

GCE

Portuguese

Advanced GCE A2 **H596**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H196**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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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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F887 Listening, Reading and Writing (1)

General Comments:

Most candidates coped well with most of this year's paper. However, as in previous years, many could not express themselves clearly in either Portuguese or English.

Once again, most candidates gave evidence of gaps in basic grammar, making errors of an elementary kind (spellings, endings, verb forms, gender of common nouns, adjectival and other agreements, punctuation).

Spelling tended to be poor, with candidates unsure of the correct spelling of words, when and which accent to write and the use of capital letters. As in previous years, quality of language tended to be poor and in answers to Tasks 4, 7 and 8 candidates did not make use of the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to express themselves clearly in their own words. In Exercises 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 candidates frequently failed to copy words correctly. The general impression was that most candidates were not used to reading and writing Portuguese.

Adding to the above problems was the fact that many candidates did not always ensure their handwriting was immediately legible. As has been pointed out in previous years, this is an important aspect of the examination. Handwriting points to candidates' command of the language and they are expected to write clearly. Examiners should not be expected to spend time trying to decipher candidates' handwriting. At this level, candidates are expected to express themselves legibly.

Once again, many did not write their answers in the spaces provided. Candidates are expected to write clearly in the space. Answers (or parts of them) written elsewhere on the script result in marks being lost. In Task 4, some candidates not only wrote outside the space provided but needed extra sheets because their handwriting was so big that one line was used for two or three words. Some started their answers to Question 8 (b) on the page clearly marked for the answer to Question 8 (a) and some left the spaces for answers to 8 (a) and 8 (b) unused and unnecessarily used extra sheets for their answers. Teachers are advised to impress on their students the need to write clearly and neatly in the spaces provided.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Task 1

This multiple choice exercise in Portuguese was generally well answered by the majority of candidates. There was no pattern to wrong answers.

Task 2

Most candidates coped well with this gap-filling exercise. There was no pattern to wrong answers. Candidates did not always ensure their answers made sense in the context of the written text as well as the text they had heard. This Task points to candidates' command of the language. In addition, very frequently candidates did not ensure they copied correctly the words they had chosen.

Task 3

This listening comprehension exercise in English was generally well answered. Many candidates did not always ensure their answers were clearly expressed. Many demonstrated that they had a poor command of the English language.

- Q (a)** Some candidates could not convey the idea of “debt”.
- Q (b)** Candidates frequently omitted to mention “before” and some answered “16” rather than “6”.
- Q (c)** Candidates often answered “your” financial situation.
- Q (d)** Many candidates gained only 1 mark because they had not understood that the second detail was “go to a travel agent”.
- Q (e)** Many candidates were unsure of how to give a clear answer. “The best offers and packaged holidays” were typical details given.
- Q (f) (i)** “exchange currency in coins”, “reserves” and “exchange the currency” are examples of incorrect answers.
- Q (i)** Sometimes candidates failed to state that the money should be obtained “before”.

Task 4

Most candidates coped well in communication.

However, many referred to “meu irmão” rather than “meus irmãos”.

Many were unable to convey “packages”, although it had been mentioned in the Task 3 listening text.

Many candidates used the definite article with ‘Angola’. At this level, candidates as expected to know the spelling of all Portuguese-speaking countries and regions and their adjectives as well as which countries take the definite article and which do not.

Many candidates did not know the Portuguese for the following details:

‘spring’; ‘all-inclusive’; ‘there’; ‘Angolan’; ‘travel insurance’; ‘suggest’; “we would be grateful”.

Quality of language was mostly poor, as mentioned above. There were gaps in basic grammar as well as persistent and elementary errors in spelling and punctuation. At this level, candidates are expected to know when to use full stops and question marks, the use of the correct accents and the cedilha, the use of capital letters, the difference between formal and familiar forms of address, agreements, the use of the Subjunctive, the direct and indirect object pronouns and the difference between ‘tudo’ and ‘todo’. Candidates are also expected to know that “y” and “ñ” are not used in Portuguese words.

Task 5

Most candidates coped well with this Task. There was no pattern to wrong answers.

Task 6

Most candidates coped well with this Task. There was no pattern to wrong answers.

Task 7

On the whole, candidates coped quite well with this Task. They tended to give the basic relevant details. However, quality of language was poor and material was frequently lifted from the text. Candidates made little or no attempt to use their own words, as instructed, and many demonstrated a lack of grammatical awareness. Marks were lost for Quality of Language. Answers asked in the past tense were usually answered without a verb or in the Present or the Infinitive. Teachers are advised to encourage students to paraphrase and write grammatically correct sentences which make sense in the context of question and answer. Basic details alone do not always make sense.

Question (c) was “Como é que...?”. “Família” and “Amigos” are correct details but candidates were expected to describe “como”.

Likewise, question (g) (ii) was “Porque é que...?” and question (i) required an answer to “para que...”. Candidates are expected to answer such questions in a correct grammatical way and not rely on simple basic details for a meaningful answer.

Task 8a

Many candidates did not perform at their full potential because they did not follow instructions to base their answer on the text. Some wrote well in excess of the recommended number of words.

Most candidates failed to gain full marks because they chose to give their opinion on why the young should learn foreign languages rather than why, according to the text, it was important for young people to learn foreign languages. Candidates are expected to read the text attentively and then answer the question, based on their reading and using, as far as possible, their own words. Lifting material extensively from the text does not demonstrate that the text has been understood and it does not demonstrate the candidate’s ability to communicate clearly in Portuguese.

Task 8b

In this task candidates were asked for their opinion and the question invited them to explain which foreign languages young people should learn. Some candidates wrote short answers and many wrote well in excess on the recommended number of words. There are 20 marks to be gained in this task and candidates are expected to adhere to the recommended number of words. This demonstrates how good a candidate’s command of the language is.

Again, most candidates failed to gain full marks because they failed to follow instructions and answer the question. Very often there were long introductions which did not even begin to answer the question. Then there were lists of languages and long lists of countries where those languages were spoken. The usual reason given for learning those languages was because “é a lingua mais falada no mundo” and the answer became quite monotonous as the same reason was repeated for each language. Sometimes candidates repeated details they had used in their answers to Task 8a or lifted ideas or material from the Task 8a text. Most failed to put forward original arguments and were unable to justify arguments with appropriate vocabulary.

Teachers are advised to encourage candidates preparing for this examination to read widely and practise justifying their opinions using a wide range of vocabulary.

Task 8 Quality of Language

As mentioned with regard to other tasks in this examination, many candidates made persistent, serious and elementary errors and demonstrated a restricted range of vocabulary and structures. At this level, candidates should know how to spell “português”, “Portugal” and “Brasil” as well as other countries (see comments on Task N° 4 above). Many candidates demonstrated that they had little grammatical awareness and had no idea of punctuation and of the use of initial capital letters. These are basic aspects of writing and the general impression was that many candidates were not used to formal writing, which is an important part of the examination. Teachers are advised to encourage future candidates to master Portuguese (and English) grammar and extend their range of vocabulary.

F888 Listening, Reading and Writing (2)

General Comments:

The 2014 examination included such world issues as the worldwide presence of Greenpeace, *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro and the fight against malaria in São Tomé and Príncipe. Whilst it was obvious that some candidates had not heard of São Tomé and Príncipe, they were familiar with the topic of *favelas* in Rio.

The panel of Examiners has been impressed with the standard of entries for 2014, particularly with the creativity and quality of responses. The Examiners are always struck by the originality and wide range of responses given.

With particular reference to the essay question (Section C), there was an unprecedented interest in responding to Q.11 about social unrest. Those candidates who wrote about social unrest in Portugal, Angola and Brazil gave forceful arguments with a good analysis of the reasons for the unrest. There were many passionate essays, with clear evidence that candidates had come prepared to the examination with plenty of appropriate vocabulary and relevant verbs.

Where candidates were less successful over the breadth of the exam, the main reasons were:

- not reading the rubric properly and answering in the wrong language;
- short answers which were ambiguous. Marks cannot be awarded for poor or absent syntax;
- poor punctuation and poor spelling;
- leaving the question unanswered;
- copying from the supplied texts.

As a reminder to Centres, please instruct candidates to write using black pen only, and avoid using white eraser paint. The resolution of the scanned script is poor when the candidate has used a blue pen, and Examiners find it less easy to mark the script.

As the examination season approaches, a helpful, proactive suggestion would be for Centres to emphasize to candidates the key issues surrounding exam-writing. Insofar as candidates for the 2014 examination are concerned, this should have included direction on the need to use capital letters, and full stops at the end of sentences, as well as using capital letters for the first letter of countries and cities; e.g. Rio de Janeiro. Another key issue to emphasize is that it is essential that candidates answer in full sentences, rather than short phrases. A sizeable cohort answered with a minimum of words, or bullet points; e.g. 2c/2d. Whilst Examiners understand the pressures and time-constraints placed upon candidates during the examination, including the range of abilities sitting the examination, from the Examiner's perspective, where the candidate does not show evidence of being able to link up sentences, or where there is obvious avoidance of verb tenses/structures, the mark awarded for quality of language will be lower. Unfortunately, a number of candidates received low quality of language marks for this reason.

There are 3 sets of Quality of Language marks over the extent of the examination. Throughout Sections A and B there are two sets of 10/10, and in Section C (the essay) there are another 20 marks available to be awarded. Therefore, a quarter of all the marks are for Quality of Language.

Quality of language marks encompass syntax, expression of the answer/idea, verb tenses and participle agreement, spelling and punctuation, agreements of any sort, correct gender, and accurate target language without interference from a first language. A persistent, on-going difficulty for which marks are usually deducted, is the area of accents, and cedillas. The GCE

A2 level examination requires detailed precision, and this means that Examiners notice the presence/absence of accents, and assess accuracy accordingly. It is recognized that some candidates rarely write in Portuguese, and that accents are probably an irrelevance to them. However, for the purpose of examination writing, accents are essential.

This annual report carries a request to Centres to remind candidates that good handwriting is much appreciated. It is the responsibility of the candidate to produce clearly written answers, and it is not for the Examiner to spend extra time deciphering untidy or unreadable handwriting.

At the time when the examination season is approaching, candidates must be given every encouragement to do research on the key topic areas, so that they can build their knowledge of Portuguese-speaking countries/communities. It is vital, and expected by the Examiners, that each candidate has studied and prepared the topics included in the essay-writing section, within the context of a Portuguese-speaking country/community. The rubric for Section C instructs candidates to reference a Portuguese-speaking country or community. As in previous years, a high percentage of this year's candidature did as instructed, and wrote interesting, creative essays. A minority did not refer to a Portuguese-speaking country/community, yet wrote good essays. Unfortunately, the Examiners were unable to award them many marks for Relevance and Points of View. For example, Essay Question 18 proved very popular, with many fine descriptions of music festivals, and the candidates' enthusiasm and passion for the event was captured. Where the essay does not mention in which country the event was held, nor the cultural relevance of which music was played, nor the cultural mix of people attending, then it can be said that the candidate has truly failed to include references to a Portuguese-speaking country/community.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A, Q.1a – d: Listening and Writing

Candidates had difficulty rendering *trota-mundos* in English. A small number answered this question in Portuguese and were not awarded any marks. In 1(b) 'to climb' was rendered by *es/calate*, though 'rock-climbing' was accepted. A minority chose 'pilot' as the correct answer though it is a cognate of *pilotar*. Other candidates used other nautical terms such as 'steer/navigate/drive/sail' and these were all accepted. Most managed to answer 1(c) correctly, though there was, overall, difficulty in expressing the two ideas. In 1(d), where candidates combined 'economic' with *crise*, no mark was awarded for using the Portuguese word *crise*.

Q. 2a – k: Listening and Writing

- 2a) There problems with the spelling of *metrópoles*.
- 2b) Most candidates answered well.
- 2c) There were many cases of misspelling of *têm*, though it was written in the question. Where candidates quoted verbatim, accents were often missed off; e.g. *que dá melhor acesso à favela*. (QL)
- 2d) Candidates often gave a list, and this was acceptable. Most managed to score at least 2/4, though Examiners expected *lixo* to be spelt properly rather than '*lichó*' especially as it is a commonly known word.
- 2e) Candidates often used the verb *sentir* rather than *cheirar*. Both were accepted. For the 2nd mark, candidates had to mention the idea of noisy/*barulhento* with an agreement.

- 2f)** This question, with 3 marks, caused difficulties. *Tênis/tênnis/sapatilhas* were all acceptable. There was great confusion as to what the trainers were hanging from. Any answer mentioning *os fios/cabos elétricos/fiação elétrica* scored a mark.
- 2g)** The question required the candidate to refer to *numa favela indiana há um espírito mais aberto/livre/informal* OR reference to a less open spirit in a Brazilian *favela*. Without a reference to the country, no mark was awarded.
- 2h)** This question was not successfully answered, and only a small number gave the correct answer.
- 2i)** and **2j)** were correctly answered by most.
- 2k)** The answer had to include a reference to the cost of *alugar/aluguel*.

Section B, Q.3:

This was a task to link up the correct two parts of a phrase with reference to the meaning contained in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the text *A luta contra a malária em São Tomé e Príncipe*. Where candidates make multiple attempts at the box filling, they must ensure that they clarify which is the answer to be marked – this should be in the box, or near to it, and all other workings crossed out – otherwise the Examiner is duty bound to mark the answer wrong. To avoid messy crossing out, encourage the candidates to initially select their choice in pencil.

Q 4(a – g):

This exercise was executed well by over 50% of candidates. Candidates had to read Paragraph 3 of the text (on the fight against malaria), and find the synonyms for the words. Whilst marking, it became evident that some candidates had not understood the instructions, or they did not have an understanding of the text.

Q. 5:

The instruction was to read Paragraph 4 (Fight against malaria) and, mindful of the sense of the text, manipulate the language to fit the gaps. (a) A passive construction was expected, together with agreement (*foi lançada*), or reflexive (*lançou-se*). *Lançou* was not accepted. *Recuação* was not accepted. For (f), a present participle was anticipated (*registando-se*), but very few candidates used this, and chose instead a past tense. There were other acceptable verbs for (j) apart from *erradicar* such as *eliminar, acabar com, matar, banir, and parar*

It is wrong to include a choice of two answers, and the Examiner will mark both wrong.

Q. 6:

As with Task 9, it is important that candidates use their own words in their answers, and do not copy the text. One or two words of ‘lifting’ are acceptable, but the Examiners want candidates to express themselves using their own words. The Quality of Language mark for this section is adjusted downwards where candidates copy entire phrases.

Weaker candidates managed to score some marks across the exercise, though, generally they came unstuck at 6c(ii). A strong contingent omitted to mention the names of the two islands, so there was confusion as to which one was being referred to. Some chose to ignore this particular question because it was almost ‘too much’ for them. The best thing to do is ‘have a go’ and try and write something. Before the examination, candidates must practise reading longer texts in the target language so that they can assimilate such texts when under examination conditions.

Q. 7:

This is a transfer of meaning task, and does not have to be translated. Examiners are expecting to see the transfer of the main points of each sentence, with 2 marks maximum awarded for interpretation of each of the 5 sentences. It is obvious that many candidates found the task very difficult, but Examiners have been impressed overall with the efforts made, and original transfers of meaning.

However, English spelling was challenging and candidates were not sure about how to spell 'Angolan' with many writing 'angolian'with no capital letter either. 'Fiction writer' was very often rendered as 'fictionnist' (not accepted) and 'portrait' was used for 'portray'. Most candidates transferred *na qualidade de ficcionista* into 'quality of fictionnist/ficcionist', but where the meaning was conveyed, the mark was awarded.

In future years, it would be helpful if candidates would write in double-lined spacing for this task. Candidates, particularly for this exercise, should make sure that what they are writing makes sense, and 'flows' well, and that they capture the essence of the text, sentence by sentence. It is, therefore, a good idea, once the task is finished, for the candidate to relax for a short while and read his/her work over to ensure that it makes sense.

Q. 8 (a – f):

This task deals with word classification, and also tests the range of the candidate's lexicography. Where the candidate recognizes that a noun/present participle/adjective with agreement, adverbial phrase is required, then that is the foundation of success for achieving top marks. For (b) a present participle was expected, and for (c) an agreement was anticipated as in the model (*motivadas*). Candidates generally found [e] and [f] challenging because they had to come up with two different phrases for substantially similar notions.

Whilst a solid number of candidates used one-word answers to explain the words, based on and interpreting the meanings inherent in the text (*A literatura angolana em perspectiva*), another group of candidates chose to give their own definition of the word/phrase in sentence format.

Both approaches are valid, though Examiners prefer the former one, in which candidates base their interpretation of the meaning solely on the meaning of the word/phrase in the text.

Q. 9 (a – e):

The questions were based on the second text about Angolan literature.

(a) Most answered and were awarded 2 marks. (b) In order to answer this, and include the 3 different answers, candidate had to have a good understanding of the text. Some candidates resorted to 'copying' because they could not find other ways of expressing the answers.

(c) Candidates mostly scored one mark here for the notion of a better future of Angola, or for understanding themselves better. (d) To many it was obvious that a subjunctive form was required here, though candidates did find alternative strategies, e.g. an infinitive, but somehow, this masked a potential inability to construct a subjunctive response. (e) Too many candidates answered this by selecting the words from the text: *uma . . . fontes . . . sobrevivência material*. The answers were quite straightforward money/income and daily needs. Generally, candidates were not clear-thinking about answering this last question.

Q. 10:

Based on Paragraph 5, and a gap-filling exercise, these two phrases seemed straightforward enough. In (a), (second gap) many candidates overlooked what should follow *quanto* (*ao*); and that *após* is not followed by *de*, therefore implying that some other conjunction is required. Candidates must look for clues.

In (b), in the first gap Examiners were looking for more than merely *importante*, such as *necessário/fundamental/imprescindível/obrigatório*. The second gap required a subjunctive (*deixem*) and the more observant candidates recognized this.

Section C, Q. 11 – 18

As mentioned above, one of the most popular essay topics for 2014 was No.11 (*Temas sociais*): *A lei e a ordem pública – a agitação civil*, followed closely by No.13, *O meio ambiente*, and No.18 *Temas culturais*, writing about a music festival.

Most candidates managed to write more than 250 words, and this is essential in order to deal substantially with a topic. Essays must always include references to Portuguese-speaking communities/nations. One candidate wrote about a festival of Portuguese music in an area of London where there is a large Portuguese-speaking community, and this was very relevant. Other essays on this topic featured festivals in Brazil and Angola. With such a topic, it is easy for the candidate to become ‘carried away’ in their excitement to describe their experiences. However, it is always useful before starting to write, to make a plan of what should be included and also reflect on what is being asked, so that the candidate stays ‘on track’.

Featured in the 2014 examination were topics requiring essays, a letter to the local newspaper, and three articles for the school magazine. When writing a letter to the newspaper it is important to consider the type of language to be used, and a ‘formal’ register; whilst writing for the school magazine will invoke a more informal, relaxed and maybe, humorous register. It is hoped that candidates have the opportunity to practise the different styles required, in their work leading up to the examination.

The Examiners were impressed with many essays, but particularly the strength of emotions and related vocabulary in No.11, Civil Unrest; the sincerity to be found in the hopes and aspirations for the Environment (No.13), always popular; the lively, and evocative language used when describing music festivals (No.18); and arguing the advantages and disadvantages of there being a wind farm built adjacent to their school.

The first thing that the Examiner looks for is the candidate’s points of view, and the relevance of the response. Secondly, the structure and analysis over the entirety of the essay is considered. Is there an introduction to the topic, a substantial middle part, and then conclusions? These are easy things to overlook for candidates who do not do much essay-writing throughout the year. Next, the accuracy of the Quality of Language is evaluated, such as grammatical awareness, e.g. errors in verb forms, genders of nouns, adjectival agreements, accents, simple and complex sentence structures. Finally, the Examiner considers the range of the Quality of Language, and how varied the vocabulary is. Has the candidate been repetitive in what he/she has written? Has the candidate used complex, compound tenses and interesting syntax? Is there evidence of the subjunctive? These are all the ingredients that go to create a good quality essay which Examiners like to see. One lovely proverb that a candidate used when writing about *O meio ambiente* (No.13) was *quem não tem cão caça com gato*. The ability of the candidate to vary their language and interject a wide-ranging vocabulary is very nice to read.

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