been achieved had the candidates devoted the same time to producing just two responses. The situation has improved inasmuch as there are fewer such events but nevertheless it is still a significant problem.

Many candidates' responses were only vaguely relevant. Examiners bore this in mind when allocating marks for communication and only those who held closely to the task set were able to achieve marks in the 7-10 range. A considerable number of candidates wrote pieces which responded to a very general theme, based on the topic area, but not closely related to the task set. This was particularly the case with questions 1 and 2.

Spelling remains an issue for candidates at all levels, so schools should encourage the use of dictionaries and indeed teach candidates how to use dictionaries. One candidate, having looked up the word "would", wrote "conditional" in the middle of the sentence, which illustrates exactly one of the problems if teachers have not trained candidates in the use of dictionaries.

Use of dictionaries seems to be increasing, however, but there are many examples of candidates who use them badly, failing to choose the correct part of speech or otherwise choosing an inappropriate word. Nevertheless, it is very apparent that many candidates struggle to find the correct word and have to guess because they have no dictionary.

Such mistakes can cost dearly because the candidates are not credited with being able to form tenses if they make spelling mistakes. The mark scheme for marks between 12 and 15 for Quality of Language refers to "successful with more complex language features, though with some inaccuracy" (12/13 marks) and "Errors noticeable only in the most ambitious language" (14/15 marks). Some basic mistakes were common, notably errors with *há, é, está* and the use of *ão* for *am*, 3rd person plural. Others include the use of *tou, ta* and *tive* for *estou, está* and *estive* as well as confusion between *fui* and *foi*.

Many well written pieces did not have a range of tenses to lift the mark. However, many candidates could use a range of tenses, subjunctives, subordinate clauses and inflected infinitives with accuracy and apparent ease.

Compared to previous years there is increasing interference from Spanish. Typical of language seen was *não me gosto ficar sozinha*, and Spanish spellings of words that are similar to Portuguese equivalents. Sometimes it is clear that a candidate knows the correct Portuguese spelling because in another part of the piece they may well use the expression correctly. More specifically, candidates are not gaining the highest grades because they spell the verb endings in the Spanish way: *compré, falou, voy*.

There seems to be an increase in the number of otherwise excellent candidates who are unable to use correct accentuation and there are continuing problems with candidates using texting abbreviations such as *aki*.

Regarding the question of using different formats and styles for each response, it must be said that more candidates are remembering to do this than in earlier years of this specification. The most common way of doing this seems to be that one response is set out in the form of a letter or email (and is usually personal in tone and structure) and the other is identified as a blog.

The majority of candidates relied on the bullet points; the best pieces had the fourth and fifth bullets as the focus as these allowed for the development of ideas. Those candidates aiming for A and A* grades should not waste time developing the first two bullets but move straight on to the development of ideas. The highest marks for communication will be earned by those candidates capable of using speculative ideas.

Candidates following the bulleted suggestions should also bear in mind the word limit of 150 words. In the assessment of quality of language only the required word limit is looked at, although a small degree of lenience is applied. If the candidate leaves the advanced and ambitious structures to the last part of the piece, they may well not even be assessed if they fall beyond the point where the word limit has been passed.

Q1

Some candidates chose to write about home life in general, not heeding the specific task that was set, but the vast majority who chose this popular question produced excellent and very interesting responses.

Candidates gave lots of reasons why they like being alone (*porque posso fazer o que quiser* being common) or why they don't (*é entediado, fico aborrecida*) and there were plenty of reasons given as to why they were alone in the first place.

There were some imaginative pieces of writing – more than one very successful dialogue – a Facebook style conversation taking place while the writer was still alone in the house.

Bullet point 5 sometimes led to an account of an actual day rather than the intended plan for a day, which would have given a chance to include more opinions as well as other tenses – conditional, future.

Q2

It was common for candidates to write on sport in general as a way of keeping fit and avoiding obesity. The task was to write about outdoor sports, so candidates who wrote, for example, only about enjoying indoor football would disqualify themselves from reaching a mark above six. Most candidates however, if they erred in this respect, wrote about sports which were to be played outdoors. If they were otherwise extremely good pieces of writing then the fact that they failed to address the task directly would prevent them from reaching the top mark.

It was apparent that several candidates were rewriting a piece on healthy activities and diet rather than the task set. Such candidates of course were affected by the communication mark scheme, where high marks are achieved by writing a relevant piece of work.

Occasionally it became obvious that candidates did not understand the word “outdoors” or found it difficult to express this concept in Portuguese.

Less difficult was the word *futebol*, but it was frequently spelt the English way.

Q3

Those who followed the bulleted suggestions sometimes did not follow up their response to the fifth suggestion regarding the creation of their own website. There were lots of interesting ideas, usually involving maintaining conversations with their friends while they viewed films or played games. However, they really needed to say why they would include certain features, as it is the development of ideas that leads to the highest marks.

One candidate wrote a straightforward introduction and then developed the writing into a review of a book they had read on the internet and said they intended posting the review for others to read, so something rather imaginative produced a lovely piece of work in the spirit of the question.

Some very good letters written to international companies by imaginative candidates covered the bullet points and used point 5 as a way of asking for a job with that company.

The best candidates made some excellent comments about internet safety as part of their response to bullet points 4 & 5 and they were able to link these comments to the website they would create.

Q4

This question tended to attract more competent candidates and certainly made big demands on their vocabulary. They were usually very well informed about the subject matter and made serious and detailed comments on what they did to help the environment and why.

Often the writing appeared to lack opinions but much of the writing could be construed as points of view and there were high scores for this. It was a very open question and the best candidates wrote pieces which would not have looked out of place on an A level paper.

Some of the very best pieces included some excellent writing in which the candidates exhorted their fellow citizens to take a more active part in treating the environment well.

Q5

This task appealed to a very large number of candidates and not too many risked irrelevance by dwelling too long on the curriculum offered by the school. Candidates gave very good accounts of what life is like in their school, including a variety of extra-curricular activities.

Some of the best answers contained a detailed comparison of two schools attended by the writer – one in England, the other in Portugal or Brazil – because this led to development of ideas and to the use of more complex language. Most appreciated the wealth of equipment and facilities in the UK and contrasted this with, for example, a school with very few facilities in Mozambique.

Very many responded well to the suggestion that they compare school life in the United Kingdom with life in a Portuguese-speaking country. They clearly enjoyed writing on this matter and many took pleasure in relating how they do not have to repeat a year in Britain even if they do badly in their end of year exams.

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