



General Certificate of Education

Citizenship Studies 1101

**Unit 2 (CIST2) Democracy, Active
Citizenship and Participation**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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Unit 2 (CIST2): Democracy, Active Citizenship and Participation

General Comments

The entry for this unit has continued to increase and candidates now seem better prepared to answer the questions than in previous examinations. The major issue for many candidates was their use of time and the variable amount they wrote for each response, regardless of the marks available. This was especially an issue in regard to Question 8 which carries 25 of the 90 marks available for the whole unit. Candidates need to be aware of the balance of both marks and Assessment Objectives across the paper. Section A carries 40% of the marks for this unit and is identical in structure and mark allocation to CIST1. Section B carries 60% of the marks, with Q8 having the largest mark allocation. In regard to the higher mark allocation questions, there was little evidence of candidates planning their responses via notes or checklists. In Section B, candidates do have access to their Active Citizenship Profiles but there was little clear evidence of their detailed use. As both a new style of GCE and as a new subject, it is pleasing to note the progress centres are making regarding the teaching of this new and dynamic subject. There was clear evidence of greater candidate involvement in active citizenship tasks than last year. Centres clearly appear to be developing Citizenship skills and understanding through their choice of tasks.

The paper seemed accessible and the ability of candidates to mention topical examples to support the points they were making was extremely refreshing.

Section A – Making a Difference

Question 01

Many candidates were able to access the full marks for this question. Most responses were based upon the source. Many candidates wrote at too great a length given that only 5 marks are available. The question asked for a brief outline of two impacts. Candidates had to identify the impact and outline how it impacted on ordinary citizens. Too many candidates wrote generally about the credit crunch rather than impact on ordinary citizens.

Question 02

Many candidates wrote about what the UK and other governments did during the early stages of the credit crunch and recession. The issue of whether it is the duty of government to overcome the issues was less prominent in answers. The question was attempting to get candidates to discuss the role of government in an economic downturn. The role and duty of government in relation to its citizens is a key citizenship concept. The nature of the degree of that duty is at the core of political debate. This question posed the fewest number of issues regarding the structure and length of the response.

Question 03

This was the least popular of the optional questions. Many were able to write about the European Union, its structure, its broad aims and some contemporary issues but often were unable to utilise this knowledge in a form that really focused on the question posed. The question required a discussion about the impact of the EU on political and economic life in the UK. The EU has caused internal divisions within both the Conservative and Labour parties and led to the formation of other political parties, i.e. the Referendum Party and UKIP. The impact upon economic life in the UK has involved the introduction of the CAP, Regional Aid and a debate about joining the Euro currency. The whole question of sovereignty has permeated the UK/EU debate for many years. Many candidates wrote about immigration when more specifically the focus should have been on internal migration within the EU. Human Rights were often mentioned and clearly there is much confusion between the EU and the ECHR: the European Court of Justice is an EU body whilst the European Court of Human Rights is not.

Question 04

This was the more popular of the two optional questions. The question was intended to allow candidates to discuss whether pressure groups strengthen the voice of citizens in political decision making. Most candidates were able to write at length about the activities of various pressure groups, but some missed the key concept of the citizen's voice in the political process. Many candidates were able to quote examples of pressure group theories and categorisations but were unable to link this knowledge to the crux of the question. Many could identify successful and unsuccessful groups and give reasons for their assumptions but were unable to lift their responses to the next level about citizens and the political process, and political accountability between elections.

Section B – Active Citizenship

Candidates from several centres submitted their Active Citizenship Profile with their examination papers. Profiles should be collected at the end of the examination and retained by the centre. Candidates are able to use their Profile to help them answer questions in this section. The Profile should provide a framework for responses, ie dates, sequences of events, names of people involved. This depth of information was often missing from responses. Candidates appeared to perform better than last year in regard to this section. Candidates need to clearly recognise that this section of the paper carries 40% of the whole AS marks. Too many candidates did not fully access the marks available for Question 8, which carries 25 of the 60 available in Section B. Questions 5 and 6 relate directly to the Active Citizenship tasks candidates have undertaken whilst Questions 7 and 8 relate to Active Citizenship and candidates are expected to be able to use examples from their own studies and participation to enrich their responses. Most candidates need to consider their time allocation in regard to Question 8 and how they plan the response; too many did not allocate sufficient time or follow any clear plan.

Question 05

This question did reveal a pleasing range of tasks that had been undertaken by candidates. However, many candidates failed to access higher marks through failure to focus on how the 'task' benefitted from working with others, how the candidate benefitted from working with others or how they as individuals benefitted. Stronger responses were able to discuss, for example, how tasks were delegated according to the skills and interests on named others.

Question 06

Candidates were able to access this question and write about citizenship tasks they had undertaken. Assumptions were often made about this task being 'effectiveness' often with little or no narrative to support this assumption. The key to assessing the marks in this question was having a view about what makes a citizenship task effective and then justifying the criteria selected for effectiveness. Many candidates wrote about casting their vote in the 2010 General Election but often failed to indicate why this was effective within the context of the question. Another common flaw was to assume that benefits to the candidate, such as greater confidence or new skills, made the task effective.

Question 07

Most candidates were able to show understanding of the concept of Learner's Voice, although a large number made no reference to their own centre's policies. Stronger responses discussed the effectiveness of school councils, consultations of students on some issues, and other forms of Learner's Voice. Weaker responses were often very generic about the concept of consultation. Many candidates were able to enrich their responses by mentioning their own participation.

Question 08

Many candidates did not leave sufficient time to complete this question. Very few appeared to plan their response even though this question carries 25 of the 90 marks available from this unit. The question was not successfully deconstructed by many candidates who saw the phrase 'pressure group campaigns' and wrote about a range of campaigns. The question was about the role of the media in promoting both pressure group and citizen led campaigns. The response should therefore have included references to both pressure group and citizen led campaigns. Many candidates only wrote about pressure group campaigns. The core of the question was about the role of the media. This generic term needed to be deconstructed, ie the roles of differing forms of the media, TV v the press, the greater freedom of the press as against the legal restraints on TV. Many candidates wrote generally about the media. Some of the best responses included references to contemporary examples such as the Thai Red Shirts and the Gaza aid flotilla. Very few quoted any local examples of pressure group and citizen led campaigns and how they were reported/promoted by the local media.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>.