

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: **(i)** Initial presentation (maximum $3\frac{1}{2}$ minutes); **(ii)** Topic Conversation (7 – 8 minutes) on issues arising from the Presentation; **(iii)** General Conversation (8 – 9 minutes) on themes completely different from those raised in the Topic Conversation.
- Each section should be clearly identified on the recordings. It is important that the prescribed timings are observed.
- Candidates should be reminded if necessary to ask the Examiner questions in both conversation sections and be prompted to do so, if necessary. The Examiner's replies to such questions should be concise – it is the candidate and not the Examiner who is being marked.
- Interaction with the Examiner is an important criterion for both conversation sections.

General comments

The performance of candidates covered a wide range, from the outstanding to the very basic. Some very good candidates were clearly native speakers, but occasionally the Teacher/examiner allowed the candidate to ride rough-shod over the required timings. On a few occasions the general conversation became an extension of the topic conversation. There were still a few presentations that were not related to any Spanish-speaking country.

The quality of the recordings was generally good, though a few tests were recorded at a rather low volume, or with the Teacher/examiner's voice almost inaudible. Although the microphone should be placed near the candidate, please ensure that both voices can be heard. The range of samples followed correct procedure, with a range from top to bottom. Some centres supplied recordings of all the candidates entered.

A few teachers did not develop a proper conversation with the candidates or failed to prompt them to ask the required questions. An otherwise good candidate could lose marks because the teacher failed to prompt the candidate to ask two questions in each section. Overall though, Teachers/examiners entered into the spirit of the test and helped candidates to produce the best possible recordings.

While most centres carried out the necessary administration efficiently, a few centres failed to observe the correct timings for the separate sections as required by the specification.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Part 1: Topic Presentation

Guidance on topic areas for the Presentation and discussion may be found in the syllabus. Topics must relate clearly to aspects of Hispanic life or culture and it is important that candidates make this relevance explicit in their Presentation. 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. Some candidates used specific examples or relevant statistics to good effect in support of their point of view. Presentations ideally provided a personal overview of the issue to form the basis of a discussion in the topic conversation. Candidates who spoke in a casual or disjointed manner, or who made little attempt to engage the Examiner lost credit. Sometimes it was not clear what the actual topic for the presentation was and candidates should be encouraged to state this clearly at the outset.

The best presentations showed evidence of careful preparation and organisation. These not only offered statistics and other factual information, but also included a candidate's own reactions and analysis; weaker presentations were characterised by being limited to a random list of items, with no discernible central theme or argument.

Part 2: Topic Conversation

Most candidates understood questions and responded well in the topic conversation. Many were able to give thoughtful and extended responses and maintain a discussion, though weaker candidates tended to follow an examiner's lead and rely on a question-and-answer approach. In a few cases candidates were disadvantaged by being allowed – or indeed encouraged – by the Teacher/examiner to treat this section as a continuation of the Presentation, speaking at length but with minimal intervention by, or interaction with, the examiner,

Most candidates had a sufficient range of vocabulary and structures at their disposal, which were used accurately and idiomatically. Most candidates remembered to ask questions of the examiners either in the natural course of conversation or, in some cases, after prompting, although a few asked only one question even then.

Part 3: General Conversation

There were still some cases where no clear distinction was made between the two conversation sections: the General Conversation must be separate from the Topic Conversation and must not be a continuation of the candidate's chosen topic. The start of the section should be clearly announced on the recording. Although there are no prescribed areas for the General Conversation, topics should be at an appropriate level. Common areas included current events or an item in the news, health, education, the arts, sport, the environment, the economy, politics and social concerns. In some centres, the conversation did not develop to the required depth for this examination,

The range and style of questioning should encourage candidates to use more sophisticated language and to show competence in structures at a suitably advanced level. When questioning remained at a low level 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; it is not sufficient for the teacher to state an opinion without actually being asked.

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 texts concerning environmentally friendly business practices and lifestyles were generally well understood by candidates. The linguistic competence of the candidates was generally excellent and, provided that there were no penalties for lack of comprehension, top marks for quality of language were very commonly awarded. Scripts were generally well presented, and there appeared to be little difficulty in meeting the time constraints.

Awareness of the techniques required for this examination was variable and often made a considerable difference to the final mark. Lifting, (the direct copying of five or more words from the text), often invalidated a mark for comprehension. Better candidates produced skillful paraphrasing in their answers; those who were less confident in their understanding often deconstructed and then reordered parts of sentences from the text with very variable degrees of success. A number of candidates exceeded the permitted number of words in **Question 5** which meant that part, or sometimes all, of their personal response could not be assessed.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

This exercise is usually found to be less of a challenge than the following question. Not so this year. The wrong phrase was often selected for answers, especially for **(b)** and **(e)**. The other common reason for not scoring the mark was to add or omit words from the beginning or end of the target phrase.

- (a)** Many were correct, although some lost a mark by prefacing the phrase with *vivir...* or adding *...a*.
- (b)** A lot of difficulty was found in matching *en su totalidad es* with *de pies a cabeza resulta*. Those who were successful sometimes omitted the final *...resulta*.
- (c)** This match proved to be more accessible.
- (d)** The correct phrase was identified by the majority of candidates.

- (e) Perhaps through unfamiliarity with the meaning of *sinónimo*, many candidates found difficulty in matching *equivale a costoso* with *es sinónimo de caro*.

Question 2

This question was generally answered well by all candidates with the considerable majority scoring higher marks than for the previous exercise. A few attempted mistakenly to paraphrase their answers, when all that is required is a grammatical manipulation which uses the words which are given.

- (a) This was generally done well, although a few lost the mark by answering *es necesario más empresas* (without *que*).
- (b) Most candidates were also successful here. Some overlooked the need to end their answer with *...de* in order to match *...con* in the cue.
- (c) This manipulation proved to be more demanding than the others. Many attempted to use verbs which did not have the same meaning as *suelen* or *tienden a*.
- (d) Given the predominance of native speaker candidates, it was somewhat surprising that a number overlooked the need for a subjunctive after *hacen que...* A few wrongly made the subjunctive verb plural.
- (e) Acceptable answers were either *nos damos cuenta de que* or *tomamos/tenemos en cuenta que*. Variations of these, such as *nos damos cuenta que* or *tomamos/tenemos en cuenta de que* were not accepted.

Question 3

Candidates taking 9719 were usually successful in presenting the required information in their own words, often using more complex linguistic structures. Instances of lifting five or more words directly from the text occurred often by oversight rather than by design. Many 8685 and 8665 candidates gave some but not always all of the required information, and their awareness of the lifting rule was a little more patchy. Attempts at re-ordering the words of key phrases, usually because of difficulties of comprehension, did not always succeed in conveying the correct meaning.

- (a) Most candidates got the first point, although a common lift, perhaps unconscious, was *los ingredientes de origen animal*. It was necessary to qualify that few brands were *100 per cent* or *completamente transparentes* in indicating the origin of their products to score the second mark. The other two marks for *no es fácil verificar* and *más empresas deben aceptar inspecciones* were often elusive to many candidates.
- (b) This was the most successful question for the majority of candidates. Nearly all were able to stress the importance of knowing that a product had not been previously tested on animals. The second point was also widely noted, although some marks were lost by lifting five or more words from *que no cuentan con colorantes o aromas hechos con componentes*.
- (c) Conversely, this sometimes proved more challenging for many candidates. Most wrote that eco-clothes tended to lack style or aesthetics. However, the facts that there was also little variety in style and that the owners wanted to offer what they had been unable to find as customers, were missing from many answers.
- (d) Most scored at least one mark for this question but few got all three. The most common correct element was the fact that the company used recycled cardboard in its packaging. The fact that *Solera* had stopped using plastic in any of its shipments was frequently overlooked. Paraphrasing the meaning of *siempre compensamos la huella medioambiental de nuestros envíos* was a challenge which only the best candidates accomplished successfully.
- (e) This was generally answered well by a majority of candidates. Most successfully stated that *la ropa vegana es más cara*. Many went on to score the other two marks for noting that customers wished to identify with the cause and contribute to the protection of the environment, provided that they managed to avoid lifting from *porque se sienten identificados con lo que* and *quieren contribuir a la protección del medioambiente*.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Comprehension of this second text, which relates how what we eat can have an impact on the environment, was generally sound, and candidates recorded marks similar to those scored in the previous question.

- (a) Three pieces of information were needed and better candidates were successful in recording all of them. Most scored marks for noting that *Juliana* only buys food products that have been produced locally and for expressing any one of the following ideas: *se preocupa por la salud del planeta/su objetivo es cuidar del medioambiente como consumidora/consume productos menos perjudiciales para el medioambiente*. The most commonly missed mark was the one for noting that she buys *marcas que animen a reutilizar los envases*.
- (b) Many candidates again did well on this question. Most scored marks for stating that food that had been imported or transported a long way and fish should be avoided. (A common lift was *de otra parte del mundo*). A number of candidates missed the third mark with responses such as *conocer las temporadas en que se producen los alimentos*, which does not answer the question *¿Qué se debe evitar para tener una dieta climática?*
- (c) A lot of candidates missed marks for this question often because they failed to make clear that it is the production (not the consumption) of beef that causes high CO₂ levels. For the second point, a comparison was needed namely, that meat production produced more greenhouse gases than the world's transport vehicles. The point that it produces high levels of ammonia was the most successful.
- (d) A good number of candidates made the point that the health of humanity and the planet go together, although there was some lifting from the line *la salud del ser humano y la del planeta van de la mano*. Most clearly understood the idea that *elegir bien lo que uno come es una manera de salvar el medioambiente*. Sometimes the element of choosing our future or a better future was missing from the final point.
- (e) The vast majority wrote that to be a *climariano* you needed a lot of time, and a good number explained that the 'sustainable' products were not always easy to find. However, not so many were able to show that they had understood that knowing about nutrition or choosing the right products *requieren esfuerzo*.

Question 5

For some candidates a lack of familiarity with the techniques required for this question was often responsible for a significant reduction in the final mark which might have been achieved. It is important to adhere to the word count of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for **part (b)**, the personal response.

- (a) To score well here, it is necessary to select specific details from the texts which answer the question concisely. Those candidates who attempted to write in general terms about dietary considerations achieved lower marks than those who considered each text in turn and selected facts relevant to the question. Introductory sentences, such as the following, are unnecessary and waste words: *En los textos 1 y 2 se habla de lo que es ser vegano y lo que es ser climariano*.

There were a few instances of personal opinions being incorrectly offered in this part of the question. There is no credit for this in the marks scheme.

Those who paid attention to the question asked, and picked out specific details about the difficulties of being vegan and *climariano* – many of which had already formed part of answers to comprehension questions – scored well. No introductions or conclusions are required and the recommended technique is to plunge straight in:

Para los veganos es difícil identificar ingredientes de origen animal ✓ y pocas marcas son 100 por cent transparentes. ✓ También hace falta más variedad en las prendas ✓ y sus precios son elevados. ✓ Ser climariano también es difícil porque requiere esfuerzo ✓ y tiempo... ✓

Six marks have been scored in roughly one third of the words available, leaving ample room for further details and then 5**(b)**.

An illustration of an answer which uses a similar number of words without recording a single mark is:

En los textos leídos previamente se tocan los temas que en la sociedad que vivimos hoy por hoy son cada vez más importantes: el veganismo, que nos habla mucho del cuidado al animal, y climariano que nos cuenta cómo a través de la consumición uno puede ayudar al ambiente...

- (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. Higher marks were achieved by those who introduced some originality in their answers. A few answers could not be marked as the word limit had already been exceeded.

Although there was a growing eco-friendly awareness in most candidates' countries of residence, interest among the inhabitants in the origins of the food they consumed was considered to be relatively thin on the ground. Far greater importance was attached to availability and pricing. In some countries there appeared to be a small but increasing number of vegans.

Quality of Language

In this cohort, there were few cases of very poor Spanish. Most seemed to come from a native-speaker background. Unless they had been penalised for scoring zero in any of the comprehension questions, many candidates were awarded maximum marks in all three quality of language assessments.

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.
- **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 texts concerning two different types of criminality and the efforts of the authorities to combat this were generally well understood by candidates. Most of those taking 9719 were first language speakers who were able to show clear understanding of the topic in good Spanish. A number of candidates taking 8685 were candidates of Spanish as a foreign language who, despite lacking the same fluency of expression, were often also able to demonstrate good comprehension. Scripts were generally well presented, and there appeared to be little difficulty in meeting the time constraints.

Awareness of the techniques required for this examination was variable and often made a considerable difference to the final mark. Many candidates appeared to have been well coached in the techniques required although lifting, (the direct copying of five or more words from the text), often invalidated a mark for comprehension. Better candidates produced skillful paraphrasing in their answers; less able candidates often deconstructed and then reordered parts of sentences in the text with very variable degrees of success. A small number of candidates exceeded the permitted number of words in **Question 5** which meant that part, or sometimes all, of their personal response could not be assessed.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Although good scores were often achieved for this question a few candidates selected the wrong phrase for their answers. The other commonest reason for not scoring the mark was to add or omit words from the beginning or end of the target phrase.

- (a) Many were correct, although some tried to use references in the text to *fusiles*, which did not work. Others lost the mark by adding *...a sus guardaparques* to the correct answer.
- (b) This was generally done well. A few incorrectly offered *no disponer de recursos mínimos*.

- (c) The phrase was almost universally correctly identified. Answers prefaced by *en...* or which omitted *las...* did not score.
- (d) There were very few incorrect answers.
- (e) This again was successfully answered by the vast majority of candidates.

Question 2

This question was generally answered well by 9719 candidates and a number scored higher marks than for the previous exercise. It proved to be much more of a challenge for 8685 candidates.

- (a) The length of the phrase to be manipulated was sometimes a problem, and a few candidates had difficulty in fitting the words into a logical sequence. The majority correctly opted for *los tesoros naturales no pueden ser custodiados por el Estado*, although alternative versions such as *el Estado no puede (man)tener/dejar custodiados los tesoros naturales* were also acceptable.
- (b) The simplest approach was to answer in two words *sigue creciendo*. (The misspelling *creciendo* was not allowed). There were several acceptable variations, such as *sigue sin parar* or *sigue en/su crecimiento*.
- (c) Not unexpectedly, most 9719 candidates were aware of the need for a subjunctive here and usually came up with an acceptable construction. 8685 candidates found this more of a challenge.
- (d) A similar differentiation was very noticeable here. How to use *so(er)* in this manipulation appeared very obvious to native speakers. Not so to those whose first language was not Spanish.
- (e) The number of different ways in which *falta* can be used caused a few more problems here. Most 9719 candidates correctly answered *si hace falta incendiar un bosque*.

Question 3

Candidates taking 9719 were usually successful in presenting the required information in their own words, often using more complex linguistic structures. Instances of lifting five or more words directly from the text occurred often by oversight rather than by design. Many 8685 candidates appeared to be aware of the lifting rule and began their answers in their own words, with lifting being more prevalent in the latter part of their answers. Attempts at re-ordering the words of key phrases did not always succeed in conveying the correct meaning.

- (a) This was generally done well, with most candidates referring to all, or at least two, of the three points required: the possibility of encountering a drugs trafficker, that these criminals used the forest to store their goods and that there were only a low number of forest rangers.
- (b) Four marks were on offer here provided that answers contained sufficient details. Many candidates noted the lack of protection and resources which the natural parks were experiencing. Not so many were successful in giving full details of the new equipment destined for the rangers: *fusiles/armas por valor de 300 000 dólares* and *chalecos antibalas, donados por EEUU*. A common lift was *una inversión de 300000 dólares en fusiles*.
- (c) This question proved to be a little more demanding, especially for 8685 candidates. That the local inhabitants did not hesitate to report illegal activities causing environmental damage in the parks was often stated successfully. More difficulty was found in stating the belief that a tree was of greater value growing than when felled, with lack of comprehension often illustrated by lifting five or more words from *que es más rentable el árbol en el bosque que un árbol talado*.
- (d) Few candidates scored both marks here. Many noted the lack of investment in the parks but neglected to qualify it by saying that it had been going on for twenty years. Difficulty was also found in noting that the parks were experiencing an increase in *problemas no relacionados con la naturaleza*.
- (e) To score the first two marks on offer here it was necessary to establish the contrast between the minor dangers (*escopeta*) which the park rangers experienced when encountering trespassers in the past and the grave perils (*rifles automáticos*) they faced today. For the other two marks it was

necessary to elaborate further on the brazenness of the *narcotraficantes*: *no tienen en consideración a las personas ni a la naturaleza* and *pueden decidir prender fuego a un bosque para asustar/intimidar*.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Comprehension of this second text concerning pickpockets in Madrid was good, with candidates scoring slightly higher marks than for the previous exercise.

- (a) Three pieces of information were needed and not many candidates were successful in recording all of them. To their credit, many non-native speakers managed to work out the meaning of *almendra central* and, provided that they did not lift *las líneas que pasan por*, were able to score the mark. The other two marks came from noting that the value of the stolen goods rarely exceeded 400 euros and that both wallets and mobile phones were the items most commonly targeted.
- (b) Most candidates did well on this question. Many were able to state that the police had photographs of the pickpockets and were able to identify them when they were patrolling the stations; although a common lift was *de patrulla en las estaciones*. The point that the pickpockets were most likely to be operating when the Metro was at its most crowded, during rush hour or at times of major events, was often clearly stated. A little more difficulty was encountered in noting that the criminals followed the crowds to other locations, notably the beaches during the summer tourist season.
- (c) This was another question where candidates often mentioned one or two, but not all three, of the details being sought. Many were able to note that there was not a set day or time when the pickpockets were most likely to be operating. More difficulty was found in stating that it was impossible to predict where they would be operating. Not every candidate who had been successful in establishing these two points was able to round them off by saying that *la situación cambia en cualquier momento* or *pueden influir miles de factores*.
- (d) To score two of the three marks on offer here, in addition to noting that there were many cameras in the Metro, it was necessary to clarify that these were used to identify the criminal and follow the journey of the victim. Most candidates clearly understood that the victim needed to act swiftly as the camera recordings would soon be erased.
- (e) This question was done well, with many candidates scoring both marks for noting that mobile phones can be *reprogramados para no ser rastreados* and *se venden fácilmente en el mercado negro*.

Question 5

For some candidates a lack of familiarity with the techniques required for this question was often responsible for a significant reduction in the final mark which might have been achieved. It is important to adhere to the word count of 140 words for **both** parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for **part (b)**, the personal response.

- (a) To score well here, it is necessary to select specific details from the texts which answer the question concisely. Those candidates who attempted to write in general terms about crime achieved lower marks than those who considered each text in turn and selected facts relevant to the question. Introductory sentences, such as the following, are unnecessary and waste words: *Los crímenes son algo prácticamente imposible de erradicar y tanto en Costa Rica como en Madrid son un problema*.

There was also a tendency among less able candidates to copy verbatim from the texts when extracting key details. Although there is no penalty for this, it should be remembered that any copied material will usually be less concise in nature and therefore will use a lot of words to cover few details, and will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark. There were a few instances of personal opinions being incorrectly offered in this part of the question.

Those who paid attention to the question asked, and picked out specific details about the difficulties of combatting crime – many of which had already formed part of answers to comprehension

questions – scored well. No introductions or conclusions are required and the recommended technique is to plunge straight in:

En Costa Rica hay un guardaparque por cada 4000 hectáreas ✓ y el gobierno lleva 20 años sin invertir en los parques. ✓ Además hay problemas con narcotraficantes ✓ armados de rifles automáticos ✓ que hacen lo necesario para intimidar a los guardaparques... ✓

Five marks have been scored in roughly one third of the words available, leaving ample room for details about the Madrid pickpockets and then 5**(b)**.

An illustration of an answer which uses 58 words before recording a single mark is:

En el Metro de Madrid y en los parques Nacionales de Costa Rica se pueden identificar dos problemas criminales, los cuales se adaptan a las precauciones que hacen los policías en el Metro o los guardaparques. En el caso de los parques nacionales de Costa Rica, los cuales han sido infiltrados por miembros de bandas organizadas de narcotraficantes... ✓

- (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. Higher marks were achieved by those who introduced some originality in their answers. A few answers could not be marked as the word limit had already been exceeded.

The prevalence of security cameras varied according to candidates' nationalities. Those who lived in countries with an abundance of cameras mostly thought they were a good thing, deterring crime and giving a greater feeling of security. A minority did not like the fact that they were being watched all the time. Those who lived in countries with few cameras wished for more.

Quality of Language

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

Unless they had been penalised for scoring zero in any of the comprehension questions, native speakers were awarded maximum marks in all three quality of language assessments

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.
- **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 texts concerning how films are watched in Spain and Mexico were generally well received by candidates. Most of those taking 9719 were able to show clear understanding of the topic in good Spanish. Candidates taking 8685, despite lacking the same fluency of expression, were often also able to demonstrate good comprehension. Scripts were generally well presented, and there appeared to be little difficulty in meeting the time constraints.

Awareness of the techniques required for this examination was variable and often made a considerable difference to the final mark. Many candidates appeared to have been well coached in the techniques required although lifting, (the direct copying of five or more words from the text), often invalidated a mark for comprehension. Better candidates produced skillful paraphrasing in their answers; less able candidates often deconstructed and then reordered parts of sentences in the text with very variable degrees of success. A small number of candidates exceeded the permitted number of words in **Question 5** which meant that part, or sometimes all, of their personal response could not be assessed.

Comments on specific questions

SECCIÓN PRIMERA

Question 1

Although good scores were often achieved for this question a few candidates selected the wrong phrase for their answers. The other commonest reason for not scoring the mark was to add or omit words from the beginning or end of the target phrase.

- (a) Most were correct, although some omitted *durante...* or did not recognise *decenio* and wrongly offered *después de varios años*.
- (b) This was generally done well, with few incorrect answers

- (c) Another good set of responses. Occasionally less able candidates latched on to vocabulary in the text which appeared coincide with that in the cue and offered incorrect answers such as *limitando la posibilidad*.
- (d) This was more of a challenge, with only better candidates successfully answering *merecen señalar*.
- (e) Another more challenging question. Some candidates lost the mark by not adding ...*el giro* to the end of their answer.

Question 2

This was a challenging question for many candidates, the vast majority of whom were learning Spanish as a foreign language. A small number of individual answers were left blank, perhaps suggesting that either candidates were unfamiliar with the grammatical point being tested or that they had decided to save time and get on with the rest of the paper.

- (a) Many better candidates recognised that a subjunctive was required after *hacer que*. The fact that what followed *la imagen y el sonido* needed to be plural, either *se mejoren* or *sean mejores* was often overlooked. The reflexive *se* was also commonly missed.
- (b) There were a great many acceptable answers for this manipulation. A number, but not all, of these variations needed to be in the passive – *porque se ha incrementado/el número de/el personal; porque el personal ha sido/fue incrementado; por haberse incrementado el personal*.
- (c) Again many variations of a correct answer were available and better candidates showed a good awareness of suitable vocabulary – *esta tecnología está/es limitada de/en dos maneras/modos/áreas/cosas/formas/aspectos; ...por dos razones/factores/cosas/aspectos*.
- (d) Only one correct version was available here and many better candidates successfully answered *una fórmula que se basa en un sistema*.
- (e) Errors here were often the reverse of what commonly occurred in (a). If *aparta* was used it needed to be prefaced by *se*. No futurity was involved and so a subjunctive was not needed.

Question 3

Candidates taking 9719 were usually successful in presenting the required information in their own words, often using more complex linguistic structures. Instances of lifting five or more words directly from the text often occurred inadvertently rather than by design. Many 8685 candidates appeared to be aware of the lifting rule and began their answers in their own words, with lifting being more prevalent in the latter part of their answers. Attempts at re-ordering the words of key phrases did not always succeed in conveying the correct meaning.

- (a) Most candidates showed understanding of the first point about how the emergence of streaming platforms were competing with cinemas. Far fewer were successful in stating that there was no longer a lot of difference between watching films at home or in the cinema. The third point was often attempted but sometimes either lacked the detail of *sonido e imagen* or the phrase *la imagen y el sonido* was lifted, possibly inadvertently.
- (b) Similar marks were also recorded for this question, with lack of specific detail often being a key factor. Many scored the mark for double-sized seats and often for the food service during the film, although quite a few lacked the *durante la película* detail. The third mark proved more elusive as it required the specific detail that the bar was in the entrance or that it replaced the traditional popcorn kiosk. A few candidates wrote about some of the innovations mentioned in the third paragraph, which could not be credited here.
- (c) This question was generally tackled quite well by most candidates. The moving, vibrating seats that emitted smells, air and water were usually there in candidates' answers. Many went on to score maximum marks by adding that these effects were more (not only) suitable for *películas de acción* or *escenas de alta velocidad* and that for safety reasons small children or those under one metre in height could not be admitted. (Several ingenious methods at avoiding a five word lift of this last detail were to be seen. Unfortunately, re-wording the sentence to accommodate *menos de un metro de altura* did not evade the issue).

- (d) Few candidates scored both marks here, with lack of specific detail often being the reason. It was necessary to stress the attractiveness of the discounted prices being offered, and that spectators were allowed to change screens during the first half hour of a film.
- (e) The fact that cinema goers were unhappy that spectators were now permitted to use their mobiles was often successfully noted. Only very few candidates showed understanding that the light pollution came from spectators who were dining, and not from the mobile phones. More success was recorded in noting the objections to spectators being allowed to get up and chat to one another.

SECCIÓN SEGUNDA

Question 4

Comprehension of this second text concerning the state of the cinema in Mexico was similar to that of the previous exercise.

- (a) Three pieces of information were needed and not many candidates were successful in recording all of them, usually because of a lack of detail. The social aspect of going to the cinema was commonly stated as also was the point about pleasure derived from seeing others share your emotions. For the other point it was necessary to say that you laugh or cry with (not at) people unknown to you.
- (b) This was generally answered well, with better candidates scoring all three marks. Most conveyed the first point about the number of tickets sold annually, but not so many were successful in trying to explain that Mexico was the fourth country in the world in terms of the number of cinemas. Some omitted to explain in what respect it was the fourth country in the world, while others inadvertently lifted *el cuarto país del mundo*. The fact that only a small percentage of tickets were sold for films made in Mexico was usually correctly noted.
- (c) This proved to be a challenging question for many candidates. Most omitted the detail of the lack of advanced investment. Very few, if any, candidates managed the point about producers needing to raise money during different stages of production.
- (d) There were not many fully accurate answers to this question concerning the distribution of films in Mexico. To score the first mark it was necessary to point out that only films that would *garantizar altos números de entradas* would be widely shown around the country. For the second mark, although many made reference to the less well known films not so many successfully stated that these did not make it to the big, commercial cinemas.
- (e) All candidates fared better on this question, with those taking 9719 often picking up three or all four of the available marks. Most showed understanding that young people commonly *ven películas fragmentadas* or *en plataformas* and that they often went on to seek out the book on which the film was based. 8685 candidates often experienced difficulty in disentangling *hacen esto de manera socializada* and *la comentan o la comparten en redes sociales*.

Question 5

There were encouraging signs of increased familiarity with the techniques required for this question. Candidates were aware of the importance of adhering to the word count of 140 words for both parts of the question. Anything in excess of 160 words is disregarded, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for **part (b)**, the personal response.

- (a) To score well here, it is necessary to select specific details from the texts which answer the question concisely. There was a tendency among less able candidates to copy verbatim from the texts when extracting key details. Although there is no penalty for this, it should be remembered that any copied material will usually be less concise in nature and therefore will use a lot of words to cover few details, and will not be considered in the Quality of Language mark. There were only one or two instances of personal opinions being incorrectly offered in this part of the question.

Candidates who paid attention to the question asked, and picked out specific details about the changes being made by cinemas, and what motivates us to visit them – many of which had already

formed part of answers to comprehension questions – scored well. No introductions or conclusions are required and the recommended technique is to plunge straight in:

Los cines ofrecen descuentos ✓ para combatir las plataformas de streaming. ✓ Otra idea es proveer butacas más grandes ✓ y un servicio de catering durante las películas. ✓ Se permite el uso de teléfonos móviles. ✓ En el cine se puede reír o llorar con personas desconocidas... ✓

Six marks have been scored in roughly one third of the words available, leaving ample room for further details about motives for going to the cinema, and then 5**(b)**.

An illustration of an answer which uses more words without recording a single mark for content is:

Los textos están hablando del cine, las películas, y lo que significa para atender cines y ver películas. Texto 1 habla sobre los problemas que los cines españoles han experimentado, y también qué están haciendo para luchar y combatir contra sus problemas. Texto 2 está hablando sobre los cines mexicanos, sus popularidades...

- (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 the question. Higher marks were achieved by those who introduced some originality in their answers.

Cinema going was still considered a popular activity in most candidates' countries, although some expressed reservations at the high prices. Many commented on the impact that Covid was having and how this had encouraged the practice of streaming films at home. This, although a cheaper option, did not have the social pull of the big screen.

Quality of Language

The quality of the majority of candidates' Spanish, here and throughout the paper, was generally up to the standard required by this examination. Unless affected by scores of zero on any of the comprehension questions, Marks awarded usually ranged from Sound to Very Good.

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

Overall, there was a good level of ability on display in the essays written for this session. It was clear to see that the majority of candidates understood the importance of clarity in their writing and many displayed the ability to marshal their thoughts in a coherent and succinct manner. The hard work that has been carried out in centres by way of preparation for this examination came shining through in many of the essays presented. It is a simple but pleasurable task to apply the mark scheme to essays that are written articulately and accurately and in such a way as to leave no doubt that the issues in the title have been dealt with very convincingly indeed by the candidates. It would be fair to say again this session that very few essays struggled to make valid points or draw convincing conclusions.

There were very few problems relating to the word count (250 – 400 words) although there was some evidence to suggest that some candidates still believe that the more they exceed the word limit, the better their essays will be. Unfortunately, thus is not the case. Very long compositions often lose their coherence and focus and therefore marks are lost especially in terms of content (although the language mark can also suffer). Equally, there were a few short essays presented and they also lost marks both in terms of content (because they fell short in terms of knowledge and understanding of the topic) and because there was an insufficient amount of language to assess. On a more positive note, there were hardly any examples of pre-learnt essays. The mark scheme makes things very clear in terms of how candidates can access the higher categories for both language and content so there really is no excuse for falling foul of the word count instruction. Nevertheless, it is clear to Examiners that centres have embraced the notion that if candidates have a good understanding of the mark scheme then they are far more likely to produce better essays. Many centres, it would seem, insist on the mark scheme being required reading for their candidates and this is no bad thing at all.

Most essays remained focused on the actual title set on the paper and resisted the temptation to go off on unrelated tangents in order to fill space. It has been said many times before in these reports but those essays that simply rely on vague generalisations that are some distance away from the specifics of the title set always perform less successfully, in particular with regard to the marks for content. Thankfully, very few such essays fell into this trap and many essays were all the more successful as a consequence.

With regard to the quality of the language used by candidates, many essays showed ample evidence of complex sentence structures used with confidence together with the regular use of an extensive range of advanced and relevant vocabulary. Some essays, however, relied too heavily on the simplest sentence patterns and showed little evidence of grammatical awareness in an advanced context. A consistent lack of grammatical accuracy, it goes without saying, is unlikely to attract marks above the 'poor' category for language.

There were, as is often the case, a number of common errors in terms of language to report. It would appear again that many of the errors that follow could be avoided if candidates left time in the examination room to

check what has been written before the examination ends. Some very basic items of vocabulary, and annoyingly one or two words that were actually provided in the essay title on the paper, were misspelt by candidates. The most frequent ones were 'la tecnología' (sic.), 'las desventajas' (sic.), 'proibir' (sic.) and 'los avances' but the most common mistake by far was 'desarollado' (sic.).

Many candidates also fell foul of the rules governing the use of singular and plural verbs. 'La gente' still manages to confuse candidates into believing that it requires a plural verb. Whilst the idea of 'la gente' is notionally plural, the fact remains that it is grammatically singular and so takes a singular verb. The same applies to 'todo el mundo' as well. There were fewer examples of plural subjects being given singular verbs but the term 'muchas personas' was often brought into play with a singular verb in utterances like '...muchas personas piensa que estar desempleado no es culpa del individuo...' (sic.), perhaps because of the influence of 'la gente' and the need for a singular verb.

The verbs *gustar* and *encantar* continue to be problematic for some candidates with even the more accurately written essays dropping their guard occasionally and being caught out in sentences such as '...muchos padres no les gustan la comida rápida...' (sic.) and '...los jóvenes encantan hacer la compra en línea...' (sic.). In general terms, however, the use of verbs and tenses was well handled by candidates but once again there were too many occasions where candidates showed a reluctance to use accents in order to avoid verbal ambiguity or when accents were used when there was no need to do so. Examples such as '...en el futuro más gente comprara su comida en línea...' (sic.) and '...es importante que los jóvenes comán una dieta sana...' (sic.) illustrate the points above.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- Tenses used appropriately and accurately.
- Topic-related vocabulary employed judiciously.
- Full understanding of the differences between the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
- The use of impersonal expressions and idiomatic language in order to enhance the register of the writing.
- The accurate use of the subjunctive as and when needed.

Common errors included:

- Incorrect spelling of some very basic items of vocabulary.
- Confusion with the use of singular and plural verbs with singular and plural subjects.
- The application of the subjunctive mood in sentences where it was not required.
- The verb *gustar* employed inaccurately.
- Confusion with the preterite tense and the imperfect tense.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *La vida diaria*

Hacer la compra en línea tiene ventajas pero también tiene desventajas para la sociedad en general. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This was the most popular title on the paper. Most argued that online shopping is undoubtedly convenient and can reduce costs but that actually shopping in real shops and interacting with retailers is also hugely important and very much an important part of our everyday routine. There were numerous mentions of the positive impact on the environment of online shopping with people not having to travel to shops and the like in order to make their purchases. Many concluded, perfectly reasonably, that a balance between the two different methods of shopping is most desirable. A few also went on to argue the case on behalf of small, independent retailers and how they struggle to compete with larger retail chains as well as suggesting that we should do all we can to support such outlets in order to keep our high streets thriving.

Question 2 *La gastronomía*

¿Deberíamos prohibir que los jóvenes compren comida con altos niveles de grasa?

This was also quite a popular title and candidates dealt well with the many different issues it touched upon. Some candidates felt quite strongly that there should always be an element of choice and that it is the

individual's responsibility to eat healthily. Others seemed convinced of the need to impose restrictions on the sale of food such as burgers and pizzas in order to help young people make the right choices. Some argued that it would be unfair to impose such bans only on young people but that they could see the reasons behind such a move. There was no disagreement about the unhealthy nature of foods with high fat content.

Question 3 *El empleo y el desempleo*

Con todos los avances tecnológicos en el lugar de trabajo, el desempleo es inevitable. ¿Qué opina usted?

This title was popular and opinions were split amongst those who selected it for their essay. Some were convinced that unemployment will be increased as machines take over the work of humans whilst others felt that technological advances will only serve to provide more work opportunities provided that education also adapts to the changing world of technology.

Question 4 *El desarrollo social y económico*

Un país no se puede considerar desarrollado si hay pobreza en las calles. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This title proved to be fairly popular with candidates. The majority expressed the view that for a country to be considered fully developed then there needs to be very low levels of poverty, or indeed no poverty, amongst the population. Many argued that poverty cannot be wiped out completely but that it can only be minimised in a well-developed country. Some candidates went on to point out that even those countries generally considered to be fully developed are obliged on a daily basis to tackle poverty on their streets.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

La energía nuclear no representa una amenaza para nuestro planeta. Por el contrario, es la única solución a nuestras necesidades energéticas. ¿Qué opina usted?

This was a slightly less popular title with candidates. Those who responded to it were able to deal with both sides of the argument in fairly convincing fashion. In terms of atmospheric emissions, many felt that nuclear power is no bad thing for the environment. However, there was a general acceptance that the potential risks involved with the production of nuclear energy cannot, and should not, be overlooked. A few were prepared to embrace nuclear energy production provided safety guarantees could be stepped up with no compromises or short cuts.

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

Overall, there was a good level of ability on display in the essays written for this session. It was clear to see that the majority of candidates understood the importance of clarity in their writing and many displayed the ability to marshal their thoughts in a coherent and succinct manner. The hard work that has been carried out in centres by way of preparation for this examination came shining through in many of the essays presented. It is a simple but pleasurable task to apply the mark scheme to essays that are written articulately and accurately and in such a way as to leave no doubt that the issues in the title have been dealt with very convincingly indeed by the candidates. It would be fair to say again this session that very few essays struggled to make valid points or draw convincing conclusions.

There were very few problems relating to the word count (250 – 400 words) although there was some evidence to suggest that some candidates still believe that the more they exceed the word limit, the better their essays will be. Unfortunately, thus is not the case. Very long compositions often lose their coherence and focus and therefore marks are lost especially in terms of content (although the language mark can also suffer). Equally, there were a few short essays presented and they also lost marks both in terms of content (because they fell short in terms of knowledge and understanding of the topic) and because there was an insufficient amount of language to assess. On a more positive note, there were hardly any examples of pre-learnt essays. The mark scheme makes things very clear in terms of how candidates can access the higher categories for both language and content so there really is no excuse for falling foul of the word count instruction. Nevertheless, it is clear to Examiners that centres have embraced the notion that if candidates have a good understanding of the mark scheme then they are far more likely to produce better essays. Many centres, it would seem, insist on the mark scheme being required reading for their candidates and this is no bad thing at all.

Most essays remained focused on the actual title set on the paper and resisted the temptation to go off on unrelated tangents in order to fill space. It has been said many times before in these reports but those essays that simply rely on vague generalisations that are some distance away from the specifics of the title set always perform less successfully, in particular with regard to the marks for content. Thankfully, very few such essays fell into this trap and many essays were all the more successful as a consequence.

With regard to the quality of the language used by candidates, many essays showed ample evidence of complex sentence structures used with confidence together with the regular use of an extensive range of advanced and relevant vocabulary. Some essays, however, relied too heavily on the simplest sentence patterns and showed little evidence of grammatical awareness in an advanced context. A consistent lack of grammatical accuracy, it goes without saying, is unlikely to attract marks above the 'poor' category for language.

There were, as is often the case, a number of common errors in terms of language to report. It would appear again that many of the errors that follow could be avoided if candidates left time in the examination room to

check what has been written before the examination ends. Some very basic items of vocabulary, and annoyingly one or two words that were actually provided in the essay title on the paper, were misspelt by candidates. The most frequent ones were 'la tecnología' (sic.), 'las desventajas' (sic.), 'proibir' (sic.) and 'los avances' but the most common mistake by far was 'desarollado' (sic.).

Many candidates also fell foul of the rules governing the use of singular and plural verbs. 'La gente' still manages to confuse candidates into believing that it requires a plural verb. Whilst the idea of 'la gente' is notionally plural, the fact remains that it is grammatically singular and so takes a singular verb. The same applies to 'todo el mundo' as well. There were fewer examples of plural subjects being given singular verbs but the term 'muchas personas' was often brought into play with a singular verb in utterances like '...muchas personas piensa que estar desempleado no es culpa del individuo...' (sic.), perhaps because of the influence of 'la gente' and the need for a singular verb.

The verbs *gustar* and *encantar* continue to be problematic for some candidates with even the more accurately written essays dropping their guard occasionally and being caught out in sentences such as '...muchos padres no les gustan la comida rápida...' (sic.) and '...los jóvenes encantan hacer la compra en línea...' (sic.). In general terms, however, the use of verbs and tenses was well handled by candidates but once again there were too many occasions where candidates showed a reluctance to use accents in order to avoid verbal ambiguity or when accents were used when there was no need to do so. Examples such as '...en el futuro más gente comprara su comida en línea...' (sic.) and '...es importante que los jóvenes comán una dieta sana...' (sic.) illustrate the points above.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- Tenses used appropriately and accurately.
- Topic-related vocabulary employed judiciously.
- Full understanding of the differences between the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
- The use of impersonal expressions and idiomatic language in order to enhance the register of the writing.
- The accurate use of the subjunctive as and when needed.

Common errors included:

- Incorrect spelling of some very basic items of vocabulary.
- Confusion with the use of singular and plural verbs with singular and plural subjects.
- The application of the subjunctive mood in sentences where it was not required.
- The verb *gustar* employed inaccurately.
- Confusion with the preterite tense and the imperfect tense.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *La vida diaria*

Las tiendas como las conocemos hoy en día no tienen futuro. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This was a very popular title on the paper with candidates. There was a considerable degree of agreement that shops as we know them today most certainly have a role still to play in society. Many pointed out that shops selling clothes and food, in particular, are the ones where customers need to visit in person in order to check the quality and the feel of the goods for sale. There was, nevertheless, an acceptance that online shopping has its advantages in terms of convenience and competitive pricing. Some also went on to mention how the environmental impact is reduced by people not travelling into a town or city centre in order to do their shopping. Both forms of shopping, it would appear, have a future.

Question 2 *La gastronomía*

Con respecto a nuestra dieta, el veganismo es la mejor opción. ¿Qué opina usted?

This was also quite a popular title and was generally well dealt with by candidates. Some felt a vegan diet, if embraced by many more people, might help to lessen the impact of mankind's carbon footprint. Others made it clear that it seems more realistic for people to accept that a more balanced approach with perhaps less

meat consumption might be the most practical and acceptable way to address the environmental issues related to our diet. A good number of candidates also pointed out that vegan food can often be full of flavour as well as being healthy in spite of what some inveterate meat eaters may think.

Question 3 *El empleo y el desempleo*

¿Cree usted que estar desempleado es culpa del individuo?

This popular title also provided many interesting and well-reasoned responses. Many expressed the view that in the majority of cases where people lose their jobs, the cause of this is almost always beyond their control. Some reference was made to the notion that some people prefer to rely on state benefits instead of having a job but this was regarded by most as the exception and not the rule.

Question 4 *El desarrollo social y económico*

¿Cómo se puede reconocer un país desarrollado social y económicamente?

This title proved to be the least popular on the paper with candidates. The essays that were written on this subject were, however, largely well-structured and dealt methodically with the salient issues. Democratic rights, low levels of unemployment and reasonable health care systems were amongst the main indicators for candidates that a country could be regarded as well-developed economically and socially. A few essays also pointed out the desirability of having a free press and freedom of speech in order to qualify as such.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

El bienestar de nuestro planeta depende de lo que hacemos hoy y no de lo que planeamos hacer en cinco o diez años. ¿Qué opina usted?

This was also a very popular title on the paper. Titles on the environment often prove to be attractive to candidates on the grounds that the subject clearly interests them and that they are likely to have prepared the topic thoroughly beforehand in class. There was more or less unanimous agreement that the urgent nature of the climate crisis is such that we cannot afford to postpone remedial action. Almost all candidates who responded to this title felt that we need, as an entire planet, to act immediately in order to tackle environmental issues.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Paper 8685/33
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

Overall, there was a good level of ability on display in the essays written for this session. It was clear to see that the majority of candidates understood the importance of clarity in their writing and many displayed the ability to marshal their thoughts in a coherent and succinct manner. The hard work that has been carried out in centres by way of preparation for this examination came shining through in many of the essays presented. It is a simple but pleasurable task to apply the mark scheme to essays that are written articulately and accurately and in such a way as to leave no doubt that the issues in the title have been dealt with very convincingly indeed by the candidates. It would be fair to say again this session that very few essays struggled to make valid points or draw convincing conclusions.

There were very few problems relating to the word count (250 – 400 words) although there was some evidence to suggest that some candidates still believe that the more they exceed the word limit, the better their essays will be. Unfortunately, thus is not the case. Very long compositions often lose their coherence and focus and therefore marks are lost especially in terms of content (although the language mark can also suffer). Equally, there were a few short essays presented and they also lost marks both in terms of content (because they fell short in terms of knowledge and understanding of the topic) and because there was an insufficient amount of language to assess. On a more positive note, there were hardly any examples of pre-learnt essays. The mark scheme makes things very clear in terms of how candidates can access the higher categories for both language and content so there really is no excuse for falling foul of the word count instruction. Nevertheless, it is clear to Examiners that centres have embraced the notion that if candidates have a good understanding of the mark scheme then they are far more likely to produce better essays. Many centres, it would seem, insist on the mark scheme being required reading for their candidates and this is no bad thing at all.

Most essays remained focused on the actual title set on the paper and resisted the temptation to go off on unrelated tangents in order to fill space. It has been said many times before in these reports but those essays that simply rely on vague generalisations that are some distance away from the specifics of the title set always perform less successfully, in particular with regard to the marks for content. Thankfully, very few such essays fell into this trap and many essays were all the more successful as a consequence.

With regard to the quality of the language used by candidates, many essays showed ample evidence of complex sentence structures used with confidence together with the regular use of an extensive range of advanced and relevant vocabulary. Some essays, however, relied too heavily on the simplest sentence patterns and showed little evidence of grammatical awareness in an advanced context. A consistent lack of grammatical accuracy, it goes without saying, is unlikely to attract marks above the 'poor' category for language.

There were, as is often the case, a number of common errors in terms of language to report. It would appear again that many of the errors that follow could be avoided if candidates left time in the examination room to

check what has been written before the examination ends. Some very basic items of vocabulary, and annoyingly one or two words that were actually provided in the essay title on the paper, were misspelt by candidates. The most frequent ones were 'la tecnología' (sic.), 'las desventajas' (sic.), 'proibir' (sic.) and 'los avances' but the most common mistake by far was 'desarollado' (sic.).

Many candidates also fell foul of the rules governing the use of singular and plural verbs. 'La gente' still manages to confuse candidates into believing that it requires a plural verb. Whilst the idea of 'la gente' is notionally plural, the fact remains that it is grammatically singular and so takes a singular verb. The same applies to 'todo el mundo' as well. There were fewer examples of plural subjects being given singular verbs but the term 'muchas personas' was often brought into play with a singular verb in utterances like '...muchas personas piensa que estar desempleado no es culpa del individuo...' (sic.), perhaps because of the influence of 'la gente' and the need for a singular verb.

The verbs *gustar* and *encantar* continue to be problematic for some candidates with even the more accurately written essays dropping their guard occasionally and being caught out in sentences such as '...muchos padres no les gustan la comida rápida...' (sic.) and '...los jóvenes encantan hacer la compra en línea...' (sic.). In general terms, however, the use of verbs and tenses was well handled by candidates but once again there were too many occasions where candidates showed a reluctance to use accents in order to avoid verbal ambiguity or when accents were used when there was no need to do so. Examples such as '...en el futuro más gente comprara su comida en línea...' (sic.) and '...es importante que los jóvenes comán una dieta sana...' (sic.) illustrate the points above.

Examples of good use of the language included:

- Tenses used appropriately and accurately.
- Topic-related vocabulary employed judiciously.
- Full understanding of the differences between the verbs *ser* and *estar*.
- The use of impersonal expressions and idiomatic language in order to enhance the register of the writing.
- The accurate use of the subjunctive as and when needed.

Common errors included:

- Incorrect spelling of some very basic items of vocabulary.
- Confusion with the use of singular and plural verbs with singular and plural subjects.
- The application of the subjunctive mood in sentences where it was not required.
- The verb *gustar* employed inaccurately.
- Confusion with the preterite tense and the imperfect tense.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 *La vida diaria*

Hoy en día ya no importa tanto la interacción humana, por ejemplo en las tiendas o en las cafeterías ¿Qué opina usted?

This was the least popular title on the paper. Those candidates who responded to this topic expressed the view that human interaction on a face-to-face basis is hugely important to people's emotional well-being and happiness in general. The widespread use of mobile phones when out and about was cited as the main

reason why people often keep themselves to themselves in social settings. Candidates felt that people should indeed make much more effort to engage with others when in shops and cafés although they would not go so far as to ban the use of electronic devices in such settings.

Question 2 *La gastronomía*

La cocina tradicional no puede competir con la comida rápida. ¿Está usted de acuerdo?

This was the most popular title on the paper. There was a clear understanding of the unhealthy nature of most of the fast food available today but also an awareness of the difficulty many people have in resisting the convenient nature of burgers, pizzas and so on. Many praised the wholesome nature of traditional, home-

cooked food and the desirable role it can play in bringing families and friends together around a table. It was pointed out as well that there is much more control of ingredients with traditional cooking and far less reliance on overly processed items.

Question 3 *El empleo y el desempleo*

¿Será mejor el mundo laboral para los jóvenes de hoy comparado con el pasado? ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

There was a lot of clear agreement with the positive implication of the question in this popular title. The general consensus was that the world of work will indeed be better for young people in the future than it has been in previous years. Employment rights, health and safety and decent working conditions were all brought into play when comparisons were made with previous generations of workers. Some also felt confident enough to believe that the exploitation of workers would soon be a thing of the past in global terms.

Question 4 *El desarrollo social y económico*

Las grandes empresas multinacionales tienen una enorme influencia con respecto al desarrollo social y económico de un país. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This was not a popular title amongst candidates. Some felt that multinational corporations have far too much influence in terms of the social and economic development of a country whilst others felt that this was something of an exaggeration. The provision of huge numbers of jobs was considered a positive aspect of the operations of many such corporations but some candidates also felt that the exploitation of workers was something that could not be ignored.

Question 5 *El medio ambiente*

Tenemos que usar los recursos naturales de manera más responsable aunque nos haga la vida más difícil. ¿Hasta qué punto está usted de acuerdo?

This was a popular title amongst candidates. The essays produced were full of conviction and showed admirable understanding of the issues surrounding the use of natural resources. There was general agreement that we all need to be more responsible with the ways in which we exploit such resources. The possibility that some inconvenience to our daily lives may be the result of such a responsible approach was considered by many to be a price worth paying.