

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/01
Speaking

Key messages

Candidates should:

- Fill in the oral form correctly.
- Present their introduction “naturally”, even if pre-learnt.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- Provide evidence of research.
- Show interest in and personal engagement with the topic.
- Support opinions with evidence.
- Avoid sweeping statements.

Candidates should also expect to:

- Be interrupted.
- Be asked to support statements.
- Be asked unexpected questions.
- Be asked about headings in a different order to that in the prepared topic submission form.
- Give examples.
- Be stretched to their linguistic “ceiling”

General comments

The general level of spoken Spanish was high. The majority of candidates were able to maintain a conversation in fairly accurate and fluent language. There were, however, some recurring mistakes, listed in another section of this report.

Before the first part of the test (newspaper article discussion), candidates used their preparation time well, considering the issue in question and other issues that might arise in conversation. Most candidates were able to sustain an interesting discussion and use the language of argument well. The Examiners asked candidates to express opinions and to substantiate, elaborate, clarify or qualify them. Many of the performances were highly satisfactory and some were excellent.

Regarding the second part of the test (prepared topic discussion), most candidates had prepared their topics very thoroughly. Examiners found evidence of detailed research using different sources, and rewarded candidates highly for the quality of their research. When detailed and extensive factual knowledge was combined with clear analysis and well-founded opinion, candidates achieved much higher marks.

There were a very small number of under-prepared presentations, where the candidates appeared to have only vague knowledge of some crucial aspects of their topic. This is surprising, given that gathering (and remembering) sufficient information is one of the easiest ways of gaining marks in this part of the test.

The general titles and headings of the topics varied greatly in style, from broader to more specific and from concise (a short phrase) to elaborate (long questions or sentences). As long as the title and headings formed a clear and coherent whole, the style chosen did not matter and excellent discussions could flow from very different-looking lists of headings. There were, however, two or three cases where the list of subtitles was obviously incomplete, and it was found that candidates had accidentally omitted some. Care should be taken to avoid this in the future.

The discussions mostly flowed naturally without the candidates giving the impression of simply reciting pre-learnt material. They tended to respond readily to the Examiners' questions with appropriate replies. Not

only that, but most did not appear taken aback by unexpected questions and tackled them confidently and honestly. Candidates were rewarded for their ability to engage in a natural and spontaneous conversation.

Most candidates also displayed an excellent ability to keep calm and collected or, at least, not to allow nerves to interfere significantly with their performance. There were only a couple of instances when the nerves got the better of the candidate. In such cases, the Examiners were sympathetic and understanding and gave the candidate ample time to calm down and recover, so that he or she could resume the performance with more confidence and receive all due credit for it.

Comments on specific questions

Section A (Newspaper Article Discussion)

This is in principle the most challenging part of the test, as the candidates need to choose one of four newspaper articles, never seen before, and have only twenty minutes to prepare it: read it through and understand it, make a note of their reaction and opinions on it, and think about which issues might arise from the topic presented in the article. They should also consider the general heading on the card and give some thought to possible areas of discussion.

The bulk of this part of the test is by nature unpredictable. After one minute's summary of the article and 3 or 4 minutes' talking about their opinions on it, the conversation broadens according to the general heading on the card. The headings this year were: the Media, Cultural Life and Heritage, Patterns of Daily Life and Religion and Belief. The third and fourth proved by far the most popular, and candidates had plenty to say on each, with opinions being generally well-supported. The first two were chosen by fewer candidates. The scarcity of takers for the first card (the Media) was unexpected, as the topic has been of such current interest in recent months.

Candidates were naturally more nervous during this part of the test, but curiously, this did not result in significantly poorer performances than in the second part. In some cases, candidates rose admirably to the challenge and relaxed into a spontaneous and natural exchange with the Examiner. Occasionally, the conversation felt so "real" as to make it possible to forget, momentarily, that it was an exam. Having to improvise did stump some of the candidates, but a high proportion of them fared just as well in **section A** as in **section B**.

The weakest candidates (a minority) found it hard to support their views with arguments after an initial yes/no answer, and were nonplussed by why/how questions. They took refuge in simple statements and repetitive ideas. It must be said, however, that there were fewer weak discussions this year than the last. The very best candidates (a minority too) played an active role in the conversation and even introduced new topics themselves. Between these two extremes, the majority of performances showed good discussion skills and considerable resourcefulness.

Section B (Prepared Topic Discussion)

Most topics were well-suited to an 8-10 minute discussion, being neither too broad nor too narrow, or else fairly large topics approached in an intelligently selective way. So for example, if the candidate was talking about a long historical period, the presentation worked best when it clearly concentrated on particular aspects of that period, while perhaps touching more lightly on other points.

The most popular group of topics this year was history and politics, ranging from the most remote to the most recent, with well over a third of presentations falling into this category. The terrorist group Eta was one of the most explored subjects. The second most popular category was the arts and miscellaneous cultural topics, with just under a third of titles; art, literature, cinema, music, gastronomy, minority languages, native cultures and fiestas were all represented. In yet another thematic area, there were also a good number of presentations dealing with social and ethical problems. The rest of the subjects included sport (normally discussed in connection with political or social issues), the economy and the environment, the latter with one lone presentation. Science was entirely absent except for this one topic. Religion was discussed as an important part of many of the topics, but it was not chosen as the main topic by anyone.

We had some of the more familiar topics, for example the Arabs in Spain, bullfighting or drugs in Latin America, but many candidates had chosen to approach them in an original or personal way. All those who went beyond the purely descriptive in order to provide some analysis or personal view were highly rewarded, as long as they supported their insights convincingly.

Similarly, many presentations produced excellent conversations when an element of controversy or debate was brought into it. The contentious aspect could be implicit in the title, or else introduced under one of the headings.

There were also some unexpected and unusual topics, for example ethical debates in a very specific human or political context (in the Hispanic world, of course), or some lesser-known artists or performers.

Quality of language

Pronunciation

This was good overall and did not impair communication on the whole. These were among the most frequent errors:

- Pronunciation of *u* in words like *ataque, Miguel, guerra*.
- Anglicized initial vowels in words like *unidad, Europa, euro, usar, Uruguay*.
- Soft *g* in words like *religion* or *legislar*.
- Stress on wrong syllable in words like *regimen, democracia, Dalí*.
- Voiced *s* in words like *musulmán* or *invasión*.

It is especially important for candidates to learn the correct pronunciation of terms or proper nouns directly related to their theme.

Grammar

- Failure to conform to gender and number agreements between noun and adjective.
- Wrong gender. Words like *problema, tema, país, situación* and *solución* suffered more than others.
- Confusion between *ser/estar/haber*.
- Conjugation errors: missed subjunctives, preterite for imperfect, wrong person ending.
- Incorrect use of *gustar*.
- Inability to distinguish between certain pairs of words: *nada/ningún, este/esto, bueno/bien, para/por*.
- Omission of *s* in the hundreds: **noveciento, *cuatrociento*.
- Use of cardinal instead of ordinal for kings and queens: *Carlos *tres, Fernando *ocho* instead of *tercero, octavo*.

Among the more glaring mistakes were the (very rare) unconjugated infinitives and some invented participles: **hacido, *ponido, *vido*.

Vocabulary

Some pairs of words were often confused:

- *Policía/política*
- *Peligroso/peligro*
- *Tiempo/hora*
- *Derechos/derechas*
- *Nombre/número*

Invented words were also used, one of the most frequent being *resultado*.

Candidates with a more sophisticated and specific vocabulary achieved higher marks in Range and Accuracy than those using the more general and common words, for example *llevar a cabo/realizar actividades nocivas/perjudiciales* against *hacer cosas malas*.

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/02
Reading and Listening

Key Messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- focus only on the required information and communicate it precisely in their answers
- pay particular attention to conveying the required information to the examiner in unambiguous language.

General comments

This is the third year of the Cambridge Pre-U Spanish Principal examination. This report will look at the performance in this year, but will also concentrate on giving advice and guidance for future examinations.

This is a mixed-skills paper which allows candidates to show their Spanish-language skills in Reading and Listening. Candidates have 2 hours 15 minutes to complete the paper. They are advised to spend 1 hour 15 minutes on the Reading exercises and 1 hour on the Listening exercises. They may choose the order in which they prefer to tackle the exercises.

Part I – Reading (30 marks)

There are two passages with a combined limit of 600 words. The first one has reading comprehension questions in Spanish requiring answers in Spanish. Although these answers are not assessed for quality of language, candidates must not “lift” phrases from the passage. The second passage has questions in English that require answers in English. The third exercise is a retranslation from English into Spanish of a paragraph of about 75 words based on the stimulus of the earlier second reading passage.

Reading Text 1 was a passage about the number of shipwrecks submerged off the Spanish coastline and the Government’s attempts to protect them from international treasure seekers. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. It is important for candidates to use their own words. Full sentences are not required in the answers but the correct information must be conveyed successfully. Accent errors are only penalised if they affect meaning and slight spelling errors are accepted if the word is recognisable, but not if the spelling error leads to another word.

For **Question 1** candidates needed to explain that the Sella had set sail in search of submerged shipwrecks. For **Question 2** there was a straightforward answer of *Estados Unidos*, whereas the answer to **Question 3** required a more in-depth answer, with two marks available for an explanation that the Spanish authorities wished to avoid any future repetition of what had happened with the submerged Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes, whose treasure was discovered by an American ship. Similarly, in **Question 4** full information was required, but some candidates repeated the word *litoral* without explaining what it meant. In this exercise, candidates are required to use their own words as much as possible and not to “lift” words from the original passage. For **Question 5**, candidates needed to give a full explanation as to what had happened to the two ships mentioned: one sank in a battle and one sank in a storm. Candidates who “lifted” the expression *inmersiones de buceo* without explaining what it meant could not be given the mark for **Question 6**. It was necessary to use an expression such as *bucearán (hasta los barcos)*. Most candidates gave a correct response to **Question 7**, where both the simple answer *nada* was sufficient or a more detailed explanation, such as *tendrán que dejarlos en paz*. This type of exercise can be demanding in places, but overall the Examiners found that the majority of candidates displayed a good understanding of the Spanish material and were able to write their answers with an appropriate standard of Spanish language.

Reading Text 2 was an article discussing the situation of young people and alcohol. The material was generally understood by the candidates, who succeeded in answering the English questions set on the

passage in a fluent, comprehensible way. Many candidates scored high marks on this exercise. Most provided the correct information for **Question 8**, but some failed to gain the two marks available because they understood *valor* here to mean “value”, whereas in this context it means “courage”. In **Question 9**, the verb *se atenúan* was occasionally misunderstood as “extenuate” or “accentuate”. Most candidates gave a correct answer for **Questions 10 and 11**, although some marks were lost for incomplete answers where a candidate referred to “a liberal atmosphere” but failed to mention “but with limits/boundaries”. Another example of choosing the incorrect English word was apparent in **Question 12**, where some candidates wrote that parents “condone” rather than “condemn” the drinking of alcohol. Most candidates gained the mark available for **Question 13**.

Reading Text 3 was a paragraph in English based on the material in **Reading Text 2**. Candidates had to translate this into Spanish. The previous text contained words and phrases that could help them, but generally some manipulation of language was required. For marking purposes, the text is divided into 30 boxes and these are each awarded one mark or zero. The total score is converted to a final mark out of 10. The correct information should be communicated and suitable and accurate alternative renderings are accepted (e.g. few candidates knew the exact Spanish phrase for “no-man’s land”, but the Examiners also accepted good attempts, such as *tierra neutral*, *región de nadie*, *tierra de ningún hombre*, etc. Slight spelling errors are disregarded, but not if the meaning of the word is altered. The final mark scheme document gives a detailed list of versions that were accepted or not.

Most candidates performed well in this exercise and there were some pleasing translations. Although slight errors are permitted, the Examiners point to several common errors. These include confusion between *por* and *para*; difficulty with expressing the passive voice, such as “I was brought up by” (*me criaron* or *fui criado por*) or “has always been seen as” (*siempre se ha visto como*); missed subjunctives, such as *querían que yo les contara* or *¡ojalá/esperemos que sobrevivan!*; confusion between *ser* and *estar*; inability to use the expression *me doy cuenta de*; weak use of the imperfect tense (“what I was feeling” – *lo que sentía*); confusion between *tan* and *tantos*, etc.

Part II - Listening (30 marks)

Candidates have control of their own individual listening equipment. They may stop, rewind and replay the recording at will, and they may make notes and write their answers at any point. There are three passages with a combined limit of 700 to 800 words. The first has listening comprehension questions in Spanish requiring answers in Spanish, whereas questions for the second passage are in English and require answers in English. Answers in the target language are not assessed for quality of language. Candidates then listen to a third recording of about 250 words and summarise it in English using bullet points for guidance (maximum of 100 words).

The extract for **Listening Text 1** was an interview with the Peruvian writer and Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa. The test is marked positively and the objective is to communicate the correct response, but not to reproduce the original text word for word. It is important for candidates to use their own words. Vocabulary items need to be understood but they should be conveyed in an answer that is a logical response to the question. Full sentences are not required in the answers but the correct information must be conveyed successfully. Accent errors are only penalised if they affect meaning and slight spelling errors are accepted if the word is recognisable, but not if the spelling error leads to another word. It would appear that candidates understood the material well and produced sound responses. Most candidates answered **Questions 15 and 16** correctly, but some failed to give two reasons for **Question 17** out of the three possible (*lo encuentran incompatible con ser escritor*, *la política no les interesa* or *desprecian la política*). For **Question 18**, candidates needed to explain the idiomatic expression and the Examiners awarded a mark for a variety of suitable explanations where it was clear that the candidate had understood the material. The remaining three questions were usually understood and answered correctly.

In **Listening Text 2** candidates heard a report about the rules governing School transport in Spain. Candidates appeared to understand the material well and produced some good, thoughtful answers. Occasionally, however, rather than weak comprehension of the Spanish material, a candidate might have lost marks because of awkward English expression that did not convey the information correctly. Most candidates gained the full marks available for **Question 22**, but a few missed the reference to “check/inspect the vehicles”. **Question 23** led to some misunderstanding with the expression *la normativa vigente* (“the existing rules/laws”), believing that there was a reference to “people” and so gave answers such as “the number of people on the bus”. Another misunderstanding occurred with the meaning of the word *seguridad* for **Question 24**. In this context it means “safety” and not “security”. Some candidates lost marks in **Questions 25 and 26** because they did not give full information, omitting “appropriate” with the “licence” or “permit”, or omitting “unlimited” when referring to the “liability insurance”. Few candidates succeeded in

comprehending *seguros* here, which clearly refers to “insurance” and not to “safety” or “security”. Similarly, some candidates failed to give full information for **Question 27**, where it was necessary to say that the children must have their seat-belts fastened during the whole journey.

Listening Text 3 involved an interview with a biologist working with DNA. The test required a summary of his views in no more than 100 words in English. There were five bullet points of information to be covered. The full gist of the passage needs to be understood, there has to be detail and it needs to be well selected. The material should be expressed concisely, read well and be informative. The 10 marks available are awarded positively according to these criteria. Length is important. A summary with fewer than 80 words is likely to be self-penalising, as all the above criteria are unlikely to be met. On the other hand, candidates should beware of writing over-long summaries. It should be stressed that the Examiners operate a cut-off point and any material written beyond that point cannot be assessed, even if it is correct. Without doubt, candidates appeared to find the material accessible and there were some high marks awarded in this exercise. Most candidates appeared to be familiar with the vocabulary and concepts in the extract. The Examiners found that many candidates produced very good summaries that demonstrated a good understanding of the gist and detail of the original Spanish extract. They were able to infer ideas and showed an ability to select key facts and to communicate this information concisely.

Advice and Guidance to candidates

Listening and Reading Comprehension

What comprehension skills are required?

- The material for the texts may come from any of the Topic Areas in the Syllabus;
- the material could be factual or abstract;
- inference – you have to work out the answers;
- manipulation - you will be expected to manipulate the language;
- explanation – you will need to explain;
- synthesis – you may need to combine points of information;
- full information is always required – answers may be long;
- a high level of Quality of Language is expected – accuracy and sophistication are needed.

Answering Spanish questions set on the texts

- Remember that full sentences are not required. However, the full information asked for must be given;
- highlight the question words (*¿quién?*, *¿cómo?*, *¿cuándo?*, etc.), so that it is clear what information is needed;
- note how many marks are awarded for each question, so that no essential information is omitted;
- try to use your own words and do not reproduce the language of the texts word for word;
- practise building a wide Spanish vocabulary, so that you are at ease using synonyms for words in the texts;
- remember that your Spanish answers must make sense. If they do not, then there is something wrong.

Answering English questions set on the texts

- Write your answers in good English and check your spelling;
- beware of “false friends” (words that look alike in Spanish and English but have different meanings);
- realise that some Spanish words can often have two meanings; choose the correct one;
- find the appropriate English word, not necessarily one that looks similar to the Spanish word;
- make sure your whole answer sounds like real English and makes sense to someone reading it;
- make sure that you give the full information required; do not omit any essential information.

Retranslation for Reading Task 3

Translation involves moving material from one language to another. Good translation is a real art that needs much practice, but which is often neglected. The elusive ideal is a translation that reads well and that conveys accurately the sense of the original.

- Study the Spanish stimulus passage in Reading Task 2 carefully: it gives vocabulary and structures to be used and re-worked;

- read the English passage and understand what is required;
- study the setting, context and tone of the extracts;
- use sensible and intelligent guesses where vocabulary is not known;
- never leave gaps;
- think carefully about the grammar of the sentence being translated; Examiners regularly point to the failure of candidates to translate tenses correctly, to spot adjectival agreements and to link pronouns with the nouns to which they refer;
- beware of literal translation and poor/meaningless Spanish;
- beware paraphrasing – do not stray too far away from the original;
- but, on the other hand, do not be afraid to change word order, parts of speech, etc.;
- remember that accuracy is more important than creativity.

Summary skills for Listening Text 3

What are summary skills?

- all the bullet points have been covered
- the gist of the passage has been understood
- there is detail and it is well selected
- the material is expressed concisely
- the material reads well and is informative
- there is no incorrect information

Advice on summary skills

Writing a good summary is a matter of regular practice and also of acquiring the correct technique. An unsuccessful attempt at a summary may be due to lack of understanding of the original text, but more often than not, it is the way the exercise has been tackled that is at fault.

- Listen to the passage until you have a good idea of what the whole text is about;
- do not start summarising (or even translating) every sentence; you will not be discarding the less significant details and you will quickly run out of words;
- make rough notes on the question paper; you are not likely to have time to write out a full version of the summary and then write out a clean copy;
- it is often not necessary to know the meaning of every word – do not panic if you do not understand something;
- remember this is a summary – be selective – you cannot include every bit of information;
- make sure that you cover all the bullet points;
- spread the words: it is a common error to say too much about the first half of a passage and too little (or nothing at all) about the last parts;
- “prune” written summaries, removing unnecessary words without deleting the main points that you wish to convey;
- absolutely stick within the word limit – do not exceed 100 words;
- check the accuracy of everything you have written.

The Quality of your Spanish Language

- Remember that essential Spanish grammar knowledge is required; you should aim for responding in accurate language;
- be confident in your use of all Spanish tenses, in particular the present, preterite, imperfect and conditional, both regular and irregular;
- be able to use tenses with all persons, not just the first person;
- be able to switch between the first and third persons with confidence, as this is often required in comprehension passages;
- use pronouns with confidence, in particular *le* and *se*, and be able to switch from first person to third person pronouns and adjectives with ease (e.g. *mí* to *su* and *mío* to *suyo*, etc.);
- use *gustar* and similar verbs properly in all tenses;
- be strict when applying the correct articles and adjectival endings (e.g. *un problema*, *cinco rosas rojas*, etc.);
- know when accents are important (e.g. *trabajo* or *trabajó*? *esta*, *esta* or *ésta*?);
- be familiar with the subjunctive mood: know when and how to use it successfully;

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/03
Writing and Usage

Key messages

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

- in Part I, choose a title on which they have something to say and for which they have command of appropriate structures and lexis
- in Part I, plan their essay to produce well-structured and persuasive arguments
- in Part I, write complex sentences when appropriate, but without losing the thread of the argument
- in Part II, read each question carefully and make sure they understand the sense of the sentence(s)
- in Parts I and II, carefully proofread their responses.

General comments

Some very good pieces of work were submitted this year. The best candidates wrote well planned, interesting essays giving ample appropriate examples to support their points.

Points to note for future improvement include the need to wholly understand and fully address the question set. Some candidates, whose language is of a high level, wrote essays which did not treat all aspects of the essay title. To avoid repetition of the same idea detailed planning is advisable. Centres can help improve candidates' performance by focusing on spelling and the correct gender of words, word order, and avoiding direct translation from English such as the overuse of infinitives.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Discursive essay

The quality of the language was of a higher level than the essay technique among this year's candidates. The essay is marked following the published marking grids; for accuracy and linguistic range out of 24 marks. Development and organisation of ideas are then assessed out of 16 marks. Candidates are advised to write about 350-450 words in Spanish as a response, most candidates wrote beyond the recommendation.

Although this paper does not reward knowledge, it is advised that the information given in the essay should not be underpinned by false information and statistics or by generalizations. Unsupported or unsubstantiated opinions can affect the effectiveness of the argument.

Candidates can approach the questions in their own way and present a coherent argument from their own perspective as long as they fully address the scope of the question. Many candidates wrote well-structured essays with a clear introduction and conclusion in support of their argument. Weaker candidates wrote more general essays in which central aspects of the set question were not considered. Many candidates showed a good sense of idiom and an excellent range of vocabulary.

Focusing on developing a well-planned and organised argument supported with relevant examples remains the advice given for preparation for next year's examinations.

Part II: Usage

Exercise 1 Questions 2–6

This is a gap fill exercise, with the verbs to be manipulated offered in brackets. It tests a wide range of tenses and moods. Generally, candidates coped very well with this exercise. If problems occurred, they tended to be, like last year, on **Question 2**, where the correct use of a reflexive verb in the Preterite was tested, and **Question 5** where the Conditional tense is used with *haber*.

It was very pleasing to see that most candidates used the accent as a mark of the tense in **Questions 3 and 4** for the future and conditional tense.

Exercise 2 Questions 7–11

This grammar task exercise proved to be more demanding in terms of the language manipulation needed.

In order to answer **Question 8**, it was necessary to understand the consequence expressed by *Por no hablar ingles*. A number of candidates seemed unable to do this.

In **Question 10**, complete accuracy of grammatical manipulation is needed. Many candidates did not agree the gender *dos mujeres fueron atropelladas*. Candidates are advised to pay close attention to the grammar which is actually provided in the question and not to forget the adjectival agreement needed in some manipulations.

Question 11, proved to be the most challenging question in terms of the use of the correct relative pronoun; *para la cual, donde, en la que, en que, en la cual*.

Exercise 3 Questions 12–31

This exercise used a short article on hunger in the third world and what the UN and other organizations are doing to help the crisis. Candidates had to choose the right answer from a choice of four options. All the options provided are correct Spanish. The aim of this exercise is to test common grammar points. Most candidates scored highly in this exercise and many candidates scored full marks. When mistakes were made, they usually occurred on **Questions 14, 16, 22 and 30**.

PRINCIPAL COURSE SPANISH

Paper 9781/04
Cultural Topics and Texts

Key messages

- Candidates should always take care to focus their answers closely on the content and issues to which the question relates.
- Although “essay phrases” can serve usefully to connect ideas, when overused - or included merely to show the candidates’ familiarity with them - they can impede the flow of the argument and produce a negative effect.
- The introduction to an essay offers an opportunity to lead the reader towards the line of argument which is to follow: a simple statement of intent to answer the question wastes this opportunity.

General comments

This paper again generated many impressive answers. The key to scoring high ‘content’ marks is a focused and analytical response to the question, describing not just how but why authors/directors develop the themes/features under consideration. The most widespread error was not to focus on the terms of the question: instead, candidates sometimes dwelt on issues with which they felt comfortable, generating text that was probably familiar to them from practice essays.

Topic essays in particular still tended to be beyond the guideline length, with the additional paragraphs sometimes, but not always, put to good use. Most candidates had a reasonable grasp of historical issues, though some anomalies cropped up in answers to Topics 1 and 5. For language accuracy in the Topics section, a high proportion of candidates attained at least the ‘good’ box. Nearly all answers were comprehensible throughout, and there were fewer bulky ‘essay phrases’ clogging up their text than the previous year. The most widespread language error was perhaps over-use of the subjunctive after *aunque*.

Candidates answered on three Part I Topics and three Part II Texts, though with a marked preference for García Márquez among the texts. Introductory paragraphs in both sections were sometimes wasted, offering little more than a statement of intent to answer the question. In some cases candidates from the same Centre produced similar opening sentences or paragraphs, suggesting that they were striking out down the path of a familiar answer rather than targeting the terms of the question. Examples from the texts/films were invaluable, provided that the candidate demonstrated that s/he understood how they related to the question.

Comments on specific questions

Part I: Cultural Topics

Question 1

- A** Perhaps surprisingly for a topic rooted in historical events, candidates struggled to address the *transcurso del tiempo* element of the question. Good responses looked at how Sender's text worked at different temporal levels, with Mosén Millán's retrospective reflections framing references to undated political upheavals. More limited answers tended to list historical events.
- B** This much-attempted question gave candidates the opportunity to draw a link between the private anxieties confronting the protagonists and the historical upheavals going on around them. Many successfully made that connection, although some failed to differentiate between the characters' personal crises and their political positions. In this context, those writing on *Réquiem* found the guilt-ridden Mosén Millán a more fruitful subject than Paco, whose 'crisis' is more political than personal. For *¡Ay, Carmela!*, candidates overlooked the linkage between the protagonists' stage performance and the personal crisis at the heart of Carmela and Paulino's relationship – the question of the church wedding. Helpful analogies were nonetheless drawn between, on the one hand, Paulino and Mosén Millán, and, on the other, Carmela and Paco. The best answers avoided over-politicising Carmela, pointing out that her opposition to the nationalists was based on emotional aversion rather than ideological commitment to the Republic (references to her maternal instincts fitted well here). Answers on *La Plaza del Diamante* needed to make clear that Natalia was apolitical, and that her crisis revolved around the survival of her family. On quality of language, manipulating the verb *resolver* proved a challenge for some.

Question 3

- A** This question gave scope to candidates with an interest in cinema to write about what draws viewers to Almodóvar's work, and to evaluate his place in film history. Some of the terminology proved hard to manipulate, but candidates who had done some background reading were able to use technical terms such as *hiperrealismo* to good effect.
- B** Candidates showed an admirable understanding of the term *compasión*, with only occasional confusion with related terms such as *amor* and *solidaridad*. Candidates focused mostly on *compasión* between the characters, leaving the issue of Almodóvar's compassion for his characters relatively unexplored. Likewise, Almodóvar's use of *compasión*, though well described, was less well analysed in terms of its connection to the values reflected in and promoted through these films. The theme of death in Almodóvar's cinema featured prominently in answers from one Centre, though without a convincing connection being made between this and the theme of compassion.

Question 5

- A** Candidates who answered this question successfully referred to the historical backdrop to both Lorca and Esquivel texts, as well as the use of symbolism in the former and magical realism in the latter to communicate the emotional reality of women's plight in the face of entrenched tradition. Some candidates convincingly cited Lorca's description of his play as a *documental fotográfico* as evidence for the realism of the text. However, they were outnumbered by those who claimed that *La casa de Bernarda Alba* was an attack on Franco – proof that an accurate awareness of the chronology of 1936 is needed to locate the play's historical context. (A better argument would have been that the play anticipated the rise of Franco.) Assertions that 8 years of mourning was an exaggeration needed some supporting evidence. Answers benefitted from referring to the all-consuming final scene between Tita and Pedro in *Como agua para chocolate*.

- B** The question here involved an *hasta qué punto* evaluation task, followed by a *por qué* analytical requirement. Many candidates pointed out the generational divide between oppressed and oppressing women in Lorca and Esquivel, with María Josefa and Rosaura the exceptions to the rule. Tradition, class and widowhood were also cited to explain differing social attitudes among female characters, the latter involving the need to fill the conventionally male role as head of the household. Some candidates argued that the passion felt by Tita and Adela for their respective suitors implied their submission to the *machista* social model. A number of candidates made the more convincing assertion that female oppressors were themselves victims of the *machista* culture. Gertrudis' status as neither oppressor nor oppressed was also well discussed.

Question 8

- A** This question was answered by only one candidate.

Question 10

- A** Candidates offered some excellent textual analysis on this passage. The best answers recognised that Castel's behaviour is in many respects similar to that of rational, well-balanced individuals, though with subtle differences indicating his more manic attributes. References to other scenes sometimes led the answers into less relevant territory.
- B** This question was well attempted, although most candidates had difficulty doing justice to both aspects of it. Some dwelt too much on Castel's psychology (the subject of **Question A**). Answers benefitted from some degree of scepticism about Castel's account of the relationship (e.g. the notion that Maria understood him) and from considering to what extent Castel's perception was coloured by fantasy. References to Castel's relationship with his mother often required more evidence to substantiate the point they were making.
- C** Candidates who attempted this question concentrated on the nature of the first-person narrative. References to the role of dreams and Castel's painting were also beneficial.

Question 12

- A** Few candidates were drawn to this question. Those who did had the opportunity to identify links to key themes and concepts in the novel for further exploration in their answer.
- B** A number of candidates overlooked the term 'critique' in the question, and instead wrote about 'García Márquez's mockery of' or 'attacks on' aspects of Latin American society: this approach neglected the subtle way in which García Márquez allows readers to draw their own conclusions about the society of the novel, and also his use of the narrator as the intermediary between himself and the text. Almost all answers identified machismo, honour and official incompetence as targets of the critique, with more comprehensive answers also referring to the Church, social class and individual responsibility/collective guilt. Candidates overlooked the point (made in the first line of the indicative content) that García Márquez opts not to name the town (or country) where the story is set, nor to refer to the year it takes place, thereby giving it a universal dimension within a Latin American setting. However, candidates often referred to the real-life inspiration for the novel to good effect.
- C** Candidates embarking on this question generally – but not universally – showed a good understanding of irony, and could identify numerous ironies in the text. A few candidates interpreted the question to imply that the novel was *only* an exercise in irony and framed their answers accordingly. There was at times some confusion between irony, sarcasm and satire. The stronger answers included the nature of the *crónica* itself as a key irony in the novel.

Issues that arose in answer to all parts of **Question 12** included frequent misrepresentation of the scene at the start of the fourth chapter, with erroneous claims that Padre Amador declared the brothers innocent or described the murder as *un acto de gran dignidad*. References to Professor Hart's Critical Guide were often well used, but at other times seemed not to be fully understood, or to be of questionable relevance: examples of this were assertions about Bayardo San Román as a symbol of capitalism, the detective style of the novel, García Márquez's aversion to gold, his hostility to the Pinochet dictatorship, the bad luck associated with the colour yellow and the Calderonian honour code. Many of these are learned points appropriate to the context in which they are cited in the Critical Guide, but they can come across as forced or unsubstantiated when answering exam questions on other topics. Some candidates seemed keen to write about the honour code beyond the requirements of the question. By comparison, fate and predestination, though embedded in the novel's title, were less readily discussed.