

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

GCSE Citizenship Studies (3280)

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Contents

1.	3280/01 - Report on Written Paper	1
2.	3280/02 - Report on Coursework	9
3.	Looking Ahead to 2010	13
4.	Statistics	15

3280/01: Written Paper

Introduction

The comments on individual questions should be read in conjunction with the published mark scheme. As in previous years, it is intended that both the mark scheme and this report will serve as a helpful guide to centres in preparing candidates for future examinations.

General points

Centres are asked to emphasise to candidates the importance of writing answers that are not only coherent but also legible.

All candidates should understand that the questions in section B are based, to a lesser or greater extent, on the source material, and in some cases answers can be found directly in that material. Even if a candidate did not know the answer to a question, reference to the material should help as to what the answer might be. Studying the source material, questions and the requirements of those questions, are all essential in order to achieve the available marks in this section.

The focus this year was on source material linked to the theme of power, politics and the media. Politics is a part of the course that often seems less well understood by candidates. Several of the questions in this section were worded so as to ask 'you', i.e. the candidate, in order to enable a greater identification with political involvement or action.

For the extended writing questions, there remains a tendency, particularly for weaker candidates to write a paragraph or 'mini essay' in response to each of the five bullet points and thus not address the 'other point of view'. As stated in previous reports, answering *yes* or *no* to each of the bullet points in turn, does not necessarily address the question being asked. As a result, many candidates did not succeed in gaining a mark above level 2 (maximum 4 marks). Similar issues apply to question 1(e), although the criteria in each of the levels of assessment have some differences.

Section A

Q1(a)-(e)

As in previous years, most candidates were able to reflect accurately and clearly on their coursework activity, and the marks awarded reflected this. In parts 1(a) (i) and (ii) some candidates were more likely to be unable to distinguish the activity and its aims. 1(b) presented few difficulties other than the occasional case where a candidate engaged in activities alone. In the cases where work experience had been substituted for a Citizenship activity reference to other employees was made relevant. More able candidates were able to distinguish between the requirements of parts 1(c)(i) and (ii). For example, 'we raised £100' was worth 1 mark in part (c)(i), but the judgment of success would be that '£100 exceeded the target'. In many activities fund raising is rightly linked to awareness raising so there were plenty of opportunities here to write briefly about success. However the word 'judge' required some evidence, not just perception. Issuing questionnaires is not evidence, but completed questionnaires that indicate increased understanding of an issue is evidence from which a judgment can be made. Answers to 1(d)(i) and (d)(ii) were clear and again most candidates were able to respond accurately to the requirements of these questions.

Q1(e)

This question gave plenty of opportunity for candidates to write at length about their activities and to take strong direction from the bullet points which would enable them to write about the 'other point of view'. As with questions 9, 10 and 11 some candidates wrote in response to the bullet points rather than use them as a guide. As a result, there was a tendency to write four paragraphs or mini-essays and focus on the actual question was then lost. Candidates should remember that marks above level 2 cannot be gained if answers do not present 'another point of view'.

Section B

Q2(a)

A large majority of candidates correctly identified the League Against Cruel Sports as a pressure group, with a minority thinking that it was a political party.

Q2(b)

Although answer A is a true statement, i.e. the House of Lords is the Upper House of Parliament (and it may also be true that Lords have more knowledge of hunting than MPs) this question shows the very clear importance of the need to read the question fully and carefully. In the context of the source material the House of Lords was acting in its role as the highest court in the country, and less than half of the candidates answered this correctly.

Q2(c)

In part 2(c)(i) many candidates interpreted an “end to the Hunting Act” as a desire to seek an end to hunting and wrote about cruelty to animals. The purpose of part (ii) was to ask what candidates (mostly 16 year olds) might do if they wanted to change a law they did not agree with. Many answers suggested writing to the Prime Minister or an MP. Many answers just said write letters or protest or demonstrate or campaign, all of which were too vague. Reference to strikes or boycotts was not relevant in the context of this question. Most answers mentioned peaceful means, with only a few mentioning riots.

Q2(d)

The purpose of this question was asking candidates to distinguish between a petition and other means of representing opinion such as the results of an opinion poll. The majority of candidates rightly knew that a petition calling for something was only going to represent one side of an argument and thus could not reflect the other point of view or measure accurately ‘public’ opinion on this or any other issue. Also, many candidates realised that an e-petition would only be available to those with internet access, that only those with a strong interest on one side of the issue would probably be aware of the petition and that it could enable people to record their views many times.

Q3(a)(i) & (ii)

Were answered correctly by the vast majority of candidates, the answers being relatively easily identified in the source material.

Q3(b) & (c)

The majority of candidates had difficulties with these parts of this question, but careful reading of the source material should have given clues to possible answers. Although the source material refers to local (district) council elections in 2007, two weeks after this June 2009 exam was taken elections were being held in many parts of England to elect county councillors. There was much coverage in the media of the varying fortunes of the government and how support for it, or opposition to it, would be reflected in the forthcoming local elections. Many candidates were confused by the reference to survey and observers and referred to observers making judgment on the Labour Party. Many candidates could not distinguish between local government, the Labour Government, councillors and MPs. Protest votes were seen by many candidates as forms of protest. They were not seen as votes for a minority party, who would be unlikely in most cases to have any councillors elected, which is how some voters would choose to make some expression at the ballot box against the government.

Q3(d)

A small majority of candidates recognised the UK Independence Party as a minority party.

Q3(e)

A majority of candidates incorrectly believed that council tax is determined by householders’ incomes and not the value of their home.

Q3(f)

Just over half of the candidates knew that grassroots action is taken by people in the community (and will thus hopefully be responded to by elected politicians).

Q3(g)

This question was meant to test the knowledge of what services provided by local councils (whether it be town, parish, district, county or unitary) candidates would themselves use. Some candidates made suggestions of services they would like to have, but if these were directed at young people then credit was given. No marks could be awarded for services not used by young people or for services not provided by a local council such as health care. Most candidates referred to such services as schools, after school clubs, youth clubs or centres, sports and leisure facilities, parks or skate parks and, occasionally, libraries or the Connexions service. Crime reduction programmes are provided by local authorities, and although young people might be involved in them, they are not services.

Q4(a)

This question was answered correctly by a large majority of candidates but only a very small minority understood what was meant by 'majority' to be able to answer 4(b) correctly.

Q4(c)

Even many of the most able candidates did not understand that turnout is the proportion or percentage (or number) of the electorate (or registered or eligible voters), not of the population, who turn out to vote.

Q4(d)

It is reasonable to assume that Citizenship students should have some idea of who runs their local council(s) in terms of political parties. Although this question was asking about a concept that most candidates would not have known about in some areas of the country, correct reading and use of the data enabled a correct answer to be deduced. In other words, the largest party does not have an overall majority therefore it does not control the council. Many candidates confused councillors with MPs or a council with the government. Others wrote meaningless answers such as voters not controlling the councillors.

Q4(e)

Many candidates understood that the Green Party promotes policies that will be environmentally friendly and sustainable, but the focus of this question was on policies in a local area. No marks could be awarded for policies which only have a national context such as the reduction of carbon emissions from industrial plants. The majority of candidates mentioned recycling but didn't gain a second mark when referring to putting more waste bins in the streets to keep areas more tidy. Many candidates made references to transport, but it is important for candidates to understand that a 'policy' is not something that can be implemented in order to force people to do something against their free will. Banning cars from town centres, introducing a congestion charge (mentioned by very few), encouraging motorists to take the bus, giving more bus fare subsidies, encouraging children to walk to school and creating dedicated cycle ways as a means of promoting sustainable transport, are all relevant and worthy of credit. However, motorists cannot be banned from using their cars any more than children can be forced to walk to school. Reducing CO₂ emissions is not a policy, but an aim for which a policy needs to be implemented, but candidates suggesting more wind farms or solar power in an area were rightly credited.

Q5(a), (b), (c) & (d)

These parts of this question caused few difficulties and nearly all candidates gave correct answers to these questions.

Q5(e)

Most candidates were able to gain a mark by referring to the popular papers concentrating more on celebrities or gossip, or the quality papers treating issues more seriously or more informatively (i.e. discuss or analyse issues in greater depth and detail). Many candidates seemed to believe that popular papers are biased and that quality papers tell the truth or give facts. All papers deal with politics, business and finance, it is just that each does it differently for different readerships.

Section C

Q6(a) (i), (ii) and (iii)

A very large majority of candidates knew that the minimum age for buying fireworks is 18. However, only a minority were aware that a part time job can be taken at age 12, many thinking that it is age 16. Very few candidates knew that the age of criminal responsibility is 10.

Q6(b)

The majority of candidates knew that the customer's right in this situation was a refund, although many thought that a receipt was necessary in order to secure it.

Q6(c)

The question asked for a course of action. Thus offering an apology or promising to keep better time or simply stating that he was dismissed unfairly and should have had a warning were not correct answers.

Q6(d)

Only some candidates knew the correct answer to this question.

Q6(e)

This question did not concern whether or not the teacher should have her job back. Expected responses included that she has a right to continue with her job and that her employer has a responsibility to make necessary adjustments to enable her to do so. Most answers referred to the need to make access for wheelchairs by doors, ramps, lifts etc. Good answers referred to the Disability Discrimination Act which, amongst other requirements, obliges the employer to assess the employee's needs and fitness to return to work. There would be no obligation to provide a teaching assistant, but certainly an obligation to assess whether or not one was necessary.

Q6(f)

A very large majority of candidates understood a simple definition of multiculturalism.

Q7(a)

Only some candidates knew that the main reason for calls to reform the House of Lords, which have taken place many times over many years, was that its members, unlike those of the House of Commons, are not elected.

Q7(b)

Most candidates were able to correctly identify the two organisations Friends of the Earth and CPRE.

Q7(c)

A substantial majority of candidates knew that general elections are usually held every four to five years.

Q7(d)

A large majority of candidates do not appear to understand that different systems of voting operate for different elections. There was a lot of media coverage in the weeks and months leading up to the election in early June, which could have given the opportunity in lessons to learn a little about Europe and its institutions and how EU citizens elect their MPs and members of the European Parliament.

Q7(e)

Many candidates correctly identified the correct answer as OfCOM.

Q8(a)

Most candidates could identify a major function of the UN as peacekeeping or resolving conflict in or between countries. The UN plays a role in poverty and disaster relief but through its agencies such as UNHCR which, if identified correctly, was credited.

Q8(b)

Only a small minority correctly identified Romania as the correct answer. Romania is one of the most recent entrants to membership of the EU, Switzerland is widely known for maintaining its independence and Norway has stood apart from other Scandinavian countries by not joining the EU.

Q8(c)

Less than half of candidates knew what the Kyoto Protocol was concerned with.

Q8(d)

Most candidates were able to express that fair trade about paying the people who grow crops or produce goods in LEDCs to sell to other countries a fair price for the goods or a fair wage for their labour.

Q8(e)(i)

A large majority of candidates were able to identify issues such as child labour, sweatshops or very low wages as one of the reasons.

Q8(e)(ii)

Most candidates were able to express at least one possible consequence of the ban referred to in 8(e)(i).

Section C extended writing

This year, just over half of the candidates answered question 9, about one third chose question 10, with question 11 thus being the least popular but producing some of the most well informed and well structured answers.

Q9

Some candidates had firm views about what sentences should be given in response to certain offences and have a strong sense of justice and injustice. Nevertheless, there was some accurate reference to restorative justice and community service being more appropriate than prison, as well as the importance of rehabilitation. A few more able candidates referred to historical examples such as peaceful campaigns or passive resistance involving civil rights in the USA or South Africa. However, the stating of opinions on what sentences certain offences should have or deserve, without reference to evidence, could not result in marks being awarded above level 2.

Q10

Most candidates are aware of their rights at age 16. Opinion was divided between those who would relish the opportunity to vote and those who fear they know insufficient about what political parties stand for and therefore whether they would vote. However, a majority of candidates believed that they should be able to vote at 16. More able candidates referred to such areas of political involvement as Youth Parliaments, Youth Councils or membership of pressure groups. Candidates from those parts of the British Isles where the voting age has been reduced to 16, such as in Guernsey, were able to add an extra dimension in their answers to this question.

Q11

More able candidates were able to link their own efforts with, or put them into the context of, local, national or international programmes. It was very clear that they had a good understanding of the local, national and global dimensions of politics and responsibilities and how to balance these responsibilities by discussing how all must work together to create any meaningful change. Answers gaining fewer marks tended to concentrate on mostly individuals actions and government forcing people to recycle.

3280/02: Coursework

Centre Administration

It was pleasing to see that most centres performed administrative tasks efficiently. The following characteristics of good practice were identified:

- early May deadlines for the despatch of coursework were adhered to
- work submitted by candidates and their teachers was properly authenticated, through the signatures of both the teacher and the student, to meet Edexcel and QCA requirements
- candidates restricted themselves to a brief introductory description of both their activity and their own role in it
- the OPTEMS were completed correctly, matching the marks awarded to the work of individual candidates on their response form grids
- centres sent sufficient samples (substituting candidates with an identical/very close mark for candidates who might have withdrawn)
- the work of both the highest and the lowest scoring candidates was included in samples
- use of the latest (revised 2006) response sheet which contained a grid to record the mark for each of the four assessment areas (Planning, Activity Log, Communication and Evaluation) together with the total mark
- use of annotation commenting on the work of individual students (not a compulsory requirement but very helpful when provided)
- inclusion of clear evidence of internal standardisation where this was appropriate because more than one teacher was involved in the internal assessment.

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.

Where work experience is used it is frequently the case that the submissions are based on either a diary or an account of the candidate's experiences during their work placement. Many of these placements have only the most tenuous link with Citizenship Studies and most are an individual activity which will not meet higher mark descriptors because there is little or no involvement of others.

Sports activities can be legitimate Citizenship Activities and there were some good examples of their use in fund raising, working with younger pupils or anti-racist activities in connection with national campaigns focusing on tackling racism in football. 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 particular sporting skill (usually football and sometimes described in some detail) of those involved.

Candidate Performance

Even though numbers increased very significantly in 2009, the overall level of performance was very similar to that of previous years. Moderators saw work which covered the complete spectrum of ability and it is recognised that many young people and their teachers go to great lengths to produce coursework which represents a high personal level of achievement.

Choice of Activity

Almost all centres offer at least some element of choice and this freedom and sense of ownership is usually greatly valued by candidates. Most choices are appropriate and typically involve raising money for charity, environmental work in both schools and the community, a whole range of mentoring schemes involving work with younger pupils and, increasingly, activities showing global awareness or environmental concerns. Some activities have a particularly good citizenship or community focus.

It was noted, once again in 2009, that the small majority of candidates who do not use the response forms provided by Edexcel usually tend not to score as highly as those who do. Use of these forms is not compulsory but they do provide guidance for candidates in each of the four sections. Use should be made of the most recently revised (2006) response forms. (From 2010, under new arrangements for controlled assessment, all centres will be required to use the new Edexcel response forms.)

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 of approach cannot satisfy all the assessment criteria. Similarly, if choosing work experience, high marks will not be gained if most of the planning is done by members of the teaching staff or parents.

The other common weakness in this section is the inability of some candidates to confine themselves to planning. As there is no negative marking, candidates do not lose marks but it means that some of their writing is wasted and would be better used in other assessment sections.

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. There are, increasingly, recognisable attempts to make explicit links between the chosen activity and appropriate citizenship characteristics although this still continues to be an area of relative weakness for most candidates.

Some are very clear about why their activity represents distinctive areas of citizenship (often using the context of the specification or Programme of Study). Others do this as something of an afterthought or put too much emphasis on the acquisition of personal skills. In many cases the links are mainly implicit and, in a few cases, it is very difficult to make links at all because the chosen activity is difficult to recognise as one that reflects any form of citizenship.

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 although, in 2009, some centres are clearly giving their candidates excellent support and guidance in this section.

Communication

The gathering, inclusion and description of evidence are now very good with digital photographic support, DVDs and high-quality powerpoint presentations often increasingly common. Unfortunately, not all centres realise that their students 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 is strongly advisable.

Increasingly, too many centres are allowing their candidates to include vast amounts of evidence on an unselective basis and awarding very high marks for vast appendices. Even where some analysis of the significance of evidence is incorporated this is rarely sufficient to offer the sort of interpretation of evidence, and reasoned judgments based on its value and quality that will meet the requirements of Level Descriptors 4 and 5 in this section. Candidates need to be more aware of this.

Evaluation

Less able 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. (Here, again, candidates undertaking individual activities are at a considerable disadvantage.)

Many hint at the role of others 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 for whatever reason. (What one candidate, who scored full marks, identified as "unexpected outcomes".)

Conclusion

It is rewarding to see just how many young people approach their coursework positively, enthusiastically and often selflessly. There is often great pride in reaching a successful outcome and this is demonstrated by pupils of all abilities, many surpassing their original goals and expectations.

As in previous years, there remain administrative and internal assessment issues to be resolved but many citizenship departments achieve a great deal.

So many of the activities undertaken are of incalculable value to young people in the Key Stage 4 age group and they help to provide many successful opportunities for active participation in the school or local community. They, their teachers and their many adult supporters are to be congratulated on what has been achieved.

Looking ahead to 2010

Summer 2010 is the final sitting for the current short course specification (3280 01 and 02). Any candidates starting their course in September 2009 should be studying the new specification. The short course consists of Unit 1 - written examination (5CS01) and Unit 2 - controlled assessment (5CS02). Centres wishing to continue to complete a full course qualification can take Unit 3 - written examination (5CS03) and Unit 4 - controlled assessment (5CS04) in Summer 2011. Centres must make sure that they are entering their candidates for the correct specification.

There are some significant differences between coursework and controlled assessment, such as work experience will no longer be accepted as a citizenship activity. It may also be the case that other activities, particularly those which have a far greater emphasis on PHSE topics than Citizenship may also be excluded from controlled assessment.

Various resources are available to support the new specification, including a Teacher's Guide. This document, the specification, sample materials and other documents can be found on the Edexcel website.

Support and training opportunities will also be available during 2009-2010 and centres can also make use of the 'Ask the Expert' service - see the 'Contact us' page of the Edexcel website for further details.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	80	71	62	53	45	38	31	24	0

3280/01: Written Paper

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
3280/01 grade boundaries	80	64	56	48	40	36	32	28	24	0

3280/02: Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
3280/02 grade boundaries	40	35	32	27	23	19	15	10	6	0

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