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Citizenship Studies (3280)

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Examiners' Report

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3280_01 Written Paper

Introduction

The structure of the paper in 2006 remained largely unchanged but the extension to the examination duration (to one hour and thirty minutes) ensured that many more candidates could complete the paper fully, particularly in terms of finishing the extended writing question (Q9, 10 or 11).

In **Section A**, most candidates showed that they were capable of reflecting on their coursework activity although, as in 2005, those who had undertaken essentially solitary tasks - frequently, but not exclusively, work experience - found it difficult to answer Q1(b) and Q1(c). Answers to Q1(f) - which required extended writing - reflected the wide range of ability of those entering the examination.

The focus of Section B in 2006 was on the theme of Power, Politics & the Media. Most of the multiple choice questions were completed successfully although the lack of political knowledge of most candidates was apparent in answers to Q2(a) and Q4(d) in particular and only a minority of candidates understand why broadcasters are less biased than newspapers in Q2(d). Comprehension of the sources was usually quite good, particularly in the case of Source B on paying for local government services and Source C on voting behaviour. However, there was often a lack of factual knowledge to cover all questions relating to Source A on the relationship between the media and politics and not all candidates took advantage of Source D on reasons for voting to expand and illustrate their answers to Q5(d).

Answers to questions in Section C were better, probably because of the additional time available, although, in marked contrast to the many successful answers to Q6(a)-(f) and Q8(a)-(f), the prominent political figures pictured in Q7 were not widely known and more candidates than might have been anticipated found it difficult to identify a 'quality' newspaper from the four options given. Of the three extended writing questions, the overwhelming majority chose Q9, perhaps because of the recent publicity surrounding the theme of crime and punishment.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1 Most candidates started well by describing both their citizenship activity and their individual role in specific terms and answers to Q1(b) were pleasing in that many indicated, by using phrases like '*we all agreed after a group discussion*' or '*we took a vote on it*' to demonstrate that they understood the concept of democratic choice.

In general, the choice of citizenship activities was appropriate in the vast majority of cases and many candidates gained 2 marks by showing how their activity had helped others as they did when answering Q1(d) when occurrences such as poor timing, the unforeseen absence of members of the team, problems with bookings and faulty technical equipment all took their toll on planning. The two reasons for evaluation proved more testing but factors such as judging what had gone right or wrong or the need to pass on ideas to others for future improvement were commonly mentioned.

The three main weaknesses when answering Q1(f) on examining whether or not citizenship activities do more for those who undertake them than those who are supposed to benefit from them were:

- the determination of some candidates to write in general terms about their coursework activity rather than to answer the specific question asked;
- an inability to examine both points of view which limited answers to a maximum of 4 out of 8 marks;
- a tendency to re-write the scaffolding questions in a slightly different form instead of using them as part of the framework from which to develop answers.

Successful candidates produced a more analytical and focused approach which considered both points of view and worked towards a logically argued conclusion.

Section B

Q2 While almost everybody identified *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* as two newspapers that regularly support the Conservative Party in Q2(b), hardly anybody knew that a referendum was a national vote on a specific issue or that a by-election took place following the death or resignation of an MP in Q2(a).

Source A was widely used to identify two ways such as bias, putting a slant on reporting, or concentrating on particular news items, which newspapers use to influence the opinion of their readers but, few knew enough to answer Q2(d) successfully. Many felt that broadcasters were less biased because they addressed viewers directly or had a bigger audience. Far fewer understood that broadcasting regulations existed to ensure neutrality in news reports or that broadcasters had a responsibility to cover different points of view.

Q3 Local government finance affects all our lives but it is not a topic which generates a great deal of excitement. Despite this, performance on the comprehension-based multiple choice items Q3(a)-(e) was good though fewer candidates gained both marks on Q3(f). Some were able to identify a campaigning method against council tax increases such as refusing to pay, forming a pressure

group, contacting a local MP or councillors or using the media but they didn't always get the second mark by giving a brief indication of how any of these methods might prove successful.

Q4 Performance on Q4 was similar to that on Q3. The multiple choice questions, Q4(a)-(c) based on the voting figures shown for Leeds North West in the general elections of 2001 and 2005, were answered well but Q4(d) on the benefits of proportional representation over the present voting method of 'first-past-the-post' were simply not known.

Detailed knowledge of a system of proportional representation was not required to answer Q4(d) and an answer which outlined, for example, the way in which seats in the House of Commons were allocated in proportion to votes achieved by the different parties, and the extent to which smaller parties such as the Green Party or UKIP might gain some representation in parliament would have secured the 4 marks available.

Q5 Candidates used Source D to identify the party policies required by Q5(a)-(c) but didn't seem to realise that much of the information they needed to answer Q5(d) on reasons why citizens should vote in elections was in the source.

In the debates on voting in the 2005 general election, young people quoted in Source D referred to the link between voting; the enjoyment of our rights and the exercise of our responsibilities; the need to vote rather than to complain after the election when a vote had not been cast; the extent to which votes could make a difference when an MP could be elected by a tiny majority of votes; the way in which votes could show a desire for change particularly when the main parties offered different policies on, say, taxation levels or the Iraq war.

Section C

Q6 and 7 The human-rights based multiple choice questions, Q6(a)-(f) were probably the best answered on the whole paper. However, as Q7 moved into Power, Politics and the Media, although most people correctly identified Tony Blair as the Leader of the Labour Party in Q7(a), the pictures of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat leaders at the time of the 2005 general election proved to be much more elusive in Q7(b)-(c). Similarly, the option which identified a parliamentary constituency as the geographical area represented by an MP in Q7(d) was not widely known although more candidates successfully identified Amnesty International as a pressure group campaigning against the unfair or cruel treatment of prisoners in Q7(e).

Surprisingly, given the three popular alternatives, *The Guardian*, was not always identified as a 'quality' newspaper in Q7(f) but more candidates were able to distinguish between how quality and popular newspapers were able to have an influence on political decisions perhaps by having more detailed and factual coverage of politics in the case of the former or the simple fact that more people read the latter.

Q8 Many correct answers appeared for Q8(a) which asked for an example of a service industry, most featuring one of the emergency or social services. The multiple choice questions, Q8(b)-(d) on aspects of the Global Village were effectively covered and it

was gratifying to see that the purpose of a credit card (following the ‘buy now pay back later’ principle) was well-known and that many people were aware that a disadvantage appropriate for Q8(f) was the amount of interest charged which could lead people into debt.

Q9, 10 and 11

Given the opportunity to choose one of these questions, about 80% of candidates opted for Q9 which asked if they agreed with the view that ‘there would be less crime if punishments were more severe’. The overwhelming majority did but failed to consider an alternative view, thus limiting themselves to 4 marks out of a possible 9.

It was widely believed, following the scaffolding questions, that offenders knew right from wrong; that lawbreakers were encouraged by low detection rates; that victims should not face the perpetrators of their crimes; that punishment did not contravene the human rights of lawbreakers and that severe punishment was a universal deterrent. Few paused to add that most ex-prisoners re-offend or that countries with capital punishment might also suffer high crime rates. Too often emotion got the better of many candidates and there was often much more unsupported opinion than reason in many answers.

Q10, which asked if an MP’s political party was more important than their age, colour or previous job, proved to be far less contentious and also seemed to give candidates more chance to consider both sides of the question. However, answers to this question proved to be shorter than those to Q9 once again illustrating that many candidates have only a sketchy knowledge of the more overtly political areas of the specification.

Q11, which was equally popular as Q10, asked whether European countries should refuse to trade with world polluters, and non-signatories to the Kyoto Protocol, such as the USA, China and India. Some candidates knew the theme well and offered a balanced appraisal of the trading dilemma. Others used the scaffolding questions to move away from the main focus of the question to talk more about greenhouses gases and general environmental issues, with a corresponding reduction in the time spent dealing with the trading issue.

3280_02 Coursework

Centre Administration

For the second successive year there was a significant increase in entry for Citizenship Studies. Most centres performed administrative tasks efficiently and the following characteristics of good practice were identified:

- deadlines for the despatch of coursework were adhered to;
- work submitted by candidates and their teachers was properly authenticated to meet Edexcel and QCA requirements;
- candidates provided a brief introductory description of both their activity and their own role in the activity;
- the OPTEMS were completed correctly, matching the scores awarded to the work of individual candidates on their Response Forms;
- centres sent sufficient samples (substituting candidates with an identical mark for a candidate who might have withdrawn), including the work of both the highest and the lowest scoring candidates;
- using the 2006 response sheet which contained a mark grid for the four assessment areas (Planning, Activity Log, Communication and Evaluation) and total mark;
- incorporating helpful annotation (although this is not compulsory);
- providing clear evidence of internal moderation where this was appropriate.

Unfortunately, a minority of centres did not meet administrative requirements which, though something of a chore for busy teachers, are there to make the assessment system consistent and transparent. OPTEMS sheets were not always accurately completed; response sheets were unsigned by teachers, or candidates, or both; deadlines were not adhered to; responses to requests made by moderators were slow; samples were incomplete and internal moderation was ignored.

Centre Assessment

More centres are becoming familiar with the assessment process and most use the 5 level descriptors in each of the four assessment categories effectively. There is no doubt that, as Citizenship Studies becomes more established in the curriculum, some excellent departments are emerging which provide high quality leadership and guidance, and a genuine sense of enthusiasm and involvement.

These are extremely well run and operate in a manner which offers both support and inspiration to candidates. Such centres show clearly how internal cross-moderation has taken place and frequently annotate the work of their candidates to show how a particular mark was determined. This is immensely helpful to external moderators in the way that it helps to provide a context for the work of individual candidates to be judged.

By way of contrast, assessment in some centres leaves a great deal to be desired. How marks are arrived at, when they appear to be at variance with the level descriptors by a significant margin, remains a matter for speculation. This is most commonly, but certainly not exclusively, the case when the coursework activity is based on either work experience or, less frequently, a sporting activity.

Where work experience is used it is frequently the case that the submissions are based on either a diary or an essay outlining the candidate's experiences during their work placement. Many of these placements have, at best, only a tenuous link with Citizenship Studies and most are, inevitably, an individual activity with limited scope for examining the contributions of others.

Sports activities can be legitimate and there were good examples in 2006 of their use in fund raising, working with younger pupils or anti-racist activities. They are less successful if their primary purpose is not the assessment of an activity securely based in Citizenship Studies or if the focus is on personal fitness or a preoccupation with the sport itself.

Particularly in the case of inappropriate work experience activities, which manifestly did not satisfy the level descriptors and the assessment objectives of Citizenship Studies the adjustments made to centre marks were often very significant. It must be emphasised that Citizenship Studies is a discrete subject in its own right and not an appendage of work experience.

Candidate Performance

Even though numbers increased significantly in 2006, the overall level of performance was very similar to that of 2005. Inevitably, with entry based on an untiered examination paper, moderators see work which covers the complete spectrum of ability and it is recognised that many candidates go to great lengths to produce coursework which represents a high personal level of achievement. Only a very small minority submitted work which was really carelessly presented and badly organised.

Choice of Activity

Although a handful of centres either prescribe a coursework topic for all candidates, almost all offer at least some element of choice and this freedom and sense of ownership is usually valued by candidates. Most choices are appropriate and typically involve raising money for charity, environmental work in both schools and the community, mentoring schemes involving younger pupils and, increasingly, activities showing global awareness.

Where work experience is successful there is a clear emphasis on an area which allows interaction of young people (perhaps also involving adults) and which offers a clear focus on a citizenship activity. Occasionally, this might cover key aspects of health and safety at work but some of the best and most successful examples are those in which Year 10 or 11 pupils prepare work experience booklets and presentations for younger pupils.

Some choices appear less and less relevant to Citizenship Studies and the trend is becoming more apparent as entries increase. Animals are, at best, on the very margins of the subject at this level and it is necessary to re-iterate that some work experience placements have little or nothing to do with Citizenship Studies, that the diaries are of marginal importance to the subject, and that the enjoyment of sport, though entirely laudable is not, in itself, a citizenship activity. It is the responsibility of centres to make this clear to their candidates.

Centres are also advised to consult the current national curriculum programme of study for Key Stage 4. Direct links between this and individual choice of citizenship activity are not yet compulsory but are, nevertheless, very much advised.

Planning the Activity

Although some plans seem to be written very much after the event, most candidates give a clear and successful indication of plans involving both their own work and the contribution of others. In this sense, it must be emphasised that the contribution of others, and work with others in a group, is an essential part of this specification. There are still some candidates who undertake their activity almost solely on an individual basis and this kind approach cannot satisfy all the assessment criteria. They also put themselves at a significant disadvantage in Section A of the examination which is based on the experiences of their coursework activity and the ability of candidates to reflect on their achievements.

Activity Log

Completion of this part of the Response Form continues to improve. Diary entries now contain more detail and there is often much more analysis of the diary in terms of examining the progress of the activity. Some candidates clearly used the slight change of wording on the 2006 form which emphasised the need to make explicit connections between their activity and citizenship. Others did this as something of an afterthought and probably the majority failed to gain access to the higher levels of this section of the assessment because citizenship links were either not explicit enough or non-existent.

It is vital that the second part of the Activity Log form is used to produce an analysis which demonstrates clearly how citizenship is reflected in the activity and that this is made fully explicit. Potentially good work may well not realise its full mark potential if these links are not made. Equally, activity choices that really don't have clear links with citizenship are likely to be exposed here.

Communication

The gathering, inclusion and description of evidence are now very good with digital photographic support and PowerPoint presentations increasingly common. Unfortunately, not all centres realise that their candidates need to go beyond a description of how the evidence was gathered and used and there are a few centres who allow their candidates to submit work without any supporting evidence even though a minimum of two pieces are required by the specification. Equally, vast amounts of evidence included on an unselective basis are not required.

Some analysis of the significance of evidence is usually incorporated but this is rarely sufficient to offer the sort of interpretation of evidence, and reasoned judgments based on it that satisfies the requirements of the upper levels of the assessment criteria. As with the Activity Log, there was a slight modification in 2006 of the wording of the form designed to help candidates. For the most part, the results were slightly disappointing and centres are advised to make sure that their candidates are

familiar with the requirements set out in the Level 3-5 descriptors for the Communication Section.

Evaluation

Weaker candidates often re-write the planning section of their coursework or describe what they have done but most responses do give some indication of the ability of candidates to reflect on their participation in a citizenship activity. The main weakness continues to be excessive brevity and, in particular, this section should be used to demonstrate the ability of respondents both to work with others and to appreciate their viewpoints. Many hint at this but need to offer more detailed evidence of constructive critical awareness, not least to show how a range of group decisions (where several people make an input) might contribute to the activity's outcome or what happens when decisions have to be changed.

Conclusion

It is rewarding to see just how many candidates - who are sometimes widely criticised by sections of the media for their apathy, selfishness or anti-social activities - approach their coursework positively, enthusiastically and often selflessly. There is often great pride in reaching a successful outcome and this is demonstrated by candidates of all abilities, many surpassing their original goals.

Success also comes to candidates of many different personalities. Extroverts sometimes have natural leadership qualities although it is not unusual for introverts to emerge from the shadows. Much is learnt about organisation and the sharing of disappointment and the many who do succeed are often exceedingly modest about their achievements.

As in 2005, there remain administrative and internal assessment issues to be resolved but many citizenship departments achieve a great deal, sometimes on very limited resources. The subject continues to grow in both popularity and status and coursework offers educational opportunities far beyond the confines of the classroom and which are of incalculable value to young people in the Key Stage 4 age group. They, their teachers and their many adult supporters in the community are to be congratulated on what has been achieved. Hopefully this will be recognised as Citizenship Studies develops to occupy a more significant place in the curriculum.

If you are concerned about the suitability of future Citizenship Studies coursework activities please contact Edexcel on 0870 240 9800 or through the website:

www.edexcel.org.uk/help

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	79	70	61	52	45	38	32	26	0

3280_01 Written Paper

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
3280_01 grade boundaries	80	65	57	49	42	38	34	31	28	0

3280_02 Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Paper 2 grade boundaries	40	37	32	27	23	18	14	10	6	0

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