

Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

January 2016

Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First
Certificate, Extended Certificate and
Diploma in Public Services
Unit 6: Citizenship, Diversity and the
Public Services
(20537G)

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January 2016

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General Comments

This was the second sitting of this examination and it was noted that in a number of areas the performance of the learners had improved. One example being that in the summer 2015 Series a significant number of learners appeared unclear on the difference between rights and responsibilities; however, it was pleasing to see that this was not the case in this examination. Once again responses from the learners showed that efforts had been made to improve the teaching of this unit which ensured good coverage of the unit content.

There were good examples in the responses to every question. Knowledge and understanding were effectively applied. Some learners furnished their responses with excellent examples, even in cases of relatively straightforward questions in which the application of knowledge was not required. This was particularly evident in the responses from the more able learners, where a clear understanding of the relationship between citizens, society and the public services was often displayed.

In the questions designed to test the higher order skills of the learners, some of the answers showed good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts which, as stated above, were often supported by practical examples. However, one further area to consider when teaching this unit and preparing the learners for the examination is the understanding of key terms within the specification.

Examination Technique

It was clear from this series that centres had spent time preparing the learners which was good to see. One example is given below where the learner has underlined the key points of the question, namely the **number of responses** required and, specifically, the **support to vulnerable young people**.

5 Identify three public services that provide support to vulnerable young people.

1. Police

2. Ambulance

3. Social Services

This approach helped the candidate gain all 3 available marks.

(Total for Question 5 = 3 marks)

There are further examples of good examination practice in the section on the extended answer question, Question 17.

Question 1

Learners were asked to identify which one of four options needed to be met in order to vote in a Parliamentary election. Most learners identified that the correct answer was to be a UK citizen.

Question 2

Learners were asked to explain the meaning of the term 'legal aid'. There were a wide range of responses to this question. Some learners provided good explanations of the term, however there were a significant number of learners who confused the term legal aid with legal representation or entitlement to healthcare.

2 Marks awarded

2 Explain what is meant by 'legal aid'.

This is when an individual is granted a solicitor within a legal matter for free. This can't be given to everyone but mainly for children under the age of 18 or people out of work who can't afford to pay for a solicitor.

(Total for Question 2 = 2 marks)

2 Marks awarded

2 Explain what is meant by 'legal aid'.

~~The~~ system provides the services of a lawyer free, or very cheaply, to people who cannot afford the full fees.

(Total for Question 2 = 2 marks)

Question 3

Learners were expected to recall and state 2 social factors that should not affect a person's access to public services.

This question proved to be quite well answered with the vast majority of learners gaining both marks.

The majority of responses pertained to age, disability and gender, although almost all of the main social factors were seen. This indicated that most centres had covered this aspect of the specification well, as learners could list most of expected characteristics.

2 Marks awarded

3 Access to public services should not be affected by a person's income or race.

State **two** other social factors which should not affect a person's access to public services.

1 Age

2 Disability

(Total for Question 3 = 2 marks)

3 Access to public services should not be affected by a person's income or race.

State **two** other social factors which should not affect a person's access to public services.

1 Gender

2 Sexuality (LGBT) lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

(Total for Question 3 = 2 marks)

3 Access to public services should not be affected by a person's income or race.

State **two** other social factors which should not affect a person's access to public services.

1 Gender should not affect a person's access to public services

2 Another thing that should not affect a person's access to public services is Age.

(Total for Question 3 = 2 marks)

2 Marks awarded

Question 4

Learners were expected to recall 2 aspects of good citizenship and to apply that knowledge by explaining for each example how the public services view each aspect of good citizenship.

This question proved to be more challenging than the previous question, but nevertheless, was generally well answered. A wide range of answers were given, including activities such as protecting the environment, fund raising, respecting their neighbours, obeying the law, paying taxes in order to fund public services, voting in elections, etc. It was noted by the examiners that whilst most learners could identify the way in which public services view good citizenship, few candidates could provide an adequate explanation.

4 Marks Awarded

4 Public services view volunteering as one way that good citizenship can be achieved.
Explain **two** other ways public services view good citizenship.

1 Protecting the environment by not littering, but Recycling in the neighbourhood.

2 Participate in fund raising charities on your street to raise money for any major charity.

(Total for Question 4 = 4 marks)

2 Marks awarded

4 Public services view volunteering as one way that good citizenship can be achieved.
Explain **two** other ways public services view good citizenship.

1 Following laws promotes good citizenship because you ~~with be~~ won't be a criminal.

2 Helping and caring for the environment because you will be looking after ~~where~~ your local area.

4 Public services view volunteering as one way that good citizenship can be achieved.
Explain **two** other ways public services view good citizenship.

1 Recycling your rubbish.

2 Helping your neighbours.

Question 5

Learners were asked to state three public services that support vulnerable young people. This question was generally well answered, although a number of learners gave job roles within public services as opposed to the services themselves.

3 Marks Awarded

5 Identify **three** public services that provide support to vulnerable young people.

- 1 Social Services
- 2 police
- 3 NSPCC

(Total for Question 5 = 3 marks)

5 Identify **three** public services that provide support to vulnerable young people.

- 1 Ambulance
- 2 social services
- 3 police

(Total for Question 5 = 3 marks)

1 Mark Awarded

5 Identify **three** public services that provide support to vulnerable young people.

- 1 Social Services
- 2 Counsellor
- 3 Teachers

(Total for Question 5 = 3 marks)

5 Identify **three** public services that provide support to vulnerable young people.

- 1 Probation service
- 2
- 3

(Total for Question 5 = 3 marks)

Question 6

Learners were expected to recall and explain one way in which the need for equal opportunities affects public service organisations.

This question required a greater depth of understanding than the previous question, which proved to be slightly more challenging.

There were generally two types of responses from learners to this question. There were those who identified the effect that meeting the need for equal opportunities has on public service organisations and then could generally go on to explain it well. At the opposite end of the spectrum there were a significant number of learners who could not identify a way in which the need for equal opportunities affects public service organisations, and so failed to gain any marks whatsoever.

6 Explain **one** way in which the need for equal opportunities affects public service organisations.

2 Marks awarded

The need for equal opportunities (Equal Rights Act 2010) states equal wellbeing, this means that companies have to spend more money adapting the workplace for things like wheelchairs.

(Total for Question 6 = 2 marks)

6 Explain **one** way in which the need for equal opportunities affects public service organisations.

2 Marks awarded

It affects public service organisations in a good way because a range of different ethnicities etc allows them to bring new skills to the table which can also help the public service understand other religions and languages.

(Total for Question 6 = 2 marks)

6 Explain **one** way in which the need for equal opportunities affects public service organisations.

2 Marks awarded

Equal opportunities for all enables for all members of society to be and feel included and represented. This allows for all service organisations to be more equal and diverse, thus promoting diversity and avoiding conflict.

(Total for Question 6 = 2 marks)

6 Explain **one** way in which the need for equal opportunities affects public service organisations.

0 Marks awarded

equal opportunities can affect in public services by age, race, disabilities or any others. like if you are different colour person but other person is other colour that would be discrimination.

(Total for Question 6 = 2 marks)

6 Explain **one** way in which the need for equal opportunities affects public service organisations.

~~THAT~~ This may cause people to become racist, or discriminate if ~~other people are~~ those who people are.

0 Marks awarded

(Total for Question 6 = 2 marks)

Question 7

Learners were expected to state 2 ways in which education promotes citizenship.

This question was answered well, with most learners using their experience from education as a whole, to draw their answers from. The learners generally gave the expected responses, such as:

- Voluntary work experience
- Gaining qualifications in order to gain meaningful employment
- developing employability skills
- developing an appreciation of what constitutes citizenship

7 State **two** ways that education promotes citizenship.

1 Learning ways to get skills and qualifications in order to get a job.

2 Volunteering to gain new experiences.

2 Marks awarded

7 State **two** ways that education promotes citizenship.

1 ~~In~~ In schools they teach you not to discriminate against people by having ~~class~~ ^{assemblies} a ~~sp~~ class on it or

2 ~~Schools~~ Schools teach you how to look after the environment by having clubs such as gardening and ~~how to~~ ^{teach} you the importance of looking after the environment.

2 Marks awarded

Question 8

Learners were expected to explain why it is a responsibility of individuals claiming benefits to participate in a review of their benefits.

- 8 Explain why it is a responsibility of individuals claiming benefits to participate in a review of their benefits.

1 Mark awarded

If they don't review their benefits they could lose them or gain some more

- 8 Explain why it is a responsibility of individuals claiming benefits to participate in a review of their benefits.

2 Marks awarded

To prove that they are still eligible to claim these benefits, ~~as they are~~ you need to respect the rules and regulations of the benefit system while claiming money from the government.

(Total for Question 8 = 2 marks)

- 8 Explain why it is a responsibility of individuals claiming benefits to participate in a review of their benefits.

2 Marks awarded

It is a responsibility of individuals claiming benefits to participate in a review of their benefits so they can see how they're doing looking for a job so they're not cheating or just relying on the benefit system.

(Total for Question 8 = 2 marks)

Question 9

Learners were expected to recall and apply their knowledge of the responsibilities public service organisations have toward their employees. Expected responses included:

- enabling redress
- providing safe working environments for employees
- preventing discrimination
- paying wages

This question drew a lot of responses direct from the specification, which is what was expected. In some cases learners just stated a partial extract from the specification such as redress, training or whistle-blowing. On these occasions no marks would have been awarded as the responsibility is to **enable redress** or **provide training**, etc.

9 Give **two** responsibilities that public service organisations have towards their employees.

- 1 Provide a safe working environment
- 2 enable whistleblowing.

2 Marks awarded

(Total for Question 9 = 2 marks)

9 Give **two** responsibilities that public service organisations have towards their employees.

- 1 Redress
- 2

0 Marks awarded

(Total for Question 9 = 2 marks)

Question 10

This question expected learners to recall and state two benefits of an equal society.

A significant number of learners recognised a range of benefits including:

- everyone being treated equally
- equal access to public services
- diversity of cultures
- equal access to employment

10 One benefit of an equal society is that all individuals have the same rights under the law.

State **two** other benefits of an equal society.

2 Marks awarded

- 1 Good Society can function more effectively.
- 2 Fewer people can be discriminated against.

(Total for Question 10 = 2 marks)

10 One benefit of an equal society is that all individuals have the same rights under the law.

State **two** other benefits of an equal society.

- 1 everyone is treated equally.
- 2 everyone has the right to the same opportunities
eg: education.

2 Marks awarded

(Total for Question 10 = 2 marks)

Question 11

Learners were asked to explain two ways that immigration affects public service provision. Most learners could identify one way, but few managed to extend this adequately to gain the second mark. Few learners managed to provide and then explain a further example.

Expected impacts included:

- increased range of skills
- increased demand for public services as a result of population growth
- increased training needs

11 Explain **two** ways that immigration affects public service provision.

1 Immigration affects public service provision because of language barriers. This means the service will need a more diverse work force and more interpreters present.

2 Also disagreements with race, so potentially more incidents will occur between the English and the immigrants. Will need to be trained to handle with this situation.

4 Marks awarded

11 Explain **two** ways that immigration affects public service provision.

1 One way that immigration affects public service provision is by it putting strain on the public services as more people will be using them.

2 Marks awarded

2 ~~When there are~~ If there are more and more people entering the country it could leave the public services stretched over the vast population.

2 Marks awarded

(Total for Question 11 = 4 marks)

11 Explain **two** ways that immigration affects public service provision.

1 Increased population means higher demand for public services.

1 Mark awarded

11 Explain **two** ways that immigration affects public service provision.

1 A visa is required to come to the country along with a passport to check a person's identity.

0 Marks awarded

Question 12

This question asked the learners to state one way in which the impact of public services can be measured. Expected answers here included:

- number of people using public services
- surveys / questionnaires
- specific data, such as crime rates

12 State **one** way in which the impact of public services can be measured.

1 Mark awarded

one way the impact of public services can be measured is by their response time to a qaa call. (Total for Question 12 = 1 mark)

12 State **one** way in which the impact of public services can be measured.

1 Mark awarded

One way in which the impact of public services can be measured is by getting citizens / Public involved to share their views and opinions. There could be a voting system or questionnaire. Also measuring crime levels etc. over the years to show if there is any improvement. (Total for Question 12 = 1 mark)

Question 13

This question focused on the rights of individual users of health and social care services. The learners were given one right in the question, in this case 'dignity', and were asked to state two further rights.

Expected answers here included:

- consent when receiving treatment
- to be treated fairly / without discrimination
- access to high quality services
- individual choice in relation to public services
- confidentiality when disclosing personal and private information

2 Marks awarded

13 When using public services, people have a right to be treated with dignity.

State **two** other rights people have when using health and social care services.

- 1 The right to patient confidentiality in which sensitive information about an individual is not released.
- 2 The right to consent before treatments go underway with patients, ~~giving~~ gaining a signature and permission.

(Total for Question 13 = 2 marks)

13 When using public services, people have a right to be treated with dignity.

State **two** other rights people have when using health and social care services.

- 1 They have the right to high standards of service.
- 2 The right of having their information kept secret (confidentiality).

(Total for Question 13 = 2 marks)

13 When using public services, people have a right to be treated with dignity.

State **two** other rights people have when using health and social care services.

- 1 They should have the right to confidentiality when give personal information and details.
- 2 Also the public has a right to fill in a consent ~~card~~ before having any health care.

2 Marks awarded

There were some learners who completely misunderstood the question!

13 When using public services, people have a right to be treated with dignity.

State **two** other rights people have when using health and social care services.

- 1 when being arrested people have the right to remain silent and not give information
- 2 once to your being questioned you have the right to not be tortured.

0 Marks awarded

(Total for Question 13 = 2 marks)

Question 14a

This question asked the learners to explain one benefit to a public service organisation of having a trained workforce. The benefits expected to be stated here included:

- increased efficiency / effectiveness
- fewer workplace accidents / incidents
- improved morale within the workforce
- improved levels of service provision

This question produced a good range of responses from the learners with most identifying valid and realistic benefits of a trained workforce to a public service organisation.

14 (a) Explain **one** benefit of a trained workforce to a public service organisation.

(2)

2 Marks awarded

One benefit would be a safe working environment. This is good because there will be no injuries.

14 (a) Explain **one** benefit of a trained workforce to a public service organisation.

(2)

2 Marks awarded

They will be much more effective at their work because they are specifically trained in that area of expertise.

In the example below the learner had correctly identified a benefit, but unfortunately did not develop their answer to gain the second mark.

14 (a) Explain **one** benefit of a trained workforce to a public service organisation.

(2)

1 Mark awarded

Less management needed because they are trained.

Question 14b

For this question, learners were expected to explain a key term from the specification; 'professional standards'.

This question proved quite challenging for the learners with relatively few gaining the full 2 marks.

(b) Explain the term 'professional standards'.

(2)

Professional standards mean, ^{where} statutory obligations are carried out effectively and efficiently with decorum and care to others.

2 Marks awarded

(b) Explain the term 'professional standards'.

(2)

Working and acting ~~at~~ a high level ^{which is} of expectancy expected by a workforce mainly high punctuality, treating others with respect, etc.

2 Marks awarded

Question 14c

For this question, learners were expected to apply their knowledge. On this occasion they were asked to explain one of the ways in which a public service organisation prevents bullying and harassment. Answers to this question were expected to include:

- having codes of practice in place
- having anti-bullying and harassment initiatives in place
- public service organisations having a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment

(c) Explain **one** way public service organisations prevent bullying and harassment.

(2)

2 Marks awarded

They can do a campaign to show people what bullying can have on someone's life and how it can affect them physically and mentally

(Total for Question 14 = 6 marks)

(c) Explain **one** way public service organisations prevent bullying and harassment.

(2)

2 Marks awarded

By putting in rules and regulations preventing bullying and harassment and also stating that if the rules and regulations are not met they will be punished.

(Total for Question 14 = 6 marks)

The example below is a typical response that was awarded 1 mark as the learner had simply identified the way, but not developed it.

(c) Explain **one** way public service organisations prevent bullying and harassment.

(2)

1 Mark awarded

By having bullying and harassment policies and training.

Question 15

This was the second multiple choice question in this examination and the learners were asked which one of four options was a responsibility of a public service user. Most learners correctly identified that it was to supply accurate information.

Question 16a

In this question learners were expected to state two ways that public service organisations use liaison officers.

The expected answers included:

- supporting the families of those bereaved in tragic circumstances
- supporting minority groups in the community
- providing communication / intelligence links at demonstrations
- liaising with organisations / groups outside of the public service organisation

16 (a) Give **two** ways public service organisations use liaison officers.

(2)

They give information to a victims family.

2 Marks awarded

They can speak to foreign families.

16 (a) Give **two** ways public service organisations use liaison officers.

(2)

Two ways public service organisations use liaison officers is by if a family member died in a car crash they would tell their next of kin. Another way is by keeping the peace at protests in public.

2 Marks awarded

16 (a) Give **two** ways public service organisations use liaison officers.

(2)

because it's a way of keeping the budget down

0 Marks awarded

Question 16b

Learners were expected to apply their knowledge by means of stating the practical ways in which the police service improves the quality of life. A significant number of learners managed to identify valid ways, including:

- Reducing the level of crime by patrolling
- deterring vulnerable young people from embarking on to a life of crime
- arresting people suspected of breaking the law

(b) Explain **two** ways the police service improves people's quality of life.

(4)

1 REDUCING CRIME BY ARRESTING PEOPLE THAT ARE ACTING SUSPICIOUSLY OR COMMITTING OFFENCES.

2 PROVIDES THE PUBLIC WITH REASSURANCE AND PROVIDES ADVICE ON HOW TO BE SAFE IN THEIR HOMES AND ON THE ROAD.

4 Marks awarded

(Total for Question 16 = 6 marks)

(b) Explain **two** ways the police service improves people's quality of life.

(4)

4 Marks awarded

1. by using CCTV, this is because people will feel more safe if they know ~~that~~ they're being watched and criminals tend to not commit crime if they know that.
2. Patrols around a local area, this is because the general public will ~~start~~ feel more safe and know that the police are always looking out.

(Total for Question 16 = 6 marks)

(b) Explain **two** ways the police service improves people's quality of life.

(4)

Another two examples of the learner not reading the question!

1. one way to improve the quality of life is if you are in the army they will send you on holidays to everywhere in the world.

2. And if a young person was ~~the~~ living on the street the carer can find them somewhere to live.

(b) Explain **two** ways the police service improves people's quality of life.

(4)

1. provides free health care for everyone.

2. ~~if~~ if unemployed they can claim benefits till they get a job.

Question 17

This question proved challenging for most learners with few gaining maximum marks. Learners were expected to discuss the impact that ICT has on public service organisations, including factors such as:

- the increased use of mobile phone technology
- the increased level of unsubstantiated / unsolicited feedback on the performance of public service organisations
- the variety of applications being used by public service organisations and their impact

It was evident to the examiners that in general the learners were better prepared for this type of question. There were a number of learners who had a plan to approach the larger questions, with outlines of the sort of topics and factors they intended to cover being listed.

17 Widespread use of information and communications technology (ICT) is one reason that information about the performance of organisations which deliver public services is more easily accessible.

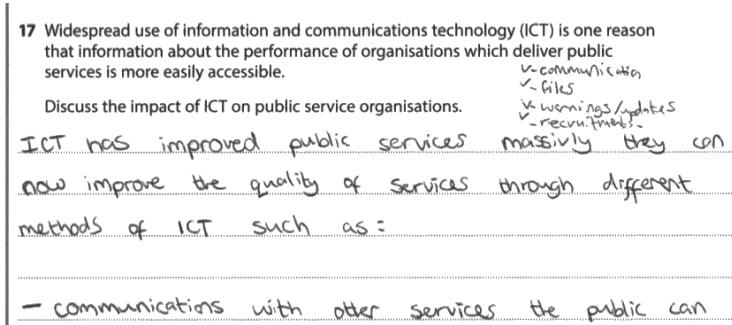
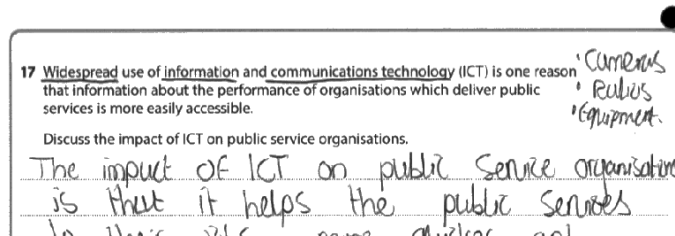
Both sides
Discuss the impact of ICT on public service organisations. (All)

Firstly the impact of ICT in the public services

This approach, identifying the command word and underlining it, as well as the prompt to cover 'All' public service organisations, helped this learner gain **6 marks**.

The approach taken in these 2 responses, by listing the topics they wanted to cover, helped them both gain **7 Marks**

7 marks



17 Widespread use of information and communications technology (ICT) is one reason that information about the performance of organisations which deliver public services is more easily accessible.

Discuss the impact of ICT on public service organisations.

The ICT really helps people now. They have a lot more control of that what is happening in the city. For example CCTV ~~cameras~~ helps them to keep an eye on that what is happening in the city and even if someone commits a crime they will be able to check what happened and it might help them to find person who committed the crime faster. Another really good thing are the cameras that check car plates what enables police to check if the car owner payed taxes or mot's immediately. Without this cameras it would be rally hard for police to check every car. I think that these days technology helps public services a lot but it also costs them a lot of money.

This response was awarded **3 Marks**.

This response just focused on the use of cameras, which although it was covered in reasonable detail, it only covers the use of ICT from a single viewpoint.

The following two responses are from the opposite end of the spectrum. The first being an 8 mark answer and the second was awarded 6 marks.

17 Widespread use of information and communications technology (ICT) is one reason that information about the performance of organisations which deliver public services is more easily accessible.

Discuss the impact of ICT on public service organisations.

Technology within the public services allows for in depth and accurate surveillance of crime and perpetrators via CCTV, traffic control measures and biometrics etc. Surveillance cannot deal with crime when it is ~~recently~~^{in progress} happening but it can keep a visual log of where, when, how and sometimes who have committed an offence, thus giving way to an investigation and/or legal grounds to actively prevent and halt this type of thing from happening again. This reliable records of particular events and perpetrators means that important information cannot be destroyed or evaded. ~~But~~ A DNA database is a good example of this. Also, the improvement of technology allows for more accurate and powerful weaponry more effective for the use of the ~~militar~~ military and armed police. However, surveillance, such as CCTV, can often be viewed as an invasion of our privacy and a breach of our human rights, thus agitating society and we see a rise in conflict and distrust between public services and the general public. Because technology is constantly changing it is also becoming more adept and

complicated. This sometimes forces criminals to go under ground to avoid detection. Here they can refine their skills, congregate online and recruit new offenders through targeting and socialising. This now means that the authorities must improve their technological skills in order to detect, assess, interpret and gain evidence against dangerous people. Today these underground offenders range from paedophile gangs to armed terrorists. Because they are a threat to the state they must be stopped. Technology changes and evolves. It drives and consumes us but it can also be used as a dangerous weapon.

This is a good example of a response that was awarded **8 Marks**.

It covers a range of ways in which ICT is used in a number of contrasting public services, and the learner has articulated the points extremely well.

It also looks at the way in which ICT is used from the perspective of the community and how that, in turn, impacts on the public service organisations.

The response also has good balance in that it considers both positive and negative impacts.

This is a typical response that had **6 Marks** awarded. Throughout the answer the learner displayed good knowledge, understanding and application of the impact that ICT has on public services.

This particular response covers a variety of ways in which ICT is used and the impact it has on the public service organisations.

It also looks at it from a variety of different viewpoints, but does not have the level of balance to enable it to receive marks from the higher band.

17 Widespread use of information and communications technology (ICT) is one reason that information about the performance of organisations which deliver public services is more easily accessible.

Discuss the impact of ICT on public service organisations.

It allows services to keep on track with any records, helping them to help individuals better if they have all the information, meaning they can understand someone properly. If in hospital they know more about them and any medicines they can/cannot use.

With online surveys it allows organisations to keep on track of what they are doing well and what they need to improve on. Allowing them to improve the ~~quantity~~ quality of their service, from the public's point of view.

It allows individuals to contact them in many different ways which can help services manage better and access information e.g. if a child is getting abused there's online resources to use to get help, which could potentially help save a life.

It helps each organisation to keep in contact ~~with~~ with each other, via radios, phones and emails. Meaning they can help each other

out and share information when needing to.

With the use of Satnavs it helps organisations locate certain incidents easier and quicker, possibly improving their services and helping individuals in need quicker.

Having CCTV cameras and speed cameras can help locate crimes and criminals, meaning they can find out more information if a crime happens and find the right criminal. Keeping the services safer and the public's.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, in future learners should:

- Remember that there is an hour to complete this paper and plan time accordingly. The lengthier questions come towards the end of the paper so more time could be allocated for later questions.
- Spend time reading each question thoroughly to ensure the question asked is the question answered, underline key words or instructions from the question.
- Be aware that all parts of the specification will be tested during the life of the qualification.
- Study the specification to ensure key aspects and terms within the specification are known.
- Look at the command word in the question – e.g., outline, describe, explain, discuss. These words provide information on the type of response required and how the answer should be phrased. For example, 'outline' requires a basic response, whereas 'explain' will require an initial idea or way, to be identified followed by expansion and/or examples to apply and illustrate why this idea or way is suitable.
- If two explanations are required half the marks will be awarded for the first response and the other half will be awarded for the second response. So if only one explanation is made then half the marks allocated for the question will be lost.
- Plan the response to the last question. This will require a number of different aspects to be addressed, with reasoning, for higher marks to be awarded.
- Exam techniques are important and appropriate preparation will ensure that learners approach the exam more confidently and with knowledge of how to respond to different types of questions.

Grade Boundaries

Unit	Max Mark	D	M	P	L1	U
<i>20537 Unit 6: Citizenship, Society and the Public Services</i>	50	38	29	21	13	0

What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we 'set' the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass and Level 1 fallback).

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries. This means that they decide what the lowest possible mark should be for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries ensures that a learner who receives a 'Distinction' grade next year, will have similar ability to a learner who has received a 'Distinction' grade this year. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to make sure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in externally assessed question papers

Each exam we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries year on year because then it wouldn't take into account that a paper may be slightly easier or more difficult than the year before.

Grade boundaries for all papers can be found here: <http://pastpapers.edexcel.com/content/edexcel/grade-boundaries.html>

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