

GCSE

Portuguese

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J736**

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

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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:

Overall this was a very good examination with a variety of suitable topics. It was in touch with current times and trends in its references to technology and healthy lifestyles. The majority of candidates achieved very high marks.

Multiple choice questions differentiated well between candidates. Where candidates failed, this seems to have been due to some degree of inattentiveness.

Many candidates still found it difficult to express certain expressions and idioms in English.

Almost all questions were attempted by a majority of candidates, but 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 B and, less frequently, C instead of A.

Exercise 2

Questions 6-12 presented very few incorrect answers. Sometimes in Q6 answer C 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 13, the following answers were rejected: “(get a) sun tan”, “get sunny weather” or “see the sun”.

In question 14, the word “sorvete” (ice cream) was not recognised by a large number of candidates. In some cases, candidates were able to recognise the English cognate “sorbet”, which then produced a great variety of spellings. Incorrect spellings of “sorbet” were accepted.

In question 15, wrong answers included: surfing, jet skiing, skiing (on its own). There were many spelling mistakes in the word “skiing” that were not penalised.

Question 17 required the straightforward “unpack” as an answer, but saw a wide variety of answers being given. Answers not accepted included: “open her luggage” or “put her bags away”. Alternative acceptable answers were: “Make the most of/enjoy the heat”.

Exercise 4

This exercise required attention to detail. It differentiated well between weaker and stronger candidates.

Question 19 some candidates answered “food” on its own, which was rejected.

Question 22 was generally correct. The correct answer was “exchanged presents”, but examiners also accepted “switched”, “swapped”, “gave each other”, “traded”, “shared”. “Changed” was not accepted.

Question 23 required the answer “for a walk”, but there were other details in the paragraph that were acceptable answers. The following answers were accepted as correct: “because it’s hot”, “because it is a bank holiday”. However, Examiners rejected “because it’s/to celebrate Christmas” and “it’s a holiday”.

Exercise 5

This exercise was about leading a healthy lifestyle and required attention to detail. It also differentiated well between weaker and stronger candidates.

Question 25 was generally answered correctly, but a few candidates answered “eggs”, this plural form was rejected.

Question 26 (a and b) required the answer “(eat) fresh fish” / “(at least) twice a week”. The answers were interchangeable. Many candidates provided the full answer on one line, which was accepted.

In question 27, some candidates did not recognise the very standard word “rebuçados” and gave a variety of wrong answers, including “fast/junk food”, “unhealthy food”.

Question 28 was not attempted by a good number of candidates. The correct answer was “horse riding” and other acceptable answers were “equestrianism” and “equitation”. Some candidates also provided the Portuguese word “equitação”, which was not accepted.

Question 29 (a and b) required the answer “(spend/pass) less time” / “(on the) computer”. Just as in question 26, the answers were interchangeable. Correct answers given on the same line were accepted. Many candidates added the expression “this is ideal”, which examiners marked as a Harmless Addition.

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 careful preparation, with teacher/examiners conducting the Speaking tests well and efficiently guiding 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 used effectively 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, 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 one 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 titles for Topics on 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 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 title for Part 1 and for Part 2 on each candidate's Mark Sheet
- ensure that the timings are correct (five 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. A small number of candidates left the exam blank.

The teachers did a very good job exposing candidates to a variety of texts to prepare them for this exam.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Exercise 1 Questions No 1-5

Mainly answered correctly and the candidates did very well in this exercise. Few candidates answered A to Q1 instead of E and an even greater number answered A to Q2 (aluguer de automóveis) instead of D (ligação de autocarros). The interpretation of the pictures, possibly the lack of vocabulary and familiarity with the sign itself, led to the wrong choice.

Exercise 2 Questions No 6 – 12

Again the majority of candidates fared well in this exercise. Only a very small number of candidates got some answers mixed up but, in general, candidates were able to match the sentences to the pictures without difficulty.

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. However in Q13 a common mistake occurred, probably because many candidates were not familiar with the expression '15 dias' that in Portuguese means '2 weeks'. This led to candidates even crossing out choice B and writing at the side, '14 dias' and therefore the most common error was opting for answer C: 'a few days'.

Exercise 4 Questions No 19 – 24

In this exercise, the candidates were given statements found online from 8 different people regarding helping others and future careers. The vast number of candidates responded appropriately. Some used the name 'Inês' several times in different places, especially in Q19. Here the answer should be 'Carlos' but in Q21 and 22 a variety of wrong names were also used.

Exercise 5
Questions No 25 -31

This exercise required candidates to fill the gap with missing information after reading the text with more complex tenses and vocabulary. This part posed some problems for the candidates whose command of English was not secure.

Q 25 – Well answered. A small number used the word 'go out' which did not complete the sentence and it was the answer for Q 30 and therefore lost a mark.

Q 26 – Candidates generally produced correct answers. Some repeated the verb and wrote 'didn't do' when the correct answer was 'stopped' to complete the stem '... doing her homework'.

Q 27 – Caused some confusion. Some candidates responded 'she wasn't interested' whereas it should have been 'she was tired'. We had a number of different spellings for "tired".

Q 28 – Strong candidates gave the right answer. It requested an answer that reflected feelings. Many candidates wrote 'change/move schools'.

Q29 – The MS required the candidates to mention 'start a new school'. Many wrote 'concentrate' which denotes a lack of understanding of the text.

Q 30 – Mostly answered correctly. Few incorrectly wrote 'go to party/outside' and lost marks.

Q 31 – This answer asked for continuity of 'studying' or of what she was doing until then', etc...a great number did not include the word 'continues to'. It showed a skimming of the text and not a detailed and careful reading.

Exercise 6
Questions No 32 -37

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

Qs 34, 35 and 36 had more mistakes. These might have been caused by not reading the text carefully or due to a limited knowledge of either English or Portuguese. This was the case, for instance, with Q 35 where the right answer was A 'with different tastes' corresponding to 'os mais diversos gostos musicais' in the text. Candidates who chose C, 'one style of music', the most common mistake, did not read the text carefully or were not familiar with the vocabulary.

Exercise 7
Questions No 38 -44

This exercise demanded more from the candidates. It proved to be difficult for the majority. In many cases, candidates left the whole exercise blank. The candidates had to interpret the text accurately to provide the right answers.

Q 38 - Candidates were expected to understand that even the smallest action we take, has an impact on the environment and the future of our planet. However some candidates interpreted it as a generational conflict and based the answer on 'young people'.

Q 39 – Candidates focussed on the 'green area the school has created' instead of on the activities the students carried out.

Q 40 – This question caused no problems.

Q 41 – This question was challenging for some candidates, with some providing a translation of the activities the characters in the text had done during an evening in order to save energy, without mentioning saving energy as a positive outcome of the choices made.

Q 42 - A number of candidates misunderstood the text and answered incorrectly saying that Maria and her friends had 'organised a clothes swap', 'given to an organization' and other different activities.

Q 43 – This question caused issues with several candidates. Many forgot to use a subject with the verb 'collected', others inaccurately included '1000' or 'million cups'.

Q 44 – Most candidates answered this question correctly.

Exercise 8

Question No. 45 -50

This last exercise demanded a lot more from the candidates and proved to be challenging for the majority. Some candidates left the whole exercise blank. Candidates were asked to interpret the text and give answers in Portuguese to demonstrate that they had understood the text correctly.

Q 45 – Many candidates, didn't pay any attention to the beginning of the sentence and wrote 'desde criança', 'é tradição', 'benefícios' 'por causa da mãe dele', etc. The answer was 'muito tempo', 'anos' but not 'toda a vida'.

Q 46 - Required the verb 'comer' followed by 'açaí sem' to complete the sentence that ended with 'açúcar'. An array of answers was given: 'comer com peixe e com carne', 'de uma forma salgada'. This had little to do with the sentence.

Q 47 - Many candidates answered this question correctly but some wrote 'tinha um sabor diferente' which was incorrect.

Q 48 - Candidates lost marks for not paying attention to the text. The required answer was to do with frequency: 'diariamente', 'todos os dias', and not 'com manga' which appeared frequently.

Q 49 - In general this question proved challenging for candidates because they didn't know the past participle of the verb 'poder', 'podido', but knew the most common past participle 'perdido' from 'perder' (to lose). Some candidates put a '?' in front of the word, others wrote 'is this even a word?' or even 'this is misspelt'. Those candidates either crossed out the word and tried to adapt the answer or left it blank. What was required was 'emagrecer' or 'perder peso'. 'Susana hadn't been able to lose weight' (Susana nunca tinha **podido** emagrecer **or** perder peso).

Q 50 – The last question was generally well answered and candidates only lost marks if they didn't pay enough attention to the text. This was the case with answers such as 'fazer dieta' or 'ser modelo' instead of 'uma refeição'.

A834 Writing

General Comments:

There was clear evidence that many candidates were well prepared for the exam. Careful preparation allowed many of them to produce relevant, detailed answers using language which was largely accurate.

Legible work with appropriate punctuation often made for a clear, coherent piece of writing which Examiners were able to assess fairly. Many pieces of writing were legible and contained appropriate punctuation.

Marks for Communication are awarded for relevant material produced in response to the task title. The bullet points are offered as suggestions and the vast majority of candidates chose to use them to construct their response. Where candidates wrote a full response to these first three bullet points they were unlikely to develop ideas fully and would be well advised to concentrate on the last two bullet points when preparing an answer. A high mark is more likely to be achieved where candidates express ideas fully and give reasons for them. An essay of 150 words has the capacity for three or four well developed ideas and there were some very detailed pieces with ambitious development.

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. Candidates are advised to make good use of the dictionary to produce accurate work.

Candidates are asked to write an essay of 150 words. Examiners will mark all of the work in order to assess Communication, worth 10 marks, but will stop marking at about 165 words when assessing Quality of Language, worth 15 marks. Where a candidate offers a longer piece of work and Examiners are not able to assess all of the work it is often the more detailed responses to the last two bullet points containing the most sophisticated and ambitious language which are not assessed. Where there was evidence of careful planning, candidates were more likely to produce a piece of an appropriate length containing a range of clause types, with consistent manipulation of structures and tense, thus giving access to high marks. In addition, careful planning and thoroughly checking work allowed candidates to produce accurate work which is required for the award of high marks when assessing Quality of Language.

Comments on Individual Questions:

It is not necessary for candidates to structure their answers using the bullet points but almost all do. The evidence suggests that this helps them to structure a balanced answer containing factual information as well as ideas and points of view.

Question No.1

This question was answered with varying degrees of success. Weaker candidates were able to focus on the first three bullet point and provide a good narrative but in such cases the work often lacked ideas and points of view. In addition, the only reference to the task title was often an explanation of how they normally go to school and, where this was included, the answer was deemed to be relevant. However, a good number of more able candidates were able to provide excellent ideas in response to the idea of encouraging families to use local public transport and this development was likely to give them access to higher marks.

Question No.2

Candidates who worked through the bullet points which accompanied this question were regularly able to provide a good response. Many clearly enjoyed writing about their favourite sports star as a good role model and were able to give plenty of detail about that person. This often allowed them to achieve a good balance between factual information and points of view. More able candidates were able to offer reasons why they would encourage their friends to spend more time doing sports, usually linked to promoting good health.

Question No.3

This was a popular choice and many candidates of varying ability chose to work through the bullet points. Although a number of weaker candidates placed a lot of emphasis on a description of what they do at the weekend it was pleasing to see that many candidates were able to develop the ideas suggested by the last two bullet points. This led to high marks not only for Communication but also enabled the candidates to produce work containing a range of clause types, with consistent manipulation of structures and tense, and consequently a high score for Quality of Language.

Question No.4

This was a popular choice. The task title was straightforward and many candidates of all abilities clearly enjoyed writing about holidays, almost always from personal experience. Many candidates are native speakers and chose to write about holidays to Portugal or Brazil, displaying extensive knowledge. More able candidates who worked through the suggested bullet points were able to develop ideas about different types of holiday and also produce work in a range of tenses.

Question No.5

Candidates who chose this question were almost always able to convey opinions effectively. However, of all of the questions, this one led to a significant number of candidates providing a good deal of narrative, particularly when they chose to write about a job they had already tried, often as work experience, and indicated that they would be interested in this type of work in the future. Writing from personal experience often enabled them to produce good quality answers.

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