

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

General comments

It is important that each candidate's name and candidate number are clearly announced by the teacher at the start of the test and that these details are also written on the CD case or cassette box in the order in which the tests have been recorded.

There were some problems and inconsistencies with timings this session and Centres are reminded to adhere to the instructions in the syllabus for each section of the test. It is in the interests of fairness and comparability that the correct timings are observed. Some tests significantly exceeded twenty minutes whilst others were well under time – even as short as eight or ten minutes. Candidates will not receive extra credit for longer tests and, in the case of short timings, are unlikely to be able to access the full range of marks.

A number of Centres did not fully comply with the documentation requirements which considerably delayed the moderation process. It is essential that the Working Mark Sheet provided in the syllabus is completed *during* each candidate's test and gives the full breakdown of marks (not just section totals). The Working Mark Sheet must be enclosed with the recordings together with the Moderator copy of the MS1 mark sheet otherwise the Centre's marks cannot be verified by the Moderator.

The latest CIE Working Mark Sheet, which has been revised for 2011 onwards, provides a useful reminder to those conducting the tests of the maximum mark available under each criterion for the different parts of the test. Even so, a few Centres gave marks above the maximum available, for example, 8 in a column for which the maximum mark is 5.

Comments on specific sections

Presentation

Presentations should last around three minutes and should serve as a coherent introduction to the topic and provide a stimulus for the subsequent discussion. A few candidates merely gave a list of points that they wanted to discuss, but this did not itself constitute a valid presentation. The Topic areas are listed in Section 4 of the syllabus, together with guidance on the use of the topic list in Section 6. In all cases, topics must be clearly and explicitly related to a Spanish-speaking country. Content and treatment should be of a suitable academic level. Centres are reminded that the Presentation is an exercise in formal speaking and that candidates are assessed for preparation and organisation as well as for relevant subject content.

Pronunciation and intonation and range and register of language form part of the assessment criteria. Candidates who dealt with a topic superficially or in a conversational, informal manner, with little evidence of preparation and organisation, could not be awarded high marks for this part of the test.

Topic conversation

In the Topic conversation candidates must be given every opportunity to perform at an appropriately advanced standard. To gain access to the highest marks, candidates should, for example, include precise detail, concrete reference, statistics, opinions and analysis.

Spontaneity, responsiveness and fluency are assessed in the Topic conversation so examiners must provide opportunities for a candidate to provide a point of view, develop an argument or justify an opinion. Over-rehearsal or the use of trigger questions prevented some candidates from showing real spontaneity. Prepared answers, pseudo discussion or a series of mini presentations could not be given high credit for Comprehension & Responsiveness. Within the language criteria, candidates who did not use higher-level language did not achieve a high mark.

Candidates are required to seek information and opinions from the examiner in both the Topic and General conversations (five marks for each section). This request for information should be explicit and relevant to the conversation actually in progress. There were some instances where the examiner volunteered information or an opinion but gave candidates credit for “seeking information and opinions”. Candidates who do not specifically request such information, or seek opinions, cannot be given credit for this. However, it is perfectly acceptable – indeed necessary – for the examiner to remind a candidate to ask questions if this has not already occurred during either of the conversation sections. Centres should refer to the mark scheme for details.

General conversation

The General conversation should again be at an advanced-level standard and allow candidates to perform linguistically and contextually at an appropriate level and encourage them to deal with topics in an informed manner. Candidates are marked against the same assessment criteria as for the Topic conversation. ‘General’ in this context does not mean ‘elementary’ and topics covered should clearly go beyond the more descriptive approaches more appropriate to IGCSE/O Level (or equivalent) and allow candidates to express and justify ideas and opinions. As quality of language is also assessed, questioning should encourage the use of as wide a range of structures as possible. Accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and appropriate register, are all taken into account.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

Key message

In order to access every mark on this paper, candidates should follow the instructions in the rubrics carefully, avoid lifting five or more words from the text to answer comprehension questions, keep to the word limit in **Question 5**, and make sure that they attempt an answer to every question.

General comments

Work was generally of a good standard and candidates clearly related well to the two texts on school-based topics. Many had been well coached in the techniques required to successfully answer each of the questions.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Candidates familiar with the required technique were generally able to score very well in this first question. It is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question. Careful cross-checking should ensure that no additional words are included either before or after the matched phrase. For example, a number of candidates invalidated their answers to **(b)** by prefacing it with *en*. The most frequently correct answers were **(c)** and **(d)**.

Question 2

In addition to performing the required language manipulation, it is important to check that the answer fits back into the original text and retains the same meaning. A recommended technique for this exercise is to copy out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath. In this way it is possible to tell at a glance whether in making the manipulation any of the elements have been omitted or whether others have been added.

- (a)** There were a number of possible permutations of the correct answer. Answers which were not considered acceptable were the omission of *a* after *se parece*, and *parece montar en bicicleta* which didn't reflect the same meaning as the original phrase.
- (b)** The important thing in this manipulation was to retain the future tense and to ensure that the passive construction was applied to *el libro de texto* and not to *contenidos*.
- (c)** This manipulation tested knowledge of the subjunctive and was done well by those who were familiar with the use of this construction after *es preciso que*.
- (d)** The usage of *a no ser* appeared not to be so well known by candidates. Acceptable answers were those that either again used the subjunctive *reciba* after *que*, or the past participle *recibida*.
- (e)** This was the best answered of all the manipulation questions. There were a considerable number of ways of re-working this phrase to use *además* and many candidates produced good answers.

Question 3

The content of both reading texts appeared to present little difficulty for the majority of candidates. because of already having studied this first text for **Questions 1** and **2**, some candidates performed marginally better on this question than on **Question 4**.

- (a) This was generally answered very successfully. Apart from instances of lifting *la tecnología está en todas partes* answers often showed very good examples of manipulation and comprehension of the text.
- (b) The mark scheme allowed four different ways to score the three marks, although not so many candidates attempted the fourth route, that of stating the time scale for the introduction of the project *Escuela Digital*. High marks were generally achieved, although some were lost for lifting *de 10 a 16 años* or by stating that every school, rather than classroom, would have Internet access.
- (c) The two marks available for stating that the success of *la Escuela Digital* was dependant on the cooperation of both schools and teachers were scored by many candidates. Not so many were able to score the third mark as they did not mention that materials for every subject would have to be digitalized.
- (d) There were few candidates who were unable to score at least one of the marks for noting that teachers would not only need support in dealing with new technology but that they would also have to update their teaching methods.
- (e) There were many excellent answers to this question, indicating full comprehension of the relevant section of text. Apart from a few easily avoidable instances of lifting there were no real pitfalls to record.
- (f) Not all candidates mentioned that digital boards increased the length of time for which candidates were attentive. This question discriminated well.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Although there were many examples of excellent comprehension, marks awarded for this question were often slightly lower than for the previous one.

- (a) This was answered very well, with most candidates readily identifying the three objectives of attendance, behaviour and marks which had to be achieved for pupils to gain rewards. The only pitfall was that of directly lifting the key five words from the text. There were some excellent examples of paraphrase which avoided this.
- (b) In this four-mark question most candidates were able to show that they had understood that the rewards scheme in France applied to the class as a whole, whereas in New York it was aimed at the individual student. The point that in France, unlike in New York, the scheme targeted pupils in non-compulsory education was not so readily identified. Occasionally, answers were devised from differences which were not stated in the text, for example *se premia por sacar buenas notas en París pero se premia por buen comportamiento en Nueva York* and these could not be given credit.
- (c) This was another four-mark question and it was very common for candidates to note only two of the points sought by the mark scheme, namely the fact that some students do not identify with the rest of the group (with the phrase *alumnos que no se identifican con sus compañeros* occasionally appearing as a direct lift) and the fact that this was not a long-term solution to educational problems. The best answers came from candidates who had clearly digested the contents of the fourth paragraph and in doing so were able to note the four different points which answered the question.
- (d) Not all candidates were able to score both marks for this question. To improve pupils' opportunities was often correctly noted but some candidates encountered a certain amount of difficulty in stating all the elements of *el entorno social y económico* without resorting to lifting.

- (e) This question discriminated well, with the idea of *no usar la recompensa como coerción* being fully understood by candidates. The fact that rewards work best when there is sincere affection was identified by many.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks awarded. Most candidates seemed to be aware 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 part (b) of the question.

- (a) There were many significant details in both texts which related to innovations and problems in the educational system. One mark was awarded for every relevant detail mentioned, and candidates who managed to note many of these within the one hundred or so words at their disposal achieved high marks. In this exercise there are no penalties for directly lifting phrases from the text. It is important to avoid vague generalisations, and introductions such as *Los dos textos hablan sobre las innovaciones y los problemas en el sistema educativo* are not only a waste of words but will also score no marks. A far more effective and rewarded opening would have been, for example, *Las escuelas han encontrado la necesidad de satisfacer la falta del conocimiento digital* and then proceeding to give details of the new technology being incorporated in the classrooms.
- (b) In the two or three sentences available to answer this question those candidates who gave a personal opinion on the changes (or need for them) in the educational system in their country scored excellent marks. Those who wrote about the state in which education in their country found itself without addressing the question of change did not fare so well.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

Key message

In order to access every mark on this paper, candidates should follow the instructions in the rubrics carefully, avoid lifting five or more words from the text to answer comprehension questions, keep to the word limit in **Question 5**, and make sure that they attempt an answer to every question.

General comments

The two texts concerning the reactions of individuals and the authorities to widespread unemployment were clearly understood by the majority of candidates and the overall quality of performance was good. Many candidates had been well coached in the techniques required. There appeared to be no issues with time management and all candidates were able to complete all parts of the paper.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

The phrases in the original text were readily identified, with many candidates spotting all five. It is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question and careful cross-checking should ensure that no additional words are included either before or after the matched phrase.

A good technique used by some candidates to check at a glance that their answers contained no extras or omissions was to copy out the paraphrase in the question and then write their answer phrase on the line beneath.

The most common omission was *una* before *época de abundancia*. Frequent additions were *los* before *aspirantes a un único puesto* and *de Turismo* following *curso un máster*.

Question 2

As usual, this was one of the more challenging exercises in the examination. In addition to performing the required language manipulation, it is important to check that the answer will fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning. The technique mentioned above of copying out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath can help to ensure that is the case. It should also be possible to tell at a glance whether in making the manipulation any elements have been added or omitted.

- (a) A considerable number of permutations of the correct answer were possible. The omission of *más* in some answers meant that the mark could not be awarded.
- (b) This was generally done well. The participle *buscando* was an acceptable alternative to *buscar*, although *no hay otra manera* was considered not to convey the same meaning.
- (c) A passive construction is quite a common feature in these manipulation questions yet this one did not appear to be fully understood by candidates. The past participle *buscada* was often confused with the noun *búsqueda*, *estar* was sometimes used instead of *ser*, and generalisations such as *la preparación* for *más preparación* and *los españoles* for *muchos españoles* resulted in unacceptable changes of meaning.

- (d) Although constructions involving *falta* have also appeared in this exercise in previous years, there were not so many successful answers as on some of the other tasks in this section. Difficulties often arose from misunderstanding of *imprescindible* or attempts to form constructions with the article and noun *la falta*.
- (e) This was generally answered well. There was occasional omission of the concept of studying or misuse of *fin* in a non-objective sense, for example, *al fin* or even *en el fin*.

Question 3

There was sound overall comprehension of the text with many excellent answers. Some candidates experienced difficulty in expressing themselves without copying blocks of five words directly from the text.

- (a) The idea of Alejandra building up her knowledge needed to be conveyed by expressions such as *sigue estudiando* or some sort of reference to *cursos* or *formación*. Simply re-working the original words *ampliar su currículum* by statements such as *no ha dejado de ampliar su currículum* was not enough. Most candidates were successful in the second point with answers such as *prefiere buscar un trabajo interesante*.
- (b) This question was answered very well with the three levels of education being clearly identified. Where marks were lost this was due to lifting phrases from the text, particularly in the case of university entrance, *que se preparan para el examen* or *el examen de acceso a la universidad*, often amounting to even more than five words from the text. Good paraphrases included *estudian para la prueba de selectividad / para ingresar en la universidad*.
- (c) If a question is worth four marks then candidates need to include four items of information in their answers. Many candidates were only awarded two marks out of the four available here, which were usually scored for stating that private schools prepare candidates for state jobs, and that these jobs are permanent.
- (d) Most candidates scored a mark for noting that training will help with future career progression, although the point about competing for the same job was often missed, especially by those who had picked up on the similar reference to competing in the previous question. Irrelevant information about how some unemployed people finance their studies and graduates who specialise was often included.
- (e) (i) This was generally answered well, and the only pitfall was that of directly lifting the phrase *quiere trabajar en una empresa multinacional* from the text. The link between Ana's aspiration and the reason why she was following a postgraduate course was sometimes not clearly stated when the concept of *para lo cual* was omitted.
- (ii) There were many excellent answers to this question which could either be answered positively, by noting Francisco's future aspirations, e.g. *quiere un trabajo bien remunerado*, or negatively, by commenting on previous experience, e.g. *no le pagaban bien en sus anteriores empleos*.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

This question was answered fairly well, although not always quite as well as **Question 3**. Nevertheless, despite some instances of lifted text, there were often excellent examples of paraphrasing and re-working the original words.

- (a) This paragraph was clearly understood by most candidates although some found difficulties in expressing the information in their own words. Common lifts included *crear nuevos puestos de trabajo con dinero público* and *lleva más de dos años sin trabajo*. Some candidates were not able to come up with an equivalent time expression for the latter phrase.
- (b) This was a three-mark question but many candidates only mentioned two of the three answers required, with *limpieza del río* and *arreglar las calles* being the most frequent. Most candidates managed to score another mark, either for *estudiar las necesidades de la comunidad* or *crear actividades para los jóvenes*.

- (c) This question was worth four marks and candidates are always advised to answer such questions as fully as possible. Juan's opposition to these schemes was sometimes not covered because it was regarded as being too obvious. The points about the temporary nature of jobs and misuse of resources were understood and expressed well. A little more difficulty was apparent in tackling the concept of *trabajos reales* or *empleos artificiales*, with the result that the point was sometimes either omitted or lifted from the text.
- (d) Not so many candidates scored the two marks available here. The point about help only being given in the short-term was sometimes omitted, and misinterpretation of *dejan de pagar* and, to a lesser extent *alquiler* and *hipoteca*, gave rise to renderings such as *para evitar que paguen* or *para que puedan pagar los impuestos*.
- (e) (i) A common misinterpretation here was to state that unemployed people were to be given *empleos* as opposed to *formación* in strategically important sectors. This misunderstanding often made it difficult for candidates to score the second point required by the mark scheme.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to finish on a high note and there were many excellent answers, often containing skilful re-working of the original text.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks awarded. Most candidates seemed to be aware 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 part (b).

- (a) Many candidates performed well and identified key points with ease and expressed them well in terms of quality of language. In this exercise there are no penalties for directly lifting phrases from the text. Candidates who were less aware of the technique required for this question lost marks by approaching the exercise as an overall summary with emphasis on generalisations or making comparisons or contrasts between the two texts which contained a minimum amount of specific detail. It is important to avoid lengthy introductions such as *Tanto en el primer texto como en el segundo el problema que se intenta evitar es básicamente el desempleo. En los dos textos los ciudadanos buscan soluciones diferentes*. Generalisations like this are a waste of precious words as they will score no marks. A far more effective and rewarded opening would have been, for example, *La gente reacciona ante el desempleo enriqueciendo sus currículums para evitar trabajo aburrido y encontrar empleos permanentes*, and then proceeding to give specific details of ways in which people are doing this.
- (b) In the two or three sentences available those candidates who gave a personal opinion on the unemployment situation where they lived scored high marks. Some candidates were able to draw upon very relevant personal experience, for example, friends or family members having lost their jobs, or themselves having difficulty in finding part-time jobs which were once easy to come by. Those who merely echoed the ideas of the texts and stated that where they lived people were opting for more education and local authorities were creating jobs for the unemployed did not fare so well.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

Key message

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General comments

The two texts concerning the reactions of individuals and the authorities to widespread unemployment were clearly understood by the majority of candidates and the overall quality of performance was good. Many candidates had been well coached in the techniques required. There appeared to be no issues with time management and all candidates were able to complete all parts of the paper.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

The phrases in the original text were readily identified, with many candidates spotting all five. It is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question and careful cross-checking should ensure that no additional words are included either before or after the matched phrase.

A good technique used by some candidates to check at a glance that their answers contained no extras or omissions was to copy out the paraphrase in the question and then write their answer phrase on the line beneath.

The most common omission was *una* before *época de abundancia*. Frequent additions were *los* before *aspirantes a un único puesto* and *de Turismo* following *curso un máster*.

Question 2

As usual, this was one of the more challenging exercises in the examination. In addition to performing the required language manipulation, it is important to check that the answer will fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning. The technique mentioned above of copying out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath can help to ensure that is the case. It should also be possible to tell at a glance whether in making the manipulation any elements have been added or omitted.

- (a) A considerable number of permutations of the correct answer were possible. The omission of *más* in some answers meant that the mark could not be awarded.
- (b) This was generally done well. The participle *buscando* was an acceptable alternative to *buscar*, although *no hay otra manera* was considered not to convey the same meaning.
- (c) A passive construction is quite a common feature in these manipulation questions yet this one did not appear to be fully understood by candidates. The past participle *buscada* was often confused with the noun *búsqueda*, *estar* was sometimes used instead of *ser*, and generalisations such as *la preparación* for *más preparación* and *los españoles* for *muchos españoles* resulted in unacceptable changes of meaning.

- (d) Although constructions involving *falta* have also appeared in this exercise in previous years, there were not so many successful answers as on some of the other tasks in this section. Difficulties often arose from misunderstanding of *imprescindible* or attempts to form constructions with the article and noun *la falta*.
- (e) This was generally answered well. There was occasional omission of the concept of studying or misuse of *fin* in a non-objective sense, for example, *al fin* or even *en el fin*.

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There was sound overall comprehension of the text with many excellent answers. Some candidates experienced difficulty in expressing themselves without copying blocks of five words directly from the text.

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- (b) This question was answered very well with the three levels of education being clearly identified. Where marks were lost this was due to lifting phrases from the text, particularly in the case of university entrance, *que se preparan para el examen* or *el examen de acceso a la universidad*, often amounting to even more than five words from the text. Good paraphrases included *estudian para la prueba de selectividad / para ingresar en la universidad*.
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- (d) Most candidates scored a mark for noting that training will help with future career progression, although the point about competing for the same job was often missed, especially by those who had picked up on the similar reference to competing in the previous question. Irrelevant information about how some unemployed people finance their studies and graduates who specialise was often included.
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- (ii) There were many excellent answers to this question which could either be answered positively, by noting Francisco's future aspirations, e.g. *quiere un trabajo bien remunerado*, or negatively, by commenting on previous experience, e.g. *no le pagaban bien en sus anteriores empleos*.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

This question was answered fairly well, although not always quite as well as **Question 3**. Nevertheless, despite some instances of lifted text, there were often excellent examples of paraphrasing and re-working the original words.

- (a) This paragraph was clearly understood by most candidates although some found difficulties in expressing the information in their own words. Common lifts included *crear nuevos puestos de trabajo con dinero público* and *lleva más de dos años sin trabajo*. Some candidates were not able to come up with an equivalent time expression for the latter phrase.
- (b) This was a three-mark question but many candidates only mentioned two of the three answers required, with *limpieza del río* and *arreglar las calles* being the most frequent. Most candidates managed to score another mark, either for *estudiar las necesidades de la comunidad* or *crear actividades para los jóvenes*.

- (c) This question was worth four marks and candidates are always advised to answer such questions as fully as possible. Juan's opposition to these schemes was sometimes not covered because it was regarded as being too obvious. The points about the temporary nature of jobs and misuse of resources were understood and expressed well. A little more difficulty was apparent in tackling the concept of *trabajos reales* or *empleos artificiales*, with the result that the point was sometimes either omitted or lifted from the text.
- (d) Not so many candidates scored the two marks available here. The point about help only being given in the short-term was sometimes omitted, and misinterpretation of *dejan de pagar* and, to a lesser extent *alquiler* and *hipoteca*, gave rise to renderings such as *para evitar que paguen* or *para que puedan pagar los impuestos*.
- (e) (i) A common misinterpretation here was to state that unemployed people were to be given *empleos* as opposed to *formación* in strategically important sectors. This misunderstanding often made it difficult for candidates to score the second point required by the mark scheme.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to finish on a high note and there were many excellent answers, often containing skilful re-working of the original text.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks awarded. Most candidates seemed to be aware 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 part (b).

- (a) Many candidates performed well and identified key points with ease and expressed them well in terms of quality of language. In this exercise there are no penalties for directly lifting phrases from the text. Candidates who were less aware of the technique required for this question lost marks by approaching the exercise as an overall summary with emphasis on generalisations or making comparisons or contrasts between the two texts which contained a minimum amount of specific detail. It is important to avoid lengthy introductions such as *Tanto en el primer texto como en el segundo el problema que se intenta evitar es básicamente el desempleo. En los dos textos los ciudadanos buscan soluciones diferentes*. Generalisations like this are a waste of precious words as they will score no marks. A far more effective and rewarded opening would have been, for example, *La gente reacciona ante el desempleo enriqueciendo sus currículums para evitar trabajo aburrido y encontrar empleos permanentes*, and then proceeding to give specific details of ways in which people are doing this.
- (b) In the two or three sentences available those candidates who gave a personal opinion on the unemployment situation where they lived scored high marks. Some candidates were able to draw upon very relevant personal experience, for example, friends or family members having lost their jobs, or themselves having difficulty in finding part-time jobs which were once easy to come by. Those who merely echoed the ideas of the texts and stated that where they lived people were opting for more education and local authorities were creating jobs for the unemployed did not fare so well.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates need to select a title that they are comfortable with and write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated and coherently structured. The use of Spanish should be generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature as well as showing a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary. Sentence patterns should show evidence of complexity and the style should be easy to follow.

General comments

The majority of candidates were able to produce essays that were relevant to the title set and, equally importantly, that were well argued and coherently structured. The level of linguistic ability shown by some candidates was very good indeed whilst others had obvious difficulties in expressing themselves clearly in Spanish.

Previous reports have mentioned the importance of addressing the title selected. Some candidates again restricted their marks for Content by writing pre-learnt essays that were clearly not a response to the title set but more a generalized set of ideas on the topic. It is good technique on the candidate's part to refer to the title as often as necessary throughout the essay in order to maintain relevance and reach coherent and understandable conclusions.

The word count (250 – 400 words) was less of a problem this session. Those candidates who exceeded the word count tended to get lower marks for both Content and Quality of Language, given that the longer the essay went on, the less coherently structured it often was and the more likely candidates were to make linguistic errors.

The overall quality of Spanish used by candidates was sometimes very good indeed. Nevertheless, common language errors included plural verbs and adjectives with *la gente*, the omission of the letter 'h' with the perfect tense, for example, *a mencionado*, and the substitution of 's' for 'z' in words such as *globalización*. The subjunctive was used well in most cases but a number of candidates called upon its use unnecessarily in sentences such as *...si el gobierno apoye a los criminales, será mejor para la sociedad en general*. Too many candidates insisted on the incorrect use of capital letters with adjectives of nationality and, as has often been mentioned in previous reports, Spanish accents were omitted or incorrectly placed by a number of candidates. Some candidates often resorted to the use of English words which consequently affected their mark for Quality of Language.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *Los padres siempre ofrecen los mejores consejos. ¿Estás de acuerdo?*

This title was by far the most popular with candidates. Most argued that parental advice is, on the whole, preferable to that of friends, although a good number also hinted at the possibility that some such parental advice can often be based on a lack of understanding of the teenage world. The weaker essays were ones that simply repeated throughout the essay the idea that parents love their children and would therefore never give bad advice.

Question 2 *Rehabilitar a los criminales es más efectivo que castigarlos.*

This was a fairly popular title on this paper. The overwhelming majority of essays argued for rehabilitation is a good idea but also that sometimes punishment serves to keep dangerous offenders off the streets and therefore acts as an effective deterrent. The better essays gave detailed answers referring to specific examples in their own country and even occasionally offering statistical evidence to back up their points.

Question 3 *El dopaje en el deporte es una consecuencia del deseo fuerte de triunfar.*

This title was less attractive to candidates. Those who responded to it felt that doping is indeed an inevitable consequence of the pressure and desire to win in the modern sporting world. Few candidates supported such use of drugs and many felt strongly that any athlete caught using performance-enhancing drugs should be banned for life from professional sporting activity.

Question 4 *Tener trabajo es la mejor manera de aumentar la autoestima del individuo.*

This was a moderately popular title. There were many examples of personal anecdotes in the responses to this question. The stress of being unemployed was depicted in some detail as a way of highlighting the notion of self-esteem being improved by gainful employment. Hardly any candidates argued to the contrary. Some went on to criticise the government in their own country for handling the problem of unemployment in ways that could be perceived as dismissive.

Question 5 *La influencia negativa de Internet no puede ser ignorada. ¿Qué opinas tú?*

This title was very popular with candidates. It was also generally well answered. The depth of knowledge of both the positive and negative aspects of the Internet was impressive. Most felt that society needs to pay more attention to the darker aspects of Internet usage, e.g. pornography, gaming obsessions etc. and deal with these more robustly.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates need to select a title that they are comfortable with and write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated and coherently structured. The use of Spanish should be generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature as well as showing a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary. Sentence patterns should show evidence of complexity and the style should be easy to follow.

General comments

The overall performance of candidates during this session was generally very good. The majority of candidates were able to produce essays that were highly relevant to the title set and, equally importantly, were well argued and coherently structured. The level of linguistic ability shown by many candidates was impressive.

Previous reports have mentioned the importance of addressing the title selected. Some candidates again restricted their marks for Content by writing pre-learned essays that were clearly not a response to the title set but more a generalized set of ideas on the topic. It is good technique on the candidate's part to refer to the title as often as necessary throughout the essay in order to maintain relevance and reach coherent and understandable conclusions.

The word count (250 – 400 words) was less of a problem this session. Those candidates who exceeded the word count tended to get lower marks for both Content and Quality of Language, given that the longer the essay went on, the less coherently structured it often was and the more likely candidates were to make linguistic errors.

Again this session, the overall quality of Spanish used by candidates was very good indeed. Common language errors included plural verbs and adjectives with *la gente*, the omission of the letter 'h' with the perfect tense, for example, *a mencionado*, and the substitution of 's' for 'c' in words such as *ejercicio* and *justicia*. The subjunctive was used well in most cases but a number of candidates called upon its use unnecessarily in sentences such as *...si el gobierno establezca un salario mínimo, será mejor para la sociedad en general*. Too many candidates insisted on the incorrect use of capital letters with adjectives of nationality and, as has often been mentioned in previous reports, Spanish accents were omitted or incorrectly placed by a number of candidates. Some candidates often resorted to the use of English words which consequently affected their mark for Quality of Language.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 ¿Tus padres pueden ser tus amigos también?

This title was popular with candidates. Most argued that parents could and indeed should be friendly with their own children at all times but also pointed out very clearly that they also had to be strict for the long-term benefit of their children. Too many essays appeared to be a prepared piece on the general importance of family life in today's society and paid hardly any attention to the specific importance of the relationship between parents and children and marks for Content were affected as a result.

Question 2 *La agresión en las calles es una consecuencia inevitable del consumo de drogas ilegales. ¿Estás de acuerdo?*

This was not a particularly popular title on this paper. Those candidates who attempted it did so passionately that whilst it is easy to link aggression with drug abuse, society also needs to appreciate more the hidden causes of such substance abuse (e.g. poor social conditions, domestic violence etc.) before dealing appropriately with drug-related violence on the streets of our towns and cities.

Question 3 *El ejercicio físico debe ser obligatorio en los colegios. ¿Qué opinas tú?*

This title was chosen by a good number of candidates. There was a wide range of different approaches to the notion of compulsory sport in schools. Many candidates felt that sport was a key element in a healthy life style. The general feeling was that physical exercise should indeed be compulsory in schools in that it could easily lead to the establishment of healthy, life-long habits. The best essays included these points, all backed up with specific references.

Question 4 *La idea de un salario mínimo es la mejor manera de luchar contra la pobreza.*

A reasonably popular title. Many argued the need for a minimum wage, especially in countries where exploitation of the workforce is common. Some suggested that it could also have a detrimental effect on the economy and that other factors have a strong influence on low levels of income, such as poor educational standards and corporate corruption.

Question 5 *La comunicación electrónica es una obsesión de hoy en día. ¿Estás de acuerdo?*

This title was rather popular with candidates. There was little disagreement with the idea that electronic communication has become an obsession, especially amongst young people. However, convincing arguments were also made for the absolute necessity in modern society for rapid, efficient communication systems to be in place to support business, education and social interaction.

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