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Spanish (9881)

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Examiners' Report

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Candidates are required to complete a single three-hour written examination. This year's paper had the central theme of Economic development and environmental protection in modern Spain. All the texts and listening material contained in the paper related to that theme and the options for the extended writing tasks were based around it. There were several texts, of different styles, with a variety of register.

Assessment Principles

Candidates' performance is assessed positively, with the following weighting: 15% Reading comprehension, 10% Transfer of meaning into English, 15% Linguistic tests, including 5% for a cloze test, 10% Listening comprehension and 50% Extended Writing.

Candidates' Responses

In general, the candidates' performance reflected a positive response to this fifth Advanced Extension Award examination. There were some excellent answers, centres had clearly prepared candidates well and most scripts reflected an appropriate level of competence and knowledge. The majority of the candidates were able to finish the paper within the allotted time and there were few examples of unfinished scripts.

Primera Sección

Texto A was an extract from a magazine article about the implementation of the Kyoto treaty and its consequences, mainly for Spain but also for the rest of the world. This text was generally well understood by candidates. There were three linguistic exercises on the passage: 1. - definitions were sought for expressions taken from the passage. Several candidates gave excellent, full definitions, with others scoring partial marks because they did not give the full meaning. Los ciudadanos de a pie and entró en vigor were the two expressions that caused most misunderstanding; 2. - required the identification of a synonym from the text. This was done very well with most candidates scoring high marks here; 3. - required an explanation of three percentage figures that appeared in the text. Again, candidates appeared to understand the figures and gave appropriate definitions.

Texto B was a second passage from the same article. This required a transfer of meaning exercise. Whilst the Examiners were not seeking a highly-polished piece of English prose, they were seeking a high standard of transfer of meaning. Most candidates clearly understood the material and wrote a sound version in English. Some candidates, however, surprisingly, did not know the English equivalent of Unión Europea or ONU and left them in Spanish. Whilst some of the cognates were not written well in English, such as compromisos, afirmar, inundaciones, remedio, etc. most finished versions read naturally in English. Without doubt, this year, the transfer of meaning exercise was done much better by the candidates, who appeared to find the factual nature of the passage more accessible.

Texto C was an journalistic piece about the construction of wind farms in the northern part of Burgos province, with various interested parties giving their opinions about the issue. The comprehension questions in Spanish required inference, analysis and evaluation, not merely identification of information within the text. The instructions stated that responses in full sentences were required and candidates should use their own words, rather than copy whole sentences or parts of sentences from the text. Most candidates had an understanding of the text and many gave full answers. This comprehension exercise required candidates to explain the meaning and a few were too reliant on "lifting" from the text without explaining. This was the case in (b) with obvian and ((d) se cargan. These items needed explaining. There were no serious misunderstandings of the material, except occasionally en auge and un atropello, and most candidates gave a creditable performance and lost marks for incomplete answers rather than for a lack of understanding.

Once the answers were assessed for comprehension, an overall mark for the quality of the language was applied, in accordance with the published grid. Although there was some weak language, the quality was generally good, with some excellent language used by some. Several of the questions, gave candidates the opportunity to use complicated verb forms.

Texto D was an extract from a sociological passage about attitudes to the environment in Spain, with a cloze test. The passage seemed to be well understood and candidates generally scored well. All of the words to be inserted were prepositions or conjunctions and candidates displayed a good understanding of their use.

Segunda sección

In the Listening comprehension text candidates are required to listen to the interview and to retrieve and convey information in their own words. Candidates have individual control of the recording: they may stop, rewind and replay the recording at will, and they may make notes and write their answers at any point. It is not necessary to write in full sentences and there are no extra marks awarded for quality of language in this task. Marks are awarded for answers that show comprehension and which contain facts and information.

Texto E featured an interview with the Minister for the Environment of Castilla-La Mancha, in which she discusses the situation of environmental protection in her region. Most candidates gave a pleasing performance and exhibited a high level of comprehension skills. Few lexical items caused problems. Most candidates understood the gist of the material and few failed to score on any of the questions, but it was necessary to give full information to gain the full marks each time. It was pleasing to see that fewer candidates relied on transcribing the whole interview this year and that there was a better attempt to use their own words. Overall, the standard of Listening comprehension skills displayed was very high, with candidates understanding both the gist and the detail of this passage with its quite demanding lexis and register.

Tercera sección

The Extended Writing question carries half the total marks for the examination and draws on the other parts of the paper. Candidates are expected to devote half of the time to this task, about 90 minutes, and ensure that they plan it carefully. Candidates are required to write about 450-500 words. There was a choice of two tasks. This year, the discursive essay was the more popular of the two, but there were some highly successful essays written for both.

Question (a) was a discursive essay discussing whether it is possible to combine economic development with the protection of the environment. Candidates were expected to make reference to the material contained in the different texts in the paper and to use the vocabulary and ideas expressed therein. Although some mention of global development and environmental issues might well be made, it was expected that the bulk of the essay would refer specifically to Spain and include names, places, events, etc. A thorough discussion of the issues is expected and the essay should be written in the appropriate register of a discursive essay, with the language of argument and debate. The essay should be structured in a logical way, hopefully with a balance discussion of both economic development and the protection of the environment, leading to a conclusion summing up the situation. Generally there was a high level of performance in this essay. In all events, it was essential for candidates to refer to the ideas and opinions expressed in the earlier texts, as well as giving their own opinions. Whilst most candidates succeeded in writing organised essays which fulfilled the tasks with an appropriate level of accuracy and range of lexis and structures, unfortunately some candidates produced an essay solely on global environmental issues, without tackling the aspect of economic development and a few still made no reference to the previous texts at all and thus failed to gain high marks for Content. There was, however, a clear indication that the majority of candidates had followed advice and made pertinent references to the other texts. There were some excellent essays, full of knowledge, well-argued and using accurate, skilful language and a wide range of lexis and structures.

Question (b) was a creative essay. Candidates were asked to write a dialogue between one person who is passionate about saving the environment and another person who believes that economic development is more important. Candidates have free rein to use their imagination but there should be clear references to names and places, and reference could be made to the evidence given in the texts within the paper. The tone and nuance should be in an appropriate register for the situation chosen by the candidate. Without doubt, there were some excellent answers to this question. However, not all candidates succeeded in using the appropriate register of dialogue and debate, and instead wrote several "mini-discursive" essays. Nevertheless, many candidates who chose this option wrote lively arguments in a highly creative way.

Advice and Guidance for Candidates

In the fifth year of the Advanced Extension Award in Spanish, there were some very good performances across the range of questions. Nevertheless, some points of guidance could be made to enable centres to improve candidates' performance.

- Time management. This is a long paper (3 hours). Candidates are recommended to spread their time carefully and to follow the recommendations as regards the time to be spent on each section.
- Where to start? It is recommended that candidates should look at the last question first. As they work through the earlier sections, they should consider points of information that they might later be able to incorporate in the Extended Writing essay.
- Vocabulary knowledge. Dictionaries are not allowed in this examination. Although the most difficult lexical items will always be glossed, it is essential that candidates should build up their vocabulary knowledge over a wide range of topics.
- Knowledge of Spain and Spanish-speaking countries. The examination requires a widespread knowledge of Hispanic life and culture. Candidates are recommended to study the Guidance for Students document and read widely across a variety of registers when preparing for this examination.

Statistics Spanish 2006

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Grade	Max. Mark	Distinction	Merit
Boundary mark	200	146	118

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