



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Citizenship Studies

41054

(Specification 4105)

**Controlled assessment: Citizenship Studies –
Taking Informed and Responsible Action**

Report on the Examination

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Unit 4 (41054): Controlled Assessment – Taking Informed and Responsible Action

General

This is the second year of examination for this unit and it has proved to be a successful addition to the Citizenship suite of specifications.

In 2012 there were two tasks available for students to choose from. A third task has been added to the bank, for future years. Teachers are reminded that these are the only permissible tasks, teachers and/or students cannot set their own tasks.

There are two options for students following on from Unit 2 (Short Course) into Unit 4 (Full Course). Option 1 is to choose Unit 4 Task 1. This invites students to follow up their advocacy of a voluntary group, charity or pressure group and take responsible action to further the aims of the group. It is important for schools and colleges to ensure that students choose the same group in Unit 4 as the one studied in Unit 2. It is not acceptable for students to choose a different group in Unit 4.

Option 2 involves the study of leisure facilities in the local community and is designed to be a completely different focus for students not wanting to follow up their Unit 2 work.

The Moderating Team have seen many examples of exceptional work, as students used their citizenship skills and embarked on courses of responsible action. Active participation was evident in the vast majority of cases and the enthusiasm and interest was infectious; many were a pleasure to read.

Schools and colleges are reminded that Controlled Assessment work can only be submitted on a Skills Profile Form (SPF). This is the only acceptable way of presenting written work for moderation. The Skills Profile consists of five stages and students have to address a number of questions in each stage. Responses can be handwritten or word-processed. The answer boxes can be enlarged to accommodate students with a large handwriting style.

Students can choose to work individually or in a small group. The final write-up of the Skills Profile should be under controlled conditions and a teacher should witness the activity. Many centres have adopted examination conditions for the final write-up of the SPF.

Schools and colleges are also reminded that moderators only require the SPF and an attached, completed Candidate Record Form. Staples or treasury tags should be used; plastic pockets or folders are unnecessary. Any evidence collected by the student should be safely stored at the centre. Where schools and colleges sent evidence, the Moderating Team were instructed not to consider it in their assessment of the Skills Profiles.

At the end of each stage, the teacher comment box is available for teachers to confirm that the student has played an active part in the action and to point to areas where credit has been awarded. Teacher comments need to be addressed to the moderator and not to the student.

If the teacher requires further assistance with the controlled assessments, a Controlled Assessment Adviser is allocated to each school and college, who can give advice and guidance on any aspect of the process from task selection to completion of the SPF. There is also information and advice on the AQA website – www.aqa.org.uk – and on e-AQA in particular. Login details are available from Examinations Officers in the school or college. There are many documents and resources available on the subject website, including

information and advice on guidance to students, expected responses for a Unit 4 task, exemplar material and a Frequently Asked Questions section.

The following observations are intended to offer insight and guidance to centres to help with the controlled assessment in future years.

STAGE 1 - INFORM YOURSELF

In this stage, students have the opportunity to set the scene for their responsible action. If they have chosen to follow up their work from Unit 2, a clear link to that work should be made. If they have chosen a different task, reasons for the change should be explained. The majority of students used this opening stage to good effect, paving the way for a detailed description of things to come.

Question 1 showed the majority of students explaining their chosen issue and giving sound justification for their choice.

Many students in Question 2 listed a small number of relevant and realistic aims that were appropriate to the task. A small number cited aims that were unrealistic and only achievable given an unlimited amount of time and budget.

In Question 3, students are invited to describe who they are going to work with and how they decided they could work with these colleagues successfully. If students decide to work on their own, reasons for that choice should be given. Several students answered the first part of the question but neglected to answer the second part.

Research is the focus of Question 4. Again, the first part of the question was very well answered, but students did not always address the whole question. Different types of appropriate research need to be fully identified and if the task is a follow-on from Unit 2, research carried out in the Short Course needs to be described.

In Question 5, many students gave a detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of themselves and others in their group. It is not necessary for students to describe the roles and responsibilities for the whole of the activity; the question asks for the roles and responsibilities in finding the necessary information. This is another instance where students have to read and address the question carefully.

The final question in Stage 1 refers to how the information retrieved will be used to make decisions about how to move forward. This section was particularly well done by the majority of students and linked to the planning of the next phase.

On the whole, marking of this stage was sound and accurate.

STAGE 2 - JUSTIFY CHOICES

In general, this section was well executed and an improvement on last year. In Question 1, students gave a number of alternatives that could have been taken. Most were realistic and achievable; some were unrealistic and inappropriate. A key mistake was that there was not always a link to the aims stated in Stage 1. Question 2 was well done by the majority of students. Reasons for choice were given and reasons for rejection also well documented. Several students talked about the role played by the identification of the skills of the group members in making the decision to move forward with a particular form of action. A number of students did not read Questions 1 and 2 properly and, therefore, their responses were not always relevant. Many action plans were impressive, with details of who is doing what, linked to a time sequence. It was noted by the Moderating Team that several action plans were left

incomplete with the two dates columns blank. It is important to submit a complete action plan so that the moderators can see the whole picture, linking the planning stage to the actual action.

STAGE 3 - ADVOCACY AND TAKING ACTION

This stage showed a great variety in the quality of the responses. A key feature of this stage is the actual question at the top of the box. Students are asked to list the different forms of evidence they have collected, yet many gave a detailed description of what they did, and did not include any of the evidence collected. Students are expected to give evidence of their participation and to illustrate their flexibility if changes to plans have to be made. They also have to show that they were able to work with others and that they were able to carry out their roles and responsibilities and work to a deadline. Unfortunately this is an area in which students frequently undersell themselves by assuming that moderators can read between the lines. We need to see a detailed description and analysis of what has been done and how any problems were dealt with. High marks cannot be expected unless a good description of the action is given. The importance of teacher comments cannot be overstated. They need to confirm both the student's participation in the action and also the existence of the evidence collected.

STAGE 4 - ASSESS THE IMPACT

This stage has also seen some improvement on last year's responses. Assessing the impact of the action can be a difficult task for many students. The most popular method of assessing the impact is still the use of questionnaires or surveys, taken before the action and after. However, there is evidence that other methods are being employed. An example of this would be talking to an audience after the action has taken place to gauge changes in perception, attitude and opinion. The impact can be measured by the number of hits on a website, the number of people who sign a petition, visits on a Facebook page or even the number of leaflets or business cards taken at an event. These are all examples seen by the Moderating Team.

Question 1 asks how the student intends to find out what impact the action has had so a full description of the method used is expected and, importantly, how the evidence will be analysed and interpreted.

Question 2 was well answered by the majority of students, with many using the data from their analysis to support their statements of how their action had affected others.

In Question 3, students interpreted community in its widest sense. Those who had carried out a school-based action talked about the school community while others had gone outside the school and described the difference they had made in the wider community.

Many students, when responding to Question 4, did not feel that they had made an impact on the wider world. Some talked about their audience taking their ideas and spreading the word in the wider community. Others described evidence of behavioural changes that could be seen in the wider world as a result of their action. Schools and colleges are reminded that it is acceptable for students to say that they do not think they have made any impact, as long as they attempt to say why.

Question 5 presents a chance for students to begin to draw conclusions. They should use the evidence gathered in earlier stages to explain how effective their action has been. Their conclusions should be logical and realistic.

A discussion of possible further action takes place in Question 6. A number of students talked about the interest they had developed for the focus of their actions and many had decided that the involvement would not end with the closing of their controlled assessment.

STAGE 5 - REFLECT AND EVALUATE

There has been a notable improvement in the quality of the students' evaluations and reflections. Many were able to look back over the planning and execution of their actions, in some cases the work they had done in Unit 2, and evaluate how successful they had been.

In Question 1 it is expected that students will revisit their aims and comment on how successful they and their group had been in achieving those aims. Again, teacher comments are very important here in establishing how realistic the measure of success is. Many students gave honest reviews of their performance, the successes and the areas for improvement.

Question 2 was also well answered, with justification of how the action had affected the community. There are two parts to this question; schools and colleges need to ensure that students answer both and address the part that asks if they think the effect will last.

Questions 3 and 4 both refer to citizenship skills and concepts and the Moderating Team have seen an improvement in the answering of these questions due in part to good teaching of these skills. Examples of how the skills were used and reviews of how the action had helped the student to understand more about the chosen citizenship issue were, in many cases, impressive.

Questions 5 and 6 produced some honest evaluations of the student's contribution, how they had carried out their roles and helped to make the action a success. As in the previous year, the evaluation of the roles of others was often vague and lacked substance. Several students were critical about their colleagues' performance and how they 'felt let down' by a lack of effort.

Question 7 showed a variety of responses. Some felt their action had accomplished its aims and now was a good time to draw a curtain, where others were still inspired to carry their responsible action further and become more involved in their citizenship issue.

Administration

The Moderating Team wish to thank centres for their support in preparing and guiding students through their Controlled Assessments.

The vast majority of centres sent their Centre Mark Forms to the moderators before the deadline. Several were very late and this impeded the moderation process.

In larger schools and colleges there was evidence of good internal moderation. The Centre Declaration Sheet should be signed by all teachers responsible for marking work. It is helpful to the Moderating Team if larger schools and colleges enclose an indication of which teacher has taught which student; a signature on the Candidate Record Form would suffice.

If a Skills Profile Form is lost, there are established procedures to follow. Schools and colleges are asked to include a copy of the appropriate letter to the moderator when submitting the Centre Mark Form and identify the students whose work has been lost.

Schools and colleges are asked to ensure that all forms are correctly and fully completed. Candidate numbers should be on Candidate Record Forms and on the Skills Profile Form.

Care should be taken with the addition of marks and the transfer of marks from the Skills Profile Form to the Centre Mark Form. It would be helpful if the centre could also ensure that the second and third copies of the Centre Mark Forms were checked before posting, to make sure they are readable. There should be no blank mark boxes next to the candidate's name and number on the Centre Mark Form. If a candidate is absent, ABS should be written in the mark box.

This year has built on the success of last year and the Moderating Team have seen work of high quality where students have embraced the spirit of active citizenship and become engaged in responsible action. Schools and colleges should be congratulated on the excellent practice that has encouraged and motivated their students.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

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

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