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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

The moderation process went smoothly for the most part, this session, and few problems were encountered with conduct of the tests or with assessment. Once again, Moderators thank all those concerned in the administration of the speaking examinations.

Centres now seem very familiar with the format of the examination and candidates, on the whole, were adequately prepared and knew what might be expected of them. Teachers/Examiners in the Centres were able to pitch their questioning at the right level, maintaining a judicious balance between appropriate challenge and friendly encouragement, as appropriate to the ability and personality of their individual candidates.

Most Centres had taken care over the quality of the recordings and made sure that the correct documentation was enclosed with the tapes. Nevertheless, 1 or 2 Centres sent tapes with unacceptable levels of background or mechanical noise or with insufficient identification of the candidates sampled. Please remember that in order for moderation to take place, a clear recording must be provided. The names and index numbers of the candidates who form part of the recorded sample should be clearly stated on the tape itself and also listed in the correct order on the cassette box or insert card. There were still a couple of instances where Centres did not complete fully the working mark sheets: without the full break-down of candidates' marks for each section of the test (i.e. all the columns on the working mark sheet – three columns for the Presentation, and five columns each for Topic Conversation and General Conversation), Moderators cannot moderate, but rather a full re-mark is required. Section sub-totals are not sufficient – even in the case of candidates awarded full or near to full marks.

Comments on specific questions**Presentation**

Practically all candidates chose a topic relevant to the syllabus requirement – related to the culture of a Spanish-speaking country. A very small number of candidates still, however, omitted to make such reference explicit, speaking in rather general terms and failing to draw out sufficiently the essential Hispanic nature or context. Conversely, very many candidates did give well-organised, informative accounts, clearly describing or analysing the importance of what they were saying for the Spanish-speaking world.

Some candidates, however, could have taken further care over preparation and delivery. Paradoxically this was typically a failing of the more outwardly fluent candidate. The Presentation itself should be fairly formal – it should introduce the topic and inform and interest the listener. Highly colloquial or low-register Spanish, rushed delivery or poorly organised material will not score highly – neither will mumbled presentations lacking in real content.

Topic Conversation and General Conversation

Candidates here have the opportunity to show their ability in terms of fluency and spontaneity, as well as linguistic sophistication. In both conversations, marks are also awarded for providing information and opinions and for obtaining information from the Examiner. Candidates should be prepared to develop the information relevant to their topic and be able to expand on their views or personal situation as appropriate or relevant. The majority of candidates rose to the challenges offered here – a pleasing number also managed to influence the direction and momentum of the discussions, creating the feeling that a real conversation and exchange of ideas was taking place. Unfortunately, Teachers/Examiners in just a few Centres are still forgetting to give candidates the opportunity to ask them questions – effectively depriving a candidate of up to ten marks in the examination.

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

Reading and Writing

General comments

The paper discriminated well and was accessible to all levels of ability. Many candidates returned good, or even excellent scripts, and there were only a few who seemed unprepared for an examination at this level.

The two texts appeared to pose few problems in terms of overall comprehension, and it was the identification of the specific details required to answer the questions and, of course, linguistic capability which sorted out the stronger candidates from those who were less able.

Time management did not appear to be an issue. Occasionally, question parts were omitted, apparently by oversight rather than pressure of the clock.

Comments on specific questions**Section 1****Question 1**

This fairly straightforward test of understanding and identifying synonymous phrases provided most candidates with a confidence-boosting start to the examination. The phrases in the text proved fairly easy to locate, although, surprisingly, **(a)** appeared to trouble a few candidates.

The most common reason for candidates not scoring 5/5 was failure to produce the *exact* equivalent to the stimulus phrase. *'Han puesto en duda'* is not the same as *'han cuestionado su valor'*, nor does *'no es de extrañar'* equate to *'no es una sorpresa que'*.

Question 2

The language manipulation required in this exercise was a far more demanding test and the full 5 marks was awarded. Common errors were:

- (a) 'garantiza' taken to be a noun.
- (b) Omission of 'como están' before 'acostumbrados a decir'.
- (c) Omission of 'a' after 'animarles'.
- (d) 'a la referencia a los caramelos'.
- (e) Failure to use the gerund after 'sigue'.

As in **Question 1** some candidates threw away marks, after doing the hard work of successfully manipulating the language, by omitting a word or two and thereby failing to reproduce the *exact* equivalent idea. Good practice for **Questions 1** and **2**, which considerably reduces the risk of these omissions, is to write the stimulus phrase on one line and then the answer immediately beneath it.

Question 3

The stimulus text proved to be fairly accessible to most candidates, dealing as it did with familiar subject matter. Most candidates seemed to be aware that, not only did they have to select parts of the text which answered the questions, but also to paraphrase them in their *own* words. All candidates need to be vigilant on this matter, as it was not only the weaker candidates who lapsed into copying phrases and therefore lost marks.

- (a) This was a very easy starter, with only the notion of 'change of habit' amongst shoppers causing a few difficulties.
- (b) Many candidates failed to elaborate on a basic answer of '*pensar que estos productos nos hacen perder peso*'. If a question is allocated 3 marks, then usually something more substantial is required. (See mark scheme).
- (c) Most candidates picked up on the basic idea that the label 'light' can cause us to consume more. The full 3 marks available for mentioning the *comparison* drawn between '*comida light*' and '*cigarrillos light*' eluded some.
- (d) This again proved to be a fairly accessible question for the majority. Weaker candidates were either unaware of '*saber*' meaning 'taste' or focused on the examples of '*mayonesa/caramelos/chicles*' rather than the root problem: 'additional water weakens flavour and leads to higher consumption'.
- (e) Not so many candidates scored the full 3 marks for this question. Surprisingly, many failed to re-phrase '*mensajes publicitarios*' or '*comunicación publicitaria*', or to mention the life-enhancing qualities extolled by these commercials.

Section 2**Question 4**

Although this was a fairly straightforward stimulus text, it did not deal with a very familiar topic. This proved to be no impediment to better candidates, with the very best scoring the maximum of 20, whereas less able candidates frequently resorted to 'lifting' phrases verbatim.

- (a) As in **Question 3**, candidates should note that if 4 marks are allocated to an answer, it is unlikely that they will score all of these with one brief sentence. The commonest failing here was to miss the point that 'restricted, boring' diets for diabetics are now a thing of the past.
- (b) Provided candidates mentioned the *attractiveness* of the alternative diets, these were a relatively easy 2 marks which many candidates took advantage of.

- (c) The word '*pilares*' appeared both in the question and in the text, making the answers easy to locate. However, copying the relevant lines from the text did not lead to an automatic mark. With the exception of '*insulina*', paraphrasing was required.
- (d) Again, the allocation of 4 marks meant that something fairly substantial was required. Despite a fairly generous mark scheme not many candidates took full advantage. 'Lifting' of phrases from the text was quite widespread.
- (e) A fairly generous 2 marks were available here for those with the ability to paraphrase. However, many candidates chose to repeat verbatim the last ten words of the text and lost marks accordingly.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates who scored well on this question were fully aware of the necessary technique.

Marks were awarded for mentioning the main points made in each text, many of which had already appeared in answers to **Questions 3** and **4**. It is not necessary to try to link the two texts with an overarching general statement which wastes words and, likewise, generalised summarising sentences will frequently be too imprecise to score many marks.

Candidates of more modest linguistic ability who observed these guidelines were able to score well by demonstrating their comprehension.

Surprisingly few candidates availed themselves of the full 10 marks which were on offer for repeating the main points of the texts. Words were often wasted on personal opinions which were not supported by the texts.

- (b) Candidates scoring 5 marks for this question were those who wrote two or three sentences about the sort of food eaten in their country and then gave their opinions about it. Common failings were to take '*dieta*' as 'slimming' or even to misread it as 'diabetes'. A huge number of candidates wrote solely about '*productos light*' and the fashion for being slim, and therefore did not really answer the question.

Sadly, there were still some candidates who disregarded the 140 word limit for the *two* answers and scored zero for **(b)**, having used up their word allowance in **(a)**.

Papers 8685/03 and 9719/03

Essay

General comments

As has been the case for several consecutive years now, the general standard of performance was very good indeed. The vast majority of candidates produced well argued and linguistically accurate essays that showed tremendous maturity and a considerable understanding of the topics under discussion. The presentation of essays was good with most candidates keeping firm control of the structure and paragraphing of their essays. A small number of candidates lost marks for content by writing essays that were hard to relate to the actual title selected. However, most candidates now fully appreciate the importance of sticking to the actual title as set on the paper and presenting their ideas and points of view in a structured manner. Word count (250-400 words) was, once again this year, not an issue, with the overwhelming majority of pieces well within the limits set by the rubric. As has been stated many times in such reports, those essays that exceed the word count more often than not lose marks as a consequence of losing their way in terms of argument, overall structure and grammatical accuracy. It is clear that Centres have now accepted the importance of instructing their candidates to abide by the rubric and not to exceed the word limit.

It is pleasing to report that, in terms of the quality of Spanish used by candidates, there were very few major errors on which to pass comment. Nevertheless, and this was the case last year, the lack of understanding of the use of Spanish accents continues to be a problem for a good number of candidates. Candidates need to take on board the fact that accents are an important part of the Spanish language. Failure to use them appropriately is likely to contribute to a loss of marks for grammatical accuracy.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Rather predictably, this title was by far the least popular with candidates. Nevertheless, those candidates who opted for this topic were able to produce well written pieces in which reasoned arguments were presented and clear conclusions were reached.

Question 2

A very popular title on this particular paper. Many candidates were able to draw upon personal experience in order to argue their case that friends are indeed important when times are tough. There were many impassioned essays that argued with equal justification that family relationships are just as crucial. All in all, this title provoked some very strong responses.

Question 3

The most attractive title for many candidates. Clearly, the theme of tourism is one that is studied in some considerable depth by Centres and this was reflected in the highly analytical nature of many of the essays written in response to the statement in the title. Most candidates argued that tourism, despite its disadvantages, is a very good thing for many countries, both economically and culturally.

Question 4

Another very popular title. The importance of education was strongly emphasised by almost every essay and many argued that it is indeed an end in itself regardless of whether or not a good education leads to a good career. Pleasingly, many essays paid tribute to the positive education received by candidates in many different countries.

Question 5

This title was avoided by the majority of candidates, presumably because it was very much centred on the use of cars in modern society and so was a much more specific brief than simply the environment in general. However, those essays that were submitted were of a remarkably high standard on the whole.

Question 6

There were, quite surprisingly in some ways, many exceptionally well written essays in response to this title despite its very scientific basis. Many candidates concluded that the unbridled use of human cloning would indeed be bad for mankind, but almost all the essays written here agreed that the carefully monitored use of such cloning techniques could actually be beneficial for many people, especially those suffering from incurable diseases.

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

Texts

General comments

Examiners report that the majority of candidates were prepared for the examination with knowledge of the texts and awareness of the type of questions set. The standard was generally good, but with fewer very good or excellent scripts than seen in other sessions. A small, but significant, number of candidates had poor understanding of the texts and answered either too many or too few questions.

Examiners would like to alert Centres to the increasing difficulty of deciphering handwriting. There were instances where the majority of the material was illegible and marking became almost impossible. Candidates can only be rewarded for what can be read. It is preferable to write less, but make it legible, than to write lengthy pieces of which much cannot be understood. Examiners would request Centres to give candidates practice in writing examination type answers under timed conditions to avoid problems in the future.

Examiners would like Centres to emphasise to candidates that they are being assessed on their knowledge and understanding of the set texts. Any other material, relating to other books they have read, or their own experiences, for example, cannot be rewarded by Examiners.

Comments on specific questions**Sección Primera****Question 1: Pérez Galdós – *Doña Perfecta***

- (a) This question proved to be straightforward and most candidates were able to give a good account of Pepe's view of Orbajosa.
- (b) Fewer candidates chose this option, but they were able to give a measured study of two or three characters. Pepe and Rosario tended to be those deemed as closest to perfection.

Question 2: Isabel Allende – *La casa de los espíritus*

- (a) This was a popular choice, but most of the answers were of a disappointing standard. Candidates responded well to (i), using the extract to good effect. The other two parts of the question tended to be answered in general terms, discussing aspects of love, but with few references to events in the novel at all.
- (b) This question elicited good and thoughtful responses, with candidates showing awareness of the political dimensions of the text. The best essays revealed a very positive response to the text with candidates able to analyse the experiences of a range of characters and support their argument with detailed references to the novel.

Question 3: Julio Cortázar – *Todos los fuegos el fuego*

- (a) This was well answered, although part (iii) tended to be rather repetitive in mentioning the motif of the love triangle, without considering the significance of *fuego*.
- (b) This question was also quite popular. The best answers included examples of short stories where characters seemed to be playing a role imposed on them by circumstances. The one instance where a character is literally on stage was not quite sufficient to sustain a full answer.

Question 4: Buero Vallejo – *El concierto de San Ovidio*

- (a) This was a popular choice, but candidates tended to focus too much on the quoted extract and did not give sufficient detail in responding to part (iii). Some good essays showed how David took a different view of the role of the *ciegos* – one shared by Adriana in the end as well.
- (b) This was chosen by a smaller number of candidates, but there were some good answers with thoughtful evaluation of David's role.

Sección Segunda**Question 5: García Márquez – *Crónica de una muerte anunciada***

- (a) This was the least popular of the options on this text and some candidates were unsure about which elements in the story to treat as 'superstition'.
- (b) Many candidates chose this question and the standard of answers was generally good, with some excellent ones. There was good breadth of understanding, considering the relative culpability of many characters in the novel, as well as detailed references and the ability to analyse the underlying social and cultural issues.

Question 6: Calderón de la Barca – *La vida es sueño*

- (a) There were many good answers to this question which gave scope for candidates of all abilities to show their knowledge of the text.
- (b) Candidates who chose to write on Clarín needed to be able to refer to his interventions in the play in detail, beyond repeated mention of his comic role. There were some sensitive essays. It was not advisable for candidates to declare that Clarín is not important and to embark on a character study of their own choice.

Question 7: García Lorca – *Bodas de sangre*

- (a) There were some good answers to this question, combining reference to the play as a whole with mention of the recurrent symbols and portents of tragedy and analysis of the text from the passage in which the quotation appears.
- (b) This was another popular question which gave much scope for all candidates to tackle it at their own level.

Question 8: Machado – *Campos de Castilla*

- (a) Very few candidates chose this question.
- (b) Relatively few candidates chose this question, but they responded well, with good and thorough answers.