



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Citizenship Studies

CIST2

(Specification 2100)

**Unit 2: Democracy, Active Citizenship and
Participation**

Report on the Examination

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

General

The entry for this unit has continued to show a healthy increase. Year on year, there has been a pleasing improvement in the quality of responses, especially in relation to the Section B questions on Active Citizenship Participation. Whilst the incidence of candidates failing to allocate time to responses relative to their mark allocation has decreased, a significant number still write at length on lower mark questions to the detriment of expected longer responses. This was especially an issue in Question 8, which carries 25 of the 90 marks available for the whole unit: this year, however, a number of candidates answered Question 8 first.

Candidates need to be aware of the balance of 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 Question 8 having the largest mark allocation. In Section B, candidates can refer to their Active Citizenship Profiles and there is now increasing evidence of their detailed use.

This is both a new style of GCE and as a new subject for many candidates, and it is encouraging to note the progress that centres are making regarding both the teaching and the active citizenship component of this new and dynamic subject. There was clearer evidence this year of candidates' involvement in active citizenship tasks than last year: a large number had been involved in the student protests regarding tuition fees and a number had cross-examined their local MPs when they had visited their centres. Centres clearly appear to be developing Citizenship skills but many still need to consider how they deliver the active citizenship component. It should be planned alongside both AS units, not seen as just an event or activity that takes place once during the course.

The paper seemed accessible and candidates' ability to mention topical examples to support the points they were making was extremely refreshing: however, some markers did comment that a number of examples and case studies quoted were dated. Citizenship by its nature has a contemporary element and centres must discuss the nature of contemporary events such as the general election, the recent AV referendum, current debates about the role of the press/media, and recent examples of pressure group activities.

SECTION A – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Question 01

Few candidates were able to access full marks for this question. Most responses were solely based upon the source. Many candidates wrote at too great length about the source. The question asked about how governments are formed. Many candidates were unclear about this topic, believing that the government is formed on the basis of the percentage of votes cast. Considering that the data was partially based upon the 2010 General Election, this lack of basic knowledge by many is somewhat concerning.

Question 02

Many candidates wrote about the recent AV referendum and how AV operates. This was marginal to the question, and so was the means whereby you might encourage more people to vote. The response expected was about the alleged unfairness of the existing system. Stronger candidates were able to contrast the AV system with the existing system. Those who argued that there is no reason to challenge the existing system were rewarded, provided that they provided evidence.

Question 03

This was the more popular of the optional questions in Section A. The crucial issue in regard to most responses was the failure to grasp what was meant by the phrase 'influential' in the question. Many candidates had detailed knowledge of why some pressure groups are more successful than others but that knowledge needed repackaging and adding to in order to answer the specific question set. Again, the use of examples enabled examiners to see that knowledge was being applied. Many were able to quote local examples of pressure groups and causes, but too many referred to standard textbook examples like Fathers for Justice and the Countryside Alliance. Responses needed to consider who was being influenced and then suggest why some groups have more influence than others: for example, resources clearly help by providing some groups with insider as opposed to outsider status.

Question 04

This was the less popular of the two optional questions. The question required discussion of whether the state should provide more or fewer services for its citizens. The question could be answered from an ideological standpoint, or from knowledge of the value and cost of public services, or a blend of the two. Many weaker candidates seemed attracted to this question, often writing in very vague terms and mainly referring to the NHS, but not giving reasons for it being a public service. The responses at the top end of the mark band were extremely persuasive in regard to the position they were taking.

SECTION B – ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Several centres submitted the Active Citizenship Profiles with the 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, such as, dates, sequences of events, names of people involved in their active citizenship work, but this depth of information was often missing from responses. Candidates performed better than last year in regard to this section. Candidates need to recognise clearly that this section of the paper carries 40% of the whole AS marks. It was encouraging to see that candidates were able to refer to their own Active Citizenship participation throughout this section.

Whilst Question 7 discusses citizenship participation or influences, it is expected that candidates draw upon their own experiences. Question 8, which considers the nature of Active Citizenship, also allows for candidates to draw upon their own experiences and it was pleasing to note the increased use of the Active Citizenship profiles, but centres need to ensure that is a working document not something with just one or two items listed. The intention is that it is used throughout the course to track Active Citizenship Participation, be it via research, developing skills or taking action. Too many candidates did not fully access the marks available for Question 8, which carries 25 of the 60 available in Section B. Many candidates need to consider their time allocation for 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 research activities that candidates would undertake. Many did not gain full marks, as they did not relate the work they were doing to the needs of a year 8 group of pupils. Many answers were very generic and gained only 2 marks. Where this scenario-based style of question reappears in the future, candidates need to consider the context when answering it: for example, the nature of a letter to an MP will be different from a set of questions put to people working for a voluntary group.

Question 06

Candidates were able to write about citizenship tasks they had undertaken and relate them to the concept of persuasion. The issue for many was selecting a suitable task that demonstrated the art of persuasion in a citizenship context. For many, it almost became the amount of money they raised at a charity event. The context could have been a class debate, challenging or questioning a visitor. Often the responses from a centre were all based around a single task. One centre, through their MP, attempted to bring about change in regard to youth unemployment in their area and believed that their persuasion got the ear of ministers; another wrote to an education minister regarding their belief in the value of citizenship as a subject and of the nature of their active citizenship work, and sent in their Active Citizenship Profiles. The most difficult element for many was assessing the degree to which their persuasion was successful.

Question 07

Most candidates became too reliant upon the source to answer this question. The source is there to provide a prompt and some context but not the whole answer. Whilst many were able to write about media influence, fewer were able to differentiate between media formats. Weaker responses just wrote about the media generally, quoting no examples of influence or of media formats. Despite the current national debate about the press in particular, too many candidates used examples from the politically now distant past. The last general election and the televised debates could have provided an interesting discussion point. The role of media ownership arose but few associated it with specific policies such as Britain's membership of the EU.

Question 08

Many candidates did leave sufficient time to complete this question this year and many wrote at length, but often not to their advantage. Many ignored completely the part of the question that asked for case studies. Many of the case studies that were included were dated and not UK-based. Many tried to warm up again their knowledge of pressure groups by stating that 'individual citizens cannot make a difference on their own but groups can and now I will write everything I know about pressure groups'. Stronger answers were able to quote both local and national examples of where citizens did bring about change or influence a debate: popular choices were Jamie Oliver, Joanna Lumley and Rachel Hoskins (plastic bags). Citizenship by its nature has a contemporary element and centres must discuss the nature of contemporary events like the General Election, the AV referendum, the role of the press/media and current pressure group activities.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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Convert raw marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

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