

GCSE

Portuguese

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J736**

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

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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A831 Listening

General comments

Most candidates dealt well with most of the paper.

Multiple choice questions differentiated between candidates effectively. Candidates achieved higher grades when they paid more attention to detail.

Exercises that require answers in English continue to cause some problems. Many candidates seemed to find it difficult to express certain expressions and idioms.

Centres should continue to encourage candidates to answer all questions as not responding results in no marks.

Comments on individual questions

Exercise 1

Questions 1-5 were well answered by most candidates. Occasionally Q1 saw a few candidates tick image A instead of C.

Exercise 2

Questions 6-12 presented very few incorrect answers. Sometimes in Q10 answer A was given instead of B.

Exercise 3

Many candidates scored full marks in this exercise. These candidates listened carefully and used the words or very short sentences in the text to produce the correct answers.

In question 15, wrong answers included: go abroad, fly around the world, make travels. The straightforward answer “travel” was not as frequent as expected.

Question 16 saw rejected the singular “in (an)other language”, as well as the all-inclusive “in every language”.

Exercise 4

This exercise was about Leisure. It required attention to detail and knowledge of idioms. It differentiated well between weaker and stronger candidates.

Question 21 was generally correct. Some candidates answered “photographs”, which was rejected. Spelling mistakes were not penalised when they created no ambiguity.

Question 22 was also generally correct. The correct answer was “enough light”, but examiners also accepted “a lot of light” and “good light(ing)”.

Question 23 saw “go shopping” rejected as the correct answer was “go to the shopping centre/mall”.

Question 24 required the answer “window shop” / “go window shopping”. This challenged the candidates’ knowledge of the English idiom. It also tested their knowledge of Portuguese as the weaker candidates did not understand the word “montras”. A good number of candidates failed to produce the correct answer. Wrong answers included: “look at shops”, “look at shop displays”, “look at the clothes on the window”, “see clothes”, “shop displays”, “see the front of the shops”.

Exercise 5

To get full marks in this exercise, candidates had to pay attention to detail. Many candidates failed to do so. However, there were some excellent answers where full marks were attributed.

Question 25 was generally well answered. Most candidates answered only “traffic lights”, which was accepted; some included “more”. The negative answer “there are no traffic lights” was rejected.

Question 26a had “bus timetables/schedules at the bus stops” as the correct answer. Many candidates failed to provide full details. Vital parts of the answer, such as “timetables” or “bus stops”, were often missed out and resulted in no marks.

Question 26b required “more road signs”. Also accepted was: “more signs on the roads”. The following were rejected: “road signs” / “traffic signs” on their own, “more traffic signals”, “more signals for the cars”, “traffic plaques”, “traffic lights”.

Question 27 required the inclusion of “centre”/ “old town (centre)”. Many candidates saw their answer rejected when they answered only “no cars (allowed)”.

Question 28 produced a variety of wrong answers. A good number of candidates did not know the word “calçada”, a greater number could not express it in English. The correct answer was “new pavement”, and “sidewalk” was also accepted. Examples of incorrect answers were: “new road”, “new street”, “new floor”, “new pathway”, “new pedestrian road”, “new walking area”, with a few candidates writing “new shoe shop”.

Question 29a sums a good number of correct answers. Some candidates found it difficult to express “edificios antiguos”. Examiners accepted “monuments”, but rejected “old houses/flats”.

Question 29b differentiated well between candidates, requiring attention to detail and a clear answer. “Library” had to be “open for longer / more time / more hours” and not “more often” or “more times”.

Exercise 6

Questions 30-35 were generally done very well.

Exercise 7

Questions 36-39 were generally done well, but did challenge some of the best candidates, as expected at this stage.

Exercise 8

Questions 40-45 were also generally done well. They too differentiated effectively.

A832 Speaking

General comments

In general, there was evidence of carefully prepared examining with teacher/examiners conducting the Speaking tests well and guiding efficiently the candidates so they could achieve the best marks.

Most candidates were well prepared and were aware of what the test involved, producing information confidently and spontaneously without being prompted.

Preparation time was effectively used after teacher/examiners had taken time to explain to candidates what was expected of them. Well prepared Speaking Test Notes were a useful tool for the candidates while presenting their chosen topic. These forms are to be retained in the centre.

Candidates were gently guided through their tests by teacher/examiners who started by asking direct questions leading on to open-ended questions. With open-ended questions candidates were able to offer relevant information and to develop and justify their ideas and points of view using a variety of tenses and structures. A good balance of closed and open-ended questions is essential for candidates to produce the best quality content and communication. Weaker candidates were encouraged to do their best through sympathetic and supportive questioning.

To allow candidates the best use of their time, teacher/examiners kept their questions succinct. As candidates are assessed for quality of language separately in each part of the test, teacher/examiners encouraged candidates to use different tenses in both parts of the Speaking Test.

Speaking tests should be timed in Part 1 from when the candidate starts their presentation and Part 2 from the start of the first answer.

Most tests were well recorded on a single track and both the candidate and the teacher/examiner were clearly audible.

Mark sheets were generally duly completed with the topic titles accompanied most of the recordings, to be externally marked.

Comments on individual questions

Part 1 - Presentation and Discussion

Part 1 allows the candidate to choose any topic of their interest and as a result, candidates showed great enthusiasm and knowledge in their Presentation.

Candidates presented their chosen and well prepared topics for 1 minute, without interruption. This was followed by the discussion where teacher/examiner offered the opportunity for candidates to express and develop their opinions using complex language features and a variety of structures, including consistent manipulation of verb tenses. Questions were re-phrased or changed as appropriate for each candidate.

Part 2 - General Conversation

Most teacher/examiners offered the candidates a choice of three topics from the list printed on the Random Order Sheet after completing Part 1 of the Speaking Test.

More fluent and confident candidates responded fully to all questions, expressing opinions and using relevant information when providing and developing justifications. Candidates were able to achieve higher marks when teacher/examiners asked questions that lead candidates to use a greater variety of tenses and other verbal structures.

Weaker and less confident candidates were introduced to the General Conversation chosen topic with, initially, more specific questions as lead-in to more open-ended questions, where candidates were then able to show initiative and attempt to develop their answers.

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:

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

Teacher/Examiners should:

- prepare carefully by carefully reading the Teacher Instructions booklet.
- 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

General comments

The majority of the candidates showed good language skills when responding to the exam questions. There were however a percentage that did not respond at all or responded inadequately in English.

Comments on individual questions

Exercise 1

Question No. 1-5

Most were answered correctly.

Q 5 - Very few candidates answered E (lanches e comida de festa) instead of B (copos e pratos de plástico). The interpretation of the pictures and possibly the text, led to the wrong choice.

Exercise 2

Questions No 6 - 12

Again the majority of candidates fared well in this exercise.

In Q 10 few candidates indicated G instead of B. They were not familiar with 'Educação Física' meaning PE and read it as 'Physics', choosing the wrong letter.

Exercise 3

Questions No 13 - 18

Generally well answered. The text was clear and candidates did not have a problem interpreting it and choosing the correct answer.

Exercise 4

Questions No 19 - 24

In this exercise, the candidates were asked questions about sport activities of 8 different people. The vast number of candidates responded appropriately. Some dropped names like 'Bararbara and Fernando' several times in different places and 'Larissa' which was correct for Q23, was entered in other questions that tended to indicate they didn't read the text properly or didn't know the vocabulary.

Exercise 5

Questions No 25 - 31

This exercise required candidates to read a longer text with more complex tenses and vocabulary.

This group posed some problems for the candidates whose command of English was not secure.

Q 25 - Well answered but a small number used the word 'doctor' or 'was a doctor' and lost a mark.

Q 26 - Produced a variety of correct answers but where the English wasn't strong, different pronouns were used. The word 'fathers' - as a direct translation from Portuguese for 'Pais' - was also used.

Q 27 - Did not cause much confusion except for a very small number that used '20 years'.

Q 28 - A good number of candidates wrote 'people in all areas', as well as words such as 'employer and employee' that were interchanged in this response. The correct answer was 'workers or medical staff'.

Q29 - The MS required that the candidates mentioned 'area of medicine' or 'medical specialization'. Many had difficulty in translating this idea and used words like 'job', 'profession', 'area of work', or 'type of job'.

Q 30 - Mostly answered correctly.

Q 31 - This answer asked for 'studying abroad' and the majority did not include the word 'abroad'. Some said in Europe, out of Angola.

Exercise 6

Questions No 32 - 37

This was another multiple choice exercise and did not pose major problems and most candidates answered correctly.

Qs 35 and 37 had more errors. In Q 37 some candidates did not understand that Ruben 'slept in a tent' and chose the 'under the stars'.

Exercise 7

Questions No 38 - 44

Q 38 - The question required an adjective to qualify bread: wholemeal, healthy, etc. Many candidates only wrote fruit and bread and lost a mark.

Q39 - didn't raise many problems as asked for 'increase the price of the meal'.

Q40 - The command of English caused few problems. It asked for 'contact', 'inform', 'warn' the parents but many students didn't know how to say it.

Q 41 - some candidates either did not understand the text or gave a hurried answer saying that 'it was not enough ' when it should be 'after a while he felt hungry'. Some confused 'hungry' with 'angry'.

Q 42 - a number of candidates didn't know the word 'vending' and used a variety of words such as 'machine that sells food', 'machine with healthy food' and so on.

Exercise 8

Question No. 45 - 50

This exercise intentionally demanded a lot from the candidates. It proved to be difficult to majority of them.

Q 45 - 'essenciais/significantes' were necessary to gain a mark. Many didn't manage to obtain it.

Q 46 - required a verb and a noun, i.e. 'causam confusão' would have been enough to gain a mark.

Q 47 - was misinterpreted by many candidates and they did not include the idea of time (pouco tempo) which lost them a mark.

Q 48 - Although the question was easy, the candidates lost marks for not paying attention to the stem of the question that carried a negative and they included another negative, 'não queriam' instead of 'queriam'.

Q 49 - in general this question posed no major problems and many alternative answers were accepted.

Q 50 – some candidates erroneously used 'desenhou'

A834 Writing

General comments

It is a pleasure to see that many candidates come to the exam well prepared and are able to follow instructions and produce good quality work. Centres are to be given credit for their role in preparing candidates.

Many pieces of writing were legible and contained appropriate punctuation. It is important that the intended meaning is clear and so the work can be assessed fairly. Sometimes a very lengthy piece of writing can prove difficult to read and candidates are advised to bear this in mind.

Marks for Communication are awarded for relevant material produced in response to the task title. Where simple opinions, such as *gosto de porque* were used or where long pieces of narrative were produced, the mark for Communication would be restricted to no higher than 6. Many candidates were able to obtain higher marks which are reserved for pieces which contain development of ideas and opinions. There was increased interference from Spanish, in particular Spanish spellings of words that are similar to their Portuguese equivalent.

Some candidates still answer more than two, and indeed usually five, questions although this was less common this year. It is appropriate to complete two pieces of writing to a high standard in one hour, with the opportunity to express and develop ideas and to include a variety of language.

Mistakes in basic language can affect the mark for Quality of Language 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 confusion between *fui* and *foi*.

Although a number of well written pieces did not have a range of tenses and so this restricted the mark, in fact many candidates could use a range of tenses, as well as subjunctives, subordinate clauses and inflected infinitives with accuracy and apparent ease. These features can allow candidates to access the higher marks.

Candidates are advised to adhere to the word count. An essay of 150 words has the capacity for three or four well developed ideas and examiners were pleased to see some very detailed pieces with ambitious development. Where a significantly longer piece of work was offered examiners were not able to assess all of the work for Quality of Language. Often this meant that the most sophisticated and ambitious language, usually written in response to bullet points four and five, in particular the use of *se* + subjunctive was outside of the work which could be assessed. A candidate who is aiming to reach grade A or A* should plan carefully and produce a piece of the required length which includes the more sophisticated language. A piece containing a range of clause types, with consistent manipulation of structures and tense will have access to high marks and candidates are advised to keep this in mind when planning their work, thus avoiding a lengthy piece of writing in the present tense.

Comments on individual questions

QUESTION 1

Many candidates could relate to this topic very well. Almost all candidates chose to structure their answer using the bullet points. They were asked to write about themselves and the people they lived with, however bullet point three sometimes led candidates to write about a day they spent with friends rather than family members.

In many answers the first three bullet points led to a good deal of narrative and more able candidates are well advised to keep this part of the answer brief. Where there was a good deal of detail in response to the last two bullet points this allowed for sophisticated work and the opportunity to gain a high mark for Communication.

QUESTION 2

Many scripts contained a good deal of factual information about a variety of sports; football was the most popular choice but there were many others, too. Candidates are reminded that each question that they choose to answer should contain ideas and points of view which they are able to explain in detail.

The response to the fourth bullet point often contained quite simple reasons for liking a particular sport but the fifth bullet point added a level of detail which enhanced the work.

QUESTION 3

This was a popular choice and many answers demonstrated the candidate's level of maturity. Many candidates wrote in detail about a day out with friends and where this contained opinions as well as facts it often helped to raise the mark awarded.

Almost all candidates were able to express a range of opinions about social media, usually explaining both advantages and disadvantages. Where an answer gave detailed reasons in response to the last two bullet points it was likely to be awarded a high mark for Communication.

QUESTION 4

The task asked candidates to write a report for a travel magazine about their ideal holiday home. Where candidates followed this instruction there were some very high quality answers containing plenty of detail and often a good deal of imagination. Unfortunately there was widespread misunderstanding of the title and a significant number of candidates wrote about their ideal holiday or about a school holiday which they had spent at home. Where they followed the first three bullet points the material was relevant to the answer and was credited although the answer could not be deemed to be fully relevant.

Where a full answer was provided in response to the task title the work often contained a rich vocabulary as well as a good range of verbal structures. Many candidates chose to have their holiday home in a Portuguese speaking country and often wrote about it from personal experience, demonstrating good knowledge and a real affection for the chosen country.

QUESTION 5

Many candidates chose to focus on their work experience and gave a good account, usually with details about their preferences and perhaps a desire to make this their future career choice. The task asked candidates to write about where they would like to work in the future and responses which were not restricted to an account of work already undertaken were often able to score highly.

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