



General Certificate of Education

Citizenship Studies 1101

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

Report on the Examination

2011 examination - January series

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

General Comments

It is pleasing to note a large increase in the entry in January 2011 as against January 2010. Candidates seemed far better prepared for the examination especially in relation to Section B – Active Citizenship Participation, where there was clearer evidence than in the past of the candidates' own involvement, which was in clearly defined citizenship tasks. A surprisingly large number wrote or commented about the issue of student tuition fees and their own involvement in the protests and were able to distinguish between responsible active citizenship and other forms of direct action. A disappointing aspect of candidate performance in this paper was the evidence that many did not have a clear understanding of the key concepts. When teaching this course centres must ensure that candidates have a clear understanding of the identified key concepts, without which they cannot develop their knowledge base or develop a clear understanding and write about issues from a citizenship perspective. An increased number of candidates answered Section B before Section A. The question paper structure follows that of CIST1 but Section B carries two-thirds of the marks for the module and, with Question 08 worth 25 marks, many candidates decided that it was in their best interests to complete the higher mark section and questions first. This strategy improved the mean mark for Q8.

Section A – Making a Difference

Question 01

Whilst most candidates were able to outline some understanding of the concept of power, very few were able to distinguish between power and authority in a citizenship context. A number tried to re-work the source but often to little effect. Authority relates to the legitimate exercise of power, normally through the exercise of a democratic mandate.

Question 02

Many candidates did not even attempt this question about the concept of a mandate. Many confused the term with manifesto. Stronger responses were able to discuss the nature of the current coalition Government and the concept of a mandate. An electoral mandate traditionally has been conferred upon a single party at a General Election by that party winning a majority of the parliamentary seats. Gaining a mandate confers legitimacy upon the Government to carry out its policies as outlined in its manifesto. The question was inviting discussion about such issues as what constitutes a mandate, the number of seats, or the percentage of votes, or the turnout at an election? Clearly, if candidates had an understanding of the concept of a mandate, they would then be able to construct an argument to accept or challenge the contention of the question.

Question 03

This question was the more popular of the two optional questions, but candidates often wrote in a very general manner, which meant that the mean mark for Question 03 was lower than that for Question 04. When questions use the term 'the media' it is always helpful for candidates to explain that this term covers a wide range of differing formats, including e-media. Too many wrote generically about the media, whereas it is clear that different media formats have differing impacts upon developing political attitudes. The best approach is to discuss a range of different forms of the media in relation to influencing political opinion, using examples to support the points being made. Too many responses contained sweeping points lacking in evidence.

Contemporary case studies that could have been included are the Daily Telegraph and MPs' expenses, the Murdoch press and its attitude to the EU, the BBC and its need for political neutrality based upon legislation, Channel 4 and the Jamie Oliver campaign on school dinners, Sky TV and its campaign to establish the Prime Ministerial Debates during the 2010 General Election. Discussion of the new e-media could include a mention of the role of Twitter and Facebook.

Question 04

Although this was the less popular of the two optional questions, those candidates who choose this question achieved a higher mean mark than those who answered Question 03. Most candidates were able to write about differing forms of political participation, though many did limit themselves to voting and elections. Within a citizenship context, the term 'democratic process' has a much wider context regarding civic engagement by citizens in decision-making from a local to a national perspective.

Responses should have included reference to the citizen as an individual and as a member of a group, eg pressure groups.

Section B – Active Citizenship

This section appeared to be better answered than in previous years. Candidates were able to discuss more clearly activities in which they had been involved. Candidates need to distinguish active citizenship from merely attending an event and having no active role. The specification discusses three levels of citizenship involvement/development: firstly, developing a knowledge base in regard to an issue; secondly, in order to use the knowledge gained, developing an understanding of a range of skills and processes to work with others to advocate or represent a point of view; thirdly, by bringing together your acquired knowledge and skills and taking some form of action to make a difference, you become an active citizen. The Active Citizenship Profile is designed to allow candidates to demonstrate through their own active citizenship work the development of this staged progression.

Question 05

Most candidates were able to outline a task in which they were involved, but the second element of the question about developing their citizenship knowledge was often less forthcoming. The response required a little detail about their knowledge development. Many had been involved in general election debates, so one would anticipate that their knowledge of party policy might have been developed and that they could quote an example of this newly acquired knowledge or understanding.

Question 06

Most candidates were able to write at length about citizenship work they had undertaken and often quoted a range of activities. The key to the question was 'How successful were you in regard to bringing about a change?' Candidates therefore needed to start by explaining what change they were trying to bring about, outlining the task and then explaining to what degree they brought about a change. Too many wrote at length about the task, leaving little time to explain its aim or whether they brought about change.

Question 07

Whilst most could write about pressure groups in general terms, few were able to write in depth about specific groups. Candidates may refer to local, national or even international groups but many seemed only to be able to quote those that appear in the textbooks. Centres should make this a research activity and develop a range of case studies for candidates to refer to. Examiners especially welcome contemporary examples. This question, whilst offering a structured response, expected that candidates would be able to contrast differing pressure groups when making each point in their argument.

Question 08

Many candidates accepted the contention of the question and wrote about non-participation in a specific campaign rather than discussing the concept of non-participation and using a range of examples to elaborate on the points being made. Stronger responses challenged the contention of the question and explained that lots of citizens do participate. Again, the issue of the phrase 'campaigns' occurred, where some candidates defined the term only in the context of an election campaign. Within the context of this specification, 'campaigning' relates to citizens as individuals and within groups carrying out a course of action.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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