
EXTENDED ESSAY REPORTS – MAY 2003

Portuguese - Group 2

Range and suitability of the work submitted

The majority of works presented pertinent topics. Some were quite original. A few of them could not explore appropriately their choices or did not focus on the culture of the language concerned.

This year theme choices were almost equally divided between literary and socio-cultural topics. Many socio-cultural topics were based on historical and/or political background and at times these tended to overpower the essay. It would have been advisable to keep this to a minimum otherwise the essay becomes unbalanced. The topics of literary type showed some variety of focused area. Some candidates showed a great deal of resourcefulness and skill in handling their topics in terms of breadth and approach.

The essays were from good to excellent, developing well-chosen topics, demonstrating the interest from the candidates in the subject and the pleasure of producing a careful text.

Candidate performance against each criterion

All essays presented the research question and the investigation procedures, as well as the conclusions and abstract. Most of the candidates were aware of the need to state clearly and unequivocally a research question to give the reader an early impression of their sense of focus. Some, however, managed to hide it in a form other than a question.

Some candidates successfully explained their motivation behind the chosen topic. The general impression was that analysis/interpretation was adequate. The methodology matched the type of essays developed, and no serious flaws were noticed in adequately matching approach to topic and research questions.

The majority of candidates used relevant source material for their analysis as a means of proper textual demonstration. The Internet use, in general, was appropriate. In some cases there was too much reliance on newspapers and recent publications in magazines. Anyway, it would be advisable to enrich the bibliography with other reference sources material.

Analysis/interpretation is an area where there is a need for improvement. Several candidates had lists of references in their bibliographies, but these were not referenced in the body of the essay. It was difficult to tell which were the candidates' ideas from those of authors they consulted. While the analysis often lent itself to the topic and the research question, there was a lack of coherent integration of the literature review in many essays. There was a general absence of critical evaluation of ideas belonging to other authors. This made these essays less thorough and less effective than they could have been.

As a consequence of this difficulty to distinguish between some candidates' ideas and those of others, it was hard to determine which of the arguments were their own. While properly giving credits to others for their ideas, the candidates need to show themselves and their own thoughts in their work.

The candidates made visible attempts at giving concluding remarks to their essays.

On the whole the presentation was very pleasing. Many candidates selected relevant material to illustrate and these candidates demonstrated a stronger understanding of their chosen topic. The candidates were aware of the fact that references, bibliography and illustration play an essential part in their research project.

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Subject assessment criteria

It was evident that care and attention were given to the details of grammar, spelling and correct syntax, choice of words and in some cases fairly sophisticated usage. It also seems that candidates have reached a good level of maturity of thought about the African, Portuguese and Brazilian literature and culture represented by their topics.

Most works demonstrated a strong interest in the Portuguese speaking areas and a good knowledge about the social context, history, and language.

One or two essays were not very carefully proofread and as a result contained basic mistakes of grammar and syntax.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

The high quality level of the essays presented is due to the excellent guidance and support that these candidates received from their teachers. In light of this examination session observations, the following areas should receive more attention:

- Effective supervision is needed to ensure a good close focus and to avoid the choice of inappropriate topics.
- If there are not sufficient resources available at the place of writing, and consequently only Internet will document the essay, it would seem better to steer candidates towards a topic that could be better documented.
- Other people's ideas should be precisely and well documented through the use of footnotes or endnotes that include carefully stated bibliographic references.
- Candidates need guidance on proofreading their own work before they submit it for critical review by the teacher.