

SPANISH LANGUAGE

<p>Paper 8685/01 Speaking</p>

Key messages

For candidates:

- Candidates' own interests 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 time, and to express not only facts, but ideas and opinions.
- Focus on the questions asked and be sure to answer what is asked.
- Remember to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections

For centres:

- The test consists of three distinct sections: **(i)** Initial presentation (maximum 3½ minutes); **(ii)** Topic Conversation (7 – 8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation; **(iii)** General Conversation (8 – 9 minutes) on themes completely different from those raised in the Topic Conversation.
- Each section should be clearly identified on the recordings. It is important that the prescribed timings are observed.
- Candidates should be reminded if necessary to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections and be prompted to do so, if necessary. The Examiner's replies to such questions should be concise – it is the candidate and not the Examiner who is being marked.
- Interaction with the Examiner is an important criterion for both conversation sections.

General comments

There was the usual wide range of performance, with some very good candidates, also those for whom considerable prompting was needed.

The quality of the recordings was generally good, though some were adversely affected by room acoustics or nearby noise. Although the microphone should be placed near the candidate, please ensure that voices of both candidate and Examiner can be heard. Centres are reminded that the recording must not be paused once the test has started

The range of samples generally followed correct procedure, with a range from top to bottom. Representatives of the whole range should be submitted. Some centres supplied recordings of all the candidates entered. The working mark sheets for all the candidates must be submitted, not just those of the candidates in the sample. A few centres failed to do this initially, causing delay to the moderation process.

While most centres carried out the necessary administration efficiently, a few centres still had a somewhat cavalier approach to the timings, either of the separate sections, or overall, or both. It is in all candidates' interests that those conducting the tests observe the full timings as prescribed to allow access to the full range of marks. It should be noted, however, that candidates cannot be awarded credit for performance in extra time.

Although most Teacher/examiners announced the start of each section clearly, in some cases it was not clear when the topic conversation ended and the general conversation started: it is important that Teachers/examiners clearly announce the start of each section. It is also the responsibility of the Teacher/examiner to announce clearly the name and candidate number at the start of each test.

There was much evidence of sympathetic examining, especially with weaker candidates and those who were clearly nervous. Teacher/examiners were generally supportive and encouraged candidates to remain calm and focused on the task.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1: Topic Presentation

Guidance on topic areas for the Presentation and discussion may be found in the syllabus. Topics must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture and it is important that candidates make this relevance explicit in their Presentation. Centres are reminded that the content mark out of ten must be halved where there was no specific reference to a Spanish-speaking country or context. It was also helpful when candidates stated clearly at the outset what their topic was.

Presentations should be a formal, concise and coherent introduction to the subject that will be discussed in the following Topic Conversation. It is important to show evidence of preparation, organisation and relevant factual knowledge. Candidates who spoke in a casual or disjointed manner, or who made little attempt to engage the Examiner lost credit, as pronunciation, intonation and quality of delivery are assessed.

The best presentations showed evidence of careful preparation and organisation. These not only offered statistics and other information, but also included a candidate's own reactions and analysis; weaker presentations were characterised by being limited to a random list of items, with no discernible central theme or argument. Most candidates made good effort to engage the listener: regardless of ability, the most engaging topics were the ones in which candidates clearly had their own interest.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

Most candidates responded well in the topic conversation. Many were able to give thoughtful and extended responses and maintain a discussion, though weaker candidates relied heavily on Teachers/examiners to take the lead. A few candidates were permitted to treat this section as a continuation of the Presentation, with little intervention by the Examiner, which limited their mark for comprehension/fluency.

Most candidates had a sufficient range of vocabulary and structures at their disposal, which were used accurately and idiomatically. Most candidates remembered to ask questions of the Examiners either in the natural course of conversation or, in some cases, after prompting, although a few asked only one question. Centres are reminded that candidates must actually ask the Examiner questions to gain credit for 'seeking information and opinions'; it is not sufficient for the Teacher/examiner to volunteer such information.

Part 3: General Conversation

The start of the section should be clearly announced. There were tests where no clear distinction was made between the two conversation sections. The General Conversation must be treated as a separate section from the Topic Conversation and must not be a continuation of the candidate's chosen topic. Teachers/examiners should not return to the same issues as in the Topic Conversation.

Although there are no prescribed areas for the General Conversation, topics should be at an appropriate level, both in content and in linguistic complexity. Common areas included current events, health, education, crime, the arts, family, sport, the environment, the economy, plans and aspirations. In some centres, the conversation did not develop to the required depth for this examination and Teacher/examiners are again reminded to allow candidates the opportunity to perform at their highest level.

The range and style of questioning should encourage candidates to show competence in structures and vocabulary at a suitably advanced level. As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the Examiner questions to gain credit for 'seeking information and opinions'. Such questions should arise naturally in the discussion and, again, it is not sufficient for the teacher to state an opinion without actually being asked.

Pronunciation and intonation

Pronunciation was generally good and there were some examples of very good pronunciation and authentic intonation, though both could suffer if candidates recited on auto-pilot during the Presentation.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing 21

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 will be required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer would fit 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, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

This was the final June appearance of the examination in this format. It provided an appropriate challenge, and the spread of marks awarded reflected the varying levels of ability of candidates. Most scripts were well presented, and response to the two texts concerning shared living and working facilities was pleasing, with comprehension often clearly demonstrated. There appeared to be little evidence of difficulty with time management.

Most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions. It was pleasing to note skilled attempts at paraphrase. On occasions, good candidates, who apparently had clearly understood the texts, did not pick up all the marks available when they answered too generally and omitted relevant details. Candidates should note the marks allocated to each question, as this is a good indication of the number of details being sought.

Some candidates still exceeded the 140 word limit in **Question 5**, thus reducing the number of marks they could score in **5(b)**. Summaries in **5(a)** which focused on relevant specific details scored many more marks than vague generalisations.

At the upper end of the ability range there were many excellent papers which were a pleasure to mark. However, equally satisfying were the answers from candidates who attempted to show off more modest linguistic skills to the best advantage.

Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Question 1

Candidates who attempted to identify the phrase in the text which perfectly matched the one in the question and took care not to omit words or to include extra words scored very high marks. Contrastingly, some candidates appeared to be unaware of what was expected of them here and did not do themselves justice on what should be a fairly straightforward exercise.

- (a) A number of candidates struggled to find the appropriate phrase or lost the mark by including either *para* at the front of the phrase, or *hoy en día* at the end.
- (b) Most candidates identified the correct expression, but some answers were invalidated when either *un* or *similar* was omitted.
- (c) This was generally answered well. The commonest error was to omit the initial se...
- (d) There were many good answers. Omission of the final *inmobiliario* prevented some from getting the mark.
- (e) The majority of candidates were successful here.

Question 2

This was a more demanding exercise, although a number of good candidates still scored maximum or near maximum marks.

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

It is not necessary to change any of the other vocabulary not affected by the manipulation.

- (a) Well answered in general. Some answers incorrectly changed the preposition: *se basa del valor*. Although they are grammatically correct, *que se basa* and *esto se basa* would not fit back into the original text. Other errors included attempting to make *basa* a noun or omission of *se*.
- (b) This question presented some challenge. A number of candidates did not change the verb *recordar* to *olvidar* which made the resulting meaning the opposite of that in the original sentence. Some answers omitted *no hay que olvidar que...*, which although a correct phrase would not fit back in the text. Others chose to use the reflexive form *olvidarse* without the appropriate preposition *de* to follow.
- (c) The subjunctive form necessary for this answer was well recognised. In fact, a whole host of acceptable permutations were offered: *aquello/eso/lo que le sea/parezca/resulte/aparente/que se vea/que se le haga atractivo para/a/en/ante la comunidad*. Moreover, a number of candidates recognised that this manipulation could be performed quite neatly without the use of a verb: *aquello/algo atractivo para/a la comunidad*.
- (d) Most candidates returned correct answers although some used the wrong pronoun with *gusta* e.g. *ya que se gusta usar* or mistakenly kept the *de* as in *ya que nos gusta de usar*. A few omitted *ya que*.
- (e) Moderate success was achieved with this manipulation and a number of candidates were able to identify the adverbial form *basta que* plus subjunctive. Various forms worked: *subas*, *se suba* or *subamos* or other verbs such as *mandar* to signify the meaning of uploading or sending the photo to the caretakers. It was not uncommon to see answers such as *basta con subir una foto*, which would have been correct if the question had not required *basta que*.

Question 3

The text about the shared accommodation facilities offered by *Casa Campus* was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved good marks. A few candidates lost marks when they copied five or more words directly from the text. A minority disregarded the reference given to the paragraph where the information for each specific question was to be found.

Candidates who answered with very brief notes in the form of bullet points were excluded from the full range of marks for quality of language.

- (a) Most candidates were able to state the main characteristics of Coliving by saying that it led to collaboration and that it had shared or common areas which encouraged interaction or a

community. In this question in particular candidates were apt to overlook the requirement that their answers should only be based on the first paragraph of the text and included material which was relevant to later answers.

- (b) Many good marks were awarded for this four-mark question. Most candidates were able to say that Coliving offered flexibility with regard to the duration of the stay, and many also scored by stating that you need not have a guarantee from the bank in order to stay. The meaning of the phrase *sin respaldo de un banco* proved a challenge for some who seemed not to understand what this meant and gave answers such as *no tienes que pagar*. Considerable success was achieved in noting that lodgers could rent their accommodation to someone else when they were away. However, a common lift was *pueden subalquilar sus habitaciones a otras personas*. It was not so common for candidates to include the point about Coliving being a meeting place for people from different backgrounds.
- (c) Almost all candidates understood that there were activities on offer to residents but a good many thought that Coliving offered jobs, misunderstanding the phrase *espacios comunes donde los jóvenes trabajen*). Most candidates understood that young people were attracted to this type of accommodation because of their income or because of its price.
- (d) Candidates usually managed to mention the *últimos avances tecnológicos* or, if not, they mentioned the various services on offer. A majority also managed to explain that it was easy to get repairs made, although many fell into the trap of lifting five or more words from the text, typically *una foto a la app* or *...algo roto, solo tienes que...*. The final point about services being located in social areas was not always accurately expressed, with imprecise answers such as *hay zonas comunes donde puedes lavar ropa* being common.
- (e) This proved to be a challenging question. Few candidates added sufficient detail to the first point concerning whether Coliving would add substantially to the housing stock in the capital. More success was achieved in querying whether this new way of living would be extended to other cities in Argentina. A common lift here was *de una nueva forma de...*

Sección 2

Question 4

The second text, about shared working facilities, provided a similar level of challenge.

- (a) Most candidates mentioned that one of the advantages of Coworking was that the workers shared expenses and that they collaborated on different projects. Frustratingly, a number of answers did not include the idea that the people living in Coworking lodgings were from *diferentes sectores*. This meant they were denied the point about sharing ideas.
- (b) Candidates generally did well on this four-mark question, with two to three marks being the commonest scores. Mentioning *teletrabajadores* was enough for the first point and was usually scored. However, the second point, though often attempted, was rarely accurate enough to score the mark. It was important to convey the idea that work colleagues were new and not previously acquainted co-workers. That a common working space would be offered was often included in answers and probably the most commonly correct point was that the Coworking venues were quieter than city offices. Some marks were missed when *con nuevos compañeros de trabajo* or *con un entorno más tranquilo* were copied directly.
- (c) A good number of candidates mentioned the fact that a good internet signal was needed, although a several overlooked that *una buena cobertura de internet* constituted a lift of five words from the text. Most were successful in spotting that a specific shared space had to be available for working. However, not all candidates scored the last point by explaining that it was the owner of the property who was to get involved with community projects, and so lost a mark there.
- (d) This question was one of the better answered in this section with many candidates scoring maximum marks. Most candidates understood that the owners of rural accommodation wanted to increase the number of clients, although there was occasionally some confusion about how diversification would achieve this.

It was also well understood that tourism should not depend on the holiday months but should be all year round. (Misspellings of *desestacionalizar* were generally recognisable enough to be accepted). The final point about the fact about fighting against depopulation was generally well answered.

- (e) Most candidates understood that *Alejandro Parera* was helping the development of rural accommodation by creating a web page about the Association of Coworking. However, *la Asociación Nacional de Coworking* was a common lift for a great number of candidates, which might have been avoided by just saying *la Asociación* or *la web de Coworking* etc. The second point relating to the set-up of digital strategies in order to interest customers was one that, if copying directly from the text had been successfully avoided, many were able to express well.

Question 5

Many candidates showed awareness of the techniques required for this part of the examination. Most, but not all, paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed. More summaries gave specific details rather than generalisations, and the better personal responses contained opinions and original ideas. In their free writing, many were able to write more accurately than in **Questions 3 and 4**.

- (a) There were clear differences here in scores between those who had practised this summary question, and those who were not used to the demands of the test. Candidates who had been well-prepared selected their answers from the texts very precisely, usually achieving greater success in extracting relevant details. Although texts about shared accommodation and shared working venues might superficially appear to have a lot in common, the specific details of each differed considerably. Therefore, candidates who considered each text separately were far more successful than those who attempted to combine them.

A good example of the former is:

El coliving propicia acceso a una comunidad ✓ a través de espacios comunes, ✓ y ofrece hospedaje económico. ✓ Los residentes tienen acceso a varias actividades ✓ y avances tecnológicos. ✓ Se desplazan ciertos servicios a zonas comunes ✓...

The start of this answer has scored five marks in just over thirty words.

- (b) Many were able to express the difficulties that young people face in trying to access the property market in their countries. Some of the main reasons were the difficult economic situations of countries, especially in Latin America, and the housing shortage. Many mentioned that young people find it difficult to find a good job and it is therefore common for them to live with their parents well into their adult lives. On a few rare occasions, candidates misunderstood the question, perhaps thinking *vivienda* meant 'life', and wrote about how difficult or easy it was for young people to get on in life.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' written Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks were generally in the Sound, Good or Very Good range. Unless they had been penalised for scoring zero in any of the comprehension questions, strong candidates who could correctly manipulate the source texts into good Spanish to display clear comprehension, were awarded maximum marks in all three quality of language assessments. Less able candidates often had major difficulties with verb formation, and use of the singular or plural verb forms in particular. Their mark often improved considerably in the final question when their writing was more free style.

And finally

A big thank you to centres who have entered candidates for this examination over the years. Assessing their work has consistently been a rewarding experience. It is anticipated that future candidates will find that the changed format of the new specification will offer similar stimulation and challenge.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing 22

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 will be required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer would fit 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, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

This was the final June appearance of the examination in this format. It provided an appropriate challenge, and the spread of marks awarded reflected the varying levels of ability of candidates. All scripts were generally well presented and response to the two texts dealing with possible solutions to environmental issues was pleasing, with comprehension often clearly demonstrated. There appeared to be little evidence of difficulty with time management.

Most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions. It was pleasing to note skilled attempts at paraphrase. On occasions good candidates, who apparently had clearly understood the texts, did not pick up all the marks available when they answered too generally and omitted relevant details. Candidates should note the marks allocated to each question, as this is a good indication of the number of details being sought.

A few candidates still exceeded the 140 word limit in **Question 5**, thus reducing the number of marks they could score in **5(b)**. Summaries in **5(a)** which focused on relevant specific details scored many more marks than vague generalisations.

At the upper end of the ability range there were many excellent papers which were a pleasure to mark. However, equally satisfying were the answers from candidates who attempted to show off more modest linguistic skills to the best advantage.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN 1

Question 1

As stated in the Key Message above, candidates should seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question and take care not to omit words or to include extra words – a feature which often invalidated answers which were otherwise correct.

The majority of candidates scored high marks for this question.

- (a) An additional...*en* sometimes spoiled the answer.
- (b) The correct phrase was almost always identified.
- (c) This was a little more challenging, with candidates sometimes offering the answer to (d) here.
- (d) If the phrase had already been misused above, then there was often a consequential error here.
- (e) Sometimes ...*esto* was omitted.

Question 2

This was a more demanding exercise, although a number of good candidates still scored maximum or near maximum marks.

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

- (a) Most candidates recognised that a subjunctive would be triggered by *hacen que* and found very little difficulty in providing one of the many options available: *hacen que el ciudadano se identifique/se tenga que identificar/sea/esté obligado a/se vea/obligado a/deba identificarse*. It was pleasing to note that the orthographical change required by the first option was widely recognised.
- (b) The passive form required in this manipulation was generally well handled.
- (c) Many candidates whose first language was Spanish came unstuck here. A very common error was to attempt a plural – *hayan/puedan haber*. Others misspelt the word: *halla/alla/aya/haiga/aiga*.
- (d) Non-native candidates found some difficulty with this structure, with many seemingly unaware that *se trata de* was the construction which was needed.
- (e) Non-native candidates and some native-speaking ones had problems with this manipulation. Only a minority successfully produced *las consecuencias jurídicas son difíciles de solucionar*.

Question 3

The text about using ‘smart bin’ technology provided a good challenge. Candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved high marks.

A number of candidates lost marks when they lifted (copied) five or more words directly from the text. Others did well in using the alternative sentences from **Questions 1** and **2** in this question to avoid certain lifts, or used different vocabulary which they found in the text e.g. *basura/residuos*. A small minority disregarded the reference given to the paragraph where the information for each specific question was to be found.

- (a) The third point sought by the Marks Scheme – that the remedy being considered to remedy unsorted, recyclable rubbish was the use of ‘smart bins’ – was successfully identified by nearly every candidate. Although the other two points – *no hay recogida selectiva de basura* and *no hay tasas que incentiven/penalicen la (falta de) separación* – were widely recognised, these were often invalidated by lifting: *la falta de recogida selectiva, tasas para fomentar o penalizar, la separación y el reciclaje*.
- (b) This was generally answered well and many candidates scored maximum marks. Most candidates stated that the ‘smart bins’ could check whether the recyclable rubbish had been sorted correctly and that they contained sensors which would notify when they were full or that the temperature of the rubbish was too high.
- (c) This four-mark question provided clear discrimination between stronger and less able candidates. Good candidates, who worked systematically through the paragraph, successfully noted the four stated advantages of these bins: *pueden – mejorar la gestión de residuos, escoger los residuos que deben recoger, diseñar el itinerario de recogida, penalizar o estimular*. Other candidates were

misled by the way in which the text enumerated these benefits, linking them with words like *empiezan por...*, *siguiendo por...*, y *acabando...*, frequently taking the meaning too literally.

- (d) Although most seemed to understand that this paragraph was focussing on ways in which citizens could be rewarded or penalised according to how they separated their rubbish, a number of candidates did not provide sufficiently accurate details. On other occasions marks were lost because of lifting – *un descuento en la tasa de basuras* or *en la tasa de recogida*.
- (e) One mark was a common score for this two-mark question. Some did not realise that the question was targeting *datos confidenciales/personales/privados*, not the data that was entered in the app or the containers – but the data that was thrown in bin. An extremely common lift was *de la empresa de recogida*.

SECCIÓN 2

Question 4

The second text, concerning a project to harness rainwater for domestic use, appeared to be slightly more accessible to candidates.

- (a) Clear understanding was shown of the fact that Mexico City enjoyed an abundant supply of rainwater during six months of the year. Not all were able to score both of the additional marks by adding either that earlier civilizations had made good use of this asset, or that the environment is very delicately balanced these days.
- (b) There were many maximum marks recorded here. Most were able to state that the architect is designing new structures and plans to restore and renovate old channels to capture the rain. It was well understood that the principal constraint was the budget or lack of finance.
- (c) This was a very straightforward question based on a very factual paragraph. Most were able to state that 79 per cent of rainwater was lost in evaporation. However, a number of candidates encountered difficulty in noting the destinations of the remaining twenty or so per cent. Problems seemed to arise in expressing that half the remainder went to replenish the aquifers without directly copying *la recarga de acuíferos subterráneos*, or in understanding that the other half drained into *las aguas negras*.
- (d) This proved to be another very straightforward question and on this occasion the success rate was high, with a considerable number of maximum scores being recorded. Candidates had little difficulty in stating that problems highlighted in adapting rainwater for domestic use included high costs of the necessary infrastructure, the small volume of water which would be collected, and that it contains a significant number of contaminants.
- (e) Full details were required to score well in answer to this question on another fairly factual paragraph.

It was necessary to say that the water obtained through this programme would be filtered, free and available for more than six months of the year. Several candidates omitted one or more of these relevant points. A very common lift was *más de la mitad del año*.

Question 5

It was pleasing to note how those candidates who were aware of the techniques required for this part of the examination achieved the marks which they merited. Most paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed for this question. Summaries which gave specific details rather than generalisations, and personal responses offering opinions and original ideas scored well.

- (a) Some candidates might have scored higher marks if they had studied more carefully the question which was asked, concerning *los beneficios de los contenedores inteligentes y el proyecto de reciclaje de lluvia*. A number wasted words by including problems or negative features associated with these initiatives

It was better to write about the two texts separately as, apart from a shared environmental theme, there were no shared specific details. A number of candidates wasted words by writing an

introductory sentence, such as *Los proyectos que presentan ambos textos tienen un objetivo en común: la conservación medioambiental*. Although this reads well for quality of language, it scores no marks for content.

The best approach is to plunge straight into the answer as, for example:

Los contenedores inteligentes tienen sensores que ayudan a saber cuándo se han llenado ✓ y necesitan vaciarse antes de oler mal. ✓ Además controlan si el usuario ha reciclado adecuadamente. ✓ Antes de usar el contenedor el usuario debe identificarse, estos datos ayudan a elegir las rutas de recogida ✓ y el tipo de residuo que recoger. ✓

The start of this answer has scored five marks in approximately fifty words.

- (b) The issue of how rubbish was dealt with in their country was something which produced a variety of viewpoints, according to where each candidate lived. These ranged from *no es un gran problema* to *es un problema en el verano con los turistas, no estamos lo suficiente conciencizados con el reciclaje, producimos mucho más que deberíamos, la vía pública está repleta de basura, las personas tiran la basura donde quieran* etc.

Quality of Language

The quality of the majority of non-native speaking candidates' Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks were usually in the Sound to Good range. Unless they had been penalised for scoring zero in any of the comprehension questions, native speakers were awarded maximum marks in all three quality of language assessments.

And finally

A big thank you to centres who have entered candidates for this examination over the years. Assessing their work has consistently been a rewarding experience. It is anticipated that future candidates will find that the changed format of the new specification will offer similar stimulation and challenge.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31
Essay 31

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, as well as 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

Once again Examiners can report that there was a good level of ability on display in the essays for this session. Candidates have, for some time now, fully understood the importance of composing an essay that makes valid and relevant points that relate clearly to the title set on the paper rather than simply writing in very general terms on the overall topic and hoping that this will attract high marks. There are 16 marks available out of a total of 40 marks for the quality of the content produced by the candidate. Essays that are brimming with irrelevance in terms of the actual title set will not score highly for content.

The quality of thinking on display in many essays was generally impressive and articulately conveyed and if these features were combined with a linguistically accurate piece of writing in Spanish then the end result would almost always be an essay that scored well both for language and for content. Evidence of meaningful preparation for this examination was again clear to see and, as one would reasonably expect, such well-prepared candidates were more inclined to perform well as a result.

Surprisingly, perhaps, there were a few issues relating to the word count (250 – 400 words). When an essay falls short of the minimum of 250 words then marks for content will inevitably suffer because the candidate does not write not enough in response to the title. The same can also be said, of course, about the quality of language mark. Very short essays simply do not have enough language in them to warrant access to marks at the higher levels of the language mark scheme. Equally, there were a number of essays that were well in excess of the maximum 400 words and these essays tended to suffer in terms of the language mark because many more errors were made as the candidate continued to write with little awareness of the upper word limit of 400 words. The mark for content in such overly long essays also suffered because there was often a tendency to rely on generalised statements or, indeed, a degree of padding was very much in evidence. Having said all this, most candidates were able to produce a piece of writing that abided by the rubric. The point has been made in many previous reports that candidates need to have a clear understanding of the wording of the mark scheme for this paper, both in terms of word limits and also as far as basic essay writing is concerned in areas such as structure, paragraphing, the use of evidence to support statements and the ability to reach a reasonable conclusion.

The more successful essays were the ones where there was a clear focus on the precise title set on the paper. This comes as no surprise given that candidates who think methodically about the issues raised by a given title are always going to access marks at the higher end of the mark scheme. Generally speaking, most candidates were able to write well-structured essays that made good use of paragraphs and the best essays tended to combine good structure and advanced level language with clearly expressed points backed up by evidence, examples or references. There were, however, a few instances in this session where essays were produced that had very little to do with the title and where candidates simply wrote down a few thoughts about the general topic. A few essays, for example, limited themselves to talking in very general terms about the nature of justice and law order (question number 2 on the paper) but then failed to analyse the importance, or otherwise, in a civilised society of there being some degree of respect for the police.

As for the quality of the language used by candidates, one extremely noticeable feature of the essays during this session was the frustrating lack of punctuation. We are not talking here about the odd missing comma or the lack of an occasional full stop. On the contrary, there were many examples of essays that were extremely difficult to decipher as a direct consequence of there being little if any meaningful punctuation. It is not reasonable to expect the reader to try to work out what is being said in an essay when, by dint of a basic degree of punctuation, the task of understanding what has been written is rendered far more straightforward. It is not unreasonable to expect candidates to write essays that are structured in a way that makes the task of assessing writing skills a stress-free one. Having said this, many candidates were more than prepared to show evidence of the use of complex sentence patterns, with a decent range of advanced grammatical structures and accurate punctuation, an awareness of the desirability of using a range of tenses where appropriate and the judicious handling of topic-based vocabulary that related seamlessly to the topic under discussion.

As is often the case, there was a range of widespread language errors to report, none of which will come as any great surprise to those involved in preparing candidates for this paper. As always, it is worth highlighting the most frequent errors so that candidates can be made aware of common pitfalls that are best avoided. The correct use of the verb *'gustar'* in some fairly basic sentences again proved to be very difficult for candidates to grasp. Examples such as *'... algunos padres no gustan ofrecer demasiado apoyo'* (sic) and *'... en mi opinión yo no gusto viajar al extranjero...'* (sic) were far too common and tended to spoil the overall impression given to Examiners as they assessed the essay. Another really common language error was the use of plural verbs (and, indeed, plural adjectives) with *'la gente'*. Statements such as *'... la gente prefieren ir de vacaciones al extranjero'* (sic) and *'... la gente viejos a meundo evitan el uso de ordenadores...'* (sic) were often seen by Examiners.

As has happened in many previous sessions, the omission of the letter *'h'* when using the perfect tense in sentences such as *'muchos países an dedicado muchos recursos al turismo'* (sic) and *'... mi familia y yo emos decidido comprar un coche eléctrico ...'* (sic) were very much in evidence. The misuse of accents again caused a degree of consternation amongst many candidates with abundant examples of a lack of understanding of how an accent can alter the meaning of individual words (e.g. *sí/si, está/esta, mandé/mande*). The incorrect use of accents inevitably has an impact on the marks awarded for language, especially when it leads to ambiguity of meaning. A number of candidates also struggled with some very basic spelling errors with examples such as *'... muchos abuelos alludan a sus nietos con sus tareas'* (sic) and *'aveces es difícil para los jóvenes...'* (sic). Other very common spelling errors were *'sobretudo'* as one word instead of two and the use of the phrase *'como consecuencia...'* (sic). Compound tense constructions also proved to be a step too far for a number of candidates with examples such as *'... la tecnología va a ser más compleja en el futuro'* and *'... han habido muchos problemas recientemente...'* (sic) and the improper use of gerunds was also a feature of many essays with examples such as *'... los beneficios de viajando al extranjero...'* (sic) being very common.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- Spanish accents being used accurately throughout the essay.
- The use of an appropriate range of tenses and moods, all appropriately conjugated.
- The correct use of *'hay'*, especially in the past tense.
- A clear understanding of the differences between the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
- Punctuation used to achieve very clear communication.
- The use of impersonal expressions and idiomatic language in order to enhance the overall register of the writing.

Common errors included:

- Extremely inconsistent use of punctuation and, on far too many occasions, no punctuation at all.
- The persistent lack of accents seriously affecting comprehension, particularly when it came to tenses or moods (*tomara/tomará, tomo/tomó, este/esté* and so on).
- The inaccurate use of singular and plural verbs.
- the dropping of the letter *'h'* with an auxiliary verb (e.g. *'los padres siempre an tenido problemas con sus hijos adolescentes en casa'* (sic)).
- The lack of understanding of the use of the verb *'gustar'*.
- The lack of adjectival agreement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

La familia

El aspecto más importante de ser joven es el apoyo incondicional de la familia. ¿Comparte usted esta opinión?

With this very popular title, there was more or less universal agreement that the unconditional support of the family is crucial to the development of young people as they grow up. Many essays also mentioned the desirability of support from members of the extended family as well as the support from parents, brothers and sisters. There were also numerous essays that talked up the importance of the support from friends as well as from family. Some essays suggested that support from the family should be consistent and perhaps not always unconditional, especially when a young person's behaviour, for example, is questionable.

Question 2

La justicia y el orden público

En una sociedad civilizada el respeto por la policía es esencial. ¿Qué opina usted?

There were many different approaches to this fairly popular title. Some took the view that respect for the police should be automatic in a civilised society whilst others felt that such respect needed to be earned by the actions of the police. There were references made to the difficult job that police officers carry out on a daily basis as well as references to well publicised incidents of what is perceived to be police aggression in the line of duty. Most felt, however, that the police are at their best when they work with communities and not against them, for whatever reason.

Question 3

El turismo

***‘¿Pasar las vacaciones en el extranjero? No gracias, prefiero quedarme aquí en mi propio país.’
¿Qué opina usted de este punto de vista?***

Opinions were somewhat divided as far as this reasonably popular title was concerned. Some felt that travelling abroad is better for reasons of cultural awareness and for enhancing our understanding of other ways of life in different countries. Others felt that staying at home and getting to know the country where one lives is both more rewarding and, quite importantly for many, a lot cheaper and less stressful than traveling abroad. However, there was no argument that travel, whether domestically or internationally, broadens the mind.

Question 4

Las nuevas tecnologías

Las nuevas tecnologías no siempre han mejorado nuestro mundo y en algunos casos lo han empeorado. ¿Está usted de acuerdo?

This was also quite a popular title with candidates. Most felt rather strongly that new technologies have undoubtedly improved our daily lives, although there was also a clear acknowledgement that not all aspects of technological progress are positive with many making reference to the technology of armed conflict and weaponry (for understandable reasons) to support this view. Some candidates discussed the pros and cons of social media as a new technology and there were numerous points raised about artificial intelligence and the impact it is having at this present moment in time.

Question 5

La contaminación

Cuando todos los vehículos que conducimos sean eléctricos, podremos dejar de preocuparnos por la contaminación atmosférica. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This popular title produced many well-constructed essays and it was clear that whilst most felt that electric cars have had and will continue to have a positive impact on the environment there were still questions to be asked about the methods of production of the electricity needed to charge such vehicles. Some essays suggested that the overall impact on clean air will be insignificant unless we embrace the phasing out of fossil fuels altogether in the next decade or so. Many expressed the belief that we need to be concerned on a permanent basis about the levels of air pollution and the inevitable effects on human health.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32
Essay 32

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, as well as 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

Once again Examiners can report that there was a good level of ability on display in the essays for this session. Candidates have, for some time now, fully understood the importance of composing an essay that makes valid and relevant points that relate clearly to the title set on the paper rather than simply writing in very general terms on the overall topic and hoping that this will attract high marks. There are 16 marks available out of a total of 40 marks for the quality of the content produced by the candidate. Essays that are brimming with irrelevance in terms of the actual title set will not score highly for content.

The quality of thinking on display in many essays was generally impressive and articulately conveyed and if these features were combined with a linguistically accurate piece of writing in Spanish then the end result would almost always be an essay that scored well both for language and for content. Evidence of meaningful preparation for this examination was again clear to see and, as one would reasonably expect, such well-prepared candidates were more inclined to perform well as a result.

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- The lack of understanding of the use of the verb *'gustar'*.
- The lack of adjectival agreement.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

La familia

El papel de otros miembros de la familia, por ejemplo los abuelos, es tan importante como el de los padres. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This popular title produced many enthusiastic statements of support for the way in which grandparents in particular can play a crucial role in the upbringing of young people within a family. Many essays also discussed the desirability of support from other members of the extended family such as aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters and so on. It was, however, the care and guidance shown by grandparents that most candidates chose to discuss. This is unsurprising given that it was specifically mentioned in the essay title. There were also numerous essays that looked to compare and contrast the ways in which families operate in other countries.

Question 2

La justicia y el orden público

Los sistemas judiciales deberían ser más estrictos con los delitos relacionados a las drogas. ¿Qué opina usted?

This equally popular title gave most candidates the opportunity to state unequivocally that more needs to be done to tackle the problems of drug-related crime. Many felt that stricter penalties for those individuals caught selling drugs on the street would very much help the situation to improve. Even more essays looked at the need to tackle drug trafficking both domestically and internationally. There was some agreement for the idea that more support should be considered to tackle addiction on the grounds that punishment would appear to many to be failing to deal with the problems faced by society.

Question 3

El turismo

La mayoría de los turistas no respetan la cultura del lugar que visitan. ¿Está usted de acuerdo?

This fairly popular title produced many convincing essays that argued passionately that the lack of respect shown by many international tourists for the country they visit is indeed a widespread problem and one that needs to be tackled head on. There was much discussion about the influence of alcohol, especially on young people, and how more should be done to restrict the sale of alcohol in the more popular coastal resorts. Many candidates argued that schools could be doing more to educate young people about the need to be more respectful of cultures other than their own.

Question 4

Las nuevas tecnologías

Los alumnos no deberían usar sus teléfonos en clase. ¿Qué opina usted?

This very popular title produced a wide range of views on the subject of mobile phones being used in the classroom. Many felt that they should be allowed given that they can be a very useful and time-saving educational tool, especially when candidates are working independently in class. Others, however, were more inclined to suggest that they should be banned in the classroom because they can be very distracting to other members of the class and also because they can be used for dubious purposes such as photographs being taken without the subject's permission and social media access with the potential for cyberbullying and so on. Other essays suggested that they could be allowed in the classroom providing the teacher has no objections.

Question 5

La contaminación

Cuando dejemos de depender de los combustibles fósiles, se acabarán todos los problemas de contaminación. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

There were some impassioned arguments in response to this slightly less popular title. The most commonly expressed view was that we still cannot afford to be less concerned about the environment once fossil fuels are no longer in widespread use. Most essays accepted that there is likely to be some limited use of fossil fuels well into the future but that alternative energy sources, in particular solar power, need to be promoted much more. There was agreement that there are many other sources of pollution unrelated to the use of fossil fuels and that society must never take its eye off the ball as far as caring for the environment is concerned.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33
Essay

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.