

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. Clear reference should be made to Hispanic culture or society.

It is important to structure the presentation to fit into the allowed time, and to express not only facts, but ideas and opinions.

Focus on the questions asked and be sure to answer what is asked.

Remember to ask the examiner questions in both conversation sections

For Centres:

The test consists of three distinct sections:

Section 1 Initial presentation (maximum 3½ minutes);

Section 2 Topic Conversation (7–8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation;

Section 3 General Conversation (8–9 minutes) on themes completely different from those raised in the Topic Conversation.

Each section should be clearly identified on the recordings. It is important that the prescribed timings are observed.

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

General comments

The performance of candidates covered a wide range of ability. Occasionally the teacher/examiner allowed the candidate to ignore the required timings. On a few occasions the general conversation became an extension of the topic conversation and there were still a few presentations that were not clearly related to a Spanish-speaking country

The quality of the recordings was generally of a high standard, though some suffered from low volume or intrusive background noise. The range of samples mostly followed correct procedure with a range from top to bottom; some centres supplied recordings of all the candidates entered. Some centres did not include recordings of the lowest mark awarded.

We remind centres to remind teachers / examiners that they should strive to develop a proper conversation with the candidates and prompt them to ask the required questions. This is particularly problematic when an otherwise good candidate loses marks because the teacher fails to prompt the candidate to ask at least two questions in each section. Overall though, teacher / examiners entered into the spirit of the test and helped candidates to produce the best possible recordings.

There was much evidence of sympathetic examining, especially with weaker candidates, and candidates' nerves were dealt with calmly by many teachers in order to maintain the momentum of the conversation. We remind teachers/examiners not to give unnecessarily long responses to questions from candidates, thereby reducing the time available to candidates to develop their own thoughts.

While most centres carried out the necessary administration efficiently and correctly, some centres needed marks amended because of incorrect addition and transcription between documents. We remind centres that it's their responsibility to ensure the accuracy of marks submitted to Cambridge.

Comments on specific questions

Part 1: Topic Presentation

Guidance on topic areas for the Presentation and discussion may be found in the syllabus. Topics must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture and it is important that candidates make this relevance clear in their Presentation. The content mark out of ten was halved where 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. Presentations ideally provided a personal overview of the issue to lead to the basis of a debate in the topic conversation. Candidates who spoke in a casual or disjointed manner and who made little attempt to engage the examiner lost credit.

Most candidates were able to inject references to a Hispanic context into their presentations. Evidence of preparation was widespread with candidates often quoting statistics but then, crucially, backing them up with their own reactions to such statistics rather than just slavishly quoting them and hoping that was enough to impress.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

This part of the test should not just be an invitation to the candidate to give a further series of mini presentations, though a few centres were content to allow this. The Topic Conversation provides the opportunity to develop points arising from the presentation. Interaction is a key criterion. Candidates whose responses were confined to pre-learned answers, with little evidence of spontaneity, could not be awarded high marks for responsiveness. Candidates should actually take part in a discussion, including justifying or refuting a point of view, as well as giving relevant examples or information.

A good number of candidates spoke articulately, intelligently and spontaneously in response to such questions and were fully able to express themselves in ways that were convincing, tightly structured and grammatically accurate for this level. Weaker candidates had difficulty in going beyond prepared answers and linguistic control was lost when this was attempted.

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.

Part 3: 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 in the Topic Conversation should be discussed. Although there are no prescribed areas for the General Conversation, topics should be at an appropriate level. Common areas included current affairs, something in the news, the arts, sport, the environment, the economy, politics and social concerns. We remind centres that in order to access the full range of marks, the conversation should be developed to the level required for this examination, with issues covering more than elementary topics such as favourite food and pets.

All conversations should go beyond the descriptive. The range and style of questioning should further allow candidates to use more sophisticated language and to show competence in structures at a suitably advanced level. Without this, candidates could not gain access to the higher mark ranges. As in the Topic Conversation, candidates should ask the examiner questions – and be prompted to do so as necessary – to gain credit for "seeking information and opinions". Such questions should arise naturally in the course of the conversation and it is not sufficient for credit for the teacher to state an opinion without actually being asked.

Language

Quality of Language is assessed in all sections. Centres should encourage candidates to use as wide a range of language as possible. Those conducting the tests should take care to provide candidates with the opportunity to do so.

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

The two texts, dealing with the introduction of robotics in the classroom and the adaptation of schools to meet the needs of the rural community seemed to have been mostly understood by the majority of candidates – education being a topic which was certainly within the remit of their experience. With a few exceptions, responses were generally well presented, with the paper posing suitable levels of challenge to meet the varying levels of ability.

Most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions. It was pleasing to note skilled attempts at paraphrase. Despite good, overall understanding, marks were lost when additional relevant details were not included in answers. (Candidates should keep a careful eye on the number of marks allocated to each question, and gauge the amount of detail to be included accordingly).

Only a very few candidates exceeded the 140 word limit in **Question 5**, thereby curtailing the number of marks they could score in **5(b)**. Summaries in **5(a)** are continuing to improve as the message seems to be getting through that relevant specific details score many more marks than vague generalisations.

Most candidates attempted all questions and there was little evidence of any difficulty with time management. As always, at the upper end of the spectrum there were many excellent papers which were a pleasure to mark. However, no less satisfying were the answers from candidates who attempted to show off more modest linguistic skills to the best advantage.

Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Question 1

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

- (a) Most candidates identified the correct expression from the start of the text.
- (b) Candidates who were able to identify the correct phrase in the text sometimes missed the mark when they did not preface *de vital importancia* with *es*. The meaning of *imprescindible* was clearly a challenge for some.
- (c) Stronger candidates correctly identified this expression in the text, including the challenging word *autodidactas*.
- (d) This target expression was successfully identified by candidates who worked out that *bondades* was a synonym of *beneficios*.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question well. However, some included *lo que* at the beginning of their answer, which invalidated the point.

Question 2

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

- (a) There were a few alternatives to this question and many candidates were successful in using a *pesar + de* with either a subjunctive form or a past tense form. Candidates who omitted *de* did not score the mark.
- (b) This grammatical manipulation was formed successfully by a pleasing number of candidates who could use the verb *estar* or *ser* in an appropriate tense which was correctly spelt in conjunction with the past participle *visto*.
- (c) Most provided a correct answer using '*Pocas personas + verb* or '*Son pocas personas que + verb*. However, there were some answers where the candidates wrote *pocqs* rather than *pocas* and did not score the mark. A similar fate befell those who introduced *lo* before *cuestionan*, as their answer would no longer fit back into the text and retain the same meaning.
- (d) This was the least well done of all the manipulations with only the strongest candidates being able to adapt the gerund *corrigiendo* with its radical change to the infinitive *corregir*. Many attempted to negotiate a safer alternative route by using *al + 'to be' + gerund*. A considerable number, however, incorrectly used *ser* instead of *estar*.
- (e) To their credit, a good number of entrants spotted the subjunctive required by *sin que* and gave good answers.

Question 3

Most candidates made a good attempt at answering all five questions, mostly trying to find the number of points corresponding to the number of marks for each. However it was clear that vocabulary difficulties did affect some responses. The text seemed to be well understood although a small number thought the text referred to robots being used as schoolteacher replacements rather than robotics. Better candidates were able to write in full sentences and manipulate language from the text well, using synonyms and rephrasing using verbs correctly.

- (a) Most candidates noted the fact that there were not enough specialised or robotics teachers. However, not every candidate stated that 'all' the teachers needed to be involved or that not 'only' the technology ones should be involved. Stronger candidates were able to paraphrase accurately and avoid copying more than four consecutive words from the source text. Those who overlooked this rule commonly copied *hay una escasez de profesores* or *no solo los de tecnología*.
- (b) The majority were able to state that one of the problems of the introduction of robotics was that it had been done suddenly or without much organisation. Another good scoring point was the fact that the teachers lacked training or that they were self-taught, although the subtle distinction between teachers not being properly trained (*formarse* and not just *formar*) and teachers not getting themselves ready for using it in their lessons defeated quite a number. Not as many candidates expressed the idea that the budget to introduce robotics differed from school to school,

stating that it was the general economy of the school that differed. Some common lifts were *un poco deprisa y corriendo* and *de un centro a otro*.

- (c) In this question a number of candidates were side tracked and wasted half of their answer space writing about *pizarras digitales* before mentioning why *Costas* justified the teaching of robotics. Many candidates were able to express the idea about the scientific method being used by students without their noticing, and many also mentioned students' awareness of preparing for the working world. Fewer candidates successfully expressed the idea of improvement in scientific subjects, with *el ámbito científico no es el que más se les atasca a los alumnos* often producing the opposite meaning in several answers. Common lifts included *métodos científicos de investigación sin* and *(que) el mundo laboral va por*.
- (d) This was usually well answered. Most candidates were able to score at least one point from the four available. The majority of candidates expressed the idea of students' interest being a priority, and many expressed the idea of robotics being integrated into other subjects well. Many also used clever manipulations to avoid lifting more than four consecutive words to express how they could be encouraged to see its use. Only the strongest candidates spotted the idea of students becoming more independent through robotics study. The unwary often directly copied *debe recorrer todo el currículo* or *el interés de los alumnos*.
- (e) There were some fairly straightforward marks on offer here. Most candidates were able to state the facts that two of the benefits would be that grades would improve and that creativity would be developed. Fewer scored the last point stating that robotics would help to overcome problems in other subjects. Common lifts were *una mejoría en sus calificaciones* and *el desarrollo de la creatividad*.

Sección 2

Question 4

The second text, dealing with how education is being adapted in rural Colombia proved to be slightly more demanding. The strongest candidates were able to write in full sentences and manipulate language from the text well, using synonyms and rephrasing using verbs correctly. Where candidates avoided lifting from the text by merely changing prepositions to those that did not work for those verbs, a lack of clarity sometimes crept in, and they risked losing marks both for the content of their responses and the quality of the Spanish written.

- (a) This was the most accessible question in this section, and a good number of candidates scored full marks by identifying the three ideas. Most mentioned that focusing the teaching on skills was needed in the countryside in order to ensure the students' interest, and many also picked up the next mark by stating that the agricultural industry was the most important means of employment / gave opportunities to young people / enriched life in the countryside. The final point was mostly well answered by many candidates although misunderstood by some to mean that students should not be enclosed or locked in school physically.
- (b) The four marks available in this question were achieved by better candidates who could correctly identify four distinct ideas and express them clearly. Ideas about the replacement of traditional classes were expressed well by most candidates (provided that lifts such as *por un huerto escolar*, *un laboratorio de química* and *were avoided*), but fewer candidates separated the ideas about students becoming more entrepreneurial and creating and marketing products. Candidates should be reminded to look at the number of marks available for a question and ensure they mention the correct number of points.

- (c) This was a challenging question, but it was pleasing to see a large number of candidates able to adapt the source text to describe how education should be adapted to the needs of a community, and to describe how rural areas were a priority as there is less state investment. Only the few, strongest candidates correctly described how Cornejo wanted to participate in the change in Colombia and avoided the trap of saying that she wanted to change Colombia on her own.
- (d) Most candidates understood that the changes in the school were good for the local economy, although a common lift was *desarrollo económico para la región*. The next point was also well understood by candidates noting that students developed practical skills for work. Most understood that agriculture was important for the country, although many did not include that students were aware or recognised that fact. A common lift was *está basada en la agricultura*.
- (e) This was a challenging question, but it was pleasing to see that some candidates got to grips with the difficult vocabulary items such as *abastecer* and *egresados* in the source text. These stronger candidates rephrased the ideas about the school restaurant well and identified that the aim was that former (rather than current) students started businesses.

Question 5

The majority of candidates paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed for this question. Most summaries gave specific details rather than generalisations, and the better personal responses contained opinions and original ideas.

- (a) Although improvement has generally been made in answering this part of the question, it is perhaps worth a reminder of the sort of answer which, despite scoring well for quality of language, will score very little for content:

Los dos textos cuentan de cómo el mundo educativo está cambiando en sus diferentes formas. El primer texto habla de la implementación de la robótica en la educación ✓ y los posibles beneficios que puede traer. El segundo texto habla de cómo se está mejorando la educación en Colombia en un esfuerzo de mejorar el futuro de los jóvenes en el campo ✓...

These opening lines use up nearly half the words allowed for both (a) and (b) and have scored two for content.

By contrast, the first half of the following answer scores five for content using considerably fewer words:

La robótica ha sido implementada en los colegios ✓ y se enseña en todas las asignaturas. ✓ Prepara a los estudiantes para el mundo laboral, ✓ mejora sus notas ✓ y fomenta la creatividad...
✓

Specific details – many of which have already cropped up in answers to comprehension questions – are required, and not generalisations.

- (b) Apart from a tiny minority who had already exhausted their word allocation by the time they reached this part of the question (and thereby scored zero), most candidates had something to say in response to the question. Many scored high marks, particularly those who brought a new idea to the table, rather than relying on ideas rehashed from the source texts. There were many independent and interesting opinions on their education, embracing those examples mentioned in the text but also going far beyond, depending on the current issues in their own countries. Most addressed the question correctly and candidates who were less able linguistically often offered some very good answers. Stronger candidates included mentioning the impact of changes, or linking changes to the development of the working world, avoiding simply mentioning that there were more computers in classrooms.

Quality of Language

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



SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/22
Reading and Writing

Key messages

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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. All scripts were generally well presented, and response to the two texts, dealing with the tax on sugary drinks and measures taken to reduce food wastage, was pleasing.

Most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions. It was pleasing to note skilled attempts at paraphrase. Despite good, overall understanding, marks were lost when additional relevant details were not included in answers. (Candidates should keep a careful eye on the number of marks allocated to each question, and gauge the amount of detail to be included accordingly).

Only a very few candidates exceeded the 140 word limit in **Question 5**, thereby restricting the number of marks they could score in **5(b)**. Summaries in **5(a)** are continuing to improve as the message seems to be getting through that relevant specific details score many more marks than vague generalisations.

Most candidates attempted all questions and there was little evidence of any difficulty with time management. As always, at the upper end of the spectrum there were many excellent papers which were a pleasure to mark. However, no less satisfying were the answers from candidates who attempted to show off more modest linguistic skills to the best advantage.

Comments on specific questions

Sección 1

Question 1

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

- (a) This was usually answered correctly. A few, perhaps influenced by the present perfect tense used in the cue, incorrectly offered *ha entrado en vigor*.

- (b) The commonest error here was the omission of *que*, which was needed to start the phrase.
- (c) Very few errors were made.
- (d) Again, this was almost universally answered correctly.
- (e) Apart from a few instances when answers were erroneously prefaced by *que* the phrase was usually correctly identified.

Question 2

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

- (a) This was done well, especially by native speakers. Some of the less able candidates attempted to use *es* instead of *está*, which does not work here. Others just offered *basado* without attempting to form a passive construction.
- (b) How the verb *soler* is used is something which candidates were either well aware of or not. The majority were able to form *suele conducir* correctly.
- (c) The main mistake was an incorrect preposition being used after *preocupados*. Only *por* was acceptable. One or two correct alternatives were noted: *si se ven preocupados por la salud* and *si la salud les tiene preocupados*.
- (d) The correct answer here caused a little more trouble to ascertain. Many carelessly overlooked that the subject of *ponga* needed to remain impersonal and so *se* was required. Others changed the cue word to *pongan*, which is not permissible. A few also incorrectly tried to omit *es suficiente* from their answers, which would give a change of meaning and emphasis when reinserted in the text.
- (e) A common error was for those candidates not in the habit of writing accents on their Spanish to mistake the noun *aumento* for the verb *umentó*. To score the mark it was necessary to use the noun with a verb in the present perfect e.g. *no ha habido / no se ha experimentado (un) aumento del / en el precio del azúcar* or *el precio del azúcar no ha tenido / experimentado / sufrido aumento*.

Question 3

The text about a tax on the sugar content of soft drinks imposed by Cataluña was generally well understood and candidates who gave clear, detailed answers in their own words achieved good marks.

- (a) What should have been a very straightforward first mark for noting that the tax was aimed at combating obesity and diabetes, was frequently spurned by the direct copying of *la obesidad y la diabetes*. (This lift could so easily have been avoided by changing the order of the two conditions). The two other points, that a similar tax had shown positive results in other countries and had been recommended by the WHO, were often overlooked. This led to some candidates who offered little more to their answer than the above mentioned lift scoring no marks for the question and thereby reducing their mark for quality of language.
- (b) Better marks were scored here. Nearly every candidate was able to state that the tax was part of a strategy to encourage healthier lifestyles. Some precision in wording was needed to score the other two marks for describing the anticipated effect that the tax would have on manufacturers – that they would produce drinks with a lower sugar content, and focus their publicity on such products.
- (c) This was also done well. Some candidates omitted one of the elements in the way the tax had been applied in other countries, where there was no differentiation between the sugar content of the drink and the size of its container. Most were able to state that the consumption of sugary drinks had increased in these countries as consumers realised that bigger bottles were cheaper. A common lift was *que los envases más grandes*.

- (d) Most candidates scored at least three of the four marks available, successfully converting direct speech into indirect. Many acceptable interpretations of *la información... está ahí* included 'the information is / there / available/ public / easy to see / find', etc. and were all credited. Amaya's views that she decides what she drinks, and that the authorities are using the tax as a money-raising scheme in addition to showing concern for public health, were often clearly noted.
- (e) A very accessible two marks were on offer here and more often than not it was direct copying from the text which prevented candidates from scoring them. Common lifts included *menos azúcar en las bebidas* and any five consecutive words from *una campaña de concienciación contra el consumo de azúcar*.

Sección 2

Question 4

The second text, dealing with proposals to cut food wastage and tackle hunger in Colombia proved to be equally accessible to candidates.

- (a) All three marks were commonly scored. The first point was sometimes invalidated by direct copying of *de hambre en el país*, and the second by neglecting to mention that the food was still fit for human consumption. The distribution of waste food to needy sections of the population was usually clearly stated.
- (b) Although the question was understood, sometimes a lack of precision meant that candidates did not manage to get the full two marks. The mark scheme was seeking a reference to the need for agricultural practices to be *más adecuadas* and to improvements to the *highways* infrastructure. There were some lifts of the language relating to the second point (*mejorar la infraestructura de carreteras (para)*).
- (c) This proved to be one of the more challenging questions to be answered, as the mark scheme was looking for full information to be given. Probably because of the number of figures and percentages involved candidates often found problems in manipulating the language. Provided that a lift was avoided, most were able to state that Colombia wastes an enormous quantity (ten million tons) of food. Provided that *vive en condiciones de inseguridad alimentaria* was understood and that candidates could paraphrase this, a second mark was also added. Not many were successful in including all the details that food could be given to nine per cent of the malnourished under-fives, but more were able to pick up a mark for noting that children who were dying from hunger would be saved.
- (d) Two marks out of three was a common score here. The idea that the proposed law would offer *incentives* to reduce food wastage was often overlooked. The two points that businesses and their owners would be encouraged to donate excess food and that there would be penalties for those who wasted food still fit for consumption were usually clearly stated.
- (e) Candidates who took care managed to score all three marks here. The first point, that this is the first example of food waste legislation, needed to be qualified by *in the world*. The fact that this would save a considerable amount of money was usually successfully recorded. The final point was frequently invalidated by the direct copying of *la cultura de la solidaridad*.

Question 5

Many candidates now appear to be aware of the techniques required for this part of the examination. The vast majority paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed for this question. Most summaries gave specific details rather than generalisations, and the better personal responses contained opinions and original ideas.

- (a) Although considerable improvement has been made in answering this part of the question, it is perhaps worth a reminder of the sort of answer which, despite scoring well for quality of language, will score next to nothing for content:

Básicamente en el texto uno se habla más de una manera la cual van a usar los catalanes para aumentar el precio de las bebidas azucaradas y rebajar el consumo. En el texto dos se comenta la nueva ley que quieren poner en Colombia, la cual...

These opening lines use up nearly one third of the words allowed for both (a) and (b) and the answer has yet to score any content marks.

By contrast, the first half of the following answer scores five for content using a similar number of words:

Cataluña introdujo un impuesto sobre bebidas azucaradas ✓ que varía dependiendo de la concentración de azúcar. ✓ Se intenta estimular que los productores fabriquen refrescos con menos azúcar ✓ y que promocionen productos menos azucarados. ✓ En Colombia la ley prohíbe la destrucción de alimentos aptos para consumir... ✓

Specific details not generalisations are what is required.

- (b) Apart from a small minority who had already exhausted their word allocation by the time they reached this point (and thereby scored zero), most candidates had something to say in response to the question. The word *nutrición* was interpreted either as meaning 'having sufficient food' or 'eating healthily'. With the former most answers did not perceive any real issues, but mentioned the existence of food banks and organisations to help those in need. Candidates taking the latter interpretation often linked obesity with the increase of fast food restaurants and prepared meals as a negative or, if positive, the Mediterranean diet and the ready availability of fresh produce.

Quality of Language

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

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/23
Reading and Writing

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Language: when preparing for the exam, make sure to revise the basic agreements, tenses and verb endings.

General comments

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Most candidates attempted all questions and appeared to be aware that they should not copy more than four consecutive words of text in their answers to the comprehension questions. It was pleasing to note skilled attempts at paraphrase. Despite good, overall understanding, marks were lost when additional relevant details were not included in answers. (Candidates should keep a careful eye on the number of marks allocated to each question, and gauge the amount of detail to be included accordingly).

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- (a) Most candidates identified the correct expression from the start of the text.
- (b) Candidates who were able to identify the correct phrase in the text sometimes missed the mark when they did not preface *de vital importancia* with *es*. The meaning of *imprescindible* was clearly a challenge for some.
- (c) Stronger candidates correctly identified this expression in the text, including the challenging word *autodidactas*.
- (d) This target expression was successfully identified by candidates who worked out that *bondades* was a synonym of *beneficios*.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question well. However, some included *lo que* at the beginning of their answer, which invalidated the point.

Question 2

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

- (a) There were a few alternatives to this question and many candidates were successful in using a *pesar + de* with either a subjunctive form or a past tense form. Candidates who omitted *de* did not score the mark.
- (b) This grammatical manipulation was formed successfully by a pleasing number of candidates who could use the verb *estar* or *ser* in an appropriate tense which was correctly spelt in conjunction with the past participle *visto*.
- (c) Most provided a correct answer using '*Pocas personas + verb* or '*Son pocas personas que + verb*. However, there were some answers where the candidates wrote *pocqs* rather than *pocas* and did not score the mark. A similar fate befell those who introduced *lo* before *cuestionan*, as their answer would no longer fit back into the text and retain the same meaning.
- (d) This was the least well done of all the manipulations with only the strongest candidates being able to adapt the gerund *corrigiendo* with its radical change to the infinitive *corregir*. Many attempted to negotiate a safer alternative route by using *al + 'to be' + gerund*. A considerable number, however, incorrectly used *ser* instead of *estar*.
- (e) To their credit, a good number of entrants spotted the subjunctive required by *sin que* and gave good answers.

Question 3

Most candidates made a good attempt at answering all five questions, mostly trying to find the number of points corresponding to the number of marks for each. However it was clear that vocabulary difficulties did affect some responses. The text seemed to be well understood although a small number thought the text referred to robots being used as schoolteacher replacements rather than robotics. Better candidates were able to write in full sentences and manipulate language from the text well, using synonyms and rephrasing using verbs correctly.

- (a) Most candidates noted the fact that there were not enough specialised or robotics teachers. However, not every candidate stated that 'all' the teachers needed to be involved or that not 'only' the technology ones should be involved. Stronger candidates were able to paraphrase accurately and avoid copying more than four consecutive words from the source text. Those who overlooked this rule commonly copied *hay una escasez de profesores* or *no solo los de tecnología*.
- (b) The majority were able to state that one of the problems of the introduction of robotics was that it had been done suddenly or without much organisation. Another good scoring point was the fact that the teachers lacked training or that they were self-taught, although the subtle distinction between teachers not being properly trained (*formarse* and not just *formar*) and teachers not getting themselves ready for using it in their lessons defeated quite a number. Not as many candidates expressed the idea that the budget to introduce robotics differed from school to school,

stating that it was the general economy of the school that differed. Some common lifts were *un poco deprisa y corriendo* and *de un centro a otro*.

- (c) In this question a number of candidates were side tracked and wasted half of their answer space writing about *pizarras digitales* before mentioning why *Costas* justified the teaching of robotics. Many candidates were able to express the idea about the scientific method being used by students without their noticing, and many also mentioned students' awareness of preparing for the working world. Fewer candidates successfully expressed the idea of improvement in scientific subjects, with *el ámbito científico no es el que más se les atasca a los alumnos* often producing the opposite meaning in several answers. Common lifts included *métodos científicos de investigación sin* and *(que) el mundo laboral va por*.
- (d) This was usually well answered. Most candidates were able to score at least one point from the four available. The majority of candidates expressed the idea of students' interest being a priority, and many expressed the idea of robotics being integrated into other subjects well. Many also used clever manipulations to avoid lifting more than four consecutive words to express how they could be encouraged to see its use. Only the strongest candidates spotted the idea of students becoming more independent through robotics study. The unwary often directly copied *debe recorrer todo el currículo* or *el interés de los alumnos*.
- (e) There were some fairly straightforward marks on offer here. Most candidates were able to state the facts that two of the benefits would be that grades would improve and that creativity would be developed. Fewer scored the last point stating that robotics would help to overcome problems in other subjects. Common lifts were *una mejoría en sus calificaciones* and *el desarrollo de la creatividad*.

Sección 2

Question 4

The second text, dealing with how education is being adapted in rural Colombia proved to be slightly more demanding. The strongest candidates were able to write in full sentences and manipulate language from the text well, using synonyms and rephrasing using verbs correctly. Where candidates avoided lifting from the text by merely changing prepositions to those that did not work for those verbs, a lack of clarity sometimes crept in, and they risked losing marks both for the content of their responses and the quality of the Spanish written.

- (a) This was the most accessible question in this section, and a good number of candidates scored full marks by identifying the three ideas. Most mentioned that focusing the teaching on skills was needed in the countryside in order to ensure the students' interest, and many also picked up the next mark by stating that the agricultural industry was the most important means of employment / gave opportunities to young people / enriched life in the countryside. The final point was mostly well answered by many candidates although misunderstood by some to mean that students should not be enclosed or locked in school physically.
- (b) The four marks available in this question were achieved by better candidates who could correctly identify four distinct ideas and express them clearly. Ideas about the replacement of traditional classes were expressed well by most candidates (provided that lifts such as *por un huerto escolar*, *un laboratorio de química* and *etc.* were avoided), but fewer candidates separated the ideas about students becoming more entrepreneurial and creating and marketing products. Candidates should be reminded to look at the number of marks available for a question and ensure they mention the correct number of points.

- (c) This was a challenging question, but it was pleasing to see a large number of candidates able to adapt the source text to describe how education should be adapted to the needs of a community, and to describe how rural areas were a priority as there is less state investment. Only the few, strongest candidates correctly described how Cornejo wanted to participate in the change in Colombia and avoided the trap of saying that she wanted to change Colombia on her own.
- (d) Most candidates understood that the changes in the school were good for the local economy, although a common lift was *desarrollo económico para la región*. The next point was also well understood by candidates noting that students developed practical skills for work. Most understood that agriculture was important for the country, although many did not include that students were aware or recognised that fact. A common lift was *está basada en la agricultura*.
- (e) This was a challenging question, but it was pleasing to see that some candidates got to grips with the difficult vocabulary items such as *abastecer* and *egresados* in the source text. These stronger candidates rephrased the ideas about the school restaurant well and identified that the aim was that former (rather than current) students started businesses.

Question 5

The majority of candidates paid careful attention to the overall number of words allowed for this question. Most summaries gave specific details rather than generalisations, and the better personal responses contained opinions and original ideas.

- (a) Although improvement has generally been made in answering this part of the question, it is perhaps worth a reminder of the sort of answer which, despite scoring well for quality of language, will score very little for content:

Los dos textos cuentan de cómo el mundo educativo está cambiando en sus diferentes formas. El primer texto habla de la implementación de la robótica en la educación ✓ y los posibles beneficios que puede traer. El segundo texto habla de cómo se está mejorando la educación en Colombia en un esfuerzo de mejorar el futuro de los jóvenes en el campo ✓...

These opening lines use up nearly half the words allowed for both (a) and (b) and have scored two for content.

By contrast, the first half of the following answer scores five for content using considerably fewer words:

*La robótica ha sido implementada en los colegios ✓ y se enseña en todas las asignaturas. ✓
Prepara a los estudiantes para el mundo laboral, ✓ mejora sus notas ✓ y fomenta la creatividad... ✓*

Specific details – many of which have already cropped up in answers to comprehension questions – are required, and not generalisations.

- (b) Apart from a tiny minority who had already exhausted their word allocation by the time they reached this part of the question (and thereby scored zero), most candidates had something to say in response to the question. Many scored high marks, particularly those who brought a new idea to the table, rather than relying on ideas rehashed from the source texts. There were many independent and interesting opinions on their education, embracing those examples mentioned in the text but also going far beyond, depending on the current issues in their own countries. Most addressed the question correctly and candidates who were less able linguistically often offered some very good answers. Stronger candidates included mentioning the impact of changes, or linking changes to the development of the working world, avoiding simply mentioning that there were more computers in classrooms.

Quality of Language

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



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

Many candidates were able to demonstrate a convincing ability to deliver well-conceived, tautly argued and intelligently written essays. The flair, linguistic accuracy and thoughtful approach to the issues raised by the titles of the essays on the paper were very much on show in numerous essays. These observations undoubtedly reflect the high levels of preparation and linguistic commitment that many candidates embrace as an integral part of their preparation for this particular examination.

In general term, those essays that set out immediately to deal with the title set on the paper and stick determinedly to the issues involved without lapsing into vague musings on the overall theme were the essays that attracted more marks at the upper end of the mark scheme. The stipulated word count (250 – 400 words) was adhered to by the vast majority of candidates.

There were only a few examples of essays that had been pre-learnt and which had little, if indeed anything, to do with the title set and were mainly a collection of superficial thoughts on the general topic (e.g. *Las relaciones personales*) rather than on the actual title set. The mark scheme states that for an essay to be awarded a 'very good' mark for content, it needs to be 'detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated' as well as being 'coherently argued and structured'. The very best essays ticked every one of these important boxes. If candidates have a clear understanding of the mark scheme, it follows that they are more likely to produce better essays.

In terms of the quality of Spanish used by candidates, there were plenty of insightful responses that were confident in their use of complex sentence patterns. Such essays were generally accurate and were inclined to show a good sense of idiom as well as an ability to draw upon extensive vocabulary that was relevant to the issues under discussion. Many essays also read reasonably well and showed a generally sound grasp of Spanish grammar with some attempts at varied vocabulary.

The more common language errors are worth highlighting in order that future candidates can be made aware of the most obvious pitfalls.

At the very top of this list of common misunderstandings is the erroneous tendency of some candidates to use singular verbs with plural subjects and vice-versa. Examples such as 'la gente son pobre' (sic), 'la relación entre dos personas son importantes' (sic) and 'muchos ríos está contaminados' (sic) were not unusual. Equally commonplace was the lack of adjectival agreement in many essays. Utterances such as '...los individuos inteligente...' (sic), 'la polución atmosférico' (sic) and 'el gobierno mejicana' (sic) showed up in a good number of essays.

Many candidates were inclined to confuse the uses of *ser* and *estar* and quite often the accurate use of the passive voice proved challenging. Examples such as '...tales vehículos caros están conducidos por la gente rica...' (sic) and '...muchas decisiones malas han estado tomadas por los jóvenes...' (sic) serve to illustrate

this particular point. There seemed to be some confusion with regard to the difference between 'si no' and 'sino' and also 'por qué' and 'porque' which often resulted in a lack of clarity of the entire sentence and/or point being made.

In spite of the points raised above, there were indeed many good essays that made reasonable use of paragraphs in order to reach coherent conclusions. The very best essays achieved structural balance throughout and were linguistically sophisticated. Those candidates who made relevant points often backed up by evidence, examples or appropriately focused references were rewarded by gaining access to the higher categories of the mark scheme.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- Accurately conjugated verbs.
- Accents being used accurately throughout the essay.
- Consistently executed adjectival agreement.
- The judicious use of adverbs and adverbial phrases in order to raise the register of the essay.
- The correct use, depending on context, of *por* and *para*.
- The consistently accurate use of appropriate tenses with verbs in both singular and plural forms.

Common errors included:

- A lack of accentuation, which often lead to confusion e.g. tomara/tomará, tomo/tomó, esta/está etc.
- Ending sentences with a preposition.
- Poor punctuation leading to a breakdown of understanding of the point being made by the candidate.
- Confusion over the use of the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
- Continued misunderstanding of the differences between *hay* and *es/tiene*.
- The dropping of the letter 'h' with an auxiliary verb (e.g. 'los padres an tenido problemas con el comportamiento de sus hijos' (sic)).
- Confusion with the use of the letters 'g' and 'j' in words such as 'generalmente' and 'agencia'.
- The omission of opening exclamation marks (¡) and question marks (¿).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones personales*

'En una relación humana el conflicto es tan natural como la armonía. ¿Estás de acuerdo?'

This proved to be a reasonably popular title. Candidates adopted a wide range of approaches, as one would expect with any essay on the theme of human relationships. Most agreed that conflict and harmony are integral parts of any relationship but that great efforts must be made to secure more harmony in our day-to-day, human interactions. Many felt that occasional conflict, particularly within the family context, is inevitable but that strong relationships can cope with this particular stress. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there were many personal examples called upon by candidates to illustrate the points made in response to this title.

Question 2 *La justicia y el orden público*

Las cárceles están superpobladas. ¿Qué podemos hacer para resolver este problema?'

This was also quite a popular title and was generally well dealt with by candidates. The more elegant responses dealt thoroughly with ways to reduce crime in the first place in order to avoid overcrowding in the various prison systems around the world. The less successful responses tended to make simplistic statements regarding hygiene in prisons or, indeed, the need to reintroduce capital punishment in order to reduce the prison population, with no real analysis of other ways to resolve the problem of prison overcrowding.

Question 3 *El trabajo y el ocio*

El salario que cobras es más importante que el trabajo que haces. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a very popular title on the paper. Most candidates expressed the belief that the best scenario is one where the individual is well paid for doing an enjoyable job. Others felt, however, that for most of the working population, the important issue is money. Candidates often stated that putting up with a boring or unappealing job is quite common among the adult population, especially in the light of the pressure on parents to provide food and shelter for their children.

Question 4 *La guerra y la paz*

La amenaza de guerra es un método efectivo para garantizar la paz. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This title proved to be slightly less popular with candidates. There was, nevertheless, much evidence of the conviction that war is to be avoided except in only the most extreme circumstances. Many candidates felt that the threat of war could reasonably be seen as an effective way of guaranteeing peace but then went on to mention that the proliferation of nuclear weapons introduced a greater element of risk. Quite understandably, there were hardly any essays that suggested that war is a desirable aspect of international relations.

Question 5 *La contaminación*

Si nos gusta tanto la libertad personal que ofrecen los automóviles, tenemos que aceptar la contaminación atmosférica. ¿Hasta qué punto estás de acuerdo?

This was a remarkably popular title amongst candidates. Most of the essays that were written in response to the title showed genuine conviction in their belief that cars are an important aspect of personal freedom in our everyday lives but that we urgently need to address the issue of air pollution. Needless to say, electric cars were mentioned by most candidates as a possible way forward, despite the high costs involved. Others pointed out the need to produce clean electricity (by phasing out the use of fossil fuels) in order to avoid polluting our atmosphere. Cars are here to stay, it would appear, but not the internal combustion engine.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/32
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

The essays produced for this session once again offered a wide variety of ability levels ranging, as is often the case year on year, from responses that were barely adequate all the way to extremely well written and convincingly structured pieces of writing. The regularity with which many candidates were able to demonstrate a convincing ability to deliver well-conceived, tautly argued and intelligently written essays was impressive. The flair, linguistic accuracy and thoughtful approach to the issues raised by the titles of the essays on the paper were very much on show in numerous essays. These observations undoubtedly reflect the high levels of preparation and linguistic commitment that many candidates embrace as an integral part of their preparation for this particular examination.

In general term, those essays that set out immediately to deal with the title set on the paper and to stick determinedly to the issues involved without lapsing into generalised comments on the overall theme were the essays that attracted more marks at the upper end of the mark scheme. The stipulated word count (250 – 400 words) was adhered to by the vast majority of candidates and only a handful of candidates wrote a brief paragraph on each of the five titles set on the examination paper, thereby severely limiting the marks that could be awarded in both language and content. Once again, for this session, there were only a few examples of essays that had been pre-learnt and which had little, if indeed anything, to do with the title set and were mainly a collection of superficial thoughts on the general topic (e.g. *Las relaciones personales*) rather than on the actual title set. As has been stated before, examiners award good or very good content marks to candidates whose essays are relevant and to the point whereas those essays that are inclined to show little understanding of the title or which deal vaguely and arbitrarily with the issues are highly unlikely to attract such good marks for content. The mark scheme states that for an essay to be awarded a 'very good' mark for content, it needs to be 'detailed, clearly relevant and well-illustrated' as well as being 'coherently argued and structured'. The very best essays ticked every one of these important boxes. If candidates have a clear understanding of the mark scheme, it follows that they are more likely to produce better essays.

In terms of the quality of Spanish used by candidates, there were plenty of insightful responses that were confident in their use of complex sentence patterns. Such essays were generally accurate and often showed a good sense of idiom as well as an ability to draw upon extensive vocabulary that was relevant to the issues under discussion. Many essays also read reasonably well and showed a generally sound grasp of Spanish grammar with some attempts at varied vocabulary. Again, it is worth pointing out that the mark scheme clearly states what is expected in the essays written by candidates in order to attract marks in the various language categories ranging from 'very poor' to 'very good'. The more common language errors are, as always, worth highlighting for the benefit of future candidates.

At the very top of this list of common misunderstandings is the erroneous tendency of some candidates to use singular verbs with plural subjects and vice-versa. Examples such as 'la gente son pobre' (sic), 'la relación entre dos personas son importantes' (sic) and 'muchos ríos está contaminados' (sic) were not unusual. The tone that this type of error sets in an essay is such that it really is worth informing candidates

just how widespread the misunderstanding is in order that it can be avoided in future. Equally basic and yet just as commonplace was the lack of adjectival agreement in many essays. Utterances such as ‘...los individuos inteligente...’ (sic), ‘la polución atmosférico’ (sic) and ‘el gobierno mejicana’ (sic) regularly occurred in a good number of essays. Perhaps candidates run out of time to check what they have written or maybe they simply do not see the grammatical error. Either way, such fundamental inaccuracies are best avoided.

Many candidates were inclined to confuse the uses of *ser* and *estar* and quite often the accurate use of the passive voice was a challenge for a good number of candidates. Examples such as ‘...tales vehículos caros están conducidos por la gente rica...’ (sic) and ‘...muchas decisiones malas han estado tomadas por los jóvenes...’ (sic) serve to illustrate this particular point. For some candidates, once again there seemed to be some confusion with regard to the difference between ‘si no’ and ‘sino’ and also ‘por qué’ and ‘porque’ which resulted in a lack of clarity of the entire sentence and/or point being made.

In spite of the points raised above, there were indeed many good or better essays that made reasonable use of paragraphs in order to reach coherent conclusions. The very best essays, as one would expect at this level, achieved structural balance throughout and were linguistically sophisticated. Those candidates who made relevant points often backed up by evidence, examples or appropriately focused references in order to produce very readable essays, were rewarded by gaining access to the higher categories of the mark scheme.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- Accurately conjugated verbs.
- Accents being used accurately throughout the essay.
- Consistently executed adjectival agreement.
- The judicious use of adverbs and adverbial phrases in order to raise the register of the essay.
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- The omission of opening exclamation marks (¡) and question marks (¿).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones personales*

Es muy fácil exagerar la importancia de tener buenos amigos y poder depender de ellos. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This was a popular title with candidates and one which produced many interesting and thoughtful responses. Good answers were often characterised by a variety of forcefully made points stating not just the importance of having good friends but also of knowing who one’s real friends are, especially at moments of personal crisis. Social media websites were often cited as causing the exaggeration of the importance of friends but most essays concluded that self-deception in terms of the number of real friends an individual may have really is somewhat pointless. Personal examples, as is often the case in such essays, tended to enhance many of the points made in response to the title.

Question 2 *La justicia y el orden público*

Si los jóvenes tuvieran más cosas que hacer en su tiempo libre, habría menos delincuencia juvenil en las calles. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a generally well answered title but also quite a contentious one. Some candidates decided that young people are often let down by those in authority and are regarded with suspicion by their elders. Others were keen to point out the element of personal choice involved for many young people when faced with the opportunity to indulge in criminal activity. Most did conclude, however, that in general terms it is likely to be the case that figures relating to juvenile delinquency would decrease if young people were offered better local facilities in terms of youth clubs, sports centres and so on.

Question 3 *El trabajo y el ocio*

El trabajo contribuye más a la sociedad que el ocio. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a less popular title on the paper, although those who responded tended to produce work of a decent standard. Whilst the importance of leisure time activities was not underestimated in any way, most agreed that work does indeed contribute more to society, especially in economic terms. The basic point appeared to be that a society cannot function successfully with very high levels of unemployment. The compelling nature of this argument was apparent for many candidates.

Question 4 *La guerra y la paz*

En casos extremos, la guerra sí que se puede justificar. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This title proved to be reasonably popular with candidates. The best essays gave a balanced analysis of the possible justifications for armed conflict and many also made highly appropriate references to recent history in order to support their argument. The weaker essays tended to confine themselves simply to the assertion that war is a bad thing but then did not go on to develop further any of the surrounding issues.

Question 5 *La contaminación*

Nuestro planeta es mucho más resistente a la contaminación de lo que pensamos. ¿Hasta qué punto estás de acuerdo?

This was a very popular title amongst candidates. There was much agreement that the planet is struggling to cope at present with the levels of pollution we are currently subjecting it to as a consequence of our dependence on oil and plastics, for example, and that a tipping point would appear to have been reached. There was also a degree of sympathy for the view that nature has coped, and always will cope, with whatever humans throw at it. Either way, the amount of conviction with regard to the importance of the issues raised by the title was rather impressive.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33
Essay

Key messages

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- Ending sentences with a preposition.
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- The dropping of the letter ‘h’ with an auxiliary verb (e.g. ‘los padres an tenido problemas con el comportamiento de sus hijos’ (sic)).
- Confusion with the use of the letters ‘g’ and ‘j’ in words such as ‘generalmente’ and ‘agencia’.
- The omission of opening exclamation marks (¡) and question marks (¿).

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *Las relaciones personales*

Es muy fácil exagerar la importancia de tener buenos amigos y poder depender de ellos. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This was a popular title with candidates and one which produced many interesting and thoughtful responses. Good answers were often characterised by a variety of forcefully made points stating not just the importance of having good friends but also of knowing who one’s real friends are, especially at moments of personal crisis. Social media websites were often cited as causing the exaggeration of the importance of friends but most essays concluded that self-deception in terms of the number of real friends an individual may have really is somewhat pointless. Personal examples, as is often the case in such essays, tended to enhance many of the points made in response to the title.

Question 2 *La justicia y el orden público*

Si los jóvenes tuvieran más cosas que hacer en su tiempo libre, habría menos delincuencia juvenil en las calles. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a generally well answered title but also quite a contentious one. Some candidates decided that young people are often let down by those in authority and are regarded with suspicion by their elders. Others were keen to point out the element of personal choice involved for many young people when faced with the opportunity to indulge in criminal activity. Most did conclude, however, that in general terms it is likely to be the case that figures relating to juvenile delinquency would decrease if young people were offered better local facilities in terms of youth clubs, sports centres and so on.

Question 3 *El trabajo y el ocio*

El trabajo contribuye más a la sociedad que el ocio. ¿Qué opinas tú?

This was a less popular title on the paper, although those who responded tended to produce work of a decent standard. Whilst the importance of leisure time activities was not underestimated in any way, most agreed that work does indeed contribute more to society, especially in economic terms. The basic point appeared to be that a society cannot function successfully with very high levels of unemployment. The compelling nature of this argument was apparent for many candidates.

Question 4 *La guerra y la paz*

En casos extremos, la guerra sí que se puede justificar. ¿Estás de acuerdo?

This title proved to be reasonably popular with candidates. The best essays gave a balanced analysis of the possible justifications for armed conflict and many also made highly appropriate references to recent history in order to support their argument. The weaker essays tended to confine themselves simply to the assertion that war is a bad thing but then did not go on to develop further any of the surrounding issues.

Question 5 *La contaminación*

Nuestro planeta es mucho más resistente a la contaminación de lo que pensamos. ¿Hasta qué punto estás de acuerdo?

This was a very popular title amongst candidates. There was much agreement that the planet is struggling to cope at present with the levels of pollution we are currently subjecting it to as a consequence of our dependence on oil and plastics, for example, and that a tipping point would appear to have been reached. There was also a degree of sympathy for the view that nature has coped, and always will cope, with whatever humans throw at it. Either way, the amount of conviction with regard to the importance of the issues raised by the title was rather impressive.