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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 migration between Latin America and 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 fourth 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 an article in *Mía* magazine, in which Alba, a Colombian immigrant in Madrid describes her experiences and the difficulties she has had to face. This text was generally well understood by candidates. There were three linguistic exercises on the passage: (i) 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. *Concienciarme* and *realizar suplicias* were the two expressions that caused most misunderstanding; (ii) required a grammatically correct alternative version of some expressions from the passage. This was done quite well, but some candidates still had difficulties with *gustar*, even at this level; (iii) required an expression to be found in the text that meant the opposite of the definitions given. This was done very well and most candidates scored full marks in this exercise.

Texto B was an extract from an editorial in a Bolivian newspaper about the emigration situation in South America, with a cloze test. The passage seemed to be well understood and candidates generally scored well. All of the words to be inserted were verbs and candidates displayed a good understanding of their use.

Texto C(i) was an investigative journalism piece from *El País* about the bad conditions that illegal migrant workers have to face in the agricultural areas of southern Spain. 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. There were no serious misunderstandings of the material and the only lexical items that caused some problems were *riñones* and *pillar el paro*. 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 C(ii) 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, but some had difficulty in transferring that understanding into good English language and some answers did not read well. Lexical items that caused problems in context were: *un viento que corta, menudas, ecuatorianos, se convierte en, decenas, furgonetas, cortinillas echadas, rezan, engullen, un jornalero a la espera*, etc.

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 D featured an interview with the Colombian Ambassador to Madrid in which he discusses the situation of Colombian immigrants in Spain. 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. This year there was a choice of two tasks. The first was a discursive essay on the advantages and disadvantages of tourism for Spain and the second was a creative essay, involving continuing the story in the first extract from the point where the text ended. 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 the situation of migration into Spain. 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 migration issues and other nationalities who emigrate to Spain (eg. North Africans) might be made, it was expected that the bulk of the essay would refer specifically to Spain and Latin America and include names, places, events, etc. The essay should make reference to the problems facing the countries of Latin America and the reasons that lead people to migrate, as well as the situation they find on arrival in Spain.

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, 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 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 should write in the first person and should put themselves in the position of an imaginary immigrant. Any Latin American country could be chosen and the essay should describe the reasons that led to the person emigrating, the experiences s/he encountered in Spain and hopes for the future. 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. Many candidates who chose this option wrote vivid accounts of personal experiences in a highly creative way.

Advice and Guidance for Candidates

In the fourth 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.

Grade Boundaries

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Grade	Max. Mark	Distinction	Merit
Raw boundary mark	200	144	116

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