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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

SPANISH

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Paper 8685/01

Speaking

General comments

Centres for the most part conducted the tests in accordance with the instructions and followed the syllabus correctly.

There are few observations to be made in this Report that have not been made earlier. It is appropriate, however, to summarise some continuing problems. A few Centres still fail to observe the prescribed timings for the tests – particularly when more fluent candidates are involved. Those conducting the examinations are also reminded that they should enclose the mark sheet giving the breakdown of the constituent parts of the test for each candidate as well as a copy of the computer-printed sheet of total marks. Also, candidates should be clearly identified by name and number on the tapes sent for moderation. The quality of recordings was generally good, but all Centres are asked to check that candidates are clearly audible.

All this said, however, the vast majority of Centres comply fully with these requirements and Centres are thanked for helping the moderation process run smoothly.

Presentation and discussion

Moderators still need to remind a few Centres that the subject chosen for presentation and discussion must be clearly related to some aspect of life or culture of a Spanish-speaking country. Some candidates still spoke on general subjects such as sport, eating disorders, environmental issues and so on, but without focusing the discussion sufficiently (or at all) on the Hispanic dimension. Candidates who omitted this dimension were not able to access the full range of marks in the presentation and as a result marks awarded by the Centre had to be adjusted.

In the discussion, candidates were, for the most part, challenged appropriately to give facts, opinions and justifications for their points of view. This aspect of the test was generally well observed and allowed marks to be awarded across the range, both for fluency and for content and range.

General conversation

This part of the test was generally conducted well. In a few cases, however, the range of issues covered was rather limited and elementary in scope. This part of the examination should make similar demands on the candidate, in terms of production and range of language, to the topic, and should go beyond just everyday life and interests. Most Centres did take care to challenge better candidates effectively and caused few difficulties in moderation.

Seeking information from the Examiner

Candidates are required to seek information or opinions from the teacher/Examiner in both the topic discussion and the general conversation. Most Centres are now clearly ready for this, though the candidate should be reminded with a prompt if this has not been done. Up to ten marks are lost if a candidate does not ask questions, so it is clearly in the interests of all to observe this. Even those candidates who are awarded very high marks elsewhere in the test for fluency and command of the language have to earn these ten marks specifically and credit for asking questions cannot be extrapolated from another mark criteria (as seemed to be the case for one or two candidates).

<p>Paper 8685/02</p> <p>Reading and Writing</p>

General comments

Examiners can report once again that, in general terms, the performance of candidates on this paper was very good indeed. It would appear to be the case that the majority of candidates (and therefore the majority of Centres) are more familiar now with the demands of this particular paper. Consequently, they are more likely to score high marks, given that they are able to organize their time better during the examination and, as a result, give a very good account of themselves. The problem relating to word count in **Question 5** has, in most Centres, been addressed in so far as candidates are now restricting their mini-essays to 140 words, as stipulated in the rubric. Those who continue to write in excess of 200 words are simply wasting time that could be put to better use. Once an upper limit of 150 words has been reached, Examiners draw a line and ignore the remainder regardless of linguistic quality or accuracy.

The stimulus articles appeared to be accessible to all but the weakest candidates and many were in a position to respond fully and enthusiastically to the tasks set.

However, it needs to be stated once again that those candidates who ignore the rubric in **Questions 3** and **4**, namely that answers should be written "...*sin copiar frases completas del texto...*", and merely lift their answers from the stimulus material will lose marks heavily.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Well answered by the vast majority of candidates. Very few problems caused by this question.

Question 2

Some candidates did not use the "...*forma exacta de la palabra o palabras que parecen entre paréntesis...*" and so lost marks.

Question 3

- (a) Well answered by most candidates. It is worth noting here that the number of marks available for each answer is a good indication of the amount of detail required.
- (b) Many correct answers here, but some candidates wrote far more than was actually asked for in the question.
- (c) This question caused very few problems at all.
- (d) Some candidates used parts of the texts not stipulated in the question (lines 14-18) and therefore wasted time and often lost marks.
- (e) Generally well answered, but some candidates simply missed the point and, it is felt, many simply failed to read the lines stipulated (lines 19-21) in order to get the correct answer.
- (f) There were some excellent personal responses to this question with many candidates scoring full marks.

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates omitted to mention the idea of living independently in their own homes and so only scored a half mark for mentioning the lack of money.
- (b) Hardly any problems in answering this question correctly.

- (c) Almost every single candidate scored the mark in this question.
- (d) The three difficulties were spotted by many, but too often candidates lost marks in this question because they lifted too much from the text.
- (e) A hard question for many candidates, but there were still some excellent responses. Again, many examples of simple textual lifting scoring no marks at all.
- (f) Another tough question, well answered by many candidates.

Question 5

There were some excellent pieces of writing from a large number of candidates in this question and, as mentioned earlier, most responses fell within the word limit. Being able to write concisely and using evidence from both texts are essential ingredients for success in this question and that is precisely what many did. Candidates who exceeded the word limit lost marks for content mainly because they were unable to make sufficient mark bearing points within the 140 word limit. Those candidates who showed a clear line of thinking, who wrote accurately and with some style and who kept to the word limit were rewarded well.

Paper 8685/03

Essay

General comments

Once again, the general standard of performance this year was extremely good. The majority of candidates were able to produce concise, well structured and grammatically accurate essays. There were very few examples of essays that departed from the actual title. It is clear that candidates now understand fully the importance of responding to the selected title and marshalling evidence that is relevant in order to support their views. It is pleasing to be able to report that candidates presented their essays very well indeed, using tightly structured paragraphing in order to address the issues under discussion. Consequently, most essays held a clear line of thought and reached valid and pertinent conclusions. There was very little 'padding' in candidates' essays this year and almost all essays remained within the word count stipulated in the rubric (i.e. 250-400 words).

Linguistically, there were very few serious errors to report. As occurred last year, however, some candidates still find it hard to resist the use of tautological statements such as '*...a mi modo de ver, me parece que...*'. Such an approach is best avoided. The use of accents continues to be of minor importance to some candidates. However, the vast majority of essays displayed a confident use of complex sentence patterns, used extensive vocabulary relevant to the selected title and employed a good sense of idiom. Many essays were, indeed, a joy to read.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This title, as is often the case with this particular topic area, was the least popular by far. The standard of the small number of essays submitted was, however, very pleasing indeed.

Question 2

The most popular title by a long way, which was not surprising given the contemporary importance of the issue of drug-related crime. There were many hard-hitting views expressed, ranging from a belief that drugs will eventually destroy mankind to the absolute necessity for stronger punishments for drug pushers.

Question 3

Not as popular a title as was expected, but nevertheless there were some excellent essays written on the effects, mainly negative, of popular magazines on youth culture.

Question 4

Another unpopular title with very few takers, possibly because of the overtly political angle of the question itself.

Question 5

This title produced a sizeable batch of strongly argued essays, all of which expressed agreement that health care should indeed be free to all members of society. There were many examples of candidates referring openly to the situation regarding the health services, or lack thereof, in their own countries. Such essays were often well structured and very meticulously set out.

Question 6

Surprisingly perhaps, this title proved to be the second most popular of the paper. Many candidates wrote with great conviction on the importance of the family unit in society. So much so that it would appear that the idea of family has a very secure future!