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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 number of candidates for this session was, as usual, lower than in the June examination. Most Centres are now very familiar with the format of the examination and there were generally few problems encountered by the Examiners arising from the actual conduct of the tests. Centres are thanked for their attention to detail in meeting both the requirements and spirit of the syllabus. In the case of a small minority of Centres, however, there are still some administrative points that need to be addressed.

A few Centres are still not sending with the tapes a detailed working mark sheet (form WMS) showing the breakdown of all constituent marks for all candidates. It is not sufficient, for example, to give a total (say) of 15 for the Presentation. Moderators need to know the assessment under the separate criteria: content, language and pronunciation. Similar breakdowns of information must be shown for the Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections. The syllabus and mark sheets themselves give clear headings under which marks are to be awarded. Without this information, Centres' marks cannot be moderated nor accepted and the candidates in question have to be re-marked by the External Moderator. Examiners wish to emphasise, however, that there are very few Centres who did not comply with instructions, but such Centres inevitably cause disproportionate inconvenience in the moderating process.

The quality of recordings was generally good, though a few Centres used machines with obtrusive mechanical or background noise. All Centres are asked to check that candidates are clearly audible and are clearly identified by name and number on the tape and tape box.

Comments on specific areas

Presentation and Topic Conversation

In general, Centres and candidates remembered that the subject chosen for presentation and discussion must be clearly related to some aspect of life or culture of a Spanish-speaking country. This relationship should be explicit, rather than merely implied, as happened in some cases, particularly when certain subjects of more general application such as sport, social problems or environmental issues were discussed. Examiners who encouraged or reminded their candidates to focus on the Hispanic dimension during the test were acting in their candidates' best interests and all Examiners are asked to ensure when conducting the test that they give candidates the opportunity to make it clear that they are speaking about a Hispanic context.

In discussion, candidates were, for the most part, challenged appropriately and encouraged to state not only facts, but to give opinions and justifications for their points of view – essential if candidates were to have access to the whole range of marks.

General Conversation

Although this part of the test was generally conducted well, again, in a few Centres, the range of issues covered was rather limited and at a somewhat elementary level. As has been stated in previous reports, the General Conversation should make similar academic and linguistic demands of the candidate as does the Topic Conversation, and should go beyond just everyday life, plans and interests. Most Centres did take care to challenge better candidates effectively and weaker candidates were encouraged to do their best with sensitive questioning and a suitable gradation of difficulty.

Seeking information from the Examiner

Again, for the benefit of a few Centres who overlooked the requirement, a reminder that candidates are required to seek information or opinions from the Examiner in both the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation sections. Up to ten marks are lost if a candidate does not ask questions, so it is clearly in the interests of all to observe this. All candidates have to earn these ten marks specifically.

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

General comments

The paper proved to be a good test of varied skills in reading and writing Spanish. Although the first text was fairly demanding, insufficient time to complete the exam did not appear to be an issue. The general impression given was that candidates had been well prepared for the different tasks.

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

This was generally very well done. However, the importance of the instruction in the rubric – *expresiones ... que sean equivalentes* – needs to be emphasised. Some careless loss of marks was incurred by candidates writing much lengthier phrases which, although containing the required expression, could no longer be deemed *equivalente* to the original. The reverse also occurred, where the omission of words again meant that the answer was not equivalent to the phrase given in the question.

Question 2

This language manipulation exercise proved slightly more demanding than the identification test of **Question 1**. As in **Question 1**, careless marks were lost when added or omitted words meant that answers could no longer be considered to be *expresando las mismas ideas*.

Candidates should be reminded that they must use the *exact* form of the word given on the question paper in their answer e.g. *soluciones* could not be used for *solución*; *auxiliar* could not be used for *auxilio*.

- (a) Many candidates failed to use the future tense of the verb or omitted *problemas*.
- (b) Common errors here were the verb not being in the infinitive, the omission of the verb, or wrong prepositions.
- (c) The most common failing here was to try to use *más*, *menos* or *mucho* in place of *tanto*.
- (d) This was generally well answered. There was some uncertainty about the correct preposition to use after *capaces*.
- (e) This attracted quite a variety of answers. Frequent errors included *información de la disposición*, *información es en la disposición* and other similar inaccuracies.

Question 3

The demanding text really tested candidates' skills in showing comprehension without *copiar y pegar* *completas del texto*.

- (a) Those candidates who took care to write a full answer invariably scored well here. Marks were lost for careless, incomplete answers.
- (b) The temptation for this answer was to 'lift' verbatim from the text. This was not credited, as it would have been an injustice to the many candidates who successfully paraphrased the 'objective'. Many candidates scored one mark for *usar la informática*, but were unsuccessful in giving further details.
- (c) This question was generally done well.
- (d) A substantial number of candidates scored half marks on this question through considering only the *new* techniques for surgery. To score full marks, reference needed to be made to the practices which these techniques replaced.
- (e) This question was generally done well, although 'lifting' verbatim again was a temptation for weaker candidates.

Sección Segunda**Question 4**

This comprehension exercise on preventative medicine generally proved more accessible than its **Question 3** counterpart.

- (a) There were very few candidates incapable of scoring at least two marks on this opening question.
- (b) The most able candidates came up with some very impressive ways of paraphrasing *manipulación genética* although, because of the difficulty involved, a wide range of interpretations was allowed.
- (c) The comparison made between preventative and curative medicine in the second paragraph was of the public's comprehension and perception of these. Several candidates failed to tie their answers to the text and merely launched into a general comparison between the two different types of medicine, scoring zero marks (and incurring a resulting reduction to their mark for language).
- (d) Most candidates scored highly on this very straightforward question.
- (e) Few candidates had difficulty in identifying the points required for the answer, although some were tempted to 'lift' directly from the text.

Question 5

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates were fully aware of the rigorous constraint of length placed upon these demanding exercises. Only a few ignored the 140 word limit and suffered the consequences.

- (a) It is no mean feat to summarise the main points of two lengthy texts in little more than 100 words, whilst simultaneously displaying good language skills. The technique required is to go straight to the 'nitty gritty' of the texts e.g. *Hoy día los médicos pueden usar imágenes en 3-D para mejorar las técnicas de operar* and avoid bland generalisations such as *En recientes años ha habido muchos avances en la medicina curativa y la medicina preventiva*. The best candidates did this very successfully although, unfortunately, some candidates who had performed well elsewhere dropped marks by incorporating too much imprecise waffle in their summaries.
- (b) Equally demanding is to give an opinion of your country's health system in a short paragraph (3 or 4 lines). However, most candidates were able to do this very successfully and few scored less than three out of the five marks available. The secret, as most seemed to know, is to include a personal response and two or three different issues or ideas.

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

As in previous years, the general standard of performance was very good indeed. The majority of candidates were able to write concise, well argued and grammatically accurate essays that showed maturity and considerable insight into the topics under discussion. There were hardly any examples of essays that departed, even briefly, from the actual title. The presentation of essays was good again this year, with most candidates keeping a tight grip on the structure and paragraphing of their essays. Word count (250-400 words) was not an issue, with the overwhelming majority of pieces well within the limits set by the rubric. Those few essays that exceeded the word count, more often than not lost marks as a consequence of losing their way in terms both of argument and linguistic accuracy. It is clear that Centres now fully appreciate the importance of instructing their candidates to abide by the rubric and not exceed the word limit.

Linguistically, there were very few major errors to report. However, as 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. The vast majority of essays did, however, display a confident use of complex sentence patterns and were able to use an extensive range of vocabulary relevant to the selected title. Such essays, as is always the case, will score high marks for language.

Comments on individual questions**Question 1**

This title was by far the least popular. Indeed, this particular topic area regularly proves to be the least attractive to candidates. Of the handful of essays actually written in response to this title, all were of a pleasing standard.

Question 2

One of the most popular titles on this particular paper. Many candidates were able to relate personally to the idea of paying more attention to the views of their friends as opposed to listening to their parents and, not surprisingly perhaps, the majority expressed the view that many parents are simply out of touch with the youth of today.

Question 3

Another extremely attractive title for many candidates. There were many different viewpoints expressed, ranging from those who adore fast food of any sort to those who feel it is an abomination. Examiners were pleased to report that although many essays took a very personal approach to the title, the majority were able to keep a firm grip on structure and argue a very convincing case indeed.

Question 4

Another very popular title. The importance of education was strongly emphasised by almost every essay and there were many impassioned pleas for more equality of opportunity, in particular for women but also for young people.

Question 5

This title was avoided by the overwhelming majority of candidates. However, those essays that were submitted were of a remarkably high standard on the whole. Most took the view that national cultures throughout the world are in some considerable danger given the relentless onslaught of globalisation.

Question 6

There were a large number of exceptionally well written essays in response to this title. Clearly, world peace is a very genuine priority for many people, but sadly the majority of essays argued that it is indeed very much a dream, as stated in the title, given the evidence in recent years of man's inhumanity to man.

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

Texts

General comments

Examiners were pleased to see that the majority of candidates seemed to enjoy the texts studied and knew how to approach the examination questions. A small number of individuals did not follow the rubric correctly and either answered too many or too few questions. Candidates who answer only two questions are very unlikely to attain a satisfactory mark for the component. And those who answer more than the required three questions also reduce their chances of achieving a high grade because they will have insufficient time to write four or more answers of sufficient depth. In addition, candidates must be reminded that they may only be credited for one answer on each text. If both options on any text are attempted, one answer will be discounted, thus reducing the available marks by one third. One other issue to draw to candidates' attention is the need to refer to the whole text in answering part (iii) of the (a) questions in **Sección Primera**. In the case of a collection of short stories, this could include reference to other stories as well as the one quoted in the extract, though this would obviously depend on the relevance of material to the question set.

Comments on specific questions

Sección Primera

Question 1: García Márquez – *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

This is always a very popular choice and candidates showed good knowledge of the text and the general issues raised.

- (a) Examiners were seeking awareness of the atmosphere in the *pueblo* that went beyond the description of the deserted streets to include the sense of isolation, tension because of the curfew, lack of ambition and purpose caused by the political situation. The analysis of the colonel as *único* could be interpreted in a number of ways, but could include reference to his sense of independence, the importance of the *gallo*, and his moral and political stance. It was, of course, perfectly acceptable to challenge the statement in the question.
- (b) Examiners looked for a response where candidates used material to show whether the *mujer* was helped or hindered by her desire to maintain a dignified front. It was not sufficient to refer to incidents without making them part of a structured argument. Most candidates responded well to these questions and showed empathy with the characters.

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

Examiners continue to be impressed by the way in which candidates respond to this text, despite its length.

- (a) There was a small number of candidates who did not know the circumstances of the *contusiones* suffered by Clara and Blanca, and there were many instances of lack of detail in response to (iii).
- (b) Of the two options, this was probably the more successful, as candidates were given the opportunity to select a character of their choice and show how that individual developed and learned, perhaps from their mistakes. Esteban Trueba was the most frequently named and there is a wealth of material to use in this case. It was important to ensure, however, that the question was directly addressed.

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

Candidates responded well to this collection of short stories and seemed to appreciate the author's style and approach.

- (a) The context and role of the *ingeniero* were well understood. The third part of the question was less well answered as candidates tended not to extend their analysis beyond the idea of helping others in a crisis. The best answers included reference to the last paragraph where the vehicles begin to move and disperse, destroying the communities which had been created and leaving individuals absorbed in their own lives again – for some, an isolated existence. This gave rise to a more general discussion of the author's preoccupations.
- (b) The second option gave candidates the opportunity to pursue a more individual path and produced some interesting interpretations.

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

There seemed to be fewer essays on this text than has been the case in the past.

- (a) The small number of candidates who answered this question showed they had a good understanding of the text and were sensitive to the position of *la Priora* in particular. Some answers to (iii) needed to be more detailed in showing how David's response to Valindin's enterprise developed, and why.
- (b) Too few answers to make it possible to offer any comments.

Sección Segunda**Question 5: Martín Gaité – *Entre visillos***

Responses to this text were generally of a pleasing standard. Candidates were able to consider the issues and support their argument with a good level of detail. Option (b) was the preferred choice. Candidates dealt with a range of characters, considering a number of different pressures on these individuals, and were sensitive to the effects of the repressive society portrayed in the novel.

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

Both options gave rise to some very good answers.

- (a) Rosaura's role was well understood and the best answers succeeded in weaving her story with that of Segismundo, showing how the two characters shaped each other's development.
- (b) The symbols in the play had been carefully studied and candidates were able to give examples of these with good reference to the text. Not all answers dealt fully with the second part of the question where they were asked to relate the symbols to the theme of the play.

Question 7: García Lorca – *Bodas de sangre*

This was an immensely popular choice.

- (a) Most candidates were able to analyse whether the outcome was *lo justo* – depending on a number of interpretations of the quotation. The majority of answers weighed up the degree of culpability of the three main characters, but it was difficult for some to see the dramatic or poetic context as different from a 'real life' situation.
- (b) The role of supernatural elements had been studied and was generally well understood, with the best answers linking the characters with the poetic images.

Question 8: Neruda – *Veinte poemas de amor y Una canción desesperada*

Candidates responded well to this text, which was also very popular. It was pleasing to note the fact that most candidates had been trained to refer in detail to the poems themselves in their answer. In some cases, this was not sufficiently controlled, with very long quotations and little analysis in between. Both options worked well with sensitive and thoughtful answers. Some candidates challenged the statement in (a) and showed examples of good experiences as well as sad ones in the collection. In answering (b), there were some thorough analyses with awareness of poetic technique.