

GCE

Portuguese

Advanced GCE A2 **H596**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H196**

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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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 what considers task 3, most candidates managed to understand the information from the text they listened to. However 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, 7.

In regards to task 8, candidates expressed themselves with general good linguistic proficiency and quality of language. In spite of this, 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 features that describe an ideal city.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question No.1

The majority of the answers were correct despite the fact that e, f and h were common errors. Only a few candidates left one or two answers in blank. To get good marks, candidates needed to provide the correct answer by using their grammatical and vocabulary knowledge on the spot.

Question No.2

Full awarded responses 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 recording that they were listening to instead of choosing words that made sense. Some candidates swapped the answers for gaps e, f and g. It was important to perceive the difference between *poderá* and *deverá* for gap i. In addition, some candidates used other words for answer j, again for using their common sense rather than focusing on the audio track.

Question No.3

Good responses at Higher Tier automatically provided full answers as requested in the questions. Many excellent responses contained detailed information to all the questions. Other candidates need to develop more thoroughly their answers and listen carefully to the recording in order to grasp specific information.

For example, candidates at Higher Tier showed perfect understanding of the difference between *cheap* and *cheaper*, *close* and *closer*, *doze* and *dois*. The benefit of the doubt was given many times considering that some candidates reveal poor expression in English regarding the concept of *traditional travel packages*. To answer question f, only a small group of candidates used their solid understanding of geography as there is a conceptual difference between *travelling towards the east* and *travelling to East/Orient countries*.

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 *voar* instead of *viajar* for *flying*. Furthermore, an outstanding use of verb tenses was vital. Answers such as “gosto de voar” and “quanto custa” were accepted for communication but did not get marks for Quality of Language as candidates needed to use different structures of Future tense and ideally the Conditional (*gostaria de viajar*) or the Imperfect followed by infinitive (*gostava de viajar*) provided that the concept of wish and intention was expressed. Finally, some candidates omitted the idea of “really” and “next” which was necessary.

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 candidates at Higher Tier revealed a solid knowledge of vocabulary (they were able to perceive the difference between *função* and *funcionamento*) but also reading skills. Again, providing the contact with a wide variety of textual sources is important during the course as only a few students knew what *terramoto de 1755* was. Also, to get full marks, candidates needed to be able to distinguish between Present and Future (*têm/terá*).

Question No. 7

Responses at Higher Tier 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. In addition, where candidates did not mention all the elements to answer a question, full marks were not awarded.

Answers 7i, 7n and 7o were common errors due to confusion between *habilidades* and *qualidades*. Some answers were not answered at all, whereas others were so incomplete that lacked clarity.

Finally, responses at Higher Tier showed a tense agreement, ie, when questions were in the past, candidates answered in the past.

Question No. 8a

Responses at Higher Tier revealed an understanding of the task in itself (*Explique que pormenores são importantes*) but also the ability to paraphrase instead of commenting on the details from the original source.

Question No. 8b

Some excellent responses contained detailed and specific elements that provided a concrete description of the ideal city of the future. To achieve their full potential, candidates are recommended to read magazines and newspapers in order to obtain ideas that will allow them to describe thoroughly and precisely what they can find in a city.

F888 Listening, Reading and Writing (2)

This 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. While 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. There is ongoing confusion over the spelling of the third person plural preterite, with some candidates writing, for example, *pararão* for *pararam*. This was the case even when the correct form of the verb appeared in the text or the question! The written accents, too, continue to cause problems, and Centres are urged to impress upon candidates the need for accurate spelling.

It is noted that there were 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, 200 million people unemployed in Brazil). In 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.

SECTION A: Listening and Writing

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.

In response to 1(b), many candidates explained *why* Coluna acquired his nickname (because he was a prolific goalscorer) rather than *how* he got it (from a journalist).

For 1(c), many candidates were not specific enough, writing that Eusébio called Coluna ‘you’ rather than noting that he used the ‘*você*’ form of address.

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. The Portuguese for *alcohol* and *alcoholic* were very frequently misspelt. In response to 2(d), many candidates wrote of ‘reducing’ rather than ‘preventing’ alcohol consumption.

In 2(f)(i), there was, unfortunately, widespread confusion between *descriminalização* and *discriminação*, with the latter altering the meaning of the response and so losing the mark. Question 2(h) proved demanding for some candidates who wrote about the dilemma being between *justiça* and *saúde*. This may be the dilemma for those dealing with drug dependents but not for the dependents themselves, where the text is clear that the choice is between wanting to stop taking drugs and wanting to carry on.

SECTION B: Reading and Writing

Tarefa 3

Many candidates achieved high marks for this task. Those who performed less well might have benefited from more practice in this kind of exercise.

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. Marks were sometimes lost, astonishingly, by candidates failing to copy correctly from the text (eg by leaving the accent off *porém*).

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.

Tarefa 5

This task was also well done. Pleasingly, many candidates noted the need for the future subjunctive in (f) and the present subjunctive in (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 *nutricionista* and *sanitárias* (incorrectly rendered as *sanitary*)

Tarefa 8

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

Tarefa 9

This task was also well done by the majority of candidates.

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. In question 10(a), many candidates overlooked the matter of the contents, *composição*, of the sandwiches.

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 about equality rather than equality of opportunity. Good answers used specific examples (eg the position of women in Angola) to develop convincing arguments.

Q 12: Although popular, this title elicited less convincing responses, and examiners were disappointed to read largely generalised comment on how ‘sad’ unemployment is and how ‘the government should do something’. As noted above, specific details (eg genuine statistics, examples firmly rooted in specific towns or communities) are required.

Q 13: Many good responses were written by candidates who clearly had knowledge and understanding of the topic of recycling.

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

Q 15: Unfortunately, many of the candidates who chose this question displayed little or no real knowledge of the topic, with very limited discussion of any convincing reasons why science should or should not be regarded as the most important school subject. Examiners would have expected some mention of specific scientific progress or achievements, for example, to back up candidates’ opinions.

Q 16: This was a very popular choice of essay title. Good answers focused, as the question demanded, on one particular technological advance (most commonly the mobile ‘phone or the internet). However, many candidates ignored the requirement to focus the answer on a Portuguese-speaking community or country, and examiners were not impressed by vague references to how ‘nearly everyone in Portugal / Brazil has a mobile / uses the internet’.

Q 17: Some interesting responses were elicited by this question, and examiners rewarded thoughtful considerations of, for example, the extent to which the Portuguese language might unite countries such as Angola. There was usually, however, less emphasis on the *cultural* aspects of the question than examiners would like (culture being the overarching topic area for Qs 17 and 18).

Q 18: There were very few responses to this question.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

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