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CAPE[®] SPANISH UNIT 1



Subject Report

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CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION®**

MAY-JUNE 2025

**SPANISH
UNIT 1**

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INTRODUCTION

This report is based on candidates' responses in the May-June 2025 CAPE Spanish Unit 1 examination. This unit — La Familia, La Sociedad Y El Medio Ambiente — consists of the following modules.

- Module 1: El individuo, la familia y la vida diaria
- Module 2: La sociedad y los asuntos sociales
- Module 3: El medio ambiente

These modules are tested through the following papers.

- Paper 01 — Listening Comprehension
- Paper 02 — Reading and Writing
- Paper 03 — Literary Analysis and Themes
- Paper 04 — School-Based Assessment

This year, 217 candidates registered to take the CAPE Spanish Unit 1 examination. The overall performance of candidates on this unit remained consistent with candidate performances in 2024 and 2023. In 2025, 97 per cent of candidates received acceptable grades, Grades I to V, compared with 96 per cent in 2024 and 98 per cent in 2023.

PAPER 01 — Listening Comprehension

Paper 01 — Listening Comprehension — consists of six compulsory questions arranged into two sections covering all three modules. Two questions are based on Module 1, one question on Module 2 and three questions on Module 3. Knowledge of the entire unit is required.

The aim of this paper is to test candidates' listening skill. In Section A, which is based on Modules 1 and 3, there are five short selections in Spanish and short answers are to be provided in English. Section B, which is based on Module 2, consists of an extended conversation, interview commentary or discussion in Spanish with questions in English which candidates are expected to answer in English. The maximum number of marks available for this paper is 72. The paper contributes 30 per cent to the final assessment. Each module contributes 10 per cent.

The highest score achieved by any candidate on Paper 01 was 65.71. The mean score was 43.83 out of 72 (60.88 per cent) and the standard deviation was 10.58.

PAPER 02 — Reading and Writing

Paper 02, Reading and Writing, consists of seven questions. Familiarity with the entire unit is required. The aim of this paper is to test reading and writing skills. Section A consists of two passages based on Modules 1 and 3 requiring short responses. Candidates must answer all questions in Section A. Section B consists of five essay questions based on Module 2. Candidates are required to write an essay in Spanish on one of the five questions. The total number of marks available for this paper is 72. The paper contributes 30 per cent to the final assessment. Each module contributes 10 per cent.

The highest score achieved by any candidate on Paper 02 was 63. The mean score was 40.08 out of 72 (55.67 per cent) and the standard deviation was 11.34.

SECTION A — Reading Comprehension

In this section of Paper 02, candidates were presented with two passages written in Spanish. They were required to respond to questions based on these passages. The questions for Passage 1 — *El Arte Cubano* — were written in Spanish. Candidates were required to respond using Spanish. For Passage 2 — *La Ebullición Global en México* — the questions were written in English and candidates were required to respond in English.

Passage 1— El Arte Cubano

In this compulsory question, candidates were required to show their understanding of a passage in the target language, by responding in Spanish, using their own words, to questions set in Spanish. They were also required to express their opinion on issues raised in the passage.

Part (a)

The question, pitched at the literal level of comprehension, required candidates to identify two consequences of the political situation in Cuba on the arts. Candidates were generally able to identify that artists were forced to leave Cuba. However, some responses used inaccurate or imprecise vocabulary such as 'viajar' instead of stronger, context-appropriate terms like *escapar*, *exiliarse*, or *abandonar*. Inaccuracies suggested that some candidates did not fully grasp the implication of being forced to leave.

Part (b)

This question, set at the inferential level of comprehension, required that candidates explain why Cuban artists are accepted in other countries. It required connecting facts and interpreting how background and artistic style influence reception abroad. Some candidates struggled to make the connection that would allow them to provide a full and coherent explanation. While they often mentioned artists leaving due to political issues or having unique talent, few clearly expressed both the complexity of the political situation and the unique blend of cultural influences in Cuban art. Some answers lacked the operative adjectives/phrases to describe the political climate/complex situation.

Part (c)

In this question, candidates were required to identify three examples of Cuban artistic expression from the passage. It was very well done; most candidates correctly listed *music*, *painting*, *photography*, and other accepted examples. However, a few candidates provided irrelevant examples that were not mentioned in the text.

Part (d)

This question assessed candidates' ability to effectively explain how the tobacco industry and Cuban art are connected, particularly by identifying the symbolic and cultural value of tobacco packaging and its influence on artistic identity and representation. Candidates who performed well referenced

the use of artistic elements in branding and packaging. They also discussed the role of such designs in promoting Cuban cultural imagery. Though many identified that there was a relationship between Cuban tobacco and art, they did not effectively articulate how this connection was manifested. A common shortcoming was the failure to infer that the designs of tobacco packaging are not merely decorative, but serve as a cultural canvas, thus contributing to Cuban visual identity and influencing broader artistic expression

Part (e)

This question required candidates to explain how Cuban art evolved. It required comparison and a summary of development over time, showing understanding of style and cultural independence. Candidates performed moderately well/satisfactorily. Many attempted to describe the evolution but missed critical elements such as referencing both dimensions (*dos dimensiones*) or qualifying the use of colour. In addition, a common oversight was the failure to show how Cuban art transitioned from colonial or imitative styles to more authentic, critical and expressive forms that reflect the nation's unique cultural and political experiences.

Part (f)

This question required candidates to interpret the figurative language in the expression, '*unas obras...sirvan para colorear...*' and to demonstrate understanding of the metaphorical use of colour in Cuban art as a means of masking, softening, or beautifying harsh social realities. This was the most challenging question for candidates. Many struggled to move beyond literal interpretations of *colorear*. Responses were often too literal and lacked reference to the figurative intent of the expression. While a fair number of candidates recognized that colour referred to vibrancy and joy in Cuban art, fewer made the evaluative leap to explain that the use of bright, cheerful colours serves to mask or soften the difficult/harsh realities of life in Cuba.

Part (g)

In this question, candidates were required to identify the two ethnic groups stated in the passage as having influenced Cuban art. This question was straightforward, requiring direct retrieval from the text and as such, most candidates were successful in their response. While many candidates correctly identified *africanos* and *españoles*, some responses included an additional element, *tradiciones*, which was directly lifted from the passage. A small number of candidates provided only one correct group or ethnicity.

Part (h)

Pitched at the evaluative level, this question required candidates to express an informed opinion, using relevant examples or reasons to show how art connects to societal elements in their own country. Candidates were expected to go beyond naming art forms; they had to explain the relationship between art and society. Performance on this question varied widely. Some candidates gave strong, contextually relevant examples of how art interacts with social issues, culture, and national identity. These included references to music highlighting political issues, visual art

promoting cultural heritage, art forms conveying social commentary and the expression of societal perspective on relevant issues, or dance reflecting community traditions. However, some candidates mentioned art forms and then made weak attempts at explaining the connection with different aspects of the society.

Passage 2 — La Ebullición Global en México

In this compulsory question, candidates were required to read a passage in Spanish and respond in English to questions set in English. This task assessed their ability to identify and analyse information at different levels of comprehension: understanding and conveying the meaning of the text by extracting key details, interpreting ideas, analysing relationships, and explaining key phrases or idiomatic expressions in context.

Part (a)

This question, pitched at the literal level of comprehension, required candidates to identify two distinct effects/consequences explicitly stated in the passage that resulted from the record temperatures experienced in Mexico during July 2023. Most candidates were able to identify at least one correct consequence from the passage, such as *249 deaths* or *families fleeing fire*. However, a significant number of candidates did not quantify the fatalities; this was essential for credit. Others misinterpreted the information (particularly regarding workers fainting in unbearable heat) and included irrelevant effects not mentioned in the text.

Part (b)

This question, set at the inferential level, assessed candidates' ability to explain the reasoning behind the metaphor "Global Boiling", drawing on multiple textual details that highlight the unprecedented intensity of the heat. Candidates generally grasped the concept of record-breaking heat. Strong responses referenced multiple extreme records (hottest ever recorded, hottest three-week period, hottest days, and highest ocean temperatures). Weak responses either used vague language without sufficient supporting detail or relied on general world knowledge rather than textual evidence. A few mistranslated *lapso* as 'lapse', leading to distortion of meaning.

Part (c)

For this part, candidates were required to extract three specific impacts of El Niño on Mexico from the information stated in the passage. Many candidates were able to correctly identify two impacts such as *affected public health* and *the increase in the demand for energy needed for cooling*. The best responses specified that *the energy demand was for cooling, and that ecosystems were threatened, not destroyed*. Misuse of overly strong terms like 'destroyed' or vague terms like 'affected' resulted in loss of marks.

Part (d)

This question required that candidates identify and explain at least three ways a climate emergency declaration can support mitigation efforts. Candidates were expected to connect these actions to

reducing the effects of climate change. Candidates performed satisfactorily in this question. Stronger responses included both the allocation of resources and the adoption of ambitious policies, as well as a third element linking public awareness to the seriousness of climate change. Weaker responses, however, omitted this awareness or they gave generic statements about solving the problem without explaining the mechanism. Some candidates also referenced their global knowledge on the topic, thus resulting in producing responses that were not stated in the passage.

Part (e)

For this question, candidates were required to show the connection between reducing temperatures and preserving resources, for example, forests and water bodies. Candidates should have explained how these resources help regulate climate.

Similar to the previous question, candidates performed satisfactorily. Stronger candidates connected protecting forests with climate regulation (cooling effect) and linked water resource preservation with maintaining lower temperatures. Weaker candidates omitted the connection between preservation and climate regulation or merely stated ‘regulating the climate’ without explaining how. Again, some responses drew on global knowledge rather than specifics from the text.

Part (f)

For this question, which was pitched at the evaluative level of comprehension, candidates were required to present the contrast in Mexico’s approach — its stated commitment to reduce carbon emissions via mitigation strategies versus its continued dependence on fossil fuels and weak programme transparency. Candidates should have captured this contradiction explicitly or through contrasting expressions but the question proved challenging to most candidates; only a few successfully presented the contrast. In addition, many candidates listed one strategy only or they misinterpreted the commitment as a compromise.

Parts (g) to (k)

This group of questions assessed candidates’ ability to locate specific words or phrases from the text that are equivalent in meaning to given expressions. This exercise tested candidates’ vocabulary in context at the literal comprehension level; performance was generally very good. Most candidates demonstrated the ability to scan the passage effectively and identify the correct lexical items or phrases corresponding to the given meanings. This suggests that most candidates understood how the target expressions were used within the original context.

Recommendations for Teachers

- Have students practise substitution activities, replacement and transformation exercises, and the summarizing and paraphrasing of words in order to improve their ability to use their own words and expressions.
- Have students practise responding to comprehension questions that are geared at developing the different cognitive levels of the Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge.
- Provide students with practice targeting interpreting figurative language in literary and cultural texts.
- Strengthen inferential and evaluative skills by linking ideas logically, explaining how or why, and interpreting figurative or implied meanings in the text.
- Model paraphrasing techniques: Reduce reliance on direct lifting and help students express answers in their own words while retaining accuracy.
- Increase use of varied practice: Incorporate literal, inferential, and evaluative questions in class exercises so students can develop a balanced skill set.
- Simulate exam conditions: Provide timed practice sessions that include scanning, targeted retrieval, and constructing coherent, concise responses.
- Model inferential reasoning: Practise showing the link between cause and effect rather than stating disconnected facts.
- Discourage over-reliance on global knowledge: Emphasize that credit is awarded for information drawn from the passage.
- Strengthen paraphrasing techniques: Help students move beyond direct lifting by rephrasing while retaining meaning.

SECTION B — Essays

This section assessed candidates' ability to express themselves in Spanish in an analytical and logical manner related to the themes outlined in Module 2 of the syllabus. Candidates were required to write an essay, in Spanish, of 300–350 words, on one of five topics given. Candidates were assessed on content and presentation, (organization and coverage of the topic, structure, logical reasoning, relevance and inclusion of facts, ideas and opinions) and correctness of expression (range of vocabulary and idioms, as well as accuracy of grammatical structures).

Question 3

El paro existe porque no hay trabajo para todos. Discute.

This question was moderately popular as it recorded the second highest number of attempts. Candidates were required to examine the causes of unemployment and discuss whether it is primarily due to a shortage of available jobs, while also considering alternative contributory factors. In responding, candidates demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the topic and were able to provide a range of ideas related to the causes of unemployment. Most responses supported the view that structural, educational, technological, and systemic issues limit employment opportunities. Many candidates argued that lack of access to formal education or required qualifications often bars individuals from the workforce. Some highlighted discrimination based on socio-economic status, gender, or ethnicity, which limits access to opportunities. Others mentioned technological advancements and automation replacing human labour, especially in specific sectors, for example, manufacturing. Economic instability and poor governance were also discussed as systemic contributors to unemployment. Some candidates were able to successfully present counter-arguments highlighting the incongruence of available jobs and worker expectations/preferences, suggesting that not all unemployment is due to lack of opportunity. Some also argued that some individuals, though qualified, opt not to work for personal or cultural reasons.

In general, candidates should be commended for their use of relevant examples and real-world references, and a balanced treatment of the topic, for the most part, where they gave both supporting points and counter-arguments as well as logical structure and paragraphing. In some cases, however, arguments were repeated or insufficiently developed, and a few essays either lacked a clear thesis or shifted focus from unemployment to poverty in general.

Question 4

Los medios de comunicación tradicionales ya no desempeñan un papel importante en la sociedad. Discute.

This question was the third most widely attempted. It allowed candidates to explore the changing media landscape in light of the declining role of traditional media in modern society, weighing this against the continuing influence and reliability of such media. Many argued that traditional media has been replaced by social media and instant digital communication. It was frequently noted that the internet offers immediate access to news and information, making traditional outlets appear outdated. Some discussed the growing influence of content creators and influencers, who are perceived as more authentic and relatable. The psychological impacts of unrealistic media portrayals, particularly from visual media, were also cited. A common counterpoint was that traditional media remains valuable for providing verified, educational, and in-depth content. Some candidates highlighted the continued trust placed in traditional news outlets, especially during crises.

Whereas candidates made good use of comparative language and linking expressions and in some cases, integrated digital literacy issues, some candidates confused traditional media with technological devices and their essays therefore lacked distinction between traditional and digital media, thus preventing clarity and weakening their arguments.

Question 5

Es importante preservar la diversidad religiosa. Discute.

This was one of the least attempted questions. Performance was generally satisfactory to weak. The question required that candidates discuss the value of preserving religious diversity in multicultural societies, including benefits, while also considering potential drawbacks. Most candidates who attempted this question supported preserving religious diversity as a way of promoting tolerance, empathy, and cultural understanding. Some linked diversity to the development of moral values and social harmony. A few highlighted the importance of religious pluralism in multicultural societies, especially for migrants. Where present, counter-arguments mentioned religious conflict, intolerance, or secularism as reasons why diversity might be problematic or less relevant today. Ideas were generally coherent with the occasional use of real-world scenarios and examples; however, many candidates displayed challenges in distinguishing between the related but distinct concepts of religion versus religious diversity. As a result, quite a few essays focused solely on religion in general and not on diversity specifically. The lack of counter-arguments also led to imbalanced discussions.

Question 6

El sistema escolar no favorece el desarrollo del talento de los estudiantes. Discute.

In this question, which was moderately done, candidates were required to assess whether the education system supports or hinders the development of students' talents. Some produced thoughtful responses, while others struggled to directly link schooling practices with talent development. Among the main arguments postulated was the fact that academic overload stifles creativity and other non-academic talents. Others included systemic inequalities regarding access to extracurricular activities or advanced programs. A few strong responses mentioned the undervaluing of vocational or artistic skills in traditional school models.

Candidates who refuted the statement cited inclusive education and wide-ranging opportunities, for example, clubs, competitions and arts programmes. Others defended quality teaching and differentiated instruction as a means of identifying and nurturing student potential. Several responses demonstrated clear structure and relevant examples. Some candidates also reflected awareness of their own educational context, which added authenticity to their argument. One main weakness observed was the failure to explain how points related to inequity in the education system connected directly to talent development.

Question 7

La responsabilidad de eliminar el crimen de la sociedad recae en el gobierno y no en el individuo. Discute.

This question was attempted by most candidates. It required that they evaluate whether the responsibility for crime prevention lies mainly with the government or with individuals. The discussion was expected to have explored the government's role in policy and social support alongside the responsibilities of individuals, families and community. Candidates provided a range of thoughtful responses, with balanced arguments and real-life references. Many argued that the government must provide education, employment, and social programs to prevent crime. Several candidates mentioned that the government has the legal and financial power to enact change. Some explored systemic solutions such as targeting poverty and dropout rates. Strong counterpoints noted that individuals and families must also act ethically and teach good values. Some mentioned the role of religious and educational institutions in instilling discipline and a few argued that crime prevention requires a partnership between the state and its citizens. For the most part, candidates provided a balanced structure, presenting both sides of the argument clearly, and using relevant and rational examples and proposals to support their arguments. Good use of transitional phrases and cohesive devices were also evident. Nevertheless, some thesis statements lacked clarity or were underdeveloped. Additionally, some candidates diverged into focusing on causes of crime and violence, or solutions to the problem, without linking them to responsibility.

Overall Comments and Recommendations

Strengths Observed

- Many candidates demonstrated the ability to organize their essays with an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- Attempt at balance: Several essays presented both supporting points and counter-arguments.
- Use of real-world examples: Stronger candidates used current events, statistics, and examples to support their arguments.
- Relevance: Most candidates attempted to remain focused on the core issue in each question.
- Many essays used appropriate linking words and transitions to improve readability.
- Broad vocabulary and sentence structure: A few candidates with stronger control of Spanish used a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary, making their meaning consistently clear.

Weaknesses Observed

- Misinterpretation of key terms: Some candidates misunderstood or oversimplified central ideas, for example, they confused religion with religious diversity.
- Some candidates presented one-sided arguments with no opposing view, leading to weak critical balance. A few restated the same point in different ways without adding depth or new information.
- Superficial analysis: Some candidates listed causes or effects without clearly linking them to the essay topic or expanding on their significance.
- Grammar and vocabulary limitations: The work of weaker candidates contained errors in tense and agreement, or vocabulary choices that interfered with clarity.
- Underdeveloped points: While candidates often identified key arguments related to the essay prompt, some failed to expand on these ideas with sufficient explanation, reasoning, or concrete examples. As a result, the argument remained superficial or generic, lacking the depth and clarity required at the CAPE level.

Recommendations

- Embed the mark scheme into teaching: Use the official mark scheme to create simplified rubrics or checklists for peer and self-evaluation. This helps students familiarize themselves with assessment expectations and improves feedback quality.
- Use the writing process explicitly: Teach students to plan, draft, revise, and edit their essays. Scaffold writing tasks to build clarity and coherence over time.
- Model essay analysis and structure: Teach students how to create clear, well-structured thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions, and how to analyse prompts, especially distinguishing between expository and argumentative tasks.
- Address underdeveloped points: Help students move beyond simply stating relevant ideas by teaching them how to fully develop arguments. Use frameworks to guide them in expanding

their points with reasoning, real-world examples, and clear connections to the essay question. Teach full point development, that is, emphasize the need for ensuring that the arguments, explanations and examples link back to the question. Provide models of both strong and weak development so students can learn to recognize and improve their own.

- Facilitate debates and discussions: Use increased creative approaches such as role plays or simulations to help students articulate arguments and counter-arguments orally before translating them into writing.
- Promote real-world engagement: Encourage students to engage with authentic materials (podcasts, news, documentaries) on relevant social issues. Guide them in analysing and forming opinions on these topics, which they can then develop into written arguments.
- Use digital platforms for expression: Consider having students develop blogs or digital journals where they share and justify opinions in Spanish, giving them real audiences and authentic writing purposes.
- Build thematic vocabulary and grammar in context: Integrate relevant vocabulary and grammar instruction into discussions and writing on common themes like crime, education, or media.
- Emphasize balance between language and content: Remind students that clear, correct Spanish and sound, logical arguments are equally important in earning high marks.
- Encourage critical thinking: Design activities that help students analyse, evaluate, and synthesize information, fostering deeper reasoning and argumentation skills.
- Maximize opportunities for language production: Provide varied opportunities for students to express themselves in spoken and written Spanish, so they can develop fluency, precision, and confidence in argumentation.

PAPER 03 — Literary Analysis and Themes

Paper 03 — Literary Analysis and Themes, consists of eight questions. Candidates are required to answer two questions — one from Section A (Literary Analysis) and one from Section B (Thematic Essays). Candidates must use a different text to answer each question. Knowledge of the theme(s) selected is required. The aim of this paper is to test candidates' ability to understand and analyse literary texts.

Section A consists of four literary excerpts requiring short responses in Spanish to questions set on the excerpts. Candidates are expected to describe and analyse one or more of the following: plot, setting, character and narrative or dramatic techniques related to one excerpt.

Section B consists of four essay questions on the set themes. Candidates are required to answer one question. The questions are written in English. Candidates are required to refer in detail to one text for the theme of choice. Candidates must not answer Section A and Section B using the same text.

The total number of marks available for this paper is 48. These marks are equally distributed across the three modules. The paper contributes 20 per cent to the final assessment. Each module contributes 6.66 per cent.

The highest score achieved by any candidate on Paper 03 was 42. The mean score was 26.22 out of 48 (54.63 per cent) and the standard deviation was 7.59.

SECTION A — Literary Analysis

In Section A, candidates were required to respond to one of four possible extracts from the prescribed texts on the syllabus. Each question comprised four parts, Parts (a) to (d). These questions required candidates to summarize the plot, identify point of view as well as identify and comment on literary devices and techniques used in the given extracts. Required responses in this section were *limited to the given extract and not the entire text*. All answers were required to be written in Spanish and candidates were allowed the use of a dictionary.

Question 1: El encuentro entre Pedro y Tita

Candidates provided satisfactory responses for most parts of the question.

In Part (a), most candidates were able to identify the series of events that comprised the plot. They highlighted Pedro expressing his love to Tita and her response to his proposal. However, some candidates failed to mention that the encounter took place in the kitchen. There were also instances where candidates quoted from the extract to relate the plot.

In Part (b), most candidates correctly identified the narrative point of view as third-person omniscient narration. They also commented on the objectivity of this type of narration. However, some candidates did not provide adequate quotation to justify third-person omniscient narration. In some instances, 'e' and 'su' were used as examples of third-person omniscient narration in lieu of a detailed example such as *El vacío que se sentía en el estómago no se alivió*.

In Part (c), most candidates were able to provide a valid commentary on the importance of Pedro in the extract, giving appropriate supporting details. They commented on his role as a catalyst for tension in the extract. However, some candidates focused their responses on Pedro's specific actions instead of the broader role he played in creating an atmosphere of tension and highlighting Tita's emotional conflict.

In Part (d), most candidates correctly identified the mood in the last paragraph of the extract as one of sadness, frustration or anguish. Candidates provided a valid explanation and a detailed example from the extract to support their response. However, a few candidates commented on the mood of the entire extract instead of focusing on the earmarked paragraph.

Question 2: Mi amiga Sally

Candidates provided satisfactory responses for most parts of the question.

In Part (a), most candidates were able to identify the series of events that took place in the extract. However, some candidates failed to mention that despite being popular at school, Sally had lost her best friend, Cheryl. There were also instances where candidates quoted from the extract to relate the plot.

In Part (b), most candidates correctly identified two character traits of the narrator, providing valid supporting details for each character trait. However, there were instances where candidates focused on emotions instead of personality traits.

In Part (c), some candidates made valid comments on the function of the questions in the extract and justified their responses with an appropriate example. However, there were instances where responses lacked clarity in explaining the significance of the questions.

In Part (d), most candidates provided a valid commentary on the concerns of young people as portrayed in the extract. They identified conflict with parents, peer pressure and lack of freedom as challenges faced by young people in the extract. However, there were instances where candidates focused solely on providing examples in lieu of offering a deeper analysis of the issues faced by young people in the extract.

Question 3: ¡Adiós, Tío Sergio!

Candidates provided satisfactory responses for most parts of the question.

In Part (a), most candidates were able to identify the series of events that comprised the plot. They mentioned Tío Sergio boarding the boat to leave Puerto Rico and highlighted the narrator's reaction to his departure. However, some candidates failed to mention the narrator's recollection of Tío Sergio distributing his belongings among the children while others quoted from the extract to relate the plot.

In Part (b), most candidates correctly identified the narrative point of view as first-person narration. They also commented on the subjectivity or limited viewpoint of this type of narration. However, some candidates did not mention that the narrator was the protagonist while others did not provide adequate quotation to justify first-person narration. In some instances, 'yo' and 'mi' were used as examples of first-person narration in lieu of a detailed example as was expected, for example, *Yo pensaba todo el tiempo en la tarde del domingo antepasado.*

In Part (c), most candidates correctly identified the narrator's emotional state in the last paragraph as one of confusion, frustration, sadness or anger. They also provided an explanation supported by a valid quotation.

In Part (d), most candidates identified the literary device as a simile and defined it in context. However, some candidates were unable to provide a valid commentary on the effectiveness of the simile as used in the extract.

Question 4: La noche de la boda

Candidates provided satisfactory responses for most parts of the question.

In Part (a), most candidates were able to identify the series of events that comprised the plot. However, some candidates did not mention El Novio's reaction on seeing the crowd at the wedding reception. In some instances, candidates provided quotations from the extract as part of the plot.

In Part (b), most candidates were able to provide a valid commentary on La Madre's attitude in the first part of the extract. They commented on her bitterness as residual effects of her family's tragedy at the hands of Leonardo's family and they provided appropriate quotations.

In Part (c), most candidates viewed El Padre's perspective on future grandchildren as traditional. However, they failed to provide a valid commentary on the implications or deeper significance of his traditional viewpoint.

In Part (d), most candidates correctly identified the mood in the second part of the extract as one of happiness. They also commented on the festive atmosphere of the wedding reception and provided a valid quotation. However, few candidates commented on the mood of the entire extract instead of focusing on the earmarked section.

Recommendations

Teachers should focus on the following strategies to enhance students' literary analysis skills.

- Encourage students to avoid using citations when summarizing the plot.
- Expose students to literary terms such as *la trama*, *el ambiente emocional*, *el punto de vista narrativo*.
- Ensure that students are familiar with behavioural verbs such as *relata*, *comenta*, *explica*, *describe*, *discute*.
- Emphasize the importance of writing all citations in full.
- Ensure that students understand the difference between character traits and emotions.
- Provide students with adequate practice, using extracts from the text studied and questions related to plot, narrative point of view, mood, characterization, figurative language and other narrative techniques.

SECTION B — Themes

Candidates were required to write an essay of 450–500 words, in English, on one of the questions relating to the theme *La juventud or El individuo y la sociedad*. Candidates were also required to use one of the prescribed texts for the theme selected and discuss issues relevant to the question. Candidates were awarded marks for Knowledge and Understanding (16 marks), Application of Knowledge (9 marks) and Organization of Information (7 marks).

Question 5

“The experiences that young people share with adults are not as fulfilling as those shared with their peers.” Discuss.

Candidates were required to discuss the extent to which young people find experiences shared with adults less fulfilling compared to those shared with their peers, as portrayed in the text studied. *La casa en Mango Street* was the text used by most candidates who responded to this question. Most candidates examined the devastating experiences that young people in the text shared with adults: humiliation, physical and psychological abuse, sexual harassment and irresponsible parenting. As counter-argument, some candidates examined the rewarding moments that various characters shared with adults: supportive parents and elders in the community. It must be noted that while some candidates were able to identify the devastating experiences of characters in the text studied, they failed to use them to construct a convincing argument. In some instances, candidates resorted to a mere summary of the text.

With respect to *Felices días, tío Sergio*, most candidates were able to examine the traumatic experiences that some of the teenagers shared with adults: repressive household, lack of maternal support, the pangs of disappointment and betrayal and sexual harassment. As counter-argument, some candidates highlighted that young people sometimes have experiences with adults that are rewarding such as the fun activities with Tío Sergio and enriching family experiences such as Christmas celebrations. However, there were instances where candidates were unable to demonstrate sound knowledge of the text and therefore resorted to a summary of the children’s encounter with various adults in the text.

Question 6

“It is only when young people throw caution to the wind that they learn many real-life lessons.” Discuss.

This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which young people learn valuable life lessons when they take risky actions without worrying about the consequences. *La casa en Mango Street* was the preferred text for this question. Some candidates were able to discuss the lessons learnt by characters such as Esperanza, Alicia, Sally, Rafaela and Minerva, based on the bold actions taken. As counter-argument, some candidates stressed that young people could learn many real-life lessons without having to throw caution to the wind. They addressed issues such as the frailty of life, the dangers associated with blossoming sexuality, and the need for empowerment and social responsibility. However, a major challenge faced by some candidates was that they presented lessons that some characters learnt without linking those lessons to the risky actions taken in the process. Such responses therefore lacked maturity of thought.

Most candidates who used *Felices días, Tío Sergio* to respond to this question were able to present noteworthy points with solid supporting details. They argued that issues of puberty and bullying at school taught Lidia and Andrés many life lessons when they decided to take matters into their own hands. As counter-argument, some candidates highlighted that young people could learn many real-life lessons without having to throw caution to the wind. They addressed issues such as the dangers of blossoming sexuality, identity crisis, hypocrisy and social inequality. In some instances, candidates presented summaries of the text without addressing the main issues outlined in the question. Consequently, they were unable to score above the satisfactory band for Application of Knowledge.

Question 7

“Literary texts often portray individuals who always find a way to live by their own rules.” Discuss.

Candidates were required to discuss the extent to which characters in the text studied found a way to defy societal expectations. *Como agua para chocolate* was the preferred text for this question. Most candidates agreed with the statement that individuals always find a way to live by their own rules based on the experiences of some characters in the text studied. They addressed issues of Tita’s rebellion, Mamá Elena’s love affair, Pedro’s defiance, and Gertrudi’s liberation. As counter-argument, some candidates addressed Rosaura’s conformity which led to a loveless marriage and Nacha’s frustrated love and subsequent life of servitude to the De la Garza family when Mamá Elena’s mother chased away her (Nacha’s) suitor. However, there were instances where candidates resorted to storytelling without connecting the main issues in the text to the question.

With respect to *Bodas de sangre*, some candidates were able to discuss Leonardo’s affair and La Novia’s frustrated love as instances where individuals defied societal norms. As a counter-argument, they highlighted that some individuals chose not to live by their own rules but instead conformed to societal expectations. However, these characters still faced detrimental outcomes. When La Madre encouraged her son to avenge the family’s honour by pursuing Leonardo, he died in the process. She was therefore left distraught as all the male figures in the family had died. El Novio adhered to tradition and married within his class. However, he died on his wedding night when he attempted to defend his family’s honour. La Mujer fulfilled her societal obligations as a faithful wife and caring mother but had to endure a strained relationship with her husband. In some instances, candidates presented a mere summary of the text or a hodgepodge of issues faced by various characters without directly linking them to the question.

Question 8

“Conformity to societal norms always yields favourable outcomes.” Discuss.

This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which conformity to societal expectations could lead to a more enriching and rewarding life for characters in the text studied. *Como agua para chocolate* was the more popular text for this question. Most candidates argued that the life experiences of many characters in the text proved contrary since those who lived according to societal expectations were generally the ones who experienced unfavourable outcomes. Tita conformed to the De la Garza family tradition and as a result, her sense of individualism was stifled as she was denied love, freedom and happiness. Mamá Elena agreed to an arranged marriage to Juan de la Garza in order to appease her parents but suffered frustrated love. Similarly, Rosaura endured a loveless marriage coupled with emotional turmoil as she constantly questioned her husband and sister’s motives. As counter-argument, some candidates highlighted that life could be rewarding for those who did not conform. They argued that Gertrudis broke the barriers that limited her possibilities and experienced a more fulfilling life. However, there were candidates who focused on the experiences of one character, Tita, and therefore their responses were limited in scope. Some essays were also a mere summary of the text studied with limited reference to the salient issues.

With respect to *Bodas de Sangre*, candidates who wrote superior responses were able to use major characters and associated issues to construct their arguments. They argued that El Novio’s attempt to avenge his family’s honour, in accordance with cultural practices, led to his demise. Moreover, the cultural practice of marrying within one’s social class did not redound to Leonardo, La Mujer and La Novia’s benefit. Both Leonardo and La Mujer endured a strained relationship since Leonardo still harboured feelings for La Novia. La Novia endured emotional turmoil as she was unable to marry her true love. In the end, she lost her honour, husband and true love. It should be noted that some candidates lacked a solid understanding of the text studied, which hindered their ability to discuss the impact of adhering to societal norms on the lives of various characters.

Overall Comments and Recommendations

Candidates' Strengths

- Some candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the text studied and commendable analytical skills. They identified the issues in the text relevant to the question posed and discussed them using solid supporting details, all within the word limit.
- Good or excellent essays included a brief introduction with a well-constructed thesis, three to five well-supported points with a counter-argument, and a brief conclusion.
- Some candidates made appropriate use of quotations. Quotations generally supported the points made and were well integrated into the essay.

Candidates' Weaknesses

- Some essays lacked analysis. They were mere summaries of the text studied.
- Some essays were padded with either long or irrelevant citations which limited informed personal response.
- Some essays included lengthy introductions with irrelevant details.
- Some essays only contained the points made. There was no clearly outlined introduction nor was there a conclusion.
- Some responses were riddled with factual inaccuracies related to the text.
- Some responses were extremely short.
- Some responses contained citations in English as well as English translation of the text (title and characters).
- Some candidates focused on one character, thus limiting analysis.
- Some candidates focused on irrelevant sub-themes rather than directly answering the question.

Irregularities

- Using the wrong text for a stated theme, for example, using Como agua para chocolate to answer a question on La Juventud.
- Making long references to personal experiences.
- Writing general essays with no reference to text studied.
- Writing literary critiques of the text studied rather than responding to the question.
- Writing the entire essay in Spanish.
- Rewriting the prompt without answering the question or writing few garbled sentences.
- Writing responses that were illegible.
- Writing responses outside the earmarked spaces, for example, on the white spaces that border the printed questions.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers should focus on the following guidelines to enhance the quality of students' essays.

- Ensure that students identify and discuss the issues related to the theme within the chosen text. Historical and philosophical perspectives, though necessary for class discussion, do not need to appear in the written examination.
- Ensure that students are not dependent on the English translation of the text studied.
- Advise students to take their time to read and select questions carefully according to the prescribed text studied for the theme.
- Advise students to stay within the word limit as examiners do not read beyond the stipulated word limit.
- Advise students to use good penmanship as examiners are unable to award marks for responses that are illegible.
- Advise students to select citations that support the points conveyed and integrate them seamlessly into their response.
- Advise students to write their responses on the lines provided. The white spaces that border the printed questions should not be used to continue responses that cannot fit on the lines. Extra pages are provided at the end of the question paper for this purpose. In the event that students use these extra pages, they should make an annotation next to the corresponding question(s), for example, *Please see extra pages*.
- Help students to cultivate practices of proper essay writing – Introduction, Body, Conclusion.
- Advise students that an excellent response should include
 - a brief introduction with a clear thesis statement relating to the question and clear reference to the text used
 - four to five solid points supported by concise, appropriate, brief and complete quotes, and an informed personal opinion, each in a new paragraph, one of which should be a counterpoint to show balance in the response if required
 - a brief conclusion.