



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

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

It is again encouraging to see an increase in the entry for this unit as against the numbers last January. Many students appear better prepared for the examination than in the past, especially in regard to Section B on Active Citizenship. Many centres are also encouraging students to answer Section B prior to Section A as this section carries two thirds of the marks for the paper. Many students are also answering question 8 first, as this question carries 25 out of the 90 marks available for the entire paper. The issue for many students was time allocation, spending too much time on lower-mark questions at the expense of larger-mark questions or running out of time to complete the paper. The source-based question about the European Union was not well answered and that is an area where teachers need to ensure students have a grasp of the basics as knowledge regarding the EU does spill into other areas of the specification. Many students, when faced with source-based questions, rely too much upon the source to answer the question; the intention of the source is to provide an overview, not the specific answers to the questions. Many students seemed to have prepared responses to questions they thought would be on the paper and wrote at length heading in the wrong direction. This was the case in regard to questions 02, 03, 05 and 08. Students, especially in regard to higher mark questions, should make plans or notes prior to answering the question, as this forces them to think about deconstructing the question and might avoid them going off at a tangent.

SECTION A – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Question 01

Far too many students relied upon the source for their response and gained at most 2 of the 5 marks available by only identifying farm subsidies and social funds as areas of EU funding within the UK. Some students did mention examples of direct EU funding in their locality and support for infrastructure and environmental projects.

Question 02

Whilst some students had a reasonable grasp of one or two reasons why the UK should remain a member of the EU, most did not and far too many wrote about reasons and cited case studies explaining why the UK would be better off outside the EU. The question was clearly only about the case **for** Britain remaining as an EU member, so, whilst a few contrary points might be valid in a balanced answer candidates who wrote solely or disproportionately about the case against gained very few or no marks.

Question 03

This was a popular question, but too many students failed to really understand the thrust of the question. Too many wrote about media influence, or media ownership, or the media and censorship. In the light of the current Leveson inquiry, students should be aware of the issues surrounding media regulation. Most who did mention the Leveson inquiry focussed upon the phone-hacking aspect and failed to mention the regulatory aspect. The term 'regulation' in the context of the specification relates to the forms of statutory and non-statutory regulation that exist in regard to all forms of media in the UK. The question required an overview of differing media formats and how they are regulated. The question needed a

definition of what is meant by the term ‘the media’ followed by coverage of a range of different forms and how they are regulated, eg newspapers non-statutory via the Press Complaints Commission, to the internet non-regulated. Many understood the role of Ofcom and wrote about the BBC Trust.

Question 04

This question was slightly less popular than question 03 but overall was better answered. Many students had a good grasp of terms like fiscal and monetary policy and understood the role of the Bank of England. Often those with a sound grasp of economics wrote over-theoretically about economic policy. In a citizenship context, the requirement was to write about the government and the economy, ie taxation and public spending, investment policy and how the government relates to the market and how if at all it can control economic events.

SECTION B – ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The Active Citizenship work the student has undertaken underpins the marks awarded for this section. Each year, students are becoming more involved in active citizenship tasks and appreciate the interaction between citizenship knowledge, skills and trying to make a difference. Whilst many responses draw from the Active Citizenship Profile that the students are allowed to take into the examination, many others lack the detail one would expect from having material available to which the student can refer. As this specification has matured, there is an increasing expectation that students should be able to draw upon their own experience when answering question 08. Students who are able to draw parallels or direct evidence from their profiles achieve higher marks. There is still a need for students to develop their understanding of the conceptual background to active citizenship.

Question 05

Many students did not gain full marks as they failed to answer both elements of the question. All were able to various degrees to write about research undertaken but many were unable to link the research directly to actions that they took.

Question 06

The vast majority of students linked this response to their answer to question 05. Students do need to remember that each question is marked in isolation, so comments like ‘see above’ add nothing to the response. Each response has to be self-contained even if it does mean repeating information. Among the range of tasks outlined by students and many now involve work overseas. One student wrote about her participation in a charity project in Kenya where the conditions were challenging, another student wrote about starting a campaign to prevent their school applying for academy status. Many students wrote about the public sector disputes. The weakness for many students was the ability to fully explain why a task could be described as an active citizenship task. Too many got carried away writing about the task instead of focussing upon what makes something active citizenship and then supporting the descriptor with evidence from their task.

Question 07

Most students could access this question but too many relied upon either the source only or wrote in very general terms about petitions and public meetings. In order to achieve high marks, students needed to look at the context of the question. The topic was public meetings and petitions but the context was about local decision-making. There was a clue in the source that referred to the local council. Therefore, many students scored at the mid point rather than achieving higher-level marks. Some students did mention the concept of local decision-making, some referred to NIMBY style issues, but very few discussed the issue of direct democracy v representative democracy.

Question 08

Many students wanted this question to be about why some pressure groups are successful, and by answering in this way only achieved, at best, marks in the mid band. For this 25-mark question, students must be encouraged to devise a plan or at the very least make notes. This will stop many going off in the wrong direction. The most favoured pressure groups were Fathers for Justice and Greenpeace. The latter was often quoted incorrectly as an insider group. It might be a very influential group but has always seen itself as an outsider group. Stronger responses did relate the pressure groups of their choice to ‘influencing central government’, the context of the question. Many used case studies to inform their answer, as the question required. Recent examples quoted included the campaign against the privatisation of the country’s forests. Many mentioned the recent riots but although they may influence government action, they cannot be seen as formal pressure groups.

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.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion