

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

The majority of the speaking tests were conducted in full accordance with syllabus requirements and Centres are thanked for their part in the efficient administration of the tests.

Recordings and documentation

Nearly all Centres provided clear recordings and enclosed the appropriate documentation. Please note that the top copy of the MS1 mark sheet must be sent separately to Cambridge in the envelope provided and not enclosed with the test materials.

The recordings should have enclosed with them the Moderator copy of the MS1 and the Working Mark Sheet with all the relevant columns completed. There were still a few, but significant number of Centres that only put section totals on the Working Mark Sheets. Without a full break-down of the marks awarded the Centre's marks cannot be moderated or confirmed.

Topic Presentation

Most of the topics presented by candidates were appropriate to the syllabus requirements. A list of suitable topic areas was given in **Section 4** of the 2010 syllabus booklet, with further guidance on the treatment of topics available in **Section 7**. Candidates should be reminded about the need to focus on the Hispanic context of their chosen topic as candidates who do not do this will have their mark for Content/Presentation halved. It is important also, where Centres are situated in Spanish-speaking areas, that candidates make explicit the particular relevance to that area in order to fulfil the requirement that topics are "studied with reference to countries/communities where the language is spoken". It was not adequate, for example, under "Sport" just to list the candidate's own interests or participation: the topic should be widened to place such activities fully in regional context. Teacher/Examiners are reminded that candidates should be permitted to speak for up to three and a half minutes without interruption and that the presentation should be a coherent talk in its own right and not just a list of points to be discussed in the Topic conversation.

Topic and General Conversations

Interaction is the key element in both the Topic and General conversation sections. Most candidates had sufficient material and information to deal with Examiners' questions and were able to develop such information in subsequent discussion. In some cases there was a tendency to keep to factual or descriptive matters, or to allow the candidate to give a series of prepared statements but without development or being encouraged to discuss or debate the issues. Teacher/Examiners are reminded of the assessment criteria for Comprehension and Responsiveness, where – in the top mark band – "responses are natural and spontaneous even to unexpected questions. Able to present and defend a point of view in discussion."

It is important that topics for the General conversation have scope for candidates to give opinions, state a point of view and allow debate and open discussion. They should be of a nature to allow a candidate to perform at advanced level, both in terms of academic content and linguistic range and complexity.

Part of the assessment for interaction is a candidate's ability to engage the Examiner in conversation. Five marks are available in both conversation sections for "Seeking Information and Opinions." This should be done explicitly. It was not sufficient for teacher/Examiners merely to volunteer their own point of view or opinion and then give the candidate credit for this. Centres are reminded that in the case of candidates who do not ask any questions by the end of each section that teacher/Examiners must prompt by asking "Do you have any questions to ask of me?" It is hoped that such questions will of course have arisen naturally in the course of the conversation and be part of the development of the discussion, rather than unrelated, prepared all-purpose questions. Candidates who do not actually ask questions cannot be awarded credit for seeking information and opinions.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

General comments

The two texts on the impact of television and computer games on the lives of young people posed few problems of understanding for the majority of candidates, and marks awarded for **Questions 3 and 4** were commonly in the good to high range. However, many candidates encountered difficulty in targeting the required detail in their summary in **Question 5(a)** and developing their opinion in **Question 5(b)**.

There were a large number of candidates whose handwriting proved very challenging to decipher which may, on occasions, have led to a loss of potential marks when parts of answers were illegible. Most candidates kept within the word limit for **Question 5** although there were still a significant number who did not manage to write all of their answers to **Questions 3 and 4** without 'lifting' more than four consecutive words from the texts.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

The key to achieving good marks on this question was to study carefully how the five words from the left-hand column had been used in the text, before attempting to find a definition in the right-hand column. Candidates who overlooked this step, preferring to go directly to the list of definitions, often came unstuck.

Common errors included: *cargado* instead of *asaltado*, *se recibe* instead of *se aprecia* and *envuelven* instead of *se aproximan*.

Question 2

This question, which usually proves to be the most challenging, was almost universally done well. Where errors were made it was often not the language which was at fault, but rather that the manipulated phrase could not be re-inserted in the text with the same meaning. A good technique to check whether an answer has the correct meaning is to copy out the phrase in the question and then write the answer phrase on the line beneath.

- (a) Candidates showed good manipulation of language. However, some answers did not get a mark because they were not close enough to the original meaning. For example *Habr  de bombardear al joven con unos 10000 anuncios*, although a perfectly good manipulation of *habr *, did not retain the meaning of the phrase in the text.
- (b) This was mostly done well. There were a few instances where candidates managed to successfully adapt the sentence without changing the meaning in itself but, by changing the word order, the manipulated phrase was not able to be reinserted into the text successfully. e.g. *Premiar a sus hijos es la costumbre de los padres*.
- (c) As with the previous answer, a considerable number of variations were offered – and accepted, provided that the correct meaning was retained. Answers such as *'la situaci n en Espa a est  bastante grave'* were not acceptable.
- (d) Many correct answers were offered. A few candidates wrote *publicen* for *publiquen* and therefore the mark could not be awarded.

- (e) A large variety of successful manipulations of this phrase was recorded.

Question 3

The text about the effect of television on the health of young people was well understood by most candidates. Occasionally, in this question and also in **Question 4** some candidates answered from their own experience of the world rather than what they had read in the text.

- (a) Hardly anybody missed the fact that, apart from sleeping, young people spend most of their time watching television. With marks on offer for just two of the four possible detrimental effects of this, many candidates scored the maximum.
- (b) Full marks were not so common here. The mark scheme rewarded answers which emphasised the time spent using new technology, rather than the fact that there had been many advances. The lack of time which parents now have to prepare meals for their children was also overlooked by a number of candidates.
- (c) There were generally good answers to this question. Among the few exceptions were answers which did not say *regalan TV para sus habitaciones* and only mentioned that children were given *todo tipo de tecnología*. A few other answers included information that was not in the text: *en vez de salir a jugar con los amigos, hablan a través del PC o del celular*. This type of answer was too vague to be credited.
- (d) Candidates appeared to show full comprehension of the point that if you eat while watching television you become less aware of when you have eaten enough, and scored the full two marks for stating this. The third mark was sometimes missed when candidates targeted the lack of awareness of the parents, rather than their tendency not to offer a balanced diet to their children and to let them eat what they like.
- (e) Many candidates scored the full three marks. A few candidates did not mention that the sale of high-calorie foods and drinks were to be prohibited in schools. Instead they wrote *instituciones* which was not sufficiently accurate as the text referred to educational institutions only.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with how young people can become addicted to computer games, also proved to be very accessible. Candidates appeared to relate easily to the ideas contained in the passage, and high marks were commonly awarded.

- (a) Most candidates performed very well on this question. Occasionally, candidates could not be rewarded because they tried to answer the question with information not present in the text. For example: *Los juegos on line impiden a los jóvenes concentrarse en sus deberes del hogar y crean una barrera entre el joven y sus padres*.
- (b) This was another well-answered question, with five possible answers permitted in the mark scheme. Where candidates only scored three marks it was commonly through missing out that young addicts spend a lot of time (or 25 hours a week) playing computer role-play games.
- (c) Candidates generally performed well on this question.
- (d) This was another question where candidates generally scored well. The only barrier to full success was when a candidate, through oversight rather than misunderstanding, failed to mention all three factors, and missed out, for example: *admitir la existencia del problem*.
- (e) Again, the final question posed very few problems. Occasionally, candidates lost marks by 'lifting', probably more by accident than design, five or more consecutive words from the original text.

Question 5

Candidates who had been coached in how to tackle the two parts of this question scored well, whereas those who seemed unaware of what was required did not.

Only a very few candidates exceeded 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 the second part.

- (a) It is useful once again to remind candidates that the technique required to score well in this question is to pick out as many points from both texts which are relevant to the task set – in this case, ‘the problems which television and computers can bring for young people’. Marks are allocated on a point for point basis, and ‘lifting’ from the texts is no longer an issue.

There is no need to seek similarities between the two texts or to write an introductory sentence or conclusion, as generalisations will not score marks. With only 140 words available an introduction such as, ‘*En ambos textos se plantean los problemas que pueden traer el uso inadecuado de las tecnologías, tales como Internet, la televisión o los juegos de rol*’ wastes nearly 30 words which can only be taken into consideration when allocating the 5 marks for quality of language. The recommended approach is to disregard generalized summary writing and to plunge straight in with specific details, for example, ‘*Los jóvenes dedican muchas horas a ver la tele...*’ Candidates who adopted this technique scored well on this exercise.

- (b) This was not such an easy question for candidates living in countries where personal computers are not so commonplace. A way to circumvent this was, after having stated this fact, to focus on how young people do spend their time. As always, in order to score the full five marks, in addition to giving their opinion, candidates should try if possible to bring in their own ideas, instead of just relying purely on information from the texts.



SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

General comments

Candidates responded well to the two texts on the theme of mistreatment of animals, and their work was generally well presented. In many Centres there was pleasing evidence that the techniques required for this assessment had been thoroughly rehearsed. In **Questions 3** and **4**, instances of candidates directly transcribing five consecutive words or more from the original texts seemed to occur through oversight rather than disregard of the rubric, and in **Question 5** the vast majority of candidates succeeded in answering within the 140-word limit.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Careful candidates scored well on this opening question. As always, answers to this question must contain the words from the original text which are the exact equivalent to the paraphrase. A few candidates who had successfully identified the phrase were careless in copying it across, either by omitting words or by adding unnecessary, superfluous ones. A good technique to check whether an answer contains extras or omissions is to copy out the paraphrase in the question and then write the answer phrase on the line beneath.

- (a) Candidates who were aware of the meaning of *a menudo* readily identified the phrase.
- (b) This was generally very well done, with nearly every candidate submitting a correct answer.
- (c) There were almost as many correct answers for this as on **Question (b)** and only a few were invalidated by careless inclusion of an initial *que*.
- (d) Nearly every candidate identified the relevant phrase from the original text. Not so many were successful in reproducing the exact words to match the paraphrase in the question. It should be remembered, for example, that if the paraphrase contains a verb then the target phrase will almost certainly contain a verb also. Answers such as *fuentes de venta clandestina* were not accepted.
- (e) This question had a similar outcome to the previous one. Many candidates merely answered *simple antojo*, without taking into account the *por* of the paraphrase.

Question 2

As in previous years this proved to be the most challenging question on the paper and only the most able candidates achieved good marks. A number of candidates who made the correct manipulation either introduced or omitted words which invalidated their answer. The technique mentioned above of copying out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath can help to prevent this occurring.

- (a) Candidates who were used to the *hace...que / desde hace* time constructions had little difficulty. A few struggled when they attempted to merge the original *lleva* with one of these constructions.
- (b) This was done well by all who were aware of the meaning of *preciso*. Past tenses other than the perfect were acceptable, as was the infinitive or a subjunctive construction.



- (c) A more challenging manipulation was sought here, with no choice but to use a subjunctive after *es imposible que*. The correct spelling of *acojamos* was also required.
- (d) There were a number of correct ways to manipulate this phrase. The guiding principle, as ever, is that the re-worked phrase should fit back into the original text and convey the same meaning.
- (e) Many ingenious attempts were made to manipulate this phrase using *tantos*. Candidates who were successful were careful to collocate *tantos* with *perros*, and not with *países*, which would not have conveyed the meaning of the original text.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to appreciate the general gist of the passage (on the plight of dogs and other pets in Spain), and hence grammatical constructions, specific expressions and items of vocabulary provided the main areas of challenge.

In their answers many candidates are now adopting the perfectly legitimate tactic of using the paraphrase from **Question 1** whenever appropriate to avoid 'lifting' more than four words from the original text. However, it should be remembered that the Quality of Language mark will focus only on original language produced by the candidate.

- (a) Candidates took full advantage of the marks on offer here. There was a choice of five possible answers and high marks were often achieved by some careful re-arrangement of the original text.
- (b)(i) The question asked for candidates' opinions on why they thought so many dogs were abandoned in August, and it was insufficient merely to answer 'because it was holiday time'. To score the mark the answer needed to be extended to include such possible reasons as, 'they couldn't take their pet with them', or 'they couldn't find anybody to look after them' etc.
- (ii) Most candidates picked up a mark for the second part of this question by noting that dogs were likely to be killed by traffic or die from hunger if abandoned on the streets. Not so many were successful in noting that the animal should be tied up outside the *Protectora*, and only a few mentioned that no effort would be spared to admit them.
- (c) There were generally good answers to this question. Most candidates were able to pick up on the idea that it is very difficult to prove that a dog has been abandoned if the owner claims that it has run away. The more able candidates scored the full three marks by adding that it was the severity of the fines that prompted the owners to lie.
- (d) This was a two-mark question, and most candidates were able to come up with at least one of the reasons why Spanish pet shops were considered inadequate. The phrase *el ejemplar en la vitrina* appeared to cause a little difficulty.
- (e) With marks available for any two of three possible answers most candidates scored well. There was occasional misunderstanding of the exact significance of *compra compulsiva* and *simple antojo*.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with the more general threats which human beings pose to animal species, also proved to be accessible to the majority. Candidates appeared to be fairly familiar with the ideas contained in the passage.

- (a) Even though **más** was highlighted in bold print in the question, it was still overlooked by a few candidates who focused on other, less significant human actions mentioned earlier in the paragraph. Provided that they didn't 'lift' more than four consecutive words from the final sentence, most candidates scored the full two marks.



- (b) Candidates appeared to find little difficulty in identifying the relevant sections of the text and, with marks available for any three of four possible answers, most were able to score. To answer this question well frequently called for skill in paraphrasing, and more able candidates met this challenge with confidence.
- (c) A number of candidates did not mention that the amount of money to be made is a major factor in the illegal trafficking of wild animals. Marks were commonly given for noting the importance of the trade in animal fur and hides, and also for the interest in owning an exotic pet.
- (d) Most candidates successfully recorded that when man introduces alien species to a habitat this often has a detrimental effect on native species. Some candidates were confused by the use of the word *poblaciones*, and misinterpreted the text to state that such acts led to animals posing a threat to humans.
- (e)(i) and (ii) Both parts of this question were examples which illustrated the point made in the previous paragraph, and candidates appeared to enjoy following the sequence of events which converted what had initially seemed to be a good idea into a less beneficial outcome.
- (i) Most candidates were able to state that the foxes were brought in to control the rabbits and, as a result, there was a considerable decline in native species that were in competition with these newcomers. Not so many scored the third mark by recording that the rabbit had no natural predator in Australia.
- (ii) The undesirable outcome of the bees imported to Brazil was clearly understood. Answers were occasionally marred by instances of possibly inadvertent 'lifting'.

Question 5

Only a very few candidates exceeded the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded by Examiners, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for the second part.

- (a) It is useful once again to remind candidates that the technique required to score well in this question is to pick out as many points from both texts which answer the question asked – in this case, 'how do humans mistreat animals?' Marks are allocated for relevant points made, and 'lifting' from the texts is no longer an issue.

There is no need to seek similarities between the two texts or to write an introductory sentence as generalisations will not score marks. With only 140 words available an introduction such as, '*En estos dos textos nos informan sobre la influencia que tienen los humanos sobre otras especies y el resultado que se puede producir debido de esto,*' wastes nearly 30 words which can only be taken into consideration when allocating the 5 marks for quality of language. The recommended approach is to disregard generalized summary writing and to plunge straight in with specific details, for example, '*Los hombres maltratan a los perros cuando los abandonan en la calle...*' Candidates who adopted this technique scored well on this exercise.

- (b) This was clearly an emotive subject for candidates and many were able to voice strong opinions after a brief review of the practices in their own countries. As always, in order to score the full five marks, in addition to giving their opinion, candidates should try if possible to bring in their own ideas, instead of just relying purely on information from the texts.



SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

General comments

Candidates' work was generally well presented and there was evidence that the techniques required for this assessment had been well practised. In **Questions 3** and **4** it was a very rare occurrence to find a candidate directly transcribing five consecutive words or more from the original texts, and in **Question 5** only a few candidates exceeded the word count and many included complex subjunctive structures when they offered opinions in their personal response.

Among less able candidates there was a considerable amount of first language interference which frequently hindered understanding.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

The majority of candidates scored well on this opening question, and it was rare to find errors in **(d)** and especially **(e)**. As always, answers to this question must contain the words from the original which are the exact equivalent to the paraphrase, (a rule which was waived as an exception this year to allow the addition of *españoles* to **(c)**).

Only a few candidates who had successfully identified the phrase were careless in copying it across, either by omitting words or by adding unnecessary, superfluous ones. A good technique to check whether an answer contains extras or omissions is to copy out the paraphrase in the question and then write the answer phrase on the line beneath.

Question 2

Once again this proved to be the most challenging question on the paper and only the most able candidates achieved good marks. Unfortunately, a number of candidates who made the correct manipulation either introduced or omitted words which invalidated their answer. The technique mentioned above of copying out the phrase as it appears on the question paper before writing the answer underneath can help to prevent this occurring.

- (a)** There frequently appeared to be confusion over the meaning of *atropellos* and *transeúntes* which a more careful reading of the text might have avoided, and many answers stated that 'accidents were responsible for 65% of pedestrians'. An article was required before the percentage and, although both *de* and *por* were accepted after *responsables*, the commonly offered *para* was not.
- (b)** This was one of the more challenging of the manipulations. A number of candidates noticed the subjunctive in the original phrase, but not all came up with *sean* as required, and sometimes offered *estén* instead. A few spotted that they could avoid the subjunctive altogether by using *ser*.
- (c)** There were a number of possible ways of attempting this manipulation and many candidates did so successfully. Several otherwise correct answers were invalidated by the use of a new verb *invencionar*.
- (d)** Not many candidates seemed to be aware of *cualquiera*, and even less so of the subjunctive which is required to follow it. Consequently only the most able candidates were able to pick up a mark here.

- (e) Examiners accepted *hacerse* as well as *hacer* and therefore the manipulation was accessible to the majority of candidates. Most variations in word order were accepted as long as *hay que* was followed by *hacer(se)*.

Question 3

A ploy to overcome the 'lifting' rule was to use the paraphrase from **Question 1** if appropriate. However, it should be remembered that the Quality of Language mark will focus only on original language from the candidate.

- (a) Many candidates scored two or the full three marks here. A minority of less able candidates assumed that, in keeping with contemporary environmental practice, urban planning priorities were more likely to favour the pedestrian.
- (b) Some confusion was apparent here, especially over the statistic that the majority of accidents are caused by the pedestrian (as with **2(a)** above). Also, many candidates struggled to express the concept of 'one third'.
- (c) There were generally good answers to this question. Nearly every candidate was able to pick up on the fact that the typical Spanish pedestrian goes for a walk at the weekend and then uses the car for the rest of the week. Many were also able to add that this is because cities were not adapted to encourage pedestrians.
- (d) Many candidates scored either one or two marks for noting that the elderly had difficulty in crossing the street and consequently were more likely to stay at home. A minority also successfully stated that another problem which old people faced was the fact that local councils neglected these difficulties. A few candidates interpreted *la gente mayor* as meaning the 'majority of people'.
- (e) Candidates often wrote at length for this two-mark question. The idea that using mobile phones or MP3 players can cause distraction which results in accidents was widely understood. However, unless it was clearly stated that the pedestrian was using one of these appliances, (and not the driver, as a number of candidates suggested), marks could not be awarded.
- (f) The state of mind of the pedestrian leaving the safety of the pavement to step into the danger zone was often only a concept which the more able candidates could explain. Nevertheless, most candidates were able to note the point that priorities needed to be changed.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text dealing with Bogotá's day without cars proved to be accessible to most candidates.

- (a) Many candidates scored well on this four-mark question. The facts that traffic caused significant levels of pollution, intolerable noise and reduced journeys to a crawl were all readily identified. Not so many candidates successfully expressed the other point – that the purpose of the day was to encourage citizens to use alternative means of transport.
- (b) The majority successfully stated that traffic and noise levels were reduced, although only those who mentioned the benefits to health of alternative means of transport were awarded the third mark.
- (c) The third paragraph of the text was a little more challenging. Many candidates successfully stated that a result of Bogotá's day without cars was that it showed that it is possible to lead a normal life without these vehicles. More difficulty was encountered when attempting to express that the day also drew attention to the harmful effects traffic.
- (d) Although many candidates scored at least one mark in their answers, only a minority achieved the maximum. Practice with alternative ways of expressing percentages may have been of assistance.



- (e) This proved to be the most challenging of the five questions. Marks were scored by those who noted that Bogotá's problem had more to do with an inefficient public transport service and not its over-reliance on cars. Not many candidates were able to state that the 'public' transport system only served specific interests.

Question 5

Only a small minority of candidates exceeded 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 can lead to no marks being awarded for the second part.

- (a) It is useful once again to remind candidates that the technique required to score well in this question is to pick out as many points from both texts which answer the question asked – in this case 'how does the use of cars affect people?' Marks are allocated for relevant points, and 'lifting' from the texts is no longer an issue. There is no need to write an introductory sentence or to seek similarities between the two texts as generalisations will not score marks.

A tendency to summarise what happened during Bogotá's day without cars, rather than answer the question asked often curtailed marks in the second part of the summary.

- (b) There were some examples of candidates using complex subjunctive structures in order to express their personal opinions. Not only does this fulfil a requirement of the task, it also benefits the candidate when the Quality of Language mark is being considered.

A number of candidates, perhaps through a misunderstanding of *pasearse*, gave irrelevant ideas about the system of public transport where they lived.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31

Essay

General comments

In general terms the majority of candidates performed well in this examination. Well structured, relevant and linguistically accurate essays were very much in evidence. The importance of sticking to the title set and writing in clearly defined paragraphs was apparent in many of the essays written. Weaker responses tended to drift away from the title and to include unrelated thoughts and opinions. Stronger responses managed to combine good structure and appropriate language with thoughts backed up with evidence, examples or references. A large number of candidates managed to make very good use of brief, relevant quotations or were able to use personal anecdotes and to draw upon their own experiences to support their line of thinking. Such techniques are perfectly acceptable provided they offer a relevant response to the title.

Some candidates presented pre-learnt essays that were not a valid response to the title set but more a generalized set of pre-conceived statements on the topic. Candidates who, in the body of their essay, make regular reference to the title being discussed tend to avoid this pitfall and so it is worth pointing this out to future candidates. The mark scheme refers to the importance of essays being “clearly relevant” or “generally relevant” if candidates are to access the ‘good’ or ‘very good’ mark bands for content.

Very few essays exceeded the word count but those that did were inclined to self-penalise in the sense that more errors were made in terms of language or the actual thread of the essay was lost because it went on for too long. It is therefore very important that candidates keep to the 250 – 400 word limit specified in the rubric.

The general quality of Spanish used by many candidates was very good indeed. In terms of punctuation some candidates omitted important items such as question marks or inverted commas when asking questions or quoting a reference. Spanish accents were handled better this session but some candidates appeared to rely on guesswork regarding the use of accents. Candidates could also improve on the use of the passive mood. Phrases such as *...el matrimonio debería estar apoyado por todo el mundo...* were not uncommon. There was also a tendency for a small number of candidates to end sentences with prepositions which resulted in statements such as *...el derecho a votar es muy importante, creo que*.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones humanas*

This was a popular choice of title. There was no shortage of strong opinions with regard to marriage in our modern society. The vast majority of candidates were clearly supportive of the institution and argued that it has a vital role to play in the fabric of society. Other candidates argued that marriage is indeed outdated and no longer has importance, love being the most essential ingredient in any relationship. Either approach was acceptable provided the essay responded to the title and did not become a fixed set of thoughts on human relationships.

Question 2 *La vida urbana y la vida rural*

This was a less popular title on the paper. Many essays set out to establish that rural life can often seem idyllic but that, on closer inspection, has far too many disadvantages for it to be suitable for everyone. The importance of access to shops, entertainment, emergency services and the like all appeared to influence candidates’ judgement in terms of preferring city life.

Question 3 *La salud*

A fairly popular title on the paper and there were a range of well-researched approaches to the issue of health provision. Very few candidates argued that health care should not be free. Most were convinced that working people should contribute through their taxes in order that decent health facilities can be provided to all members of any given society. Some candidates simply resorted to writing about how important health care is and did not address the cost implications mentioned in the title. This highlights the importance of dealing with the actual title set.

Question 4 *La igualdad de oportunidades*

The most popular title on this paper and the one with the most passionate range of responses. Not surprisingly, most essays argued that sixteen year old 'adults' should indeed be given the right to vote in elections. Most suggested that this would be a good way to engage young people much more in politics. Equally, a good number of other essays suggested that there is a lack of maturity amongst many adolescents and that eighteen years of age would be a more appropriate stage to offer the right to vote.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

There were some very well written pieces that argued incisively that public transport needs more public investment for it to be made more attractive as an option. Many were in no doubt that the environmental advantages of people using private transport are obvious for all to see although a number of candidates seemed to suggest that their own particular governments were unable to appreciate this.



SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32

Essay

General comments

In general terms the majority of candidates performed well in this examination. Well structured, relevant and linguistically accurate essays were very much in evidence. The importance of sticking to the title set and writing in clearly defined paragraphs was apparent in many of the essays written. Weaker responses tended to drift away from the title and to include unrelated thoughts and opinions. Stronger responses managed to combine good structure and appropriate language with thoughts backed up with evidence, examples or references. A large number of candidates managed to make very good use of brief, relevant quotations or were able to use personal anecdotes and to draw upon their own experiences to support their line of thinking. Such techniques are perfectly acceptable provided they offer a relevant response to the title.

Some candidates presented pre-learnt essays that were not a valid response to the title set but more a generalized set of pre-conceived statements on the topic. Candidates who, in the body of their essay, make regular reference to the title being discussed tend to avoid this pitfall and so it is worth pointing this out to future candidates. The mark scheme refers to the importance of essays being “clearly relevant” or “generally relevant” if candidates are to access the ‘good’ or ‘very good’ mark bands for content.

Very few essays exceeded the word count but those that did were inclined to self-penalise in the sense that more errors were made in terms of language or the actual thread of the essay was lost because it went on for too long. It is therefore very important that candidates keep to the 250 – 400 word limit specified in the rubric.

The general quality of Spanish used by many candidates was very good indeed. In terms of punctuation some candidates omitted important items such as question marks or inverted commas when asking questions or quoting a reference. Spanish accents were handled better this session but some candidates appeared to rely on guesswork regarding the use of accents. Candidates could also improve on the use of the passive mood. Phrases such as *...el matrimonio debería estar apoyado por todo el mundo...* were not uncommon. There was also a tendency for a small number of candidates to end sentences with prepositions which resulted in statements such as *...el derecho a votar es muy importante, creo que*.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones humanas*

This was a popular choice of title. There was no shortage of strong opinions with regard to marriage in our modern society. The vast majority of candidates were clearly supportive of the institution and argued that it has a vital role to play in the fabric of society. Other candidates argued that marriage is indeed outdated and no longer has importance, love being the most essential ingredient in any relationship. Either approach was acceptable provided the essay responded to the title and did not become a fixed set of thoughts on human relationships.

Question 2 *La vida urbana y la vida rural*

This was a less popular title on the paper. Many essays set out to establish that rural life can often seem idyllic but that, on closer inspection, has far too many disadvantages for it to be suitable for everyone. The importance of access to shops, entertainment, emergency services and the like all appeared to influence candidates’ judgement in terms of preferring city life.

Question 3 *La salud*

A fairly popular title on the paper and there were a range of well-researched approaches to the issue of health provision. Very few candidates argued that health care should not be free. Most were convinced that working people should contribute through their taxes in order that decent health facilities can be provided to all members of any given society. Some candidates simply resorted to writing about how important health care is and did not address the cost implications mentioned in the title. This highlights the importance of dealing with the actual title set.

Question 4 *La igualdad de oportunidades*

The most popular title on this paper and the one with the most passionate range of responses. Not surprisingly, most essays argued that sixteen year old 'adults' should indeed be given the right to vote in elections. Most suggested that this would be a good way to engage young people much more in politics. Equally, a good number of other essays suggested that there is a lack of maturity amongst many adolescents and that eighteen years of age would be a more appropriate stage to offer the right to vote.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

There were some very well written pieces that argued incisively that public transport needs more public investment for it to be made more attractive as an option. Many were in no doubt that the environmental advantages of people using private transport are obvious for all to see although a number of candidates seemed to suggest that their own particular governments were unable to appreciate this.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33

Essay

General comments

Overall candidates performed well with the best answers being well structured with a range of vocabulary and tenses and showing a line of argument backed up by evidence and pertinent reasoning. There are still a few candidates who write a pre-prepared essay which does not answer the title set. The mark scheme refers to the importance of essays being “clearly relevant” or “generally relevant” if candidates are to access the ‘good’ or ‘very good’ mark bands for content.

Linguistically candidates need to improve on the use of *gustar* and *por/para* as well as adjectival agreements. Phrases such as *...a las mujeres les gustan la libertad personal...* and *...es importante luchar para los derechos de la mujer...* were common. Candidates are advised to avoid omitting “h” from *ha* and using “s” instead of “c” in words like *ambición*. Many candidates generally used the subjunctive correctly and effectively.

Very few essays exceeded the word count but those that did were inclined to self-penalise in the sense that more errors were made in terms of language or the actual thread of the essay was lost because it went on for too long. It is therefore very important that candidates keep to the 250 – 400 word limit specified in the rubric.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones humanas*

This was generally well answered with some candidates drawing on personal experiences to back up their points. The best answers showed how single parent families were often just as good or better than those two parent families where domestic violence or constant arguments are a feature of daily life.

Question 2 *La vida urbana y la vida rural*

Some answers gave a detailed description of urban life but failed to draw a comparison with rural life. Others did describe both town and country life but failed to evaluate which was “*más importante*.” The best answers did both of these and also listed advantages and disadvantages of both lifestyles.

Question 3 *La salud*

This was generally well answered with candidates supplying medical evidence for the dangers of smoking not only to the individual but also to bystanders. This was then used by some candidates to argue for non-entitlement to medical attention. However, most candidates took a broader and balanced view, stating that to be consistent medical attention would also have to be withheld from alcoholics, the obese and those who take no exercise. Another point made by a few candidates was that there would be no incentive to stop smoking as a previous history as a smoker would exclude a patient from medical attention.

Question 4 *La igualdad de oportunidades*

This was the least popular of the titles. Many candidates tended to launch into an anti-male diatribe, very often using personal unbalanced anecdotes instead of statistics or logical argument. There were several essays which agreed with the title but failed to define “*machismo*” or how people should fight against it except by saying that men were evil and cruel. Nevertheless, there were a few excellent essays on this title which were clearly argued and very well structured.



Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

Candidates who answered on this title were well prepared with a mass of facts relevant to their own country and they used them to produce closely-argued and well-illustrated essays which were relevant to the title. The majority of candidates did not just limit themselves to description but also evaluated the extent to which the authorities had taken the problem seriously.