

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

Key messages

The Speaking test consists of three sections: Presentation, Topic Conversation and General Conversation. Each is assessed separately and Centres should take care to ensure that each section is clearly distinguished on the recordings and to observe the prescribed timings for each. Centres are reminded that:

- the interests of the candidate should play a part in the choice of the subject for the Presentation. Clear reference should be made to Hispanic culture or society;
- it is important to structure the presentation to fit into the allowed 3½ minutes, and to express not only facts, but also ideas and opinions;
- candidates should focus on the questions asked of them and make sure they answer what is asked;
- candidates should remember that they are expected to ask questions of the Examiner in both Conversation sections.

Spanish should be generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as showing a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary. Interaction with the Examiner is essential in both Conversation sections.

General comments

The majority of Centres carried out the tests according to the syllabus requirements and instructions. As a result candidates had the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.

There was still, however, a significant minority of Centres that did not keep strictly to the rules and caused problems or delay in the moderating process. Shortcomings were mainly in the following areas:

- (i) Timing – candidates must be allowed the prescribed timings for each of the sections. There were some instances of greatly extended timings for the Presentation. Candidates cannot receive extra credit for their performance in tests that go beyond the time limit and indeed were likely to lose credit, since they were not able to organise their Presentation appropriately.
- (ii) Separation of Topic and General Conversations – Moderators (and candidates) need to know when each conversation section begins and ends, so it is important to announce clearly the Topic and the General Conversation sections and to make sure that different issues are discussed in each. In some cases, there was no obvious General Conversation and Centres should be aware that marks cannot be awarded for a General Conversation if this has evidently not been conducted.
- (iii) Candidates must specifically ask the Examiner questions in both Conversation sections to gain credit for 'seeking information and opinions'. It is not sufficient for the Examiner him/herself to state an opinion and then credit the candidate for having elicited it.
- (iv) Documentation – the Working Mark Sheet, fully completed for all candidates, not just those submitted as part of the sample, must accompany the recording. Moderators cannot confirm Centres' marking without this information.

Most tests were recorded on CD, and the recordings were clear and readily accessible. There were a very few instances of incompatible format or unfinalised discs. Please announce the Centre number and candidate name and number at the start of each test. Each candidate's test should be a separate track or file.

The majority of candidates were familiar with the requirements of the examination and were generally well prepared. Topics related to the areas outlined in the syllabus and were focused on the Hispanic context.

Most candidates were able to offer some opinions on the issues discussed and, within their ability range, managed to discuss matters at a factual level.

The majority remembered to ask the Examiner questions, though many needed a prompt from the Examiner to do so. Examiners should remind candidates to ask questions if necessary. In some cases, however, questions were very simplistic or all-purpose, with little real relevance to the topic.

There was some marked variation in the quality of language. At the higher level, candidates could use a wide range of structures. Most candidates had sufficient syntax and vocabulary to cope with factual descriptions and basic opinions. All candidates should be given the opportunity to respond to the unexpected and to use an appropriately advanced level of language, though a few Centres kept questioning to a comparatively low level, especially in the General Conversation, and as a result either restricted access to higher marks, or were over-optimistic and generous in the mark awarded.

Pronunciation was generally acceptable, though occasionally first-language interference impeded comprehension. The quality of intonation varied considerably. Where candidates tried to recite long paragraphs of pre-learned response, intonation, correct stressing and authentic phrasing suffered accordingly.

Comments on specific sections

Section 1: Presentation

General topic areas are outlined in the syllabus and the subject of the Presentation must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture. It is important to make this relevance explicit in the Presentation. The Content mark out of ten is halved if the Hispanic perspective is not clearly expressed.

Presentations should be a formal and coherent introduction to the subject: organisation and evidence of preparation are important and form part of the assessment.

Candidates should remember that they are outlining a situation or topic to an uninformed but interested listener. It is important to phrase their points clearly and in an appropriate manner to allow the listener to take in the messages being conveyed. The Presentation is also a vehicle for outlining ideas or opinions that can be developed in the following Topic Conversation.

Candidates chose a variety of topics; many communicated readily their own enthusiasm for the topic and included relevant information, evidence of research and ideas. Popular topics included the environment, tourism, cultural/historical items, as well as more personal concerns, such as politics, recent events, music, moral issues raised by events in the news, and so on.

Section 2: Topic Conversation

In this part of the test the candidate and the Examiner should discuss and develop points arising from the Presentation; it should not just be an invitation to the candidate to give a further series of mini presentations. Interaction is important and Examiners should encourage the candidate to justify an opinion, or refute a differing point of view.

Candidates should be discouraged from reciting long pieces of prepared material. It is important that they participate in a discussion with the Examiner. In some instances, candidates' responses amounted to a further series of mini-presentations. Examiners should be prepared to interrupt or ask for clarification or evidence where necessary to avoid such recitations.

Candidates should ask the Examiner questions to seek information and opinions and Examiners should take care not to give lengthy responses. Wherever possible, candidates' questions should arise naturally in the discussion. Although no penalty is imposed if a candidate needs a reminder, some Centres were over-generous in their marks for irrelevant or all-purpose questions.

Section 3: General Conversation

Although there are no prescribed areas for the General Conversation, the level of discussion should be at an appropriately advanced level. Different issues from those covered in the Topic Conversation should be discussed. Common issues included current affairs, a news item, the arts, sport, the environment, the economy, politics and education.

There were still some cases of questioning at a level more appropriate to IGCSE or O Level. Although some basic, personal or factual questions may be useful to start the discussion, candidates must be given the opportunity to show they can give and justify opinions of more advanced issues, as well as having sufficient general knowledge to substantiate a point. There was a marked tendency in some Centres to keep to simple or factual areas, such as likes and dislikes, hobbies and pastimes, school subjects, etc., with little development. All conversations should go beyond the descriptive and provide scope for the use of more complex language.

As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the Examiner questions to seek information and opinions and be reminded to do so if necessary. Again, such questions should relate to points being discussed, rather than being prepared, all-purpose questions. Repeated utterances such as *¿Y tú?* do not merit a high mark in this context.

Language

Fluency, range and accuracy of language are assessed in both Conversation sections. Examiners are reminded to encourage candidates to use as wide a range of language as possible, both in terms of vocabulary and structure. To be able to access the higher bands of the mark scheme, candidates should show competence in dealing with hypothetical and abstract situations as well as factual or descriptive areas.

Accuracy was often a challenge in some basic structures, including verb endings and tenses, use of numbers, or noun/adjective/verb agreements. Some candidates could have benefited from greater practice in formulating questions.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation is required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer fits back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
- **Questions 3 and 4:** comprehension of texts. Candidates should attempt to answer in their own words. Direct copying of five or more words from the text will usually invalidate an answer.
- **Question 5(a):** summary of relevant details from both texts in answer to the question set. Introduction, conclusions and vague generalisations are not required. Specific, relevant details attract marks.
- **Question 5(b):** personal response. Candidates should give a point of view and, if possible, offer ideas which have not appeared in the texts.
- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The two texts dealing with the different problems faced by children in cities in Honduras and Spain were accessible to all. The comprehension questions gave candidates not only the opportunity to show understanding, but also the chance to display skills in paraphrasing original text. This often proved to be a discriminating factor between the varying levels. Another common discriminator was the way in which the summary was approached in **Question 5(a)**, where vague generalisations counted towards only the Quality of Language mark.

All scripts were generally well presented, and there was only very occasional evidence of difficulty with time management.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

The majority of candidates were aware of the required technique in this question, with many taking the trouble to copy the paraphrase in the question before writing their answer on the line beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Additional or omitted words invalidate otherwise correct answers. Instances of this were most likely to be found in:

- (b) Answers incorrectly prefaced by *Todos los días*.
- (c) Omission of *le*.
- (d) Answers incorrectly prefaced by *para*.
- (e) Answers incorrectly prefaced by *Yo y todo el personal*.

For the vast majority of candidates this exercise proved to be a sound start to the exam, with most target phrases being readily identified.

Question 2

In addition to performing the language manipulations required in this question, it is important to check that the answers fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning. A line number reference is given for candidates to check quickly whether this is the case.

- (a) Most candidates were successful in manipulating the phrase to include the noun *suceso*, and a number of verbs were correctly used – *ocurrió*, *pasó*, *se dio* etc. Occasionally answers were invalidated by the use of the present tense.
- (b) This was the least well done of all the manipulations with only a minority of candidates correctly producing the passive construction *los centenares que son vistos en las calles*. Too many offered answers such as *son centenares que se ven en las calles* which, despite being correct Spanish and using the prompt *son*, would not fit back into the original text. A few candidates found a way to avoid the passive which would fit in the text with *los centenares que son y se ven en las calles*.
- (c) There were many permutations available in substituting *falta* for *necesito*, and most candidates were successful. There was occasional carelessness in using *faltan* instead of *falta*, (even if the answer was correct Spanish the mark could not be awarded), or omitting *me* and writing incorrectly *falta algunos cartones*.
- (d) Supplying a suitable subjunctive construction after *es imposible que* generally presented few problems for candidates. Some, however, added *lo* or *se*, providing a transformation that did not fit back into the text. Others added *no*, which changed the meaning of the original sentence – *es imposible que su institución no enfrente*.
- (e) Nearly every candidate was able to come up with a finite form of either *poder* or *lograr* to follow *cuando*. Again, neglecting to check whether their answer would fit back into the original text led to a number of candidates losing the mark by using the present rather than the preterite tense, or by including an unnecessary *lo*.

Question 3

The text about the difficulties of a young boy having to fend for himself on the city streets and the work of an agency to help such children was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved very high marks. Some candidates lost marks when they copied more than four words directly from the text.

- (a) This was a very accessible opening question with most candidates noting that Agustín did not go home because he could not remember the way. The other reason why he did not go home – because he had been abandoned by his parents – was not so widely stated.
- (b) Many candidates scored full marks for this question, pointing out that in trying to earn a living Agustín faced abuse or violence from drivers and also the risk of being run over.
- (c) Most candidates successfully described Agustín's sleeping arrangements, although a few overlooked the remainder of the question which asked about his reasons for sleeping in this fashion. Provided that candidates focused on his loss of freedom and the bullying at the *centros para menores*, rather than focusing on the number of times that he had escaped, the other two marks were easily achieved.
- (d) The fact that the *IHN* is the only agency attending to the needs of the street children was often clearly stated. Many clearly understood the director's plea that the whole community should pull together to help with this problem, although a number overlooked that by writing *todos los sectores de la sociedad* they were directly copying more than four words of the text.
- (e) Many candidates noted that politicians only seemed to address this issue when they were seeking votes, and that the government had not increased but reduced the *IHN's* budget. Not so many added the director's final complaint that there were difficulties in paying the personnel.

- (f) (i) Quite a few candidates scored one mark for *para que vean cuánto trabajan*, but missed out the second point *para hacerles ver las cosas desde su punto de vista*. Occasionally the direct copying of *la labor de los empleados* invalidated the answer. Some responses wrongly focused on the *Directora's* final sentence, which did not answer the question – *hará todo lo posible para que la institución siga en pie*.
- (ii) Many candidates successfully noted that the *IHN's* most recent initiative was to set up mobile clinics for the street children. Some candidates could not score because they missed out *atención médica*, simply writing *pondrán a empleados deambulando por las calles para atender a los niños*, or *para atender a los niños en la calle*.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with different difficulties encountered by children in the streets of Madrid, provided a similar degree of challenge which most candidates understood well.

- (a) The majority of candidates scored one mark by noting either that the mother did not want to let her daughters play alone outside or that children could no longer play in the streets. A number overlooked the second point, that she did not want her children to spend too much time watching television.
- (b) There was some overlapping with the previous answer here, which was acceptable as long as candidates made the point that cities no longer have spaces where children can play safely. Most candidates correctly stated that cities were designed for cars.
- (c) The contents of the third paragraph seemed to have generally been well understood. When candidates scored two marks instead of three it was usually because they left out the element of the current economic crisis. Sometimes a mark was lost because of the direct copying of *el miedo de los padres*.
- (d) Many candidates answered this question well by noting that certain streets were closed, allowing the children to play and the parents to relax.
- (e) The reasons why *Menéndez* was opposed to childrens' playgrounds were a little more challenging to grasp. Nonetheless, many were able to correctly state that such structures removed children from the element of risk experienced when playing in the street which is so essential for their growth and development. Quite commonly a mark was lost by directly copying *a los niños de la calle*.
- (f) As long as candidates correctly stated that neighbours or the local community would take responsibility for watching out for children on their journeys to and from school both marks were scored.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks awarded. Most, but not all, candidates were 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) This question generally produced the most disappointing answers in the entire exam. Candidates who had achieved good or even excellent marks elsewhere frequently struggled to reach even half marks here. The problem was invariably a lack of familiarity with the required technique, which may be very different from the technique which candidates have been encouraged to use in other forms of summary writing.

For this task the technique required for achieving a good mark is to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks. Therefore, answers beginning with, for example, *En los dos textos se habla de los niños con relación a la calle. Pero cada uno tiene*

aspectos y visiones diferentes. En el primero se habla de los problemas de pobreza infantil y cómo combatirlo para que no haya más chicos en la calle. Por otro lado, en el segundo texto... waste fifty-two words (about half the total available) and score nothing, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark. By contrast, an answer which began, *En Honduras hay niños abandonados por sus padres que arriesgan la vida limpiando coches en un semáforo. Pasan la noche en gasolineras y no recurren a centros para menores porque allí son maltratados* scores four marks in fewer words by giving relevant specific details. Candidates should also refrain from offering personal opinions in this part of the question.

- (b) In the two or three sentences available for this last part of the examination the vast majority of candidates wrote good answers. Most included opinions and backed these up with examples. It appeared generally to be the case that children were only able to play outside in the middle class, suburban areas of cities, and that the candidates' differing countries had had greater or lesser success in dealing with the problem of street children, which was caused by poverty and lack of education of the parents.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally well up to the standard required by this examination, with most marks in the Very Good or Good bands.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation is required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer fits back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
- **Questions 3 and 4:** comprehension of texts. Candidates should attempt to answer in their own words. Direct copying of five or more words from the text will usually invalidate an answer.
- **Question 5(a):** summary of relevant details from both texts in answer to the question set. Introduction, conclusions and vague generalisations are not required. Specific, relevant details attract marks.
- **Question 5(b):** personal response. Candidates should give a point of view and, if possible, offer ideas which have not appeared in the texts.
- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The two texts dealing with the supply and use of water were accessible to the vast majority of candidates with the appropriate linguistic skills. The comprehension questions gave candidates not only the opportunity to show understanding, but also the chance to display skills in paraphrasing original text. This often proved to be a discriminating factor between the varying levels.

Scripts were generally well presented, although there was occasional evidence of difficulty with time management.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

This exercise was generally done quite well, with a number of candidates showing signs of having practised the skills needed. **Part (b)** and, to a lesser extent **part (e)**, appeared harder to identify than the others.

The majority of candidates were aware of the required technique in this question, with many taking the trouble to copy the paraphrase in the question before writing their answer on the line beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Additional or omitted words invalidate otherwise correct answers. Instances of this were most likely to be found in:

- (a) Omission of *se* at the start.
- (b) *Se* was occasionally omitted here too.
- (d) *con esta crisis* was often added unnecessarily.
- (e) Omission of *a* at the start.

Many candidates got off to a sound start to the exam, with the target phrases being readily identified. Occasionally *al que más grita* was offered as an incorrect answer to (e).

Question 2

In addition to performing the language manipulations required in this question, it is important to check that the answers 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 whether this is the case.

This can be a very challenging exercise but there were a number of correct answers which had been arrived at by the application of grammatical rules rather than by instinct.

- (a) Candidates suggested many valid ways to change *solucionar* to *solución*. It was essential to retain the same meaning as the original phrase, and a number omitted the idea of 'try' or 'find'.
- (b) A number of candidates realised that a subjunctive verb was needed after *es imposible que*. Many provided a correct answer, although a mark could not be awarded to those who omitted *se* and offered *es imposible que lave la ropa*.
- (c) Not all candidates were able to form this passive construction. Only some were able to make the correct gender agreement for the past participle (*creada*) or change *ha* to *han*.
- (d) Those candidates who were aware that a gerund should follow *siguen* often then struggled with the correct spelling of either *distribuyendo* or *manteniendo*. A way to avoid using either was *siguen con la distribución de(l) agua*. A few otherwise correct answers were invalidated by writing *la agua*.
- (e) The subjunctive of futurity, as used after *cuando*, did not seem to be widely known. Some candidates neglected to check how the original phrase had been used in the text, and mistakenly offered a preterite verb instead.

Question 3

This text, about problems with the water supply in Panamá, was generally well understood. Most candidates were very good at identifying the key parts of the paragraphs which contained information relevant to the questions, but there were varying levels of success in candidates' ability to communicate their answers. Those who correctly identified the points which were being tested but who answered in brief phrases, or had difficulties in producing a successful paraphrase, were credited for content – provided that they had not copied more than four words of the text – but could not then access the full range of marks available for Quality of Language.

- (a) Answers to this four-mark question were accessible in the opening paragraph and many candidates were able to make simple vocabulary changes to the original text in order to avoid directly copying five or more words: *creó una comisión de emergencia; distribuir agua embotellada; aumentar los camiones cisterna; mejorar la producción de agua*. A certain amount of French language influence was apparent in the not uncommon mistaken use of *nombre* for *número*.
- (b) The key to answering this question correctly was to address the phrase *se siente engañada*. Even if candidates were uncertain of its meaning, it was clearly signposted in the middle of the paragraph and the points which followed – the unfulfilled promise, the never-ending situation, the change of lifestyle – were the answers which were needed. Some candidates attempted to find answers from the first half of the paragraph.
- (c) This was generally done well, provided that candidates did not copy five or more words from the text. A number of candidates did not notice that *la venta de agua embotellada* was a direct quote from the text (easily avoided by changing *embotellada* to *en botellas*).
- (d) There were also a number of good answers to this question. The disorderly nature of water distribution was commonly noted, and many candidates realised that they could use **Question 1(e)** as a legitimate way of paraphrasing *a quien le da la gana*. Some candidates did not see a connection between *barriadas* and *barrios* and incorrectly suggested water distribution here as one of the criticisms.

- (e) Provided that candidates did not copy *en sus lavanderías y cocinas* from the text, they were able to state that these hotel services would suffer most. The majority were also able to point out that the hotel's reserves would also soon be exhausted. The fact that many tourists were expected to arrive imminently was often not so clearly stated.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Comprehension of the second text seemed to provide a slightly higher level of challenge than the first. This was apparent among a number candidates who, after making a determined effort in the previous question to answer in their own words, perhaps because of pressures of time, often copied chunks of the text into their answers in this question.

- (a) Some candidates found the opening paragraph quite challenging and, although they often identified the relevant sections of the text, had difficulty in coming up with suitable paraphrases. Others answered well and often arrived at some interesting explanations for *menos elitista*, (*ya no es valorado como un deporte de las clases altas*).
- (b) This question proved to be more accessible. The vast majority of candidates scored a mark for stating that the opponents of golf complain about the demands it makes upon natural resources. Fewer were able to state that economic interests take precedence over environmental issues.
- (c) There were four marks available for this question and the full range was awarded. Many correctly stated that the amount of water required by a Spanish golf course was equivalent to that of a small city, although some omitted to mention that this was annually. Marks were also often scored for noting the high demands for water in areas of little rainfall, and also the problems of evaporation experienced by the water features. Some candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with the word *centenares*, often leading to its misinterpretation as another structure which consumed water.
- (d) This second four-mark question also produced a similar range of marks, with most candidates able to identify relevant phrases in the paragraph which would answer the question. The noun, or even the conjugation, of the verb *oler* was not widely known, although it did not provide a barrier to communication. Most candidates who were able to avoid copying directly from the text were able to note at least one of the three other reasons why recycled water was not favoured by golf course owners: insufficient quantity, high cost, and diversion from priority usage.
- (e) Candidates were not generally so successful on this final question. The first point about the use of desalinated water was often marred by copying the exact words *sal del agua del mar*, or by stating that salt could be used to irrigate golf courses. The point about reducing the high cost of desalination often proved difficult to tease out.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks awarded. There were a number of candidates who appeared to be unaware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words was disregarded by Examiners, and in extreme cases this led to no marks being awarded for part (b).

- (a) The technique required for achieving a good mark in this task is to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. It is the relevant specific details which score the marks. Vague introductions, such as *El agua es básica para la vida humana en cualquier aspecto. Los conflictos por el agua van en aumento debido a su decrecimiento...* waste words and score nothing, apart from contributing to the Quality of Language mark. Neither are marks awarded for personal opinion here.

There were lots of specific details in the texts which were relevant to *problemas asociados con el agua*, and many candidates with the correct technique were able to score high marks. Weaker responses often reproduced relevant sentences from the text safe in the knowledge that, other than being disregarded when considering the Quality of Language mark, there would be no penalty applied. The disadvantage of this approach is that, as the text is likely to be far more verbose than

a candidate using their own words to summarise, fewer points will be included and there is an increased risk of exceeding the word limit.

A few candidates wasted words by writing about the emergency measures adopted by the Panamanian government, which did not address the question of *problemas*.

- (b) The personal response was generally done well, (if candidates had not already reached the word limit), with most agreeing that water was generally well managed in their respective countries. The majority seemed to be aware that, in the two or three sentences which are usually available for this task, they should try to combine a personal opinion with ideas that are different, if possible, from those expressed in the texts.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally well up to the standard required by this examination. Marks awarded ranged from Below Average to Very Good, with most marks falling between the Sound to Very Good range. Although there were some exceptions, the majority of candidates had been prepared to an appropriate standard for this examination.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation is required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer fits back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
- **Questions 3 and 4:** comprehension of texts. Candidates should attempt to answer in their own words. Direct copying of four or more words from the text will usually invalidate an answer.
- **Question 5(a):** summary of relevant details from both texts in answer to the question set. Introduction, conclusions and vague generalisations are not required. Specific, relevant details attract marks.
- **Question 5(b):** personal response. Candidates should give a point of view and, if possible, offer ideas which have not appeared in the texts.
- **Language:** when preparing for the exam revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

The two texts dealing with the production and consumption of tobacco were accessible to the vast majority of candidates who had the appropriate linguistic skills. The comprehension questions gave candidates not only the opportunity to show understanding, but also the chance to display skills in paraphrasing original text. This often proved to be a discriminating factor between the varying levels.

All scripts were generally well presented, although there was occasional evidence of difficulty with time management. There were a number of attempts (with varying degrees of success) to incorporate more advanced grammatical structures in answers.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

This exercise was generally done quite well, with candidates showing signs of having practised the skills needed. **Question (c)** often appeared harder to identify than others.

The majority of candidates were aware of the required technique in this question, with many taking the trouble to copy the paraphrase in the question before writing their answer on the line beneath. As it is important to answer with a phrase from the text which is a precise match to that of the question, this is a good way to check at a glance that an answer contains no extra words or omissions.

Additional or omitted words invalidate otherwise correct answers. Instances of this were most likely to be found in:

- (a) Omission of *la*.
- (b) Omission of *los* or *convertirán*.
- (c) Omission of *el* or *nacional*.
- (d) Occasionally *como el tabaco* was added unnecessarily.

(e) Often prefaced by *hay que hacerlo*.

Question 2

In addition to performing the language manipulations required in this question, it is important to check that the answers fit back into the original text and retain the same meaning. The technique of copying out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath can help to ensure that this is the case.

This is one of the more challenging exercises of the examination but a number of candidates recognised the structure being tested even if some of their attempts at answering were unsuccessful.

- (a) This was done quite well. Some candidates came unstuck when differentiating between the noun *lluvia* and its verb *llover*. Many were able to come up with a correct manipulation using *tan*, *tanto* or *menos*.
- (b) The comparative construction *menos...que* was quite well known. Occasionally answers were invalidated by retaining *como*.
- (c) There appeared to be increased awareness of the use of *llevar + gerund* as an alternative to *desde hace* in temporal constructions.
- (d) The use of the subjunctive after *sin que* was recognised, if not always correctly applied.
- (e) Candidates who realised that the prompt *sido* was an invitation to form a passive construction were successful in this question, provided that they made the necessary past participle agreement and included the agent.

Question 3

The text on tobacco production in Cuba was fairly challenging but candidates made a determined effort to get to grips with it. The majority were very good at identifying the key parts of the paragraphs which contained information relevant to the questions, and differentiation commonly occurred in the varying levels of success with which they were able to communicate their answers.

There was evidence that candidates had prepared well for this exercise: very few resorted to copying five or more words from the text. Many struggled linguistically when attempting to paraphrase but were still able to communicate their answer. The best responses not only provided a neat paraphrase but also at times incorporated more advanced linguistic structures.

- (a) Despite being faced with what was possibly some less familiar vocabulary, most candidates were able to score at least one or two marks. It was essential to communicate the delay, and some candidates did this quite neatly by adapting the text to *se retrasó el tiempo de siembra* and scored the mark, (even if they were uncertain of the exact meaning of *siembra*). A misunderstanding of *labores* to mean *workers* sometimes meant answers did not communicate the second point and, although the higher costs were invariably clearly stated, the phrase *en términos de mano de obra* proved difficult for some.
- (b) Many candidates picked up the first mark by incorporating *guardado* in their answers, indicating that sufficient tobacco had been stored. Some, quite legitimately, used the prompt for **Question 1(c)** in their answer for the second mark. To gain the third mark, it was necessary to mention that there were sufficient stocks to meet the needs of the export market.
- (c) Although the expression *cigarros puros* had appeared two lines earlier, the use of *puros* on its own to mean 'cigars' often led to confusion. Most candidates were able to note that the Cubans placed greater emphasis on quality than quantity – especially if they had successfully completed the manipulation in **Question 2(b)** – although a number got the comparison the wrong way round. The idea of smokers paying lots of money for certain brands was accessible to most.
- (d) This question was answered very successfully. The three desirable properties of the tobacco plant were fairly conspicuous in the paragraph and, as these were mostly expressed in phrases of fewer than five words, only a minimum amount of linguistic dressing was required to incorporate these

into a sentence. Many candidates also realised that second part of the question could be answered quite legitimately by using the prompt from **Question 1(e)** rather than struggling to find their own words to re-word the relevant sentence from the text.

- (e) Candidates were not so successful in answering this question. Some, who did not understand the significance of *logros*, made the mistake of looking for answers in the first sentence. Those who correctly searched in the second sentence often appeared to be confused by *cosecheros*. Most success was achieved when candidates – even if they were uncertain of the meaning of *capacitar* – realised that *manuales y cursos* must imply some form of education or training of the other Cuban coffee producers.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text on the consumption of tobacco in Spain proved to be slightly more accessible, perhaps because candidates were more familiar with the subject matter.

- (a) Most candidates were able to note that smoking had decreased in Spain. Despite *favorece* sometimes being considered to be an adjective, (*el método favorece del gobierno*), the second mark – for stating that the government's preferred method to reduce consumption was to raise prices – was also commonly scored.
- (b) Although a number of candidates confused the idea of a *precio prohibitivo* with a total ban on tobacco, this rarely had a negative impact on their answers. Most clearly stated that a black market would flourish and also that addicts would face (not *cause*) problems. Surprisingly, the fact that many lives would be saved was sometimes overlooked.
- (c) This was a four-mark question which most candidates attempted to answer fully, and many scored two or more marks. The majority picked up the mark for observing that smokers react to price rises by buying cheaper brands and most, after disentangling *resta el gasto* and realising that *conceptos* was really just another way of saying *cosas*, were able to state that less was spent on leisure activities. Only a minority scored both marks for successfully re-working *se pasa al tabaco de liar* and *fuma a escondidas para no ofrecer*. Others sometimes picked up a mark by rearranging key words and being given some benefit of the doubt by Examiners as to whether they had fully understood.
- (d) The first part of this question was generally answered well. Most candidates were able to show comprehension of the facts that although tobacco products were considerably cheaper in the Canary Islands than in the rest of Spain fewer people smoked there. The adjective of nationality *sueco* was not always recognised, and consequently not so many were able to state that Spaniards smoked three times as much a year as Swedes. The majority of candidates correctly observed that social pressures were more likely to influence Spaniards' smoking habits than economic ones.
- (e) More difficulty was experienced with this question. Many overlooked the first part of the second sentence and consequently went on to say, incorrectly, that price rises *did* affect tobacco consumption. Understanding of *engordar las arcas del Estado* was only evident in better responses.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks awarded. Nearly every candidate 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) The technique required for achieving a good mark in this task is to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. Generalisations, often required by other forms of summary writing, are usually too vague to score. The relevant specific details score marks and introductions and conclusions waste words. For example, apart from Quality of Language marks, nothing was awarded for the introduction, *Los dos artículos subrayan los efectos sociales y económicos de fumar y cómo se produce el Tabaco. El primero enfoca en el mercado de tabaco de Cuba.*

Most candidates had been well prepared on the technique required. There was a wealth of information to draw from in answer to the question, and many achieved at least half marks and several recorded very high scores. Weaker responses reproduced relevant sentences from the text which, other than being disregarded when considering the Quality of Language mark, does not attract any penalty for copying. The disadvantage of this approach is that, as the text is likely to be far more verbose than a candidate using their own words to summarise, fewer points will be included and there is an increased risk of exceeding the word limit.

- (b) The personal response was generally done well, with the vast majority of candidates agreeing that tobacco was not looked upon favourably in their country. Most seemed to be aware that, in the two or three sentences which are usually available for this task, they should try to combine a personal opinion with ideas that are different, if possible, from those expressed in the texts. If they had not already done so elsewhere, a number of candidates succeeded in showing off more advanced language structures here although this was sometimes at the expense of reducing the number of ideas included.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish throughout the paper was generally well up to the standard required by this examination, with most of the marks falling between the Sound to Good range. Subject/verb accord and adjectival agreements were generally sound and candidates clearly had a good range of vocabulary and structures at their disposal. Although there were some exceptions, the majority of candidates had been prepared to an appropriate standard for this examination.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- select the title with which they feel most comfortable;
- write a response that is clearly relevant, well illustrated, coherently structured and well informed;
- use Spanish which is accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, and demonstrate a good use of idiom and appropriate topic-related vocabulary;
- use sentence patterns which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

In general terms, the performance of candidates for this session was good. There were plenty of examples of essays that were structured thoughtfully, accurately written, easy to read and relevant to the title which had been set. In many essays there was evidence of well-focused preparation, both linguistically and in terms of content. Clear style, accessibility, relevance to the title set and the use of a good range of grammatical maturity will enable candidates to access the higher mark bands.

There were also many examples of less convincing essays. Some candidates struggled to maintain relevance to the title they had chosen and tended to discuss the more general issues surrounding the topic area rather than the title itself. Such an approach, together with a shaky grasp of Spanish grammar and a stylistic lack of cohesion and elegance, will naturally have a detrimental effect on the marks awarded for Content and Language.

Overall, the titles provided candidates with the opportunity to tackle the issues involved from a variety of approaches and to varying degrees of depth and analysis.

This series, many candidates disregarded the rubric concerning the number of words to be used. Some essays were short of the 250-word minimum while others were well in excess of the 400-word maximum. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by writing more than is necessary in this paper. A large part of the task in this paper is the ability to produce a piece of writing that is compact, well-conceived, intelligent, linguistically accurate and, crucially, that falls within the 250–400-word limit.

In terms of the language used by candidates in their essays, the general quality of Spanish was very good. Essays that had plenty of detail, appropriate vocabulary, a good sense of idiom and a decent range of linguistic structures all scored highly for Language. The errors made in such pieces were minimal and did not detract from the flow of the argument. Nevertheless, a number of essays contained very simple errors which, had final checks been made, could easily have been spotted by candidates. It is important that candidates leave some time towards the end of the examination to allow for a thorough check of what they have written.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- sound understanding of the use of appropriate of tenses;
- the use of well-structured sentences that were able to convey the writer's thinking with clarity;
- an ability to inject essays with a degree of linguistic flair associated with more complex constructions;
- accurate use of accents;
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- correct application of the subjunctive in impersonal expressions such as *...es importante que entendamos los problemas...*

Common errors included:

- the use of plural verbs and adjectives with *gente*;
- the omission of 'h' with *ha decidido* etc;
- the substitution of 's' for 'c' in words like *ambición* and the use of 'c' for 'z', especially in *globalización*;
- incorrect spelling of key words, for example, *desarollo*, *los turistas* and *aceso*;
- misunderstanding of the differences between *hay* and *es/tiene*;
- the use of the verb *estar* in passive sentences (e.g. *las pizzas están consumidas por muchos individuos...*);
- omitting the letter 'e' from a number of infinitives (e.g. *studiar* and *scriber*).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a popular title with a wide and very interesting range of responses. Good answers were characterised by a variety of points stating not just how essential a balanced diet was for good health, but also listing the many pressures which lead us away from healthy eating. The main weaknesses in a number of essays centred on the repetition of the same basic points without further elaboration.

Question 2

This was generally a well-answered question with the very best essays providing a variety of reasons as to how rich, developed countries had exploited the resources of less developed countries and therefore bore some of the responsibility for their impoverished state. Many also suggested that there is an urgent need for better governance in some developing countries.

Question 3

This was another reasonably popular title. Most candidates avoided the temptation to write out a prepared, pre-learnt essay on the many types of tourism without referring to the actual title. The best essays pointed out, sometimes with pertinent examples, how ecotourism can actually help countries and tourists alike.

Question 4

This title produced many good essays. A few candidates strayed into irrelevant territory and wrote mainly about what the family was like years ago with little or no comparison with the present. The best essays used a balanced approach and explained ways in which the traditional family had changed but also stressed the endurance of key family elements such as love and support.

Question 5

Attempts at this title were generally well-illustrated and were able to examine the advantages for both the individual and the state of all children having access to free education. Several essays, however, also illustrated the relatively poor state of public education in certain countries and explained why many parents prefer private education to public education if they are in a position to afford to pay for it.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

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General comments

In general terms, the performance of candidates for this session was good. There were plenty of examples of essays that were structured thoughtfully, accurately written, easy to read and relevant to the title which had been set. In many essays there was evidence of well-focused preparation, both linguistically and in terms of content. Clear style, accessibility, relevance to the title set and the use of a good range of grammatical maturity will enable candidates to access the higher mark bands.

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was generally well answered by candidates with a variety of interesting approaches detailing the rise in popularity of vegetarianism. Some essays restricted themselves, with a degree of success, to listing the advantages of a vegetarian diet whilst others claimed that such a diet was insufficient for all human needs. On the whole, the best essays dealt with both sides of the argument before reaching a conclusion, one way or the other.

Question 2

This title was not chosen by many candidates but, nevertheless it was generally well answered. The best pieces analysed the historical reasons for the development of poverty in resource-rich countries and outlined a range of measures to improve the situation. There was a general acceptance that less economically developed countries will always need the support of wealthier ones.

Question 3

This was a popular title and was dealt with rather well by many candidates. The best essays offered a balanced view of the environmental drawbacks of mass tourism whilst highlighting its economic advantages for the countries visited. Loss of cultural identity and the commercialisation of national heritage were also mentioned as victims of such a phenomenon.

Question 4

This was a very popular title and some of the essays were of a very high quality with points backed up by specific references. Many candidates pointed out how the young could learn from the older generation's more positive and constructive criticisms. At the same time, a good number of essays indicated that children need to make their own decisions as they become independent and do not appreciate too much interference from parents.

Question 5

A less popular title but one which provoked some radical thinking. Most essays took the view that criminals give up their democratic rights once they are imprisoned. However, some argued that a civilised country should have no problem at all in allowing criminals a vote in national elections. Some essays, unfortunately, moved away from the title and simply discussed the importance of voting in elections in a general sense.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There was universal agreement that the quality of the food we eat has a direct effect on our health. Some argued that the 'irresistible' nature of fast food, especially amongst the younger generation, was an issue to be tackled at a national level. Some even suggested that it should be banned for people under the age of 18. Most agreed that a healthy diet together with regular exercise was the best way to stay healthy.

Question 2

This title was generally dealt with well by candidates. The best pieces maintained that political corruption was the main driver of conflict and that, therefore, corruption needed to be tackled before poorer countries could improve their standing on the world stage. All were clear that international conflict of any sort was to be avoided at all costs.

Question 3

This was a very popular title and was dealt with convincingly by many candidates. The best essays gave a clear analysis of the pros and cons of tourism and went on to suggest that the benefits for the individual of experiencing life in other countries was hugely important for international understanding and cooperation.

Question 4

This was a very popular title and some of the essays produced really were persuasive and full of insight. Almost every essay accepted the inevitability of conflict between parents and teenagers and most suggested that this was, indeed, an essential aspect of adolescence. Many personal experiences were drawn upon by candidates to provide illustrative examples of the importance of overcoming such conflict and using it to hasten the process of 'growing up'.

Question 5

A less popular title but one which produced some good pieces of writing. Most essays argued passionately that there is indeed a lack of understanding and appreciation of the difficulties faced by immigrants and that too often this can lead to antagonism and discrimination towards them. Many essays were critical of the 'us and them' attitude often displayed in host countries and went on to consider the importance of education to better understand the reasons for immigration.