

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/01
Speaking

Key messages

For candidates:

Candidates' own interests should play a part in the choice of the subject for the Presentation and clear reference should be made to Hispanic culture or society.

Presentations should not exceed 3½ minutes.

Candidates should 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 at least two questions in both of the conversation sections.

For examiners at centres:

The test consists of three distinct sections:

- Presentation (maximum 3½ minutes)
- Topic Conversation (7–8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation
- General Conversation (8–9 minutes) on themes completely different from those raised in the Topic Conversation.

Each section should be clearly announced on the recordings, and the prescribed timings observed.

Candidates should be reminded if necessary to ask the examiner questions in both conversation sections and be reminded 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 in both of the conversation sections.

General comments

Most candidates had been well prepared for the examination. They were interested in the topics they had chosen and spoke for the required time.

The majority of centres conducted the tests in accordance with the syllabus and instructions, and as a result candidates had the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability and could gain access to the full range of marks. We thank colleagues in those centres who made every effort to comply with the instructions.

There were still a very few centres that did not conduct the tests correctly, by not observing the prescribed timings or omitting sections of the test or through lapses in administration such as not identifying candidate names and numbers on the recording or not enclosing fully completed working mark sheets. As well as delaying the moderation process, such omissions meant that a centre's own marks could not be moderated or confirmed.

Most centres submitted clear recordings. Please ensure that CDs are finalised so that they can be played on another computer – a few centres did not do this. We remind all those conducting the tests that the examiner should announce the centre number and candidate name and number clearly at the start of each test: this should not be left to the candidate to do. Each candidate's test should be a separate track or file. Please list candidates included in the sample on the CD insert or label.

Working mark sheets must be fully completed and submitted for all candidates – including those whose test may not have been formed part of the sample – and enclosed with the recording. Please ensure that samples submitted reflect the whole of the candidate range. Full details of how to select the sample are given in the [Samples database](#). We must again remind centres that their marks cannot be confirmed or moderated unless the full listing of marks is shown.

Examiners are reminded that candidates must ask the examiner questions; it is not sufficient for the examiner to state a personal opinion and then award the candidate credit for 'seeking information and opinions'. The examiner should, if necessary, prompt the candidate to ask questions in both the Topic Conversation and General Conversation sections.

Candidates generally had sufficient information to respond to questions in the Topic Conversation and offered ideas and opinions. They usually managed to ask the examiner at least one question, but sometimes needed prompting to ask a second question.

The General Conversation section was variable in standard. Although many candidates interacted well, others were less forthcoming or hesitant, especially when dealing with ideas and opinions. Some of the questions examiners asked were somewhat elementary in context and did not provide adequate scope for an advanced discussion or the development of ideas and opinions.

Most candidates could benefit from further practice in asking questions. The majority remembered to ask the examiner at least one question, but as in the Topic Conversation, many did not relate naturally to the matter being discussed. Many candidates, including those of otherwise quite a high standard, had difficulty in formulating questions: a simple *¿y tú?*, for example, will not suffice.

The quality of language varied considerably. In many cases, accuracy was very good and candidates showed their willingness and ability to handle an advanced range of structures and vocabulary. On the other hand, some weaker candidates were hampered by faulty syntax and a lack of basic vocabulary.

Pronunciation was generally good or at least acceptable. Problems with some more difficult sounds occasionally impeded communication. Over-reliance on prepared material sometimes led to flat or inaccurate intonation and stressing. Nevertheless, many candidates made real efforts to sound authentic.

Some centres again did not make a clear distinction between the Topic and General Conversations. In some cases, candidates had insufficient opportunity to discuss a variety of issues or offer a suitable range of higher-level language. Marks cannot be awarded for a General Conversation if this has not been conducted.

Comments on specific sections

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 candidates should take care to make specific reference to this context. The content mark out of ten was halved if there was no specific reference to a Spanish-speaking country or context.

Presentations should be a formal and coherent introduction to the subject: pronunciation and clarity of delivery are assessed. It is important to show evidence of preparation, organisation and relevant factual knowledge. Candidates who spoke in a casual or disjointed manner and who made little attempt to engage the examiner did not score well. Presentations that exceeded the prescribed 3½ minutes did not gain credit for any extra content or language. Presentations ideally provided a personal overview of the issue to lead to the basis of a debate in the Topic Conversation.

Topic Conversation

This part of the test is not an opportunity for the candidate to give a further series of mini presentations, though a few centres were content to allow this. Interaction between the examiner and candidate is essential. The Topic Conversation should develop points arising from the presentation. Candidates whose responses were confined to pre-learned answers and lacking spontaneity could not be awarded high marks for responsiveness. Candidates who justified or refuted a point of view, as well as giving relevant examples or information scored well in this section.

Candidates should ask the Examiner at least two substantial questions. Marks could not be awarded for 'seeking information and opinions' where no questions were asked by the candidate.

General Conversation

This must be a separate section from the Topic Conversation and the start of this section should be clearly announced on the recording. It is important that different issues from those addressed in the Topic Conversation should be discussed. Please remember that it is the examiner, and not the candidate, who determines the topics to be covered in this section. Although there are no prescribed areas for the General Conversation, topics covered should be at an appropriate level to allow debate. Successful areas for discussion this series included current affairs, education, news, recent events, the Arts, sport, the environment, the economy, politics and social concerns.

As has been frequently reported, there were still cases of questioning at a level more appropriate to IGCSE or Ordinary Level. Although the conversation may start with some basic, personal or factual questions to build confidence, candidates must be given the opportunity to progress to more complex issues to show they can discuss more advanced topics. All conversations should go beyond the descriptive and allow scope for ideas, opinions and debate. Examiners are reminded that range and style of questioning should allow candidates to use more sophisticated language, show competence in structures at a suitably advanced level and gain access to the higher range of marks.

As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the examiner questions to seek information and opinions and be prompted to do so if necessary. Questions should follow naturally from the flow of the discussion and centres should remind candidates to ask at least two substantial and relevant questions.

Language

Quality of language is assessed in all sections. Candidates should be prepared to use as wide a range of language as possible, and those conducting the tests should take care that candidates have the opportunity to do so.

To gain access to the higher ranges of the mark scheme, candidates needed to show competence in dealing with hypothetical and abstract situations as well as factual or descriptive areas. As has been frequently reported, accuracy was often lacking. In particular, candidates would benefit from revising:

- numbers
- genders
- agreements of nouns, adjectives, and verbs
- appropriate use of the use of *ser* versus *estar*.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/21
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation 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

Comprehension of the two texts dealing with community and government initiatives to deal with nutritional issues was generally good. Awareness of the techniques required for this examination was variable and often made a considerable difference to the final mark. In **Questions 3 and 4**, lifting, (the direct copying of five or more words from the text), often invalidated a mark for comprehension. In **Question 5**, there was still a number of candidates who exceeded the permitted number of words, which meant that part, or sometimes all, of their personal response could not be assessed. A considerable number of candidates would have benefited from more preparation in how to approach the summary question in **5(a)**.

Scripts were usually well presented and legible, and very few candidates seemed to have had difficulty with time management. On the whole, candidates displayed a good communicative level of Spanish but spelling and use of accents were often found wanting.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Good scores were often achieved for this question. Rather than misidentification of the target, the most common error was a lack of precision in reproducing the exact equivalent of the paraphrase and adding or omitting words at the beginning or at the end.

- (a) The majority of candidates were successful. Sometimes *están* was omitted, or preceded by *que*.
- (b) This was also answered well, although *se* was occasionally omitted.
- (c) A number of candidates included *de Villaverde* at the end.

- (d) The mark was sometimes missed here when *nosotros* was omitted.
- (e) This was nearly always correct, although the spelling of *inauguración* was often inaccurate.

Question 2

Despite, in the majority of cases, having the language competency to provide correct answers, candidates need to remember that their answers must fit back seamlessly into the original text. This was a common reason why some candidates did not get full marks.

- (a) This caused few problems, although some candidates lost the mark by using the preterite e.g. *tuvimos éxito atrayendo*, or writing *hemos tenido éxito en...* without including *traer*.
- (b) It is important that candidates do not consider these language manipulations in isolation, but use the line reference given to see how the phrase fits in the text and then construct an answer which will also fit. For example, answers which began *se hacen esfuerzos...* or *los esfuerzos son para...* could not be awarded the mark.

There were instances of some answers which changed the cue word to the singular *esfuerzo*, and candidates should be reminded that this is not permitted.

- (c) This was generally well answered. A very few candidates missed the subjunctive and wrote *las comidas son ofrecidas*.
- (d) A lot of success was achieved with this manipulation. However, a small minority of candidates offered *viven a distancia*, which had the opposite meaning. Also, there was occasional incorrect use of prepositions such as *viven en poca distancia*.
- (e) Answers needed to include a first person plural, either with *el gobierno nos ha dado una subvención* or *hemos recibido una subvención que ha dado el gobierno*. Misspellings of *ha* were quite common e.g. *el gobierno nos a dado una subvención*, and could not be awarded the mark.

Question 3

Comprehension of the text about a community's efforts to alleviate hardship among its residents was generally good, and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers to the questions in their own words achieved high marks. Some responses were invalidated as they were copied directly from the text.

- (a) Although this was a four mark question, not many candidates succeeded in scoring maximum marks. This was mainly because of an absence of some of the relevant details required by the mark scheme. Common omissions were: *100 comidas; cada día; por la crisis / el paro; a 200 familias*. A 5-word phrase commonly copied from the text was *paro y la crisis económica*. Candidates would have benefitted from being able to paraphrase this to demonstrate comprehension. Information from other paragraphs occasionally was included, such as *organizará talleres para que la población se alfabetice y se profesionalice*, which could not be credited here.
- (b) This was well answered generally. Sometimes the origin of the volunteers was not accurately noted, or one of the elements of comfort or dignity was overlooked.
- (c) Many candidates scored full marks for this question. Some candidates would have scored more highly if they had been able to paraphrase *talleres de alfabetización y capacitación profesional*.
- (d) Often *la renta* was missed for the first point, although the *subvención* was almost always given, as was the point about individuals contributing. However, often the last point was lost because of direct copying from the text (the most common example being *más de 40 toneladas de*).
- (e) This rarely caused problems and candidates usually scored two marks. On occasions, however, candidates conveyed the opposite meaning of the required answer by using *faltar* in the wrong sense e.g. *que no van a faltar*, showing poor understanding of the expression *hacer falta*. Some candidates would have scored more highly if they had been able to paraphrase *el valor de la solidaridad* to demonstrate comprehension.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

The second text, dealing with Cuba's success in eradicating malnutrition in children, provided a similar level of challenge, with candidates commonly showing a clear understanding and achieving good marks. As in **Question 3**, an absence of detail in answers often prevented candidates from getting full marks.

- (a) The overwhelming majority of candidates scored the first point (that Cuba was the only country with no infant malnutrition), although some failed to include *infantil* which lost them the mark. However, another very large majority lost the next mark because they copied directly from the text, most commonly, *de 10 millones de dólares* or *un presupuesto de 10 millones*. A number of candidates failed to get the final mark by omitting *a los sectores más vulnerables*.
- (b) Only the more meticulous candidates responded with the required level of detail and scored maximum marks. A lot of candidates missed the four months aspect of the first point or copied more than four words from the text, e.g. *de la lactancia materna hasta*. Some missed the next point by either failing to include the *sana* or the *infantil* element. Candidates would have scored more highly if they had not copied *un litro de leche fluida* directly from the text, or missed out the *diario* aspect. More success was noted with the final point for this item.
- (c) This was usually well answered by most candidates. However, a few seemed to misunderstand the meaning of *voluntad política*, thinking in some cases that it was to do with volunteers.
- (d) This was another question requiring detailed answers, and not so many candidates scored full marks. A notable number of responses were invalidated because they had copied *la igualdad de género en* directly from the text. Also, the final point was often missed because *atención sanitaria para los niños* was not specified. The other two marks were usually achieved except when, as happened in a lot of cases, *no hay ningún niño en la calle* was lifted from the text.
- (e) Most candidates scored at least one mark in this question, the most usual one coming for the first part. However, some candidates referred only to the *población cubana* as a whole without specifying adults. For the second mark, both elements of *nuevos cultivos* and *aportar más variedad* needed to be included.

Question 5

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Most, but not all, candidates were aware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for part (b).

- (a) It was extremely noticeable in this session that many candidates were in need of further guidance in the techniques of performing well in this question. There were a lot of general summaries referring to problems of nutrition around the world and how important it is to get together to address the problem. Reference to the texts was often merely cursory.

The technique required for answering this question is very probably different from that which candidates have been encouraged to use in other forms of summary writing. Here candidates need to understand the importance of extracting specific details from the texts. There are no marks just for giving a general summary of the theme of the two texts, and looking for similarities and differences between them. Incorporating titles of the texts into the body of the summary will waste precious words.

In this exercise, candidates are not penalised for copying directly from the text(s). It should be remembered, however, that any copied material will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark.

A good example of the required technique from a candidate who has carefully considered the information that is being sought begins:

El recién abierto comedor social ✓ ha recibido una subvención del gobierno ✓ ayuda financiera de una familia vecina para pagar la mensualidad ✓ y de otros individuos como señoras que dejan la mitad de sus compras ✓ y donación de empresas de alimentación gratuita. ✓

El gobierno de Cuba ofrece \$10 millones para mejorar la alimentación ✓ campañas de educación alimentaria para los vulnerables, ✓ publicidad de los beneficios de la lactancia materna ✓...
(8 marks scored in 66 words).

An example of poor technique begins:

En los dos textos se le da importancia a la alimentación. El texto 1 prioriza la alimentación a todas las personas por igual y cree que la alfabetización y la capacitación profesional es importante. El texto 2 también está a favor de este último pero a la hora de alimentación prioriza la de los niños...
(0 marks scored in 54 words).

- (b) In the two or three sentences available for this last part of the examination the vast majority of candidates wrote good answers. They usually had something interesting to say about eating habits in their countries, and many volunteered opinions about why these habits existed. Most scored 4 or 5 marks.

Quality of Language

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



SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
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- **Language:** when preparing for the exam, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

Awareness of the techniques required for this examination was variable and often made a considerable difference to the final mark. In **Questions 3 and 4**, marks for comprehension were sometimes invalidated by the practice of copying directly from the text. In **Question 5**, there was still a number of candidates who exceeded the permitted number of words, which meant that part, or sometimes all, of their personal response could not be assessed.

Scripts were well presented, and no candidates appeared to have had difficulty in meeting the time constraints of the examination.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Good scores were often achieved for this question.

- (a) The majority of candidates were successful.
- (b) This was also answered well. A common error was to omit *como tal*.
- (c) Very few candidates were unable to identify the phrase targeted.
- (d) This was the most demanding item of Question 1. Not many responses were able to correctly identify *(la) punta del iceberg*, and those which did sometimes invalidated the mark by prefacing with *eso solo es*.
- (e) This was done well, although frequent omission of the initial *se* meant that the mark was not awarded to all candidates.

Question 2

- (a) There was widespread awareness that a subjunctive is required after *es posible que*. However, not all candidates were able to supply one correctly.
- (b) This passive construction was not always successfully rendered.
- (c) Moderate success was achieved. In a few instances, candidates did not render the subjunctive correctly and could not be awarded the mark.
- (d) Correct use of *gustar* regularly proves to be a challenge for non-native speakers. Occasionally the wrong pronoun *le* or *las* invalidated otherwise correct answers. Although the phrase *las joyas les gustan más a las mujeres* is correct Spanish, it could not be awarded a mark as it does not fit in the original text.
- (e) Only the most able were able to perform the manipulation for this item.

Question 3

The most able candidates successfully presented the required information in their own words, often using complex linguistic structures. Instances of copying five or more words directly from the text were rare in these responses.

- (a) Nearly every candidate was aware that the answers to this question were to be found in the quoted speech in the first paragraph. The full marks for comprehension were often scored, but a lack of ability to convert first person verbs to third person was noted and this had an impact on the mark for Quality of Language.
- (b) Most candidates picked up on the idea that shopaholics need to buy products that are considered a status symbol. Not so many noted the second point, which was also occasionally invalidated by directly copying *cuanto más tienes más eres*.
- (c) Many instances of maximum marks were recorded here. Candidates sometimes found difficulty in clarifying whether they were writing about the Christmas shopper or the shopaholic, and occasionally five or more words of *el consumo abusivo debe mantenerse en el tiempo para considerarse* were copied directly. Very few failed to mention the negative consequences for the shopaholic.
- (d) Only the most able candidates picked up maximum scores for this four-mark item. Many answers lacked the idea that women are thought more likely to be shopaholics, according to the text. Sometimes it was not established that the only difference was in the type of product bought by men and women. Candidates would have scored more highly if they had been able to paraphrase *las joyas, la lencería o los cosméticos*, (perhaps by changing the order of the items in the list, or using synonyms). Some answers were not specific enough, for example *Regas recalca la diferencia entre disfrutar y ser adictas*, which was not given a mark as it does not specify that, according to the text, women enjoy shopping more than men.
- (e) Comprehension for this second-four mark question was well demonstrated, and this was reflected in the marks which were awarded.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Comprehension of this text about the ways in which retail outlets attempt to manipulate their customers was generally good.

- (a) Many candidates scored maximum or at least two of the three marks available for this item. Comprehension of *vaciamos nuestros bolsillos* proved to be an obstacle for some, whilst others encountered linguistic difficulties in finding an appropriate conversion of *cosas que...no las necesitas para nada*.
- (b) Candidates seemed to relate well to this question, and the majority were able to show clear comprehension of shops' tactic of leaving certain parts of their display in disarray to give the appearance of popularity of a product. A number of candidates omitted to add the third point that this tactic worked particularly well with young people.
- (c) This question was also done well. Many chose to incorporate *una experiencia inesperada* into their answers, whilst successfully avoiding copying too much of the surrounding language in the text. However, ability to paraphrase *provocando que se quede más* and so demonstrate comprehension of this phrase was lacking in some responses.
- (d) Where candidates scored zero on this item, this was usually due to copying directly from the text. Those who had demonstrated comprehension by using their own words often scored at least one of the available marks here. Only the best candidates successfully noted that the screens are activated when a bottle of perfume is touched, the direction in which we are looking is tracked and persuasive images are transmitted.
- (e) Only a minority of candidates scored maximum marks. Phrases commonly copied from the text included *el carrito de la compra* and *a la altura de los ojos*. Only the most able candidates understood that *los pasillos estrechos nos hacen comprar más*.

Question 5

Examiners noted that responses in this examination series demonstrated better summary technique and adherence to the word limits, as evident in the marks awarded. Candidates should be reminded that it is of fundamental importance to observe the word count of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for part (b), the personal response.

- (a) To achieve a good mark it is essential to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question. In this exercise, candidates are not penalised for copying directly from the text(s). It should be remembered, however, that any copied material will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark.

Those who selected information according to the question, and provided specific details of addiction to shopping and tactics used by shops, scored well. No introductions or conclusions are required and the recommended technique is to plunge straight in:

En el primer texto nos cuentan que la adicción no es fácilmente reconocida. ✓ Mucha gente compra productos impulsivamente ✓ para mostrar su estatus social. ✓ Ambos sexos compran así, no solo las mujeres. ✓ Pueden curarse, ✓ admitiendo su problema a familiares... ✓
(6 marks scored in 38 words).

An illustration of a poor technique for this question:

En ambos textos se trata la problemática de la adicción a las compras. En el texto 1, el psicólogo Javier Regas nos explica las diferencias entre gastos esporádicos y un consumo excesivo, nos da su punto de vista acerca de las mujeres y los hombres y su diferente mentalidad a la hora de comprar y podemos apreciar sus consejos para un adicto...
(0 marks scored in 61 words).

- (b) Candidates who had left 40 or so words for this part of the answer were usually able to pick up another 3 to 5 marks, provided that they answered question. Prudent shopping appeared to be the norm in most countries with excesses being confined to a rich minority or tourists. Many candidates pointed to the significance of economic recession, and quite relevantly linked this to their own or their family's practices.

Some answers could not be marked as the word limit had already been exceeded. One or two candidates struggled with the meaning of *prudentemente*.

Quality of Language

The quality of candidates' Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Marks awarded ranged from 'Below Average' to 'Good', with most marks falling in the 'Sound' range.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- **Question 1:** seek a phrase in the text which matches perfectly the one in the question. Candidates should take care not to omit words or to include extra words.
- **Question 2:** rewrite the phrases to include the word(s) in brackets. A grammatical manipulation will be required, and care should be taken to ensure that the answer would fit back into the original text, retaining the same meaning.
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- **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

The paper provided an appropriate challenge to candidates across the ability range. The majority of candidates coped well with the two texts, which dealt with different aspects of service in the armed forces in two Spanish-speaking countries, and showed evidence of having been very well prepared in the techniques demanded by this examination. Scripts were legible and clearly presented. A small minority of candidates appeared to struggle with time management of the examination.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this correctly. A few incorrectly gave *cumplan el servicio militar*. Sometimes answers which were otherwise correct were invalidated by adding *de manera obligatoria*, or when preceded by *deben*.
- (b) There was considerable success in identifying this answer.
- (c) This was also done well. Candidates noted that a future tense was being sought and most were able to use this as a clue in identifying the correct matching phrase.
- (d) More difficulty was encountered here than with any other of the paraphrases to be matched. Candidates looked for phrases which contained the idea of 'studying', and many opted incorrectly for *brindan oportunidades inigualables de aprendizaje* or *aprovecharán nuestras facilidades de estudiar*. Unfortunately, those who realised that *cumplan con sus cursos* was a closer match often overlooked the fact that *salgan y* was also needed to convey the meaning of *se ausenten y*. Only the most able candidates were successful.
- (e) Far greater success was achieved here, with many candidates able to associate *en la cárcel* with *privados de su libertad*.

Question 2

- (a) There was clear evidence that candidates were familiar with how to convert active structures to the passive and vice versa. Common errors included attempts to retain the *se*, and the use of *ser* instead of *estar*.
- (b) This manipulation revolved around equating *dejar de* (to cease) to *el fin* (the end) and awareness that *desde* no longer requires *que* when it is used with a noun.
- (c) The meaning of *acabar de* was widely recognised. Many candidates realised that they were required to convey the meaning of *recién* with *acaba de*. However, answers which were nearly correct were often invalidated by the omission of either *se* or *de*.
- (d) More success might have been achieved here if candidates had checked that their answers would fit back into the original text, retaining the same meaning. The verb used before *posibilidad* must have a third person plural subject e.g. *tendrán*.
- (e) Candidates at the higher end of the ability range were aware of the use of *es preciso que* with the subjunctive. There were a number of incorrect attempts to use *preciso* adjectivally, with either *serie* or *documentos*, despite the lack of agreement.

Question 3

The text, concerning Perú's attempt to remedy a shortfall in recruits to the armed forces, was generally well understood, and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved high marks. Candidates are reminded use the marks allocated – [2], [3] or [4] – as a guide to the number of pieces of information required.

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated comprehension of the considerable reduction in numbers of recruits. The mark for stating that 60,000 recruits were needed was sometimes missed when this was not qualified by the fact that it was an annual requirement. Candidates who mentioned the current deficit of 20,000 scored the third mark.
- (b) The view that military service was a civic duty and the new law was applicable to all, and the contradictory argument that it was discriminatory and would affect only those unable to buy their way out, gave ample opportunity for candidates to show understanding.
- (c) Many candidates scored full marks in this item by noting that disincentives to doing military service included bad food, low pay and going into action against terrorist groups. Some candidates would have scored more highly here if they had known the meaning of *escaso*.
- (d) Many candidates successfully noted that the army offered education facilities and training which would enhance recruits' opportunities of gaining employment in the future. The second point, that special arrangements would be made for existing students to continue their courses, was not identified by all candidates.
- (e) Only a few candidates scored maximum marks in this item. The point about university students being exempt was commonly scored. Not so many candidates were able to associate *manutención* with *mantener*, and so the point that those who bore the responsibility of maintaining their family were also exempt was not widely recognised. Many understood that *estén privados de su libertad* was the substance of the third exemption and successfully paraphrased to demonstrate their comprehension of this phrase.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

- (a) Although comprehension was fairly straightforward, some candidates would have scored more highly if they had been able to clearly express that the UME is on a permanent state of alert, ready to act immediately when the alarm sounds.
- (b) Cases of maximum marks being awarded were not common for this item. The three points – physical entrance tests being the most difficult in the armed forces, no gender distinction in daily routine, and the fact that Irene’s female friends preferred administrative posts – were all present in the cohort’s scripts, but few individual responses succeeded in identifying all three items.
- (c) The point that women in the armed forces were in a minority in a world dominated by men was commonly noted. Fewer candidates noted clearly that the first woman had enlisted twenty-five years ago. The meaning of *cuadros de mando* was understood only by the most able candidates, who were able to remark upon the very small minority of female officers.
- (d) Many candidates scored marks on this four-mark question, although only a few were able to achieve the maximum. Most were able to note that in Verónica’s opinion the most important thing was to do her job well, although not so many were able to add to this by stating that she only achieved recognition by giving her utmost. Some candidates picked up the mark for noting the surprise which Verónica’s rank of captain generated, but only a very tiny minority noted that some women commented on her luck at being in command of men.
- (e) There were some good answers to the final question, with most being able to state that the law did not allow a serving married couple to be separated for more than a year, and also that one parent should always be there to care for a child. Some candidates neglected to state that the law was relevant to Verónica, as she was married to another soldier.

Question 5

Most candidates had been well prepared in the techniques needed to answer this question. Only a very small minority of candidates appeared to be unaware of the need to keep to the limit of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for the second part.

- (a) To achieve a good mark it is essential to note, in the limited number of words available, details from the texts which answer the question which has been asked. In this exercise, candidates are not penalised for copying directly from the texts. It should be remembered, however, that any copied material will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark. Knowledge of the required techniques appeared to be fairly widespread, and some very good scores were recorded.
- (b) Most candidates were aware that what is required here is one or two details which answer the question, whenever possible different from anything contained in the texts, and a clear personal opinion. Additionally, many seized the opportunity to show off their familiarity with more complex linguistic structures.

Quality of Language

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

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/31
Essay

Key messages

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

- select the title with which they feel most comfortable
- write a response that is clearly relevant, well-illustrated, coherently structured and well-informed
- use Spanish which is accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, 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

In this examination series a good number of candidates were able to produce essays which were articulate, clearly relevant to the actual title set, cleverly argued and confidently structured. The levels of analytical ability on show were often very impressive and were a testimony to the hard work carried out in preparation for this examination both by teachers and candidates. Those candidates who demonstrated an ability to develop the essay title and show a convincing capacity to illustrate and analyse sound arguments, more often than not backing this up with decent use of Spanish, were able to access the higher categories of both sections of the mark scheme.

There was, once again, a wide variety of different approaches to all the essay titles on the paper. Examiners want to see essays that present an articulate case with intelligent discussion of the related issues. How candidates do this is entirely up to them and, provided they respond to the title set rather than the title they would like to have seen on the paper, their views will be considered and taken in to account when a mark is awarded for content.

The importance of advising candidates to acknowledge the word count on this paper, namely 250–400 words, is well established. There were hardly any essays which exceeded the word count in any significant way.

Many responses were notable for their lack of even the most basic punctuation. This resulted in sentences with no capital letters at the beginning and a degree of difficulty in following the train of thought simply because full stops were regularly omitted. Such structural deficiencies detract from the actual point being made by the candidate.

Many candidates, however, endeavoured to produce essays that were written with accuracy, concision and self-evident relevance. It would be no exaggeration to say that the very best essays were a joy to read. However, as has also been mentioned in numerous reports previously, the need to check what has been written in order to eliminate the more basic errors ought to be an essential element of the routine in the examination room for all candidates.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- accurate use of the subjunctive mood
- ability to employ a range of advanced Spanish grammar
- consistently accurate use of Spanish accents
- consistently correct singular/plural subject and singular/plural verb agreements.

Common errors included:

- omission of accents (e.g. “Espana”, “los medios de comunicacion”, “la tecnología” and “los jóvenes”)
- inconsistency with adjectival agreement (e.g. “los estudiantes inteligente”, “un colegio estricta” and “la sociedad moderno”)
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- omission of the letter ‘h’ with an auxiliary verb (e.g. “la tecnología a mejorado la vida diaria”)
- the use of “más mejor”

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *La juventud*

This was a popular title. The more successful responses were characterised by a variety of points stating not just the natural rebellion associated with youth but also the positive aspects of occasionally questioning parental authority. Essays tended to score less well if they simply related a series of personal episodes without using them to support any general points.

Question 2 *Los medios de comunicación*

The best responses to this title provided a balanced view, with a variety of approaches regarding what were the “medios de comunicación”. Some candidates referred to television, radio and newspapers whilst others concentrated on mobiles, tablets and the internet. All these approaches were treated as equally valid answers. The weakest essays were inclined to be extremely one-sided and did not comment on the positive aspects of media on society.

Question 3 *La enseñanza*

This was another popular title on the paper. The best essays pointed out, sometimes with fascinating personal anecdotes, how an excessively strict regime at school can produce a negative effect and fail to develop students who can think for themselves. The importance of personal discipline was emphasized, as was mutual respect between students and teachers.

Question 4 *La innovación tecnológica*

This was a very popular question and candidates availed themselves of the opportunity to offer a wide range of pertinent examples to highlight both the advantages and dangers of technology in modern society. There were some genuinely excellent essays produced in response to this title.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

Attempts at this title tended to be well-illustrated and showed an eagerness to examine the effects of human activity on the environment but the best essays linked the happiness of the human race with the ultimate preservation of the environment and suggested that the two actually go hand-in-hand. Some answers also took time to consider what constitutes happiness for the human race.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32
Essay

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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *La juventud*

This question was very popular and many candidates were able to draw from personal experience in order to formulate their responses to the issues raised by the title. Essays were generally well constructed with the best answers detailing how peer pressure and the opinions of friends can sometimes be both a positive and negative force.

Question 2 *Los medios de comunicación*

This was a generally well answered question with the best essays providing a balanced view. The notion that the media should both inform and entertain (and that these two roles were not necessarily mutually incompatible) was well explained.

Question 3 *La enseñanza*

This question attracted a wealth of personal anecdotes and wistful reminiscences of school showing, in many cases, how education had lifted a student out of poverty and afforded better career prospects. The very best answers also highlighted other ways in which social inequality could be reversed. The importance of a good education was very much the backdrop for almost all the essays written in response to this title.

Question 4 *La innovación tecnológica*

This title was also popular and attracted a wide range of articulately composed essays stating the advantages and disadvantages of our contemporary dependence on technology. The best answers suggested that technology has many benefits but that we must not become, as it were, slaves to it. The strength of opinion amongst those candidates that selected this title was greatly in evidence.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

This title proved to be reasonably popular with candidates and it produced somewhat well informed and remarkably balanced answers. There were plenty of detailed examples of what should be done, as a matter of urgency, to protect the environment. Many argued that increased awareness of the threats to environmental development is likely to lead to more effective measures to protect the planet.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33
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Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *La juventud*

This question was popular and many candidates were able to draw from personal experience in order to formulate their responses to the issues raised by the title. Essays were generally well constructed with the best answers suggesting that young people need to be independent thinkers but that they also need to bear in mind the advice offered by family members when making important decisions in life.

Question 2 *Los medios de comunicación*

This was a generally well answered question with the best essays providing a balanced view with regard to the importance of news and the ability to be well informed about the issues of the day. A number of responses also suggested that the need for rolling news 24 hours a day on the television was perhaps a little excessive, given that internet access can also offer this facility. Nobody doubted the importance of individuals being well informed about the world around them.

Question 3 *La enseñanza*

This question was also popular with a good number of candidates. Most suggested that both practical and academic subjects have, or least should have, equal importance in today’s society. Many also pointed out how students tend to like a mixture of both types of subject in their weekly timetable and that this should continue to be promoted in schools.

Question 4 *La innovación tecnológica*

This title was fairly popular and attracted a range of intelligently composed essays stating both the advantages and disadvantages of technology and its close relation to the quality of our lives. The best answers suggested that technology does indeed have many benefits but that we need to be more selective and not just accept technology simply for the sake of it.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

This title proved to be reasonably popular with candidates and it more often than not produced rather well informed and balanced answers. Almost all responses suggested that our concern for environmental protection is not excessive. Indeed, most suggested that we need to be more concerned than we are at present.