



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

A larger number of schools and colleges are now entering for this unit in June. 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. There was clear evidence this year again of improved student involvement in active citizenship tasks. Many students have been involved in work both within their schools and colleges and in the wider world; many of the tasks undertaken overseas were most impressive. A number of students wrote about their own involvement in protests or in standing for elected office. A number invited in local MPs but responses often lacked details about any evaluation of such visits. Centres clearly appear to be developing Citizenship skills but many still need to consider how they deliver the active citizenship component: for example, by encouraging students to undertake a range of tasks instead of relying upon just one or two.

The overall performance on the paper is improving, especially in regard to Section B. Students answering Section B first are scoring higher marks on question 8 and therefore getting a higher overall mark due to the question being worth 25 of the 90 marks for the whole paper.

For many students, hand writing in this internet age is an issue: schools and colleges need to help students focus on styles of responses and (with longer responses) on answer plans so that students answer questions in less of a rush, also helping them to deconstruct question so they are clear about the thrust of the question.

SECTION A – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Question 01

Few students were able to access the full marks for this question. Just over 40% achieved 2 or 3 marks out of the 5 available. This was a topical question, being based upon the recent referendum about changing the voting system in the UK. Students were asked to present a brief case for opposing changing the existing First Past the Post system (FPTP) to the Alternative Vote system (AV). Most responses had a poor grasp of the nature of AV and its disadvantages. Some just wrote about the mechanics of the AV system; many wrote about its supposed advantages rather than its disadvantages. The percentage mean mark achieved was the lowest of any question on this paper.

Question 02

This question required a brief outline of the advantages and disadvantages of using referendums to decide major issues. Many students appeared to lack any understanding of the term and often extended their answers from Question 01 about voting systems. Some students did have a depth of knowledge and were able to discuss issues like direct and representative democracy, and the role of parliament. Many seemed to follow on from Question 01 and focus on generic issues relating to the mechanics of voting like timing, costs and voter apathy.

Question 03

This was the more popular of the optional questions by a margin of just under 2 to 1. Those answering this question scored a slightly higher percentage of the mean as against those who answered question 4. Many students were able to draw upon and discuss a range of public services such as the NHS, the police, and the benefit system. A number used phrases like the 'nanny state' to describe UK provision. Many who were able to identify state services were often unable to move beyond a descriptive response. Some were able to write in regard to an ideological divide over the issue of public service provision and the change in political thinking linked to the 'new right'.

Question 04

This was the less popular of the two optional questions. The aim of the question was for students to be able to discuss the nature of power with government and relate traditional ideas to the nature of the current coalition government. Many students were able to demonstrate very good knowledge of the coalition government and its formation, but very few were able to extend their responses beyond basics such as the numbers of MPs in each coalition party. Many discussed the nature of policy compromises mainly in regard to tuition fees. A few mentioned the powers of the Prime Minister and the way in which a coalition meant that things usually had to be discussed prior to a decision being made. Many were able to make quite astute comments regarding the power of each partner within the coalition. Responses for this question tended to be either very good or quite poor, as against question 3, which generated marks more evenly.

SECTION B – ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Generally, Section B was better answered than Section A. More students this year answered the paper in reverse order so as to answer question 08 first. The impact of this was to push the mean for the whole paper up. While fewer students than previously scored very badly on Question 08, many still need to consider the time they allocate to this question: too many did not allocate sufficient time or follow any clear plan. The questions with the highest percentage mean were questions 05, 06 and 07. Only a few years ago the mean for question 07 which carries 15 marks was higher than for question 8 which carries 25 marks, but there is now clear space between the average mark achieved for the two questions. It is most encouraging to see the range of active citizenship tasks undertaken by students, although some are still over reliant upon basic classroom-based tasks. Students need to be able to extract more information from their Profiles when answering the questions in Section B. There is still a lack of detail when outlining what has taken place, who was involved and what was achieved. Students need to remember that their Profile can be referred to when answering Q8 if it is relevant. Many 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 required one advantage and one disadvantage of using the internet to research a local topic. Most students handled the first part of the question well but most were unable to give a clear local context to their response so they were unable to gain full marks. Students need to read questions carefully to understand the full context of a question if they wish to gain full marks.

Question 06

Many answers to this question were most impressive. It is clear that many students are undertaking a vast range of active citizenship tasks and are able to discuss their work in the context of citizenship concepts. Most students came up with two clear tasks and most were able to identify success criteria. Some students lost marks as they described one task and aspects that went well or badly within that task instead of outlining two distinct tasks.

Question 07

Most students scored well on this question. Many wrote about pressure group activity which is clearly a hot topic for many. What was lacking from some responses was a number of contemporary case studies to help develop the points being made. Many wrote from a very theoretical perspective and included no case studies. The response required a range of forms of protest and a brief discussion in regard to each as to why there were or were not successful.

Question 08

Many more students than in previous years left sufficient time to complete this question and write at length. Many pointed out the contradiction within the question, which was deliberate, namely the idea of compulsory voluntary community service. Stronger answers were grounded in the ideas currently being pursued within the context of the 'Big Society' but too many appeared to have no contemporary understanding of the debate about voluntary service. Many were able to write clearly structured responses that developed many points of a citizenship nature.

However, many students just accepted the statement at face value and came up with a range of points to support the policy. Very few drew upon any work they had done within their active citizenship work, even sometimes when it was clear from their answer to other questions that they had material upon which to draw.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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