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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

Conduct of the examinations and performance by the candidates were generally very satisfactory. Examiners thank the teacher/Examiners and examination officers in the Centres for the care and attention to detail with which the majority attend to these tests. Most Centres are now accustomed to recent amendments to the syllabus and are well experienced in examining the candidates in a positive yet appropriately challenging manner. There remain a few points of concern, however, and these are outlined below. Where criticisms are made, Examiners wish to emphasise that these refer to a minority of Centres; nevertheless the issues are such as to affect adversely candidates' final marks, or to cause problems in the moderation process.

The examination for both A and AS candidates follows the same format. Candidates are required to start the test with a speech of not longer than three minutes without interruption (maximum 20 marks); this speech is followed by a discussion of the topic outlined in the speech (40 marks). The final part is a discussion of general issues (40 marks). In both the topic discussion and in the general conversation up to 5 marks in each section are gained by the candidate for asking information and obtaining opinions etc. from the Examiner.

The topic for the speech and subsequent discussion must be related to the Hispanic context and should reflect an appreciation by the candidate of the relevance of that topic to the Spanish-speaking society or country concerned. The vast majority of Centres took this requirement on board and candidates spoke knowledgeably and relevantly, clearly focusing on the Hispanic world. Some candidates, unfortunately, chose topics clearly outside the syllabus requirements, such as a visit to a non-Spanish-speaking country, religion in India, the family, my interests, and so on. Candidates with such topics were awarded no more than half marks for content in the speech, no matter how fluent or well organised the material; Centres which awarded higher marks had these marks moderated accordingly. Far more difficult to assess are those grey areas where candidates may have been referring to the Hispanic world by implication, but did not make the relevance clear. Such topics included the environment, euthanasia, AIDS, causes of pollution, sport and leisure. Candidates can help themselves (and the Moderators) by making clear and explicit reference to Spain or the Spanish-speaking world and by giving specific and, where possible, quantifiable evidence, statistics, names etc. in their speeches. Teacher/Examiners should also in the discussions direct their questions primarily to the Hispanic context, though of course it is perfectly acceptable to ask the candidate to draw comparisons or contrasts with his or her own society. A very few teacher/Examiners interrupted candidates' speeches with coincidental questions – this should not be done. Candidates gained credit not just for the content of their speeches, but also for the organisation and delivery. Candidates who rambled, mumbled or who were evidently making something up on the spur of the moment did not score highly; this part of the test should be an exposition, a fairly formal presentation, designed to interest and arouse the curiosity of the intelligent listener and should go beyond anecdotal sociability.

Most candidates remembered to ask the teacher/Examiner some questions. Where candidates forgot, most Examiners gave a reminder to do so; again, this is acceptable and candidates should be given this opportunity. A few Centres apparently still overlooked this aspect of the test and in some cases even awarded marks, though the criteria had not been met.

The division between the topic and general conversations should be clearly indicated, both for the benefit of the candidate and the Moderator. This was done by the vast majority of Centres. A weakness at some Centres was to keep the level of topics discussed at a rather prosaic level, descriptions of the family, age, pastimes, etc., in some cases offering little scope beyond IGCSE or the equivalent. Although such topics may serve as a useful ice-breaker, they should lead to the opportunity for candidates to show higher register of language and the ability to deal with themes and issues appropriate to Advanced Levels. Again, Centres should remember that where candidates had not been offered such opportunities, the highest range of marks could not be awarded or accented.

Administration was generally good and paperwork was carefully completed. Please remember that the working mark sheets (showing the breakdown of marks under the constituent parts of the question and not just the total mark), as well as the second copy of the MS1 (total) computer-read mark sheet, should be sent with the tapes. It is of course extremely helpful if tapes are re-wound from the beginning after the tests. Please make sure that candidate names and numbers are clearly indicated on the tape itself and on the box - there were a few cases this session of virtually anonymous candidates.

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

General comments

It is pleasing to be able to report once again that the performance of candidates in this paper was good. There is little doubt now that the majority of candidates (and therefore the majority of Centres) are very familiar with the rigorous demands of this particular paper. In only a handful of cases was it clear that candidates had not managed their time sufficiently well. Accordingly, such candidates lost marks quite heavily, in particular in the final question. The problem relating to word count in **Question 5**, as mentioned in previous reports, has now been addressed in most Centres and candidates are restricting their compositions to 140 words, as stipulated in the rubric. Those who continue to write in excess of 200 words (and sometimes even more) are wasting a lot of valuable time, which could be better spent going back over the whole paper in an attempt to avoid careless errors.

The stimulus articles appeared to be perfectly accessible to the vast majority of candidates and many, therefore, were in a good position to respond fully and intelligently to the variety of tasks set.

It is disappointing, however, to point out, once again, that candidates will lose marks if they ignore the instruction in **Questions 3** and **4** that answers should be written *...sin copiar frases completas del texto...* and merely lift their answers from the stimulus, making no attempt to show the Examiner that they have understood the text.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Very well answered by the vast majority of candidates. Very few problems caused by this question.

Question 2

Some candidates, as was the case in the last two sessions of this paper, did not use the *...forma exacta de la palabra o palabras que parecen entre paréntesis...* and so lost marks for rubric infringement.

Question 3

- (a)(b) Both were well answered by most candidates. It is worth pointing out that the number of marks available for each answer is a good indication of the amount of detail required.
- (c) Very few candidates understood this question fully. Most candidates simply paraphrased the statement rather than explain its meaning in the actual text.
- (d) Well answered by many candidates, but marks were lost for direct lifting from the text.
- (e) Generally well answered. Most candidates noted both parts of the *desventaja* referred to in the text, namely an increase in weight brought on by the consumption of sweet foods.

Question 4

- (a) This question caused very few problems amongst candidates, although a failure to mention the quantity of wine involved on a daily basis resulted in a mark being lost.
- (b) There were very few problems in answering this question correctly.
- (c) Examiners rewarded those candidates who attempted to explain in their own words the nature of *la cultura del tiempo*.
- (d) There was a considerable amount of lifting directly from the text in this question. Marks were, therefore, lost by many candidates.
- (e) A hard question for many candidates, but there were still some excellent responses. Excessive length was a problem here, with too many candidates writing half a side of A4 or even more in an attempt to cover as much ground as possible. The ability to be concise cannot be underestimated in such questions.

Question 5

As has been the case for several years now, there were some excellent pieces of writing from a large number of candidates in this question and, as mentioned earlier, most responses fell within the word limit. The ability to write concisely, use evidence from both texts and keep to the question actually asked are key ingredients for success in this part of the paper. Candidates who, despite the clear rubric, exceeded the word limit lost marks for content, mainly because they were unable to make sufficient mark bearing points within the 140 word limit. As will always be the case, those candidates who showed clarity of thought and who wrote accurately with some sense of style and structure were rewarded well, often scoring full marks for this question. Those who wrote a few vague sentences down with no reference to either of the stimulus texts were not in a position to score highly at all. Many Examiners felt that language marks were lost needlessly through grammatical inaccuracy as a direct consequence of candidates not leaving themselves sufficient time to check their answers.

Papers 8685/03 and 9719/03

Essay

General comments

This session, as in many previous sessions, the general standard of performance was very good indeed. A pleasing number of candidates were able to produce concise, well structured and grammatically accurate essays. There were a few examples of pre-learned essays that departed from the title, but thankfully these were very much the exception. There is little doubt now that candidates have a clear understanding of the importance of responding to the title selected and marshalling plenty of relevant evidence in order to support their views. Once again, it is pleasing to be able to report that the majority of candidates presented their essays very well indeed, using tightly structured paragraphing in order to address the particular issues under discussion. There were some highly original ideas expressed by many candidates and some surprisingly individualistic slants on certain themes. There was very little waffle or repetition in candidates' essays this year and almost all essays remained within the word count stipulated in the rubric (i.e. 250-400 words). Almost all those essays that did exceed the word limit tended to lose marks both in terms of language and content. Examiners remain unimpressed by candidates who ignore the rubric relating to word count.

Linguistically, there were some areas of concern amongst Examiners. Incorrect word order was an issue for a number of candidates with a few examples of literal translation from the mother tongue, especially English, into Spanish (*los padres viven muy lejos aparte...* serves as a good example of this). Accents continue to cause problems for many candidates, a good number of whom simply failed to acknowledge their importance in Spanish. Equally, shifting the word *hay* into the past tense often caused problems: *Han habido muchos problemas...* (sic.) was very common indeed. It was noticeable this year that an increasing number of candidates failed to appreciate that singular nouns require singular verbs (especially *la gente*).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This title was not popular, with the majority of candidates opting to avoid this topic. Those candidates who did choose this title, however, produced good work and were rewarded accordingly.

Question 2

A very popular choice. Many candidates wrote passionately about the generation gap and were able to call upon personal experiences in order to illustrate their views.

Question 3

Not a wildly popular title given the fairly technical nature of the topic area. Nevertheless, many essays rose to the challenge and read very well indeed. It was pleasing to note that many candidates had obviously familiarised themselves with the more technological terminology required to address this type of issue.

Question 4

Another fairly popular title with a good many takers. Most essays stayed focused on the title, but some strayed into discussion of other issues relating to inequality in general and not just sexual inequality. Those who strayed too far found themselves losing marks for content as a direct consequence.

Question 5

The least popular title by a long way as well as, it could be argued, the most difficult. Of the small number of essays submitted, only a handful were strong both in terms of language and content. Quite a few simply lost their way completely and confined themselves to a list of clichés and bland statements relating vaguely to 'culture'.

Question 6

The most popular title this session. As expected, the current conflict in Iraq provided many candidates with evidence in support of their ideas. The vast majority of essays expressed anti-war feelings throughout, but did so in a balanced and structured way. It is important in such essays that candidates do not get carried away on a wave of strong sentiment and therefore lose sight of the title.

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

Texts

General comments

The overall standard this session was adequate to good, with fewer candidates attaining very high or very low marks. Examiners observed that the vast majority of candidates showed knowledge and understanding of the texts and were aware of the type of questions set. There were some indications that the differing requirements of options (a) and (b) in **Section 1** questions need further practice to enable candidates to achieve the best possible outcome. Option (a) seeks detailed comment and analysis with reference to the extract given in responding to (i) and (ii), and then a wider overview of the whole text in answering (iii). It is not possible to achieve a high mark for this question if any part is omitted. The time allocation seemed fair as few candidates failed to complete the paper. A small but significant group of candidates found their language skills to be severely challenged when responding to the questions and at times the Spanish produced was difficult to follow.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

- (a) This is a popular text which candidates respond to very well. In this question, many candidates did not make full use of the given extract in answering (i) - there were many indications of the lawyer's physical appearance, demeanour and the state of his office for analysis. In (ii), there was some confusion regarding the *inquietud* of the colonel and many were not aware of his intentions to change his lawyer. Responses to (iii) were often thoughtful and specific, but there needed to be some reference to the fact that this was the lawyer's comment and consideration of his perception of the colonel's situation, rather than simply a list of examples of the poverty and hardship endured.
- (b) Another popular option with many good answers, well supported with evidence from the text. There were some examples of confusion with the colonel's past military career and the possible future *revolución*. Few candidates made specific reference to Agustín or explained the origin of the quotation.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates respond well to this text which was a popular choice. Parts (i) and (ii) were closely focused on the extract – candidates are advised to analyse this carefully in answering these questions. They can then demonstrate their knowledge of the novel as a whole when dealing with (iii). Candidates were able to empathise with Trueba and consider the relative success he achieved in many aspects of his life after Rosa's death.
- (b) This question was answered very well. Candidates were able to explore the concept of power from a number of different viewpoints with reference to several characters and come to satisfactory conclusions.

Question 3

- (a) This text was chosen by a relatively small number of candidates. Option (a) elicited a few very good answers, but most were rather generalised with little evidence of knowledge of the text beyond the given extract.
- (b) Answers to this option were better as candidates were able to illustrate their argument with stories of their choice, and there was no difficulty in identifying and discussing these. Some Centres had clearly prepared the text very thoroughly and candidates had a wider awareness of the author's philosophy and approach. There were some interesting interpretations, particularly of *La autopista del sur*.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates enjoyed this text and produced some good answers. Part (ii) was sometimes lacking in detail – which could be found in the extract. Part (iii) showed sensitive understanding of the issues.
- (b) This was generally well answered. Candidates showed empathy with Donato and wrote with feeling of his situation. Little sympathy was evident for Valindin. There was good focus on the question set and candidates were able to compare and contrast the two characters effectively.

Section 2

Question 5

There were more answers on this text than in previous years. The more popular option was **(a)**, with general responses dealing with a number of characters, charting their progress towards independence and discussing the various factors influencing them. Some candidates were also able to consider other themes which they saw as central to the novel and show how they were linked. Examiners were not able to give credit for very general discussion of growing up and relationships with parents and teachers. Candidates must keep their answers firmly rooted in the text and support their argument with specific references to it, not personal experience.

Question 6

Answers to this text tended to be polarised at both ends of the range – either very competent or weak. The best essays were aware of the context of the play and able to discuss the main ideas with detailed quotations of a reasonable length. Option **(b)** seemed to tempt some candidates to deal with it in a purely general way with little or no reference to the text. The question required analysis of events in the play and consideration of the outcome in the light of Segismundo's experiences. Although there was scope for personal interpretation, it needed to be confined to a response to the play itself and not stray into the nature of life in general or personal anecdote. Candidates should also avoid copying out long speeches.

Question 7

This was a very popular text and both options gave candidates much scope for their answers. In **(a)** there was a good deal of material. The best essays dealt with the different representations of blood in the play, considering such themes as *casta*, revenge, passion and death and managing to include the role of the supernatural characters. In addition, they came to a clear conclusion about the most important one, and justified it. Option **(b)** was often answered less fully as candidates declared that Leonardo was given a name as he was the most important character, but could not enlarge upon this. It was necessary to consider why the other characters were not given personal names in order to make a convincing case. Virtually all those who answered on this text knew the story well and understood the main themes. More thought needed to be given to the selection of appropriate quotations and references to make the most of their study.

Question 8

Fewer candidates chose to answer on this text than previously. Examiners reported that although candidates responded well to the poems and showed understanding of the themes, it was difficult for most candidates to combine analysis and quotation. With reference to option **(a)**, the theme of *naufragio* was interpreted as loneliness and abandonment at the end of a relationship and linked to the many references to the sea in Neruda's work. In **(b)**, many examples of sensuality were given and candidates had no difficulty in referring to two or three poems. The best answers then commented on how the poet conveys sensuality and considered other important aspects of the work rather than simply give a list of quotations.

Conclusion

The main prerequisite to success in this paper is always close study of the chosen texts. Candidates should not rely on the fact that they have the text with them in the examination to select appropriate quotations on the spot. They must be aware of crucial passages and know how to identify the key sections in advance in order to make best use of the time available. Neither should they use critical comments from the introduction to the texts. Examiners note that the majority of candidates read the rubric carefully and respond appropriately to the tasks set, but a significant minority are not achieving their potential by failing to answer all parts of a question or giving an unbalanced response - particularly in **Section 1** option **(a)** where **(iii)** requires reference to the whole text. Candidates who answer a question on a purely personal basis with no reference to a text cannot be credited.