

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

Key messages

For candidates:

- Candidates' own interests should play a part in the choice of the subject for the presentation. Clear reference should be made to Hispanic culture or society.
- It is important to structure the presentation to fit into the allowed time, and to express not only facts, but ideas and opinions.
- Focus on the questions asked and be sure to answer what is asked.
- Remember to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections.

For centres:

- The test consists of three distinct sections: **(i)** Initial presentation (maximum 3½ minutes); **(ii)** Topic Conversation (7–8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation; **(iii)** General Conversation (8–9 minutes) on themes completely different from those raised in the Topic Conversation.
- Each section should be clearly identified on the recordings. It is important that the prescribed timings are observed.
- Candidates should be reminded if necessary to ask the examiner questions in both conversation sections and be prompted to do so, if necessary. The examiner's replies to such questions should be concise – it is the candidate and not the examiner who is being marked.
- Interaction with the examiner is an important criterion for both conversation sections.

General comments

Administration and conduct of the tests

There was the usual wide range of performance, with some very good candidates. Most candidates were suitably prepared and knew what to expect in the examination. Teacher/examiners were generally supportive and encouraged candidates to remain calm and focused on the task.

The quality of the recordings was generally good, but please ensure that voices of both candidate and examiner are clearly audible. Centres are again reminded that the recording must not be paused once the test has started.

The range of samples generally followed correct procedure. The sample should include examples of the whole range, top, middle, and lowest mark awarded. The working mark sheets for all the candidates must be submitted, not just those of the candidates in the sample. A few centres had to be contacted to provide all the working marks and this caused delay to moderation.

While most centres carried out the necessary administration efficiently, a few centres did not pay due attention cavalier to the timings. Candidates cannot be awarded credit for performance in extra time; conversely it is in all candidates' interests that those conducting the tests observe the full timings of each section to allow access to the full range of marks.

Although most teacher/examiners announced the start of each section clearly, in some cases it was not clear when the topic conversation ended and the general conversation started: it is important that teachers/examiners clearly announce the start of each section. It is also the responsibility of the teacher/examiner to announce clearly the name and candidate number at the start of each test.

Comments on specific sections

Part 1: Presentation

Guidance on topic areas for the Presentation and discussion may be found in the syllabus. Topics must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture and it is important that candidates make this relevance explicit in their Presentation. It was also helpful when candidates clearly stated the title of their presentation; several candidates, however, failed to communicate what their Presentation was actually about.

Centres are reminded that the content mark out of ten must be halved where there was no specific reference to a Spanish-speaking country or Hispanic context.

Presentations should be a formal, concise and coherent introduction to the subject that will be discussed in the following Topic Conversation. It is important to show evidence of preparation, organisation and relevant factual knowledge. Candidates who spoke in a casual or disjointed manner, or who made little attempt to engage the examiner lost credit, as pronunciation, intonation and quality of delivery are assessed.

The best presentations showed evidence of careful preparation and organisation. These not only offered statistics and other information, but also included a candidate's own reactions and analysis; weaker presentations were characterised by being somewhat disorganised, with a random list of items, with no discernible central theme or argument.

Pronunciation was generally good. There were some examples of very good pronunciation and authentic intonation.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

Most candidates responded well in the topic conversation. Many were able to give thoughtful and extended responses and maintain a discussion, though weaker candidates relied heavily on teachers/examiners to take the lead. A few candidates were permitted to treat this section as a continuation of the Presentation, with little intervention by the examiner, which limited their mark for comprehension/fluency.

Most candidates had a sufficient range of vocabulary and structures at their disposal, which were used accurately and idiomatically. Most candidates remembered to ask questions of the examiners either in the natural course of conversation or, in some cases, after prompting, although a few asked only one question. Centres are reminded that candidates must ask the examiner questions to gain credit for 'seeking information and opinions'; it is not sufficient for the teacher/examiner to volunteer such information. Teacher/examiners should remind candidates to ask questions if the candidate has not done this.

Part 3: General Conversation

The start of the section should be clearly announced. In some cases, no clear distinction was made between the two conversation sections. The General Conversation must be treated as a separate section from the Topic Conversation and must not be a continuation of the candidate's chosen topic. Teachers/examiners should not return to the same issues as in the Topic Conversation. Centres are reminded that it is the teacher/examiner who chooses the topics to be discussed during the test itself; the candidate should not be asked, as happened in a few instances, which topics he/she would prefer to discuss.

In the General Conversation, the discussion and topics chosen should be at an appropriate level, both in content and in linguistic complexity. Common areas included current events, health, education, crime, the arts, family, sport, the environment, the economy, plans and aspirations. In some centres, the conversation did not develop to the required depth for this examination and teacher/examiners are again reminded to allow candidates the opportunity to perform at their highest level.

The range and style of questioning should encourage candidates to show competence in structures and vocabulary at a suitably advanced level. As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the examiner questions to gain credit for 'seeking information and opinions'. Such questions should arise naturally in the discussion and, as in the Topic Conversation, it is not sufficient for the teacher to state an opinion without being asked.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation will be required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer would fit back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
- **Questions 3 and 4:** comprehension of texts. Candidates should attempt to answer in their own words. Direct copying of five or more words from the text will usually invalidate an answer.
- **Question 5(a):** summary of relevant details from both texts in answer to the question set. Introduction, conclusions and vague generalisations are not required. Specific, relevant details attract marks.
- **Question 5(b):** personal response. Candidates should give a point of view and, if possible, offer ideas which have not appeared in the texts.
- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The examination provided an appropriate level of challenge and discriminated well, with a wide range of marks awarded to candidates from across the ability range. The linguistic competence of the candidates was generally excellent and, provided that there were no penalties for lack of comprehension, top marks for quality of language were commonly awarded. Most candidates appeared to have been well instructed on the techniques required, although lifting, (the direct copying of five or more words from the text), occasionally invalidated a mark for comprehension. A minority of candidates still exceeded the permitted number of words in **Question 5**, which meant that part, or sometimes all, of their personal response could not be assessed. Comprehension of the two texts, dealing with agricultural workers in different continents, was usually clearly demonstrated.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN 1

Question 1

Most candidates scored three or four marks. A few selected the wrong phrase for their answers, although the commonest reason for not scoring the mark was to add or omit words from the beginning or end of the target phrase.

- (a) The phrase was identified by nearly every candidate, although the mark was occasionally missed when the answer was prefaced with *extiende...*
- (b) It was a similar story with this answer, but this time the mark was lost because of the omission of the initial *con...*
- (c) This was generally answered well.
- (d) Again, this was answered well. A few candidates, perhaps influenced by *no...* in the cue, incorrectly made their answers negative.

- (e) In some instances answers included *permite...*

Question 2

This was a demanding exercise and despite their very high level of language skills candidates sometimes struggled to make the correct manipulations. Only a minority scored maximum marks.

- (a) A common error was to omit *que...* at the start, or to omit *se*.
- (b) Candidates found little difficulty in converting *un sol abrasador* to *un sol que quema*.
- (c) All those candidates of a Hispanic background (the vast majority) were successful with this manipulation.
- (d) Finding a suitable subjunctive after *para que* proved to be very straightforward. The mark was more likely to be missed by not including *más* before *altos*, which was necessary to convey the idea of *mejorar*.
- (e) This was the least successful of all the manipulations. A number of candidates seemed to tie themselves in knots in coming up with acceptable forms of either *donde poca mano de obra es necesaria* or *donde la mano de obra es poco necesaria*. Answers such as *donde precisan mano de obra menos necesaria* were not uncommon.

Question 3

The text on crop production in the polytunnels of Almería was generally well received, and most candidates were able to demonstrate clear comprehension. Marks were occasionally lost for copying more than four words directly from the text, perhaps more by oversight rather than intention. It was encouraging to see how candidates allowed themselves to be guided by the marks allocated to each question and attempted to supply a matching number of pieces of information.

- (a) Most candidates scored at least one of the two marks on offer here for saying that the polytunnels could be seen from space and that they stretch as far as the eye can see. There was occasional confusion between the 'space' which the polytunnels occupied and 'outer space' from which they were visible. A mark was lost if the five words *hasta donde alcanza la vista* were directly copied.
- (b) This was a fairly straightforward question and good marks were frequently scored. It was necessary to say that the migrant workers were poorly remunerated, worked in extremes of temperature and had no water or electricity in their accommodation. Where marks were lost it was either for the omission of one of these points or for lifting – typically ... *abandonadas sin luz ni agua*.
- (c) Only more able candidates were successful in achieving all four of the marks on offer here. Two was a more common score, usually for stating the contrast in attitudes between the two migrant workers. The reason for Yacouba's resignation and bitterness was to be found in *las infrecuentes ocasiones cuando algún "jefe" de los invernaderos ... le ofrece trabajo para el día*. The source of Koffi's enthusiasm – seeing compatriots returning to Cameroon with cars and new clothes – proved less of a challenge to identify.
- (d) This was another question which posed challenges and marks of one or two were commonly recorded. The farmers' spokesman argues that the migrants are not exploited because there are rigorous inspections and the majority of farmers conform to the legal requirements. A number of candidates confused *agricultores* with *trabajadores* in their answers, incorrectly implying that it was the migrants who met the legal requirements. More able candidates were able to point out that the farmers were unable to raise the salaries of the migrant workers in their polytunnels on account of the low prices which they were forced to accept from the supermarkets.
- (e) Again, maximum marks were not so common for this question. It was necessary to say that conditions had worsened in the sector and that farmers were opting for crops which were not labour-intensive. Furthermore, many farmers had been bankrupted or needed to renegotiate their mortgage terms with the banks. Only more able candidates included all this information in their answers.

SECCIÓN 2

Question 4

Comprehension of this second text, concerning food production in Guatemala, a topic which was closer to home for many candidates, was very good.

- (a) This should have been a fairly straightforward four mark question but often a lack of clarity in answers meant that only partial scores were recorded. It was necessary to say that *frutas exóticas* were exported to the USA because of the interest in *mejorar los sistemas inmunológicos*. Common, everyday vegetables went to El Salvador as it was a close neighbour. Answers such as *se exporta fruta y verdura a Estados Unidos y El Salvador* just did not contain sufficient detail. Not infrequently, a mark was carelessly lost by direct copying of the list *las cebollas, zanahorias, papas, lechugas*, when all that was necessary was to change the order of some items to avoid the lift.
- (b) When candidates gave full details of all the tasks performed by family members they picked up three very accessible marks. Firstly - the point which most candidates made – some of the family harvested the vegetables. Details were sometimes missing for the other two points – that others from the family then washed them in the freshwater springs, and yet others packed them in bundles which they transported to the roadside.
- (c) Candidates showed clear understanding of the drivers' need to arrive at the frontier at break of day to get through the customs checks before the officials went off for breakfast. Sometimes marks were lost through direct copying of five or more words from *los agentes aduanales siguen en su ventanilla antes de irse a desayunar y se agiliza el paso de los camiones*.
- (d) This was also very well answered. Most candidates successfully stated that *Rolando* had been shown the routes at a very early age by his father, and then had been driving them solo from the age of nineteen. Occasionally candidates overlooked that the question was asking for experience *en el pasado* and mistakenly focussed their answers on the impact that the work was currently having on his family life.
- (e) Many candidates scored all four marks by stating that the sum of money was needed for customs' tariffs, food and drink en route, in case of mechanical failure, and that all these transactions needed to be made in cash. Where maximum marks were not achieved, it was either because of omission of one or more of the above or lifting, typically *todas las transacciones se hacen en efectivo* or *todas las transacciones se hacen en efectivo*.

Question 5

Many candidates were aware of the techniques required to be successful in this question. Although there were still some exceptions, the importance of adhering to the word count of 140 words for both parts of the question appeared to be understood, but not always observed. (Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for part (b), the personal response).

- (a) The question asked candidates to concentrate only upon the workers who cultivated the produce. A number of answers wasted words when they wrote about transport or employers.

Those candidates who picked out relevant specific details from the texts – most of which had already formed part of answers to comprehension questions - which answered the question concisely, achieved high scores. There were fewer unnecessary introductions than previous years and also very few instances of personal opinions being incorrectly offered in this part of the question.

No introductions or conclusions are required and the recommended technique is to plunge straight in:

En el Texto 1 se habla de los invernaderos con la mayoría de sus trabajadores siendo inmigrantes, ✓ y exportando fruta y verduras a toda España ✓ y los principales europeos. ✓ Habla de las condiciones precarias de los trabajadores ✓ tales como el salario bajo ✓ y tener que aguantar el extremo clima. ✓

(6 marks scored in 49 words).

There were still a number of candidates who were unaware of this technique, for example: *El Texto 1 habla sobre cómo se crecen la fruta y verduras en España, estas siendo en invernaderos visibles desde el espacio. También trata de los trabajadores y cómo estos podrían estar siendo explotados debido a su baja paga. ✓ El Texto 2 trata de cómo es el transporte de estos productos, siendo que el conductor es privado de su propia vida varios días a la semana.* (1 mark scored in 66 words).

- (b) Candidates who had left 40 or so words for this part of the answer were usually able to pick up another 3 to 5 marks, provided that they answered question. Higher marks were achieved by those who introduced some originality in their answers, rather than just repeating ideas that had already been offered by the texts. A few answers could not be marked as the word limit had already been exceeded.

Answers understandably varied according to the candidates' country of origin, but all were in agreement of the importance of agriculture. Better responses made mention of the contribution to the national economy made by exports, the number of population who were employed in the food chain, the main products and the appropriate use of the land available.

Quality of Language

As stated earlier, the quality of candidates' written Spanish was generally excellent. Unless they had been penalised for scoring zero in any of the comprehension questions, candidates were almost always awarded maximum marks in all three quality of language assessments.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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General comments

The final appearance of the examination in this format provided an appropriate level of challenge and discriminated well, with a wide range of marks awarded to candidates from across the ability range. There was an understandable difference in performance between the 9719 candidates, who were mostly native speakers, and those taking 8685, for whom Spanish was not their first language. Most candidates appeared to have been well coached in the techniques required although lifting, (the direct copying of five or more words from the text), often invalidated a mark for comprehension among 8685 candidates. A small number of candidates exceeded the permitted number of words in **Question 5** which meant that part, or sometimes all, of their personal response could not be assessed.

The presentation of the papers was generally good, and very few candidates seemed troubled by the time constraints of the examination. Comprehension of the two texts, dealing with two different types of population movement, was usually clearly demonstrated. The first language speakers were able to show understanding of the topic in good Spanish, and most second language speakers, although lacking the same fluency of expression, were also able to demonstrate comprehension commensurate with their ability.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN 1

Question 1

Good scores were often achieved for this question by both 9719 and 8685 candidates. A few candidates selected the wrong phrase for their answers, although the commonest reason for not scoring the mark was to add or omit words from the beginning or end of the target phrase.

- (a) Some added *en las que hemos crecido* at the end or omitted *condujo a* at the start.
- (b) *los...* was sometimes omitted at the start, or *...en la ciudad* was incorrectly added at the end. Occasionally the incorrect answer *el caos de la vida urbana* was offered.
- (c) This was generally done well.

- (d) This was also done well, although occasionally it was unnecessarily prefaced by *el hecho de...*
- (e) A small minority of candidates omitted the initial *hay...*

Question 2

The difference between native and non-native speaker candidates was, as is to be expected, far more apparent here.

- (a) This proved to be a tough opening manipulation and few candidates were successful. Even native speakers of Spanish often supplied the wrong tense of the verb: *es* instead of *era*.
- (b) This was also challenging, despite the fact that candidates could answer simply with *aficionados a...*, without the relative pronoun. Most answers incorrectly included the preposition *a* from the original sentence.
- (c) Candidates felt on much firmer ground here and tackled this question well. Some omitted *para ampliar la casa*; some used *por ampliar la casa*, which invalidated the answer.
- (d) A fairly straightforward subjunctive construction after *es necesario que...* was required here and a majority of candidates were successful. A few attempted to use the third person plural (*den*) which could not be accepted as it did not fit back into the text.
- (e) This was a more challenging test of knowledge of the subjunctive and even native speakers sometimes came unstuck with the orthographical changes required to produce *sintamos*. The verb form *sentamos* was often offered, giving a completely different meaning.

Question 3

Candidates taking 9719 were usually successful in presenting in their own words the required information about this reverse form of population movement occurring in Spain, often using more complex linguistic structures. Instances of lifting five or more words directly from the text occurred more by oversight than design. Many 8685 candidates appeared to be aware of the lifting rule although they were not always successful in adhering to it.

- (a) This was generally done well, with candidates usually scoring two marks. The third mark was often missed by overlooking *visitar el campo para veranerar*, or incorrectly stating that people went to the city for holidays. Common lifts were *a estar enterrado en vida*, or *vivir en pueblo era lo más cercano...*
- (b) Most candidates scored two marks here too. Some were not precise enough and talked about the high cost of 'living' – not 'housing' – in the city, or referred to 'noise' rather 'chaos'. A common lift was *el caos de la vida urbana*.
- (c) Quite a few missed one of the elements for the first idea: *lugar remoto y rodeado de naturaleza* – (*esquina* was not an acceptable for *rincón*). The second point was well understood, but again some did not mention both ideas: *naturales y reciclados*.
- (d) This was generally answered well. Most candidates understood the idea of living in a sustainable way to protect our planet. A few overlooked that they wanted their daughter to live surrounded by nature.
- (e) Most candidates scored points for mentioning worse working conditions and fewer job opportunities. Some misunderstood the point about new technologies allowing people to be connected wherever they are, and suggested that they wanted to escape from these technologies to switch off. Common lifts were: *el desengaño del estrés y el consumo* and *el fácil acceso a las nuevas tecnologías*.

SECCIÓN 2

Question 4

Comprehension of this second text, concerning population movement to cities from the countryside in Central America, was similar to that of the first in that it was very good in patches.

- (a) This question was generally answered very well. Most candidates understood that people migrated to the city to improve their economic situation. Some candidates tended to find it a bit more challenging to understand that agriculture was under a lot of stress and in some cases they did not mention that this was due to climate change. Two common lifts were *mejorar la situación financiera de su familia* and *las dificultades a que se enfrenta la agricultura*.
- (b) Candidates who sought answers from the first sentence of the paragraph – stating that Central American subsistence farmers make their livings from the sale of small quantities of corn and coffee – supplied information that did not answer the question. The specific difficulties that these farmers faced were lack of rain / irrigation, loss of crops and extreme poverty. Not many scored all three marks. The majority understood that the main difficulty was lack of rainfall or irrigation, and many picked up a second mark for mentioning that harvests were ruined or that people ended up in extreme poverty.
- (c) Almost every candidate successfully noted that the activities of the multinational companies were responsible for generating increased omissions of carbon dioxide. Only a minority were able to add that the sale of cheap corn was adding to the troubles of the rural economy in Guatemala, and those that did sometimes invalidated their answer with the lift *la entrada de maíz barato*.
- (d) Full details were required to score maximum marks for this question. It was necessary to state that the coffee harvest were affected by a disease and that the banana harvest had been affected by hurricanes. Most candidates understood that increased temperatures were an underlying cause of these disasters.
- (e) Not many candidates scored the full four marks, with half this total being the most common score. It was generally understood that the Mexican plan wanted to improve the well-being of people who live in rural areas. Some, however, overgeneralised and omitted in rural areas. It was pleasing to see how the more able candidates understood the objective of planting both fruit and timber trees and answer in their own words. It was common, however, to omit one of the types of trees. The idea that presented the most challenge was guaranteeing minimum prices for small producers. It was common to interpret it as reducing the price for small producers or that prices for small producers would be lower, which would not help them, and in fact would have the opposite effect. Quite a few candidates did not score for the idea of depending less on imports, often because of a tendency to lift *de dependencia de las importaciones*.

Question 5

Many candidates appeared to be aware of the techniques required to be successful in this question. Although there were still some exceptions, the importance of adhering to the word count of 140 words for both parts of the question seemed to be well understood. (Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for part (b), the personal response).

- (a) There were a few unnecessary introductions but most candidates appeared to be aware that, to score well, they needed to select specific details from the texts which answered the question concisely. Those candidates who still attempted to write short summaries of the situation mentioned in both texts achieved lower marks than those who considered each text in turn and selected relevant details.

There was a tendency among less able candidates to copy verbatim from the texts when extracting key details. Although there is no penalty for this, any copied material was not considered in the Quality of Language mark. There were very few instances of personal opinions being incorrectly offered in this part of the question.

Those who paid attention to the question asked, and picked out specific details of the reasons for population movement - many of which had already formed part of answers to comprehension questions – scored well. A common score was six or seven, with a balance in mentioning ideas

from both texts. The ideas that were not frequently mentioned were being fed up with the consumer / capitalist lifestyle in cities and difficulty in competing with cheap corn from the United States. No introductions or conclusions are required and the recommended technique is to plunge straight in:

En España la gente se van de la ciudad al campo a causa de los precios elevados de las casas, ✓ la escasez en oportunidades de trabajo, ✓ el desengaño del estrés, ✓ y el fácil acceso a las nuevas tecnologías, ✓ para adoptar estilos de vida más responsables con el planeta. ✓
(5 marks scored in 48 words).

An illustration of a less successful approach is:

El Texto 1 consiste en como los jóvenes hoy en día se están marchando al campo. A principios del siglo 20 era todo lo contrario ya que estar en el pueblo se consideraba estar enterrado en vida. El texto habla de una pareja que se muda al campo y comienza una nueva vida ahí con su hija , viviendo de la forma más autónoma que puedan. ✓
(1 marks scored in 66 words).

- (b) Candidates who had left 40 or so words for this part of the answer were usually able to pick up another 3 to 5 marks, provided that they answered the question. Higher marks were achieved by those who introduced some originality in their answers, rather than just repeating ideas that had already been offered by the texts. A few answers could not be marked as the word limit had already been exceeded.

The places where people preferred to live varied somewhat according to the candidates' country of origin. A substantial majority thought that city life was the most popular, because of the abundance of facilities on offer. Coastal areas were often favoured in some countries.

Quality of Language

The quality of the majority of non-native speaking candidates' Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks awarded ranged from Below Average to Good, with most marks falling in the Sound range.

Unless they had been penalised for scoring zero in any of the comprehension questions, native speakers were awarded maximum marks in all three quality of language assessments.

And finally

A big thank you to centres who have entered candidates for this examination over the years. Assessing their work has consistently been a rewarding experience. It is anticipated that future candidates will find that the changed format of the new specification will offer similar stimulation and challenge.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation will be required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer would fit back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
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- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The performance of candidates taking this examination was generally good, especially of those who had entered for the 9719 component. The paper provided an appropriate level of challenge, and the spread of marks awarded reflected the differing ability levels. Candidates appeared to have been well coached in the techniques required, and it was pleasing to note a widespread awareness of more complex linguistic structures, with subjunctive constructions featuring prominently. The presentation of the papers was good, most answers were easy to read, and very few candidates seemed troubled by time constraints. Comprehension of the two texts, dealing with how talented youngsters were encouraged to develop was generally good.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN 1

Question 1

This exercise was generally done well, with many candidates scoring all or at least four of the five marks available. The matching phrase was usually correctly identified and errors usually consisted of adding or omitting words.

- (a) There were very few incorrect answers. The target phrase *aprendía las palabras con gran rapidez* was clearly identified.
- (b) Spotting *quizás fui excesivamente tranquilo* was a little more of a challenge for some. A few candidates incorrectly added *...a la hora* to their answers.
- (c) The correct phrase was readily identified. Answers were invalidated if prefaced by *y...*, the omission of *ya* or the addition of *en el instituto*.
- (d) Most candidates were successful.

- (e) This was also answered very well. A few less able candidates were led astray by the mention of *colegio* in the cue and incorrectly answered *no quería ir al colegio*.

Question 2

This is one of the more challenging exercises of the examination and it was encouraging to see the number of candidates who at least recognised the structure being tested, even if for some their attempt at answering was flawed. A small minority of candidates opted to spend little or, in some cases, no time on this question and focus their efforts elsewhere. Only the very best candidates scored three or more of the five marks.

- (a) There were several ways of using *más* to perform this manipulation. The most popular acceptable answers were: *otros niños no dirían más que coche*, *otros niños dirían no más que coche*, *más niños solo dirían coche* and *otros niños dirían coche, nada más*.
- (b) Fewer alternatives were acceptable here. An adverb or adverbial expression was needed, ideally *constantemente* (not *costantemente*) or *con frecuencia / frecuentemente*. More able candidates were usually able to oblige.
- (c) Candidates taking the 8685 component often found difficulty here. A number, realising that *al ver* translated as 'on seeing' incorrectly offered *cuando viendo*. Others, who realised that a third person form of the verb was required, overlooked that this needed to be in a past tense. Either the imperfect *veía* or the preterite *vio* was acceptable.
- (d) This proved to be one of the more challenging manipulations. Only a few candidates realised that the only way to manipulate this phrase using *frecuente* was to introduce it with *es frecuente que*. This, of course, meant that the following verb needed to be in the subjunctive. Only a few correct answers of *es frecuente que los superdotados sufran* were noted.
- (e) There appeared to be a surprising lack of awareness of how *ganas* could be used in this phrase, especially as it appears so frequently in Spanish and most commonly, as here, in *tener ganas de*. More able candidates, but not all of them, correctly answered *no tenía ganas de ir al colegio*.

Question 3

The text on recognising and educating exceptionally gifted children in Spain was generally well received, and comprehension was often successfully demonstrated. Candidates appeared to be well versed in the requirements for this question, (and also the following one), with scarcely any marks being lost for copying more than four words directly from the text. It was encouraging to see how candidates allowed themselves to be guided by the marks allocated and attempted to supply a matching number of pieces of information. A common strategy, especially among 8685 candidates, appeared to be that of identifying parts of the text that would answer questions, and then endeavouring to 'tweak' the word order or make minor adjustments in order to avoid copying directly. If this technique produced coherent answers, (which was not always the case), it was rewarded.

- (a) Many candidates scored at least two of the three marks available by noting that *Daniel* learnt words quickly – the cue from 1(a) was often put to good use here – and that he was outstanding in all the nursery school activities. It sometimes proved to be a little more challenging to explain that he was able to differentiate between words far beyond the level of the other children.
- (b) To score the first mark here it was necessary to convey the idea that the father *sospechaba que tenía una precocidad intelectual*. More able candidates realised that *pensaba / creía que* was not the same thing and, either qualified these verbs with *quizás* or used different expressions based around *posible* or *posibilidad*. The second mark was scored only by those who noted that the father did not feel the need / necessity to consult a specialist. Most candidates successfully noted that he did not think that his daughter had any problems in her personal relationships.
- (c) Many scored two marks for stating that minor difficulties with some companions were now resolved and that the daughter now fitted in perfectly well at school – again the cue for 1(c) was put to good use here. Only more able candidates were able to show clear comprehension of how the girl's understanding of her condition provided her with such a feeling of relief.
- (d) This was generally done well by most candidates who clearly recognised a common school-based scenario where a highly intelligent pupil might be rejected or even bullied by his or her peers. The

third mark was sometimes lost by not explaining fully that, in the example given, the boy was sent out of the classroom into the corridor. Without this qualification the use of *expulsar* could be interpreted as being expelled from the school.

- (e) The first point, that the mother tried changing schools, was fairly straightforward although sometimes overlooked. It was important to mention that the university classes for which the boy eventually enrolled, (confusion between *inscribir* and *escribir* caused a few problems for some), were designed for *niños de altas capacidades*. Candidates frequently found difficulty in expressing the mother's view that gifted children being happy was more important than intellectual activity. This was often misinterpreted to mean that intellectual activity should bring happiness to these children

SECCIÓN 2

Question 4

The second text about talented students at *la Escuela Nacional de Ballet de Cuba* provided a similar challenge to that of the first.

- (a) Candidates who read the question carefully had little difficulty in scoring the three fairly accessible marks for noting that pupils at the school *pueden ser de cualquier clase social; podrían bailar en el Ballet Nacional* or *en famosas compañías de otros países*. A number of candidates misinterpreted the part of the question *¿adónde van a trabajar?* and gave information about possible parents' professions: lorry drivers or construction workers.
- (b) Scores of two or three were commonly recorded here. The answers, that the Cuban State finances everything apart from the \$250 a month (needed) paid by international students, and that Cuban students pay nothing, were usually clearly stated.
- (c) Comprehension was also good here. Most were able to note that in Cuba the profession of ballet dancer is well respected and that parents have no objections if their children wish to study ballet. (Rare instances of copying five or more words sometimes occurred with *en Cuba la profesión del bailarín es reconocida y respetada*. The third point, that Costa Rican parents do not share Cuban parents' attitudes was often stated successfully.
- (d) The fourth paragraph of the text was a lot more challenging in register and content and allowed more able candidates to show their skills. To answer the question it was first necessary to bypass the flowery language of the first sentence and look for evidence of the ballerina's appreciation of the school in the second. She describes it as a mother who tolerated her childish misbehaviour, taught her everything she knew and then allowed her to rise to the height of her talent. This question discriminated well.
- (e) Marks of two or three were commonly awarded for the final question. The School's success was based on the natural talent of young Cubans (it was necessary to state the nationality), the support from the Cuban State and the persistence or dedication of experienced teachers. Most candidates noted some if not all of these points.

Question 5

The majority of candidates had been well prepared in the techniques needed to answer this question. Very few candidates appeared to be unaware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for the second part.

- (a) To achieve a good mark it is essential to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. In this exercise, candidates are not penalised for copying directly from the texts. It should be remembered, however, that any copied material will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

Knowledge of the required techniques appeared to be fairly widespread, although marks awarded tended to be slightly lower than in previous years. This appeared to be mainly because candidates often included material which was not relevant to the question: *Escriba un resumen de lo que se*

dice en el Texto 1 y en el Texto 2 sobre reconocer y enseñar a los niños talentosos. Although there was a lot of information in the texts about recognising and educating gifted children there was also other material which was irrelevant to the question. Only the discerning candidates scored well, as in this example:

El primer texto dice que se puede reconocer niños superdotados porque sobresalen en cada actividad desde pequeño, aprenden las palabras rápidamente y leen muchísimo. Es importante que sean reconocidos para entenderse, pero puede ser difícil enseñarles porque terminan las tareas rápidamente y están expulsados al pasillo. Así que necesitan ir a talleres universitarios

- (b) There were some very pleasing answers to this part of the question, with many making the most of the opportunity to show off their familiarity with more complex linguistic structures. Many candidates taking this component came from relatively small nations and a common theme was that although there was some provision for talented youngsters in sports and arts, it was not uncommon to go overseas to seek more specialised facilities for development.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally well up to the standard required by this examination, with most marks in the Sound, Good, or Very Good bands.

And finally

A big thank you to centres who have entered candidates for this examination over the years. Assessing their work has consistently been a rewarding experience. It is anticipated that future candidates will find that the changed format of the new specification will offer similar stimulation and challenge.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31
Essay 31

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- select the title with which they feel most comfortable
- write a response that is clearly relevant, well-illustrated, coherently structured and well-informed
- use Spanish which is accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as demonstrate a good use of idiom and appropriate topic-related vocabulary
- use sentence patterns which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

The levels of ability on display in the essays for this session were impressive. The need to ensure that essays stay relevant to the title set and that they are easy to read remains absolutely vital to the success of such an exercise and it was clear that the majority of candidates fully understood this. There was also a thorough understanding amongst most candidates of the need to structure their essays and to use paragraphs in order to marshal their thoughts. There were, nevertheless, some essays that were not responses to the actual title set on the paper and which simply discussed vague notions related to the title, in particular with the fifth title on the paper relating to environmental issues. Those candidates who managed to produce a grammatically accurate piece of writing in Spanish that was a genuine response to the selected title were rewarded with marks in the higher brackets of the mark scheme. Once again, there was ample evidence of focused and meaningful preparation for this examination and such well-prepared candidates always managed to perform successfully as a result.

Issues relating to the word count (250 – 400 words) were few and far between. On the rare occasion when an essay fell short of the required length, there was simply not enough language in them to warrant access to marks at the higher levels of the language mark scheme. The same could be said, of course, of the marks awarded for content. If candidates fail to deal with enough substance in response to an essay title, then they cannot expect a good mark for content. Exceeding the word limit, whilst uncommon, also resulted in essays that tended to suffer from similar issues. Such essays were more prone to language errors and to losing their way somewhat in terms of sticking to relevant points in order to discuss the title. Nevertheless, the vast majority of candidates were able to produce a piece of writing that abided by the rubric. The point has been made very often in these reports to centres that candidates need to have a clear understanding of the wording of the mark scheme for this paper, both in terms of word limits and also as far as basic essay writing is concerned. Candidates who have such a grasp of the mark scheme tend to produce more articulate and accessible essays.

With regard to the quality of the language used by candidates, the overall impression was a positive one. Aspects of advanced Spanish grammar were much in evidence in many of the essays together with a variety of tenses (where appropriate) and the use of impersonal expressions in order to enhance the register and the tone of the essay. Regrettably however, there was once again lack of punctuation in many of the essays submitted by candidates. If an essay is difficult to follow because of a lack of punctuation, the whole feel of the essay will suffer and the marks awarded are likely to reflect this. Punctuation must be seen not as merely desirable but as an absolutely essential element in the process of essay writing.

In terms of the language errors most commonly made by candidates, there is very little to report that will come as a surprise to centres. A significant number of candidates managed to confuse the word 'hay' with the word 'ahí' which led to utterances such as '*...con respecto al turismo, ahí grandes beneficios pero también ahí muchos problemas*' (sic). There were candidates who routinely wrote the word 'jente' (sic) instead of 'gente' and then went on to use a plural verb for a singular subject. Another common

misunderstanding was the use of the gerund instead of a verbal noun. Accordingly, sentences such as '*...viajando al extranjero es mejor que quedando en casa...*'(sic) were much in evidence. In addition, the most basic differences between 'ser' and 'estar' continued to cause trouble for a number of candidates in this session. Sentences such as '*...la vida diaria es mejorando como consecuencia de la tecnología nueva...*'(sic.) were often used by candidates, despite this particular point being made many times before in previous reports.

The correct use of tenses and a lack of adjectival agreements were also common features of a number of essays in this session. In addition to this, there was a surprisingly high number of spelling mistakes where individual letters caused trouble for candidates in phrases such as '*bale la pena*' (sic.), '*las acciones del estado*'(sic.) and '*...el desarrollo tecnologico*' (sic.) There was also a widespread tendency to omit accents from the vast majority of words where they are required. Unsurprisingly, in some cases the lack of accents affected accuracy and clarity, particularly when it came to tenses (*arreglo/arregló, mandara/mandará* and *so on*). Once again in this session, there was a marked tendency to drop the letter 'h' in the perfect tense with utterances such as '*...este tema a sido discutido muy a menudo ...*' (sic.) and '*...algunos padres no an aprendido a respetar las necesidades de sus hijos...*' (sic.) which, of course, were inclined to spoil many otherwise reasonably well written essays.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- The use of an appropriate range of tenses and moods, all correctly conjugated.
- The correct use of 'hay' in very basic sentences.
- A clear understanding of the differences between the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
- Punctuation used to achieve very clear communication.
- The use of impersonal expressions and idiomatic language in order to enhance the overall register of the writing.
- Spanish accents being used accurately throughout the essay.

Common errors included:

- Extremely inconsistent use of punctuation and, on far too many occasions, no punctuation at all.
- The persistent lack of accents seriously affecting comprehension, particularly when it came to tenses or moods.
- The inaccurate use of singular and plural verbs.
- The dropping of the letter 'h' with an auxiliary verb (e.g. '*los padres siempre an tenido problemas con las relaciones con sus hijos*' (sic)).
- The lack of understanding of the use of the verb '*gustar*'.
- The lack of adjectival agreement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

La familia

¿Es todavía válido el concepto de familia?

With this popular title, the majority view appeared to be that the concept of family is very much alive and well in modern society. There was also a clear understanding that it is indeed evolving and that the notion of a traditional family set-up is different today to what it might have been in the previous century. Many candidates took the opportunity to discuss the notion of extended families and, indeed, of close friends being considered as members of the family. There were many references to personal circumstances and the numerous ways in which family members can help each other with mutual support, encouragement and advice.

Question 2

La justicia y el orden público

La policía necesita el apoyo de todos para funcionar bien. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This was a reasonably popular title and it would be fair to say that the most commonly expressed view was that the police do indeed need the support of the whole of society in order to be able to function properly and effectively. There were references to the negative effects of police corruption in some societies around the world but most essays suggested that the job of the police is vital to the smooth running of everyday life and that the institution should have the support of us all. The provision of adequate funding for the police was also mentioned in many essays as was the need for politics to be kept out of policing as much as possible.

Question 3

El turismo

¿Hasta qué punto es posible establecer un equilibrio entre el desarrollo turístico y la protección de lugares ambientalmente sensibles?

This was also a fairly popular choice for candidates and there was no shortage of strong opinions being expressed. Whilst most accepted that tourism is vital to a wide range of economies in many countries around the world, there was also much support for stricter laws and meaningful regulation to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. The lack of sensitivity often portrayed in the press regarding poorly behaved tourists was also discussed as was the need for consideration of higher taxes to be imposed on travel companies and airlines in order to fund environmental initiatives to protect such areas.

Question 4

Las nuevas tecnologías

Algunos avances en los videojuegos suponen un riesgo enorme a la salud mental de sus usuarios. ¿Está usted de acuerdo?

This was a very popular title with candidates. Most felt that there is little doubt that some of the video games now available on the market can undoubtedly lead to problems related to mental health, especially in terms of the development of addiction to the virtual world on offer. Many essays were keen to point out the exceptionally realistic designs of many video games and the way in which they can help people with skills such as decision making and, to a lesser degree, social interaction. More or less every essay also made a point of mentioning the very violent nature of many of the current crop of video games and the inevitably negative psychological effects of such graphic violence on screen.

Question 5

La contaminación

Si queremos solucionar los problemas de contaminación, el reciclaje es la respuesta. ¿Comparte usted esta opinión?

This popular title produced many well-argued essays, often with strongly expressed views. Every essay accepted the importance of recycling but many went on to point out that it is only part of the solution. Much more, it would appear, needs to be done both by the individual and by governments both nationally and internationally. Putting things off and hoping the situation will get better was not seen as a viable approach to the problems of pollution. Alternative energy sources were brought into the debate as was the need for scientific research to continue to strive for further alternative energy sources.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32
Essay 32

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- select the title with which they feel most comfortable
- write a response that is clearly relevant, well-illustrated, coherently structured and well-informed
- use Spanish which is accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as demonstrate a good use of idiom and appropriate topic-related vocabulary
- use sentence patterns which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

The levels of ability on display in the essays for this session were impressive. The need to ensure that essays stay relevant to the title set and that they are easy to read remains absolutely vital to the success of such an exercise and it was clear that the majority of candidates fully understood this. There was also a thorough understanding amongst most candidates of the need to structure their essays and to use paragraphs in order to marshal their thoughts. There were, nevertheless, some essays that were not responses to the actual title set on the paper and which simply discussed vague notions related to the title, in particular with the fifth title on the paper relating to environmental issues. Those candidates who managed to produce a grammatically accurate piece of writing in Spanish that was a genuine response to the selected title were rewarded with marks in the higher brackets of the mark scheme. Once again, there was ample evidence of focused and meaningful preparation for this examination and such well-prepared candidates always managed to perform successfully as a result.

Issues relating to the word count (250 – 400 words) were few and far between. On the rare occasion when an essay fell short of the required length, there was simply not enough language in them to warrant access to marks at the higher levels of the language mark scheme. The same could be said, of course, of the marks awarded for content. If candidates fail to deal with enough substance in response to an essay title, then they cannot expect a good mark for content. Exceeding the word limit, whilst uncommon, also resulted in essays that tended to suffer from similar issues. Such essays were more prone to language errors and to losing their way somewhat in terms of sticking to relevant points in order to discuss the title. Nevertheless, the vast majority of candidates were able to produce a piece of writing that abided by the rubric. The point has been made very often in these reports to centres that candidates need to have a clear understanding of the wording of the mark scheme for this paper, both in terms of word limits and also as far as basic essay writing is concerned. Candidates who have such a grasp of the mark scheme tend to produce more articulate and accessible essays.

With regard to the quality of the language used by candidates, the overall impression was a positive one. Aspects of advanced Spanish grammar were much in evidence in many of the essays together with a variety of tenses (where appropriate) and the use of impersonal expressions in order to enhance the register and the tone of the essay. Regrettably however, there was once again a lack of punctuation in many of the essays submitted by candidates. If an essay is difficult to follow because of a lack of punctuation, the whole feel of the essay will suffer and the marks awarded are likely to reflect this. Punctuation must be seen not as merely desirable but as an absolutely essential element in the process of essay writing.

In terms of the language errors most commonly made by candidates, there is very little to report that will come as a surprise to centres. A significant number of candidates managed to confuse the word '*hay*' with the word '*ahí*' which led to utterances such as '*...con respecto al turismo, ahí grandes beneficios pero también ahí muchos problemas*' (sic). There were candidates who routinely wrote the word '*jente*' (sic) instead of '*gente*' and then went on to use a plural verb for a singular subject. Another common

misunderstanding was the use of the gerund instead of a verbal noun. Accordingly, sentences such as '*...viajando al extranjero es mejor que quedando en casa...*'(sic) were much in evidence. In addition, the most basic differences between 'ser' and 'estar' continued to cause trouble for a number of candidates in this session. Sentences such as '*...la vida diaria es mejorando como consecuencia de la tecnología nueva...*'(sic.) were often used by candidates, despite this particular point being made many times before in previous reports.

The correct use of tenses and a lack of adjectival agreements were also common features of a number of essays in this session. In addition to this, there was a surprisingly high number of spelling mistakes where individual letters caused trouble for candidates in phrases such as '*bale la pena*' (sic.), '*las acciones del estado*'(sic.) and '*...el desarrollo tecnologico*' (sic.) There was also a widespread tendency to omit accents from the vast majority of words where they are required. Unsurprisingly, in some cases the lack of accents affected accuracy and clarity, particularly when it came to tenses (*arreglo/arregló, mandara/mandará and so on*). Once again in this session, there was a marked tendency to drop the letter 'h' in the perfect tense with utterances such as '*...este tema a sido discutido muy a menudo ...*' (sic.) and '*...algunos padres no an aprendido a respetar las necesidades de sus hijos...*' (sic.) which, of course, were inclined to spoil many otherwise reasonably well written essays.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- The use of an appropriate range of tenses and moods, all correctly conjugated.
- The correct use of 'hay' in very basic sentences.
- A clear understanding of the differences between the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
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- Spanish accents being used accurately throughout the essay.

Common errors included:

- Extremely inconsistent use of punctuation and, on far too many occasions, no punctuation at all.
- The persistent lack of accents seriously affecting comprehension, particularly when it came to tenses or moods.
- The inaccurate use of singular and plural verbs.
- The dropping of the letter 'h' with an auxiliary verb (e.g. '*los padres siempre an tenido problemas con las relaciones con sus hijos*' (sic)).
- The lack of understanding of the use of the verb '*gustar*'.
- The lack of adjectival agreement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

La familia

En una familia, ser joven es difícil, pero ser padre o madre es aún más difícil. ¿Comparte usted esta opinión?

With this popular title, there was much agreement that both being a young person in a family and being a parent nowadays can be rather challenging. Many essays looked at both sides of the argument and then came to the conclusion that the role of a parent is significantly more difficult given the levels of responsibility involved. Much personal experience was brought into play in order to back up the points being made whilst a good number of candidates wrote movingly about the way in which their own parents had dealt with the demands of parenting.

Question 2

La justicia y el orden público

La policía hoy en día tiene un papel casi imposible en la sociedad. ¿Qué opina usted?

This was a reasonably popular title and it would be fair to say that very few candidates argued that the role of the police is an easy one in today's society. There was general acceptance that policing is a vital institution in today's world and that in most countries police officers carry out their duties effectively. Some references were made to the problems of police corruption in certain societies whilst many also pointed out the need for significant increases in state funding for the police in order for them to deal more successfully with the rise in crime rates.

Question 3

El turismo

¿Hay diferencia entre ser un turista y ser un viajero?

This was a reasonably popular choice of title for candidates. Some argued that there is no real difference between being a tourist and being a traveller on the grounds that pleasure and personal fulfilment are the only reasons for travelling anywhere in the world. Others pointed out that most tourists are simply keen to relax and enjoy their surroundings whilst most travellers are keen to explore and to learn more about the culture and heritage of the destination they are visiting. Either way, there was universal agreement that travelling is a worthwhile pursuit, whether at home or abroad.

Question 4

Las nuevas tecnologías

Las nuevas tecnologías son el producto de la humanidad en su mejor momento. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This was a very popular title with candidates. Many essays took the view that recent developments in new technologies, in particular the internet and mobile phones, are clear examples of the intellectual capabilities of mankind and that we should be proud of the scientists and the experts involved in such endeavours. Inevitably, perhaps, there were references to the less attractive developments in modern weaponry (both nuclear and conventional) and how it is difficult to avoid feeling a sense of shame when such technologies can often result in widespread death and destruction. Most essays, nevertheless, remained positive about potential technological advances in the future.

Question 5

La contaminación

Hemos ganado algunas batallas contra la contaminación medioambiental, pero todavía queda mucho camino por recorrer. ¿Qué opina usted de esta afirmación?

This very popular title produced many impassioned essays arguing that there is indeed much still to be done in order to avoid environmental collapse in the future. Changes to our attitudes to recycling and our awareness of environmental issues were seen as positive shifts in public opinion but most essays talked up the urgent need for governments to act more decisively to tackle climate change and environmental pollution. Very few, if any, essays argued that the status quo is an option in today's world.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33
Essay 33

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- select the title with which they feel most comfortable
- write a response that is clearly relevant, well-illustrated, coherently structured and well-informed
- use Spanish which is accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as demonstrate a good use of idiom and appropriate topic-related vocabulary
- use sentence patterns which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

The levels of ability on display in the essays for this session were impressive. The need to ensure that essays stay relevant to the title set and that they are easy to read remains absolutely vital to the success of such an exercise and it was clear that the majority of candidates fully understood this. There was also a thorough understanding amongst most candidates of the need to structure their essays and to use paragraphs in order to marshal their thoughts. There were, nevertheless, some essays that were not responses to the actual title set on the paper and which simply discussed vague notions related to the title, in particular with the fifth title on the paper relating to environmental issues. Those candidates who managed to produce a grammatically accurate piece of writing in Spanish that was a genuine response to the selected title were rewarded with marks in the higher brackets of the mark scheme. Once again, there was ample evidence of focused and meaningful preparation for this examination and such well-prepared candidates always managed to perform successfully as a result.

Issues relating to the word count (250 – 400 words) were few and far between. On the rare occasion when an essay fell short of the required length, there was simply not enough language in them to warrant access to marks at the higher levels of the language mark scheme. The same could be said, of course, of the marks awarded for content. If candidates fail to deal with enough substance in response to an essay title, then they cannot expect a good mark for content. Exceeding the word limit, whilst uncommon, also resulted in essays that tended to suffer from similar issues. Such essays were more prone to language errors and to losing their way somewhat in terms of sticking to relevant points in order to discuss the title. Nevertheless, the vast majority of candidates were able to produce a piece of writing that abided by the rubric. The point has been made very often in these reports to centres that candidates need to have a clear understanding of the wording of the mark scheme for this paper, both in terms of word limits and also as far as basic essay writing is concerned. Candidates who have such a grasp of the mark scheme tend to produce more articulate and accessible essays.

With regard to the quality of the language used by candidates, the overall impression was a positive one. Aspects of advanced Spanish grammar were much in evidence in many of the essays together with a variety of tenses (where appropriate) and the use of impersonal expressions in order to enhance the register and the tone of the essay. Regrettably however, there was once again a lack of punctuation in many of the essays submitted by candidates. If an essay is difficult to follow because of a lack of punctuation, the whole feel of the essay will suffer and the marks awarded are likely to reflect this. Punctuation must be seen not as merely desirable but as an absolutely essential element in the process of essay writing.

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misunderstanding was the use of the gerund instead of a verbal noun. Accordingly, sentences such as ‘...viajando al extranjero es mejor que quedando en casa...’(sic) were much in evidence. In addition, the most basic differences between ‘ser’ and ‘estar’ continued to cause trouble for a number of candidates in this session. Sentences such as ‘...la vida diaria es mejorando como consecuencia de la tecnología nueva...’(sic.) were often used by candidates, despite this particular point being made many times before in previous reports.

The correct use of tenses and a lack of adjectival agreements were also common features of a number of essays in this session. In addition to this, there was a surprisingly high number of spelling mistakes where individual letters caused trouble for candidates in phrases such as ‘bale la pena’ (sic.), ‘las acciones del estado’(sic.) and ‘...el desarrollo tecnologico’ (sic.) There was also a widespread tendency to omit accents from the vast majority of words where they are required. Unsurprisingly, in some cases the lack of accents affected accuracy and clarity, particularly when it came to tenses (*arreglo/arregló, mandara/mandará* and *so on*). Once again this session, there was a marked tendency to drop the letter ‘h’ in the perfect tense with utterances such as ‘...este tema a sido discutido muy a menudo ...’ (sic.) and ‘...algunos padres no an aprendido a respetar las necesidades de sus hijos...’ (sic.) which, of course, were inclined to spoil many otherwise reasonably well written essays.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- The use of an appropriate range of tenses and moods, all correctly conjugated.
- The correct use of ‘hay’ in very basic sentences.
- A clear understanding of the differences between the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
- Punctuation used to achieve very clear communication.
- The use of impersonal expressions and idiomatic language in order to enhance the overall register of the writing.
- Spanish accents being used accurately throughout the essay.

Common errors included:

- Extremely inconsistent use of punctuation and, on far too many occasions, no punctuation at all.
- The persistent lack of accents seriously affecting comprehension, particularly when it came to tenses or moods.
- The inaccurate use of singular and plural verbs.
- The dropping of the letter ‘h’ with an auxiliary verb (e.g. ‘*los padres siempre an tenido problemas con las relaciones con sus hijos*’ (sic)).
- The lack of understanding of the use of the verb ‘gustar’.
- The lack of adjectival agreement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

La familia

¿Qué tienen en común las familias felices?

Those candidates who responded to this popular title largely seemed to suggest that the main way for families to be happy is for all members of the family to trust each other and respect each other’s opinions and feelings. There were, understandably, plenty of personal references made in order to support the views being expressed by candidates. It was also pointed out by many that family life still remains important to the vast majority of people in today’s society.

Question 2

La justicia y el orden público

Para ser respetada, la policía debe reflejar la sociedad a la que sirve. ¿Comparte usted esta opinión?

This was a reasonably popular title and the bulk of the essays written in response to the title did indeed share the view that the police should reflect the society that it serves, both in terms of ethnic background and gender. Many essays argued that respect for the police should be earned but that there should also be more understanding from the public of the difficult nature of the job of policing our modern society. There were references to the independence of the police as an institution and how important this is whilst at the same time making it clear that most police forces around the world perform their duties with an ongoing sense of professionalism and commitment to the public good.

Question 3

El turismo

¿El turismo siempre trae más problemas que beneficios. ¿Qué opina usted?

This was a very popular choice of title for candidates. There was much discussion of both the advantages and the disadvantages of tourism, in particular mass tourism in Spain and the negative effects it can have on the country's sense of national identity. Most essays concluded that there were more positive aspects to tourism in terms of the economic benefits and the provision of employment for many people involved in the tourist trade.

Question 4

Las nuevas tecnologías

De todas las innovaciones tecnológicas en los último cincuenta años, el teléfono móvil es la mejor. En su opinión, ¿es verdad esta afirmación?

This was, perhaps unsurprisingly, a very popular title with candidates. Many essays agreed that the benefits that mobile phones bring are numerous whilst acknowledging that they can also contribute to the issues surrounding online bullying, petty crime and gambling addictions. A number also discussed other contenders for the best technological innovation of the last fifty years (in particular the internet) but most were happy to accept that daily life would be much more difficult without a mobile phone at hand.

Question 5

La contaminación

La raza humana no tiene ni la más remota idea de cómo resolver los problemas de la contaminación. ¿Comparte usted este punto de vista?

This popular title produced many well-argued responses, most of which agreed with the premise of the statement. Some progress has been made, it would appear, but much more still needs to be done in order to tackle pollution in all its forms. The general acceptance that the world needs to rely less on fossil fuels and much more on renewable energy sources seemed to be the main argument in such essays. A few essays also suggested that many countries deserve praise for the steps they have taken to address the problems of environmental pollution and climate change.