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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

SPANISH

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Papers 8685/01 and 9719/01
Speaking

General comments

Moderators for this session's examination found few problems. Centres and Examiners conducting the tests are thanked for the care with which they followed the instructions and ensured that the correct documentation was enclosed with the tapes. In the case of those few Centres which still presented some difficulties, Moderators should like to remind them that it is essential that, as well as a copy of the computer-printed mark sheet (MS1) giving the total of each candidate's marks, Moderators need the mark sheets which give a breakdown of the marks for performance in each section of the test and under each constituent criterion; without this information they cannot confirm the accuracy of a Centre's marking so re-marking, not moderation, becomes necessary.

The majority of Examiners approached the tests in a professional but friendly manner and were able to put the candidates at ease by establishing the right balance of formality yet receptiveness.

Overall timing for the tests was correctly observed for the most part with a few minor exceptions where tests were over-long or very short.

Recording quality was generally good.

Comments on specific areas

Speech and Topic Conversation

There were very few examples of Centres/candidates failing to choose a topic in accordance with the syllabus requirements and almost all candidates presented a topic relating to some aspect of Spanish/Hispanic culture. It is important that candidates make the Hispanic focus of their topics explicit. Some candidates lost potential marks for content where the Hispanic focus was left at a rather nebulous level: the highest-scoring candidates took pains to explain the relevance of the topic to the Hispanic world and place their ideas and information in some clear context. A few presentations were somewhat garbled or ill prepared – particularly by otherwise linguistically confident candidates. The object of the presentation is not merely to show how quickly candidates can speak (pronunciation/intonation can suffer), as if on a social occasion with friends, but is a somewhat more formal activity – to engage the Examiner's interest, explain the material and provide pointers for subsequent discussion. Additionally, as this is an Advanced Level activity, candidates are expected to show an appropriate level of detail and analysis. Therefore, they need to select a topic that is capable of debate and that goes beyond the descriptive "my holiday in..." or "my hobbies" approach more suited to lower-level examinations.

This said, there were many well-organised, informative and thought-provoking presentations and many candidates had chosen topics that clearly reflected their own interests and concerns. Likewise, in the follow-up discussions, Examiners were able to tap into the interest and explore in greater detail those points raised.

A few Centres still overlook the requirement for candidates to elicit information from the Examiner. In both this section and the following general conversation, candidates who do not ask questions of the Examiner lose out on the marks allocated to that activity.

General Conversation

Although performance in this part of the test was generally sound, some candidates could have been challenged more effectively or given opportunities to reach a higher level linguistically. Many conversations revisited descriptive or factual subjects more suited to IGCSE or similar, such as pastimes, school, future plans, daily routine, etc., rather than moving to related but more abstract discussion on – for example – leisure, education, problems of daily life and controversies. On the other hand, many Centres had acted on comments from previous reports and candidates were able (or at least given the opportunity) to discuss topics of common concern and at an appropriate linguistic register.

Papers 8665/02, 8685/02 and 9719/02

Reading and Writing

General comments

This session's question paper produced a wide range of marks and discriminated well. It was apparent that Centres are becoming familiar with the demands of the syllabus as most candidates showed awareness of the techniques required. Time management did not appear to be a problem.

In **Questions 3 and 4**, 'lifting' chunks of the stimulus text was still too common. Candidates should be reminded that this will automatically invalidate their answers, whereas an attempt to paraphrase, albeit with some linguistic inaccuracy, will gain some credit. Where candidates lift extensively, they do not demonstrate to the Examiner that they have actually understood what they have read. Even small changes to the original text will be enough to demonstrate understanding.

There were some candidates who failed to answer part of a question. This was probably more through oversight than inability, as these candidates frequently presented their papers in very untidy fashion. Perhaps a simple device like leaving a line between each answer might help.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1

This is always intended to be a fairly accessible opening exercise and, with the surprising exception of **(a)**, proved again to be so. Possibly the fact that the first word of **(a)**'s answer was to be found at the end of one line with the rest of the phrase on the next made it more difficult to spot.

Candidates should remember that in this exercise only the precise equivalent phrase is required. Answers containing additional words will not score.

Question 2

A few more problems were encountered here.

- (a)(c)** These were generally answered well.
- (b)** This produced an enormous range of alternatives, not all of which were acceptable.
- (d)** There was a fair amount of inaccuracy here, frequently centred on the omission of *se*.
- (e)** Candidates often brought trouble upon themselves, either by reversing the two elements of the phrase or by omitting part of it.

In order to score in this sort of transformation exercise, candidates must re-work the *complete* phrase in such a way that it could be inserted into the original text with no change of meaning.

Question 3

This was generally well-answered, with most candidates clearly understanding how new technology could be applied to the home.

- (a) A fairly generous mark scheme allowed most candidates to get off to a good start, with many scoring 3 or 4 marks.
- (b) This proved more of a challenge, with only the better candidates managing to paraphrase *ignorancia generalizada* or *falta de interés*.
- (c) Although generally answered well, a minority of candidates failed to link *ingresos medios* to *no... para usuarios pudientes* and offered unneeded information from paragraph 1 as an answer.
- (d) To score on this question, candidates had firstly to realise that all the information was contained in the last line of paragraph 4, and secondly to paraphrase it successfully. Although many achieved the first objective, not so many succeeded in the second.
- (e) Again, candidates identified the necessary information with relative ease, but failed to convert this into marks when they copied chunks of text verbatim.

Sección Segunda**Question 4**

This proved to be the most challenging question on the paper, with the content, concepts and vocabulary of the stimulus text providing a stiff test for many candidates.

- (a) As with many parts of **Question 3**, locating the information was not a problem. Answering it in the candidate's own words frequently was.
- (b) Despite a fairly generous mark scheme, candidates often focused on just one or two *ventajas*, thus denying themselves access to the full four marks available.
- (c) A common failing here was to attempt an answer without reference to the text. This often resulted in *áreas incomunicadas* being defined as 'rural places, away from centres of population'.
- (d) Yet again the same comment: the answer was easy to identify but not so easy to paraphrase. (Although it was not anticipated that re-wording *las tarifas serán más baratas que las actuales* would pose so many problems.)
- (e) Those candidates who could answer in their own words scored well here.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates picked up useful marks on this and the following question. 'Lifting' stimulus text is not automatically penalised at this stage of the paper and, regardless of success or otherwise in **Questions 3** and **4**, those candidates who were able to pick out the *beneficios* of new technologies that they had read about were duly rewarded.

It should be remembered that generalised opening sentences such as *En recientes años ha habido muchos avances en el mundo de tecnología...* can waste ten per cent or more of the words available. They will score nothing for content and at best merely influence the quality of language mark. A far more economical yet mark-scoring technique is to plunge straight in: *La domótica nos ofrecerá comodidad, control, ahorro...*

Some stronger candidates failed to do themselves justice by writing fairly general summaries of the two texts when the question clearly asked for *beneficios*.

- (b) It was pleasing to see that only a tiny minority had used up their 140 words before arriving at this question.

Those candidates who gave the question some thought, even if their own country's experience of new technologies was fairly limited, came up with interesting and varied opinions.

Papers 8685/03 and 9719/03**Essay****General comments**

Examiners are pleased to report once again that, as in many previous sessions, the overall standard of performance this year was very good indeed. A clear majority of candidates were able to produce pertinent, well structured and grammatically accurate essays. Disappointingly, however, there were a number of examples of pre-learnt essays that departed radically from the title and that therefore lost many marks for content. It cannot be stressed too much that candidates need to address the title as written on the question paper rather than regurgitate a piece of writing based loosely on the selected topic. The ability to bring together evidence and viewpoints in order to support a particular line of thinking continues to be of the utmost importance if candidates wish to access the higher mark ranges.

As was the case last session, the vast majority of candidates presented their essays very well indeed, keeping a tight grip on structure and paragraphing in order to address the various issues under discussion. A good number of essays conveyed tremendous originality of thought and, whilst often presenting unexpected responses to particular issues, still managed to be convincing and well conceived. There was little padding in evidence this year in candidates' essays and Examiners are pleased to report that the overwhelming majority of candidates showed good discipline in keeping within the word count stipulated in the rubric (i.e. 250-400 words). It will come as no surprise to Centres that nearly all those essays that did substantially exceed the word limit were inclined to lose marks both in terms of language and content. Examiners remain unimpressed by candidates who blatantly ignore the rubric relating to word count. It is also worth pointing out that a small but worrying number of candidates wrote a short essay on each of the six titles set on the question paper. In such cases, Examiners could only award marks for one of the essays and these could not be high as the candidate would only have spent a fraction of the intended time and effort on each answer.

In terms of language, there were a few areas of concern amongst Examiners. As was the case last session, accents continue to cause problems for many candidates, a good number of whom simply failed to acknowledge their importance in Spanish. A large number of candidates convinced themselves mistakenly that singular nouns such as *la gente* require plural verbs (...*la gente no son dispuestas a considerar...* would be a good example of this grammatical misunderstanding). The use of the subjunctive in Spanish also caused a few problems for some candidates, with many simply resorting to the use of the indicative instead (e.g. ...*los habitantes de cualquier país quieren que los turistas aprenden su lengua...* [sic.]).

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

In line with recent years, the title under this topic was unpopular. Those candidates who chose it, however, produced good work and were rewarded accordingly.

Question 2

A very popular choice. Many candidates wrote passionately and with tremendous personal conviction about the nature of human love and were able to call upon personal experiences relating both to friends and family in order to illustrate their views.

Question 3

A very popular title indeed and one which attracted a wide range of differing approaches. Some candidates, however, ignored the issue of *identidad nacional* and simply wrote about tourism in general as a modern phenomenon. Accordingly, marks were lost for content.

Question 4

Another very popular title with a good many takers writing with considerable depth of feeling. Most not surprisingly, argued against success in examinations being the main thrust of an education system.

Question 5

This title was, as expected, one which attracted many candidates. Clearly, Centres had prepared their candidates well in this particular topic and many essays were well written and linguistically elegant. Too many candidates, though, simply wrote about the environment in very generalised terms and omitted to refer to the title with its emphasis on saving the planet. Needless to say, such essays lost marks for content.

Question 6

This title was avoided by the vast majority of candidates. Those who attempted it tended to write vaguely about scientific advances or simply kept repeating that the gender of a foetus was either an act of nature or an act of God.

Papers 8665/04, 8673/04 and 9719/04

Texts

General comments

Examiners assessed the performance of candidates this session as very similar to that seen in previous years. The vast majority of candidates had prepared the texts carefully and interpreted the rubric on the examination paper correctly. A few candidates answered too many questions or both alternatives on the same text, a small number ran out of time and Examiners struggled to read some scripts because of difficult handwriting. Examiners wish to remind Centres that candidates should not access the notes or preface of their set texts during the examination (where possible these should be separated off with an elastic band). There were occasions where Examiners suspected that candidates were using these notes, or pre-learnt class notes. Candidates must ensure that they respond to the question set, and do not simply reproduce learned material or copy notes or long quotations from the text. Credit cannot be awarded for this. The set text may be taken into the examination and can be very helpful if used correctly to find quotations and references to be included in an answer, but must not have been written in or marked in any way. Examiners would like to remind candidates who choose to answer option **(a)** questions in the first section of the examination paper, that they are advised to make thorough use of the printed extract in responding to **(i)** and **(ii)**, but must be sure to include reference to the whole text in answering **(iii)**, as specified in the rubric.

Comments on specific questions***Sección Primera*****Question 1**

Doña Perfecta: Benito Pérez Galdós

- (a)** The extract gave much detail for responding to **(i)** and **(ii)**, which many candidates ignored. The best answers to **(iii)** gave a balanced view, showing both the good and bad experiences of Pepe in Orbajosa.
- (b)** This was clearly understood and generally well answered. Most concentrated on Perfecta and Inocencio and commented on the irony of the names. Some also analysed Pepe and showed that his scientific approach implied an intolerance of religion.

Question 2

La casa de los espíritus: Isabel Allende

- (a) Candidates tended to answer (i) and (ii) well, sometimes in too great length, and did not give sufficient time to (iii). This last part of the question asked candidates to consider the lack of understanding between men and women throughout the novel. In order to achieve a high mark it was necessary to go beyond the relationship in the extract, and consider, for example, Esteban and Clara's differences of opinion. There was much material for this response and scope for individual interpretation.
- (b) This was often well answered. Candidates seemed more responsive to discussion of social issues and this question addressed those themes. There were many good answers incorporating study of characters, showing areas of inequality and analysing changes which occurred during the course of the novel.

Question 3

Todos los fuegos el fuego, Julio Cortázar

- (a) A number of answers to this text were lacking in detailed knowledge of the story beyond the printed extract and the implied references to Cuban revolutionaries. The extract gave help in responding to (ii) – discussion of narrative technique, but this was not generally well done. Answers to (iii) were also rather vague and tended to be personal responses not directly related to the story.
- (b) This was better done than (a) and a number of candidates managed to analyse two or three stories in some detail and consider how the main characters see themselves as isolated from others, why and with what consequences. Other candidates had difficulty with the concept itself and reference to their reading tended to be simply storytelling.

Question 4

El concierto de San Ovidio: Antonio Buero Vallejo

- (a) Candidates seem to enjoy this text and usually answer well. Parts (i) and (ii) were tackled more effectively overall than (iii). It is essential to leave time to answer part (iii) as it gives an overview of the main themes of the text and an opportunity to analyse as well as give a personal interpretation. The best answers showed how difficult Adriana's life had been and the necessary compromises she had made for survival – a good balance to the consideration of the sad plight of the blind musicians, and indeed of society in general.
- (b) This question gave scope for a number of interpretations of *disfrazados* and there were some very thoughtful responses. There was insight into the hypocrisy shown by a number of characters who were not as they first seemed and the need for others such as Adriana to mask her true feelings in order to survive.

Sección Segunda**Question 5**

Crónica de una muerte anunciada: Gabriel García Márquez

- (a) This text continues to be very popular. There were some thoughtful and detailed discussions of the issue of the *novela policíaca* although some concentrated too much on the genre and structure with insufficient reference to the text.
- (b) There were some good answers to this question with detailed reference to the text. It was particularly important to focus closely on the question set as some candidates tried to write primarily on *honor*, seemingly pre-prepared, and therefore did not give sufficient attention to the concept of *verdad*. Others used learned notes on the culpability of individuals and the community – this could be used to good effect but needed to be well organised. It is always risky to reproduce learned material without reading the question closely enough.

Question 6

La vida es sueño: Calderón de la Barca

- (a) This question was well answered. Candidates were able to chart the changes in Segismundo and analyse the reasons for his behaviour.
- (b) Candidates responded well to this question although they tended to compare the importance of dreams with the theme of violence and concentrated too much on the former – presumably because that was what they had prepared. Those candidates who structured their answer closely on the question set, even with references to dreams, gained higher marks. The best answers analysed the nature of violence seen in the text and its causes, both in Basilio and Segismundo's behaviour.

Question 7

Bodas de sangre: Federico García Lorca

- (a) This was probably the most popular question on the whole examination paper and gave scope for all candidates to answer at their own level. Some candidates focused simply on Leonardo and La Novia and showed how time had not diminished their feelings for one another, giving little reference to the *paredes* mentioned in the question. The best answers took a wider view, considering the attitude of La Madre as well and analysing the emotional, social and physical *paredes* seen in the play.
- (b) There were varying interpretations of this question, which was intended to refer not to the main characters, but rather to the other villagers and those who chose to meddle or comment on others' behaviour. Examiners accepted a number of readings of the question and candidates gave a strong response, showing good understanding of the motivations of the characters and giving detailed references.

Question 8

Campos de Castilla: Antonio Machado

- (a)(b) There were so few responses to this text that it is not appropriate to make general comments on the performance of these candidates.

Final comment

Examiners should be grateful if Centres would ask candidates not to write comments to Examiners at any point in their answers. There is a growing trend to give information about difficulty in understanding texts, completing work, doing examinations or simply asking for lenient treatment. Candidates would be advised to use the time in the examination to do the best they can in answering the questions.