

GCE

Portuguese

Advanced GCE A2 **H596**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H196**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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 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. Also, in some cases, it seemed that lack of knowledge of vocabulary prevented candidates from making the best choices.

In 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. Secondly, many candidates used Portuguese to answer a couple of questions.

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 as well (tasks 3, 7).

In task 8, candidates expressed themselves with generally good linguistic proficiency and quality of language, although they did not always follow instructions accurately. 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. For task 8b, some candidates responded to it whereas others focused on the ideas already discussed in task 8a, therefore losing marks.

It is advisable for teachers to encourage their learners to read more widely throughout their courses to increase their repertoire of ideas and appropriate vocabulary in order to maximise their performance in this part of the exam.

Another crucial point to the overall success of this paper is to inform candidates that their handwriting also plays a key element in their exams.

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.

Question No.2

Fully 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.

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

For example, candidates at Higher Tier were able to express themselves because they possessed adequate professional/academic vocabulary, such as “application letter”, “application form”, “identification documents”. Some candidates reverted to Portuguese or wrote expressions that are not acceptable in English. It is therefore recommended that centres teach this kind of vocabulary in advance. Also, many candidates were not acquainted with the word “headquarters” (of a club, for instance). Most answered with ‘club’ whereas others reverted to Portuguese and were awarded 0 marks.

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 did not fall for the false friend *form* for *forma*. Furthermore, an outstanding use of verb tenses was vital. Answers such as “estava orgulhoso” and “o trabalho é enviado” were accepted for communication but did not get marks for Quality of Language as candidates needed to use different structures of the Past (*Fiquei muito orgulhoso*) and Future tense (*será enviado*) and ideally the Conditional (*Gostaria de agradecer*). Finally, in this task some candidates did not use accents. Centres need to reinforce the fact that use of accents in Portuguese is not only crucial for getting the correct meaning across but also a distinctive feature of the language and must be used appropriately.

Question No.5

Good responses at the Higher Tier automatically provided the only possible word to fill in the gaps in all answers. Most candidates did well in this task.

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 identify fixed expressions such as *frequentar a escola, nunca é tarde para aprender, venda ambulante*) but also reading skills. Again, providing the contact with a wide variety of textual sources is important during the course as there was an obvious tendency in 6i to choose the wrong “*bancada*” instead of “*carteira*”. This mistake happened across the diverse range of candidates' origins and proficiencies (European Portuguese/Brazilian Portuguese; high/low proficiency candidates). For those who do not recognise the expression “sentar-se numa carteira da escola”, the name “*bancada*” would be the obvious choice, since it is the only word in the chart given that is suitable for “sitting on” (as requested by the exercise).

Question No. 7

Responses at Higher Tier were full and very detailed as candidates managed to paraphrase and use their own words. All the answers that evidenced lifted material from the text were given low marks in Quality of Language. Therefore, centres should encourage students to paraphrase. In addition, where candidates did not mention all the elements to answer a question, full marks were not awarded.

Answers 7gi, ii and iii proved to be challenging to candidates as many implied that “*Teletu*” was a phone when in fact it is an app. Few candidates understood the meaning of “*criatividade*” and “*empatia*”.

Question No. 8a

Responses at Higher Tier revealed an understanding of the task in itself but also the ability to paraphrase instead of commenting on the details from the original source. On the other hand, responses at Lower Tier showed that students used the given text as a source of inspiration to discuss how the economic crisis affects families nowadays.

Finally, the majority of candidates were not able to express or did not realise the distinction in the text between Past ("a sociedade industrial e migratória") and Present ("atualmente...movimenta a sociedade no sentido oposto")

Question No. 8b

Some excellent responses contained detailed, specific and personal elements that provided an insight to the candidates' views on current family relationships. To achieve their full potential, candidates are recommended to read magazines, newspapers as well as see films or read novels that focus on family relationships in order to obtain a better picture of these affairs.

F888 Listening, Reading and Writing (2)

General Comments:

It is pleasing to report that the 2016 A2 paper was done well by the many candidates who had clearly been well prepared for the examination by their Centres.

As in previous years, 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.

Unfortunately, once again this year there were some scripts that suggested 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 given were based on other sections of the texts.

It has been reported in the past that some candidates write answers to Tarefas 6 and 10 which are excessively long, often with irrelevant material simply copied from the reading texts. It is pleasing to note that this was less of an issue this year, with most candidates keeping their responses concise and to-the-point.

Nevertheless, the most significant area of concern for Examiners remains the poor quality of written Portuguese submitted by a significant number of candidates. This issue has rightly been raised in previous reports and 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 continues to be considerable confusion over the spelling of the third person plural preterite, with some candidates writing, for example, *dependiãõ* for *dependiam* as part of their answer to Q.2(f). The present tense of *estar* was similarly garbled, with some candidates writing *estam* instead of *estão*. Written accents, too, continue to cause problems, and Centres are urged to impress upon candidates the need for accurate spelling.

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. Examiners were not impressed by the way some candidates tried to 'invent' supporting evidence, with too many cases of spurious percentages and vague, nameless surveys referenced in an attempt to suggest a more detailed grasp of the topic than was the

case. 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, genuinely 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:

SECTION A: Listening and Writing

Task 1: Listening

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

Q1(c) proved a little difficult for some candidates who struggled to explain what was meant by *lusofonia*. On the other hand, many candidates successfully conveyed the sense of Portuguese still being spoken in Macao.

Tarefa 2: Compreensão auditiva

This section presented very few difficulties in terms of comprehension, although once again it did provide early indications of some of the limitations in grammar, vocabulary and spelling demonstrated by some candidates. For example, in Q.2(a) there were many incorrect renderings of the Portuguese for *content*, while the meaning of *absorvente* proved difficult. In Q.2(c), many candidates attempted to respond using a subjunctive but failed to use the correct form or spelt it incorrectly. Centres are reminded that candidates are expected at this level to have a clear, sound grasp of all verb forms listed in the Specification.

In Q2(g), most candidates correctly noted that the *fazendeiros* felt abandoned by the monarchy, but only a few added that they had been longstanding supporters of the throne; most candidates wrote that the *fazendeiros* ended up supporting the republican cause, which is mentioned in the listening text but which does not answer the question.

Some responses to Q.2(l) simply said that ‘the plan / project was very old’, omitting to say what the plan was (to move the capital).

Most candidates scored one of the two marks for Q.2(m), noting the rivalries and disagreements within the Brazilian Imperial Family, but a much smaller number scored the second mark for mentioning what the rivalries are about (the disputed right to the throne).

SECTION B: Reading and Writing

Tarefa 3

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

For Q.3(b), some candidates incorrectly chose B instead of E, presumably tripped up by a false reading of what B actually says (that the pupils are 7 and 14 years old, not that they are between 7 and 14).

Tarefa 4

This task was well done by 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 (e.g. by leaving accents off).

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.

It should be stressed once again that the EXACT equivalents of the words or phrases in the question must be found; too many candidates simply ‘download’ entire sentences or clauses and so lose marks. Centres are referred to the answers in the Mark Scheme, which illustrate how this exercise works.

Tarefa 5

This task was also well done, although in Q.5(g) a significant number of candidates wrote *os* instead of *aos*, missing the point that *alunos* is an indirect object here.

Tarefa 6

Performance here was generally good, but some 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. There were many pleasingly expressed answers to Q.6(f), showing good understanding and interpretation of the parent's remarks in the text.

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.

Key items of lexis misunderstood included *entrada* (often rendered as *entry*), *moradores* and *alagadas*. On the other hand, there were many pleasing and interesting renderings of *foi erguido do zero*.

Tarefa 8

This task was generally well done by most candidates. Some candidates wrote unnecessarily long sentences where a simple word or short phrase would have sufficed. Curiously, Q.8(b) was a problem for a number of candidates who might have been expected to know a word as common as *complain*.

Tarefa 9

This task was also well done by the majority of candidates. In Q.9(a), a large number of candidates used the future tense rather than the past, rendering the response inaccurate.

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 Q.10(a), many candidates overlooked the idea of the company specifically taking on people to carry out inspections and repairs. Q.10(b) and Q.10(d) were usually answered correctly.

SECTION C: Writing

Here it is worth repeating comments made in previous reports. This year it was again obvious that 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.

Where 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. Such candidates are attracted by questions such as Q.15, mistakenly thinking that some well-intended but unsubstantiated opinions on computers or mobile telephones will suffice. 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, and writing too much or too little is steadily declining as an issue. However, poor spelling remained a significant feature of very large numbers of responses.

Candidates are also reminded that there are 15 marks available for Structure and Analysis, and are therefore urged to plan their essays carefully, demonstrating an ability to develop an argument and to examine or analyse the information and data they choose to offer; they are also urged to avoid repetition, and to ensure the conclusion matches the introduction: an essay that begins, 'I strongly agree (with the wording of the question) but ends, 'And so I agree to some extent...' does not demonstrate a convincing structure.

Q 11: This was one of the most popular titles, but many candidates wrote in very broad terms about gender inequality, with sweeping generalisations about men working while women cook. Better answers pointed to specific examples, with many candidates pointing to, for example, Dilma Rousseff as evidence of changing roles and attitudes.

Q 12: The small number of candidates who chose this title usually performed well, offering specific examples and good references to Portuguese-speaking countries or communities.

Q 13: This was a reasonably popular title. The quality of answers varied a good deal, with better responses discussing specific examples of the natural world under threat or, alternatively, under protection. Weaker answers tended to offer vague assertions about the need to preserve the planet.

Q 14: This question was also quite popular, with many candidates showing some good knowledge and understanding of both traditional and newer energy sources.

Q 15: As noted above, this question was popular as it seemed to offer an opportunity to write about something the candidate would feel comfortable with: technology. Unfortunately, some candidates overlooked the specific focus of the question, the possible overdependence of school pupils on technology, and wrote in very general terms about the benefits and / or disadvantages of modern technology. As in previous years, Examiners were disappointed to see the misspelling *technologia* rather too often.

Q 16: Very few candidates answered this question.

Q 17: There were very few responses to this question.

Q 18: A small number of candidates answered this question. Generally, the responses were good, as candidates needed to have some detailed knowledge of a named politician.

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