



Citizenship

GCSE

Citizenship Studies

Improving extended-
response writing skills:
candidate responses,
commentary and activities

Version 1

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to assist teachers assist students in improving their extended-response writing skills.

Each of the exam papers (A342, *Identity, Democracy and Justice – Understanding our Role as Citizens* and A343, *Rights and Responsibilities – Extending our Knowledge and Understanding*) include extended-response questions. In paper A342, these questions account for half the available marks.

Candidates who are able to write informed and reasoned responses to these extended-response questions, are much more likely to achieve a grade that reflects their knowledge and understanding of the course.

Examiners have reported significant differences in candidate performance between centres. Such differences often can be explained by the extent to which candidates have learned the skills needed for success in tackling extended-response questions.

This guide aims to help teachers develop learners' skills in relation to answering extended-response questions and contains:

- extended-response questions from the 2014 and 2015 A342 papers
- mark schemes for each question
- examples of candidates' responses
- annotations to support assessment
- commentaries on each response by the principal examiner
- suggestions to support effective use with learners.

* Although the examples in this guide are taken from paper A342, the advice is transferrable to the extended-response questions on paper A343.

(Candidate responses have been taken from the 2014 and 2015 exams. Spelling, grammar and punctuation have not been corrected.)

Questions 11 and 14

Questions 11 and 14 ask candidates to write short essays. The 'command words' give / state, describe and explain are used in these questions. It is important that learners know what each of these 'command words' is asking of them.

Give or state: Just name an object or use a simple example.

Describe: 'Painting a picture in words' to demonstrate knowledge about what an object or process is like or what it does. (Encourage learners to use examples or metaphor to add depth, precision and detail to their descriptions.)

Explain: Offering reasons why something exists or occurs. (Encourage learners to respond to an 'explain' question by including the word 'because' in their answer.)

Questions 11 and 14 include prompts to help learners to organise their thinking and response. Learners who use the prompts to help structure their responses often do.

All activities in this guide can be shared by a teaching team or adapted for use with learners.

Activity 1: Exploring a candidate response to Q11 (2014)

- Use the mark scheme to evaluate the response to Question 11 below. This response reached level 2 and was given full marks (4 out of 4).
- Annotate those parts of the question where the candidate seems to reach level 2.
- List the reasons why you think this response gained full marks.
- Compare your list with the commentary on this question from the Principal Examiner.

Question 11 (from the 2014 paper)

Explain why pressure groups can bring about change in a democracy.

In your answer you should:

- Give at least **two** examples of how pressure groups try to bring about change in a democracy.
- Explain why governments often listen to pressure groups.

(4 marks)

Candidate response to Question 11, 2014

One example of how pressure groups bring about change in a democracy is by protesting.

Another example of how pressure groups bring about change in a democracy is by campaigning and advertising for their beliefs.

Governments often listen to pressure groups because it's a group of people all with the same issue meaning the issue affects a lot of people, and also if they keep the people happy they stay in power longer.

Mark scheme for Question 11, 2014

Level 2

For 3 marks

- Sound explanation of why governments listen to pressure groups
- One valid example of a pressure group or how it tries to bring about change.

For 4 marks

- Explanation must be thorough with at least 2 valid points
- One valid example of a pressure group or how it tries to bring about change.

Level 1

For 1 mark

- General description of what a pressure group does
- **OR** one valid example of a pressure group or activity.

For 2 marks

- General description of what a pressure group does
- **AND** one valid example of a pressure group or activity.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary

Commentary from the Principal Examiner on Question 11, 2014

Candidates performed well on this question if they used the bullet point prompts to help structure a response

Most candidates were able to score at least one mark by showing a valid general knowledge of the work of pressure groups. However, no credit was given for statements that simply repeated the words in the question such as "Pressure groups apply pressure to bring about change."

Around half of the responses reached level 2 by showing an understanding of why governments often listen to pressure groups. Where candidates failed to reach level 2, it was often due to not fully answering the question and so not explaining why governments listen to pressure groups.

Good answers included references to pressure groups' expertise in helping to shape policy and a democratic government's obligation to take notice of public opinion.

Less strong answers sometimes included general references to riots and violence. Candidates tended to be rather predictable and often over general in their examples of pressure group action by mentioning campaigns and protests rather than lobbying MPs or particular examples of media use.

The candidate response in Activity 1

Even brief and simple responses like this can achieve full marks. Here the candidate shows a knowledge and understanding of:

- what a pressure group is
- what a pressure group does
- the nature of democracy
- why governments listen to pressure groups

The answer includes a 'thorough' explanation of why governments listen to pressure groups with 2 points made. Full marks were awarded.

Activity 2: Exploring candidates' responses to Q11 (2015)

Study question 11 from 2015. Then study the two candidates' responses and the mark scheme.

For each of the candidates (A and B):

- Choose the best response and explain your reasons for choosing it.
- Decide a mark for each of the two responses.
- Compare your marks with the Principal Examiner's commentary.
- Describe the advice you would give to the less successful candidate so they could do better next time.

Question 11 (from the 2015 paper)

Explain why the different rights that people may have may sometimes conflict with each other.

In your answer you should:

- Describe examples of people's rights.
- Explain why rights might conflict.

(4 marks)

Candidate A

The right to privacy and the right to security might conflict with each other. This is because the police may need to look at people's emails, messages and records of people's calls in order to put a stop to terrorism plots for example. This is an infringement of the right to privacy but it would be in favour of the right to security.

Candidate B

Everybody has human rights but sometimes they come into conflict with things. For example, your human rights can be in conflict if you live in a less economically developed country or live in a country run by a dictatorship. This is because in these situations human rights are not met.

Mark scheme for Question 11, 2015

Level 2

For 3 marks

- As for 2 marks but also including a description of two rights that may be in conflict with each other.

For 4 marks

- A clear description of two rights that may be in conflict.
- A clear explanation of why the conflict occurs. This may include examples.

Level 1

For 1 mark

- General description of what rights are
- **OR** one valid example of a right.

For 2 marks

- General description of what rights are
- **AND** one valid example of a right.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary

Commentary from the Principal Examiner on Question 11, 2015

Examiners expected candidates to show an understanding of the term ‘people’s rights’. The overwhelming majority of candidates were able to do this and to give two examples of such rights. The question asked candidates to explain why rights sometimes conflict with each other. Candidates often found this more difficult.

Examiners gave additional credit to candidates who described rights where there is a clear potential for conflict. The right to personal freedom and the right to security were judged to be suitable examples in this context. Further credit was given to those candidates who explained why such conflict might exist. Candidates often developed their responses with examples. Many described conflicts between freedom of speech and the right to be free of discrimination while others linked their answers to recent controversies over media freedom and privacy. Some of the most convincing answers explored the potential conflict between privacy and security in the context of recent police action on terrorism.

Some of the most sophisticated answers came from candidates who knew that rights can be withheld by governments or religious organisations and understood some of the justifications offered for such action.

Candidates usually performed better if they used the bullet points to help structure a response while, at the same time, checking that they were still answering the question.

The candidates’ response in Activity 2

This is a concise and well-informed answer. There is a clear description of two rights in conflict and an explanation of why the conflict occurs. The explanation includes examples. This places the response at the top of level 2.

Candidate A was awarded 4 marks.

Candidate B

Candidate B gives no specific examples of rights or possible conflicts. The response gets some credit for including the term “human rights” as part of an attempt to describe what rights are. As there is no mention of two rights that may be in conflict, the response cannot reach level 2.

1 mark was awarded.

Advice for candidate B

- Read the question more carefully and use the prompts to help you to organise your answer.
- Use specific examples to improve your descriptions.
- Study examples of human rights that may conflict with each other and understand why this might happen.

Activity 3: Exploring candidates' responses to Q14 (2014)

Evaluate the candidate response below to Question 14. Use the mark scheme to help you.

- Give a mark for the response and use annotations to show your reasons for awarding the mark.
- Describe how the learner could improve their performance next time.

Question 14 (from the 2014 paper)

Explain why the government collects crime figures.

In your answer you should:

- State at least **two** reasons why the government collects crime figures.
- Explain why it is important, in a democracy, for the public to see crime figures.

(4 marks)

Candidate response to Q14

The Government publish crime figures to show if a certain crime is getting worse, they keep the crime figures to match up with the others and if they need to look back on a crime they can. In a democracy people are going to want to see crime figures so they know what's happening. It is important that people know.

Mark scheme for Question 14, 2014

Level 2

For 3 marks

- A sound explanation of the why governments collect crime figures including at least 2 points
- **OR** a sound explanation of why governments should show crime figures to the public

For 4 marks

- A sound explanation of the why governments collect crime figures including at least 2 points
- **AND** a sound explanation of why governments should show crime figures to the public

Level 1

For 1 mark

- One point explaining why governments collect information
- **OR** one point explaining why governments share information with the public .

For 2 marks

- One point explaining why governments collect information
- **AND** one point explaining why governments share information with the public.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary

Commentary from the Principal Examiner on Question 14, 2014

Most candidates were able to reach level 2 by giving a sound explanation of why governments collect crime figures or why it is important, in a democracy, for the public to see such information.

There were some excellent answers in which candidates explained how access to reliable research enables governments to take successful, strategic action. Such candidates often went on to explain that the public can hold governments to account more effectively if they have access to reliable information on issues such as crime.

Other candidates took a more practical approach suggesting that publicly available crime statistics enables people to make more informed decisions about where to live or whether to install burglar alarms.

Some candidates simply seemed to run out of space for their answer but did not use a continuation sheet from their invigilator. In these cases they often wrote too little on one of the aspects of the question to be credited with the marks that their level of knowledge and understanding may have deserved.

The candidates' response in Activity 3

This is a vague response. Even though the candidate broadly understands why the government collects crime figures, this is not a 'sound' explanation. The attempt to explain why it is important for the public to see crime figures is similarly opaque.

This candidate was awarded 2 marks at level 1 for making an explanatory point for each aspect of the question.

To move to level 2, the candidate would need to extend both these explanations. They could:

- comment on what action governments take as a result of collecting information on crime
- explain why citizens in a democracy have the right to access this type of information (Many candidates explained that informed citizens can more easily hold governments and their agents to account).

Activity 4: Exploring candidates' responses to Q14 (June 2015)

Study question 14 from 2015. Then study the candidates' responses and the mark scheme.

- Candidate C was awarded 0 marks.
- Candidate D was awarded 2 marks.
- Candidate E was awarded 3 marks.
- Candidate F was awarded 4 marks.

For each of the candidates (C, D, E and F):

- Explain why these marks were awarded.
- Describe the advice you would give to each candidate so they could do better next time.
- Compare your explanations and advice with the Principal Examiner's commentary.

Question 14 (from the 2015 paper)

Explain how the media influence the decision making process.

In your answer you should:

- State **two** ways in which citizens can use the media to influence the decision making process.
- Explain why politicians take notice of media coverage when making their decisions.

(4 marks)

Candidate C

People are easily influenced by adverts and billboards. It makes you want to get involved. The media use newspapers to also get the news around.

Candidate D

The media influence the decision making process significantly, for example through a free press. This is when citizens can publish anything in the newspaper and on the internet. For example, they can criticise the Government as they have freedom of speech, this will then persuade the Government / politicians to take notice of what has been portrayed through the media before making their decisions as it would give them a damaged reputation if they made a decision that's disliked or not accepted by the society.

Candidate E

Citizens can use the media to influence the decision making process by making websites such as Amnesty International to persuade governments and citizens to take part and help make the right decision. They can make propaganda articles to persuade to influence the decision process.

Politicians like to have the media on their side as they want to be displayed in a positive light and be backed up by the newspapers. Citizens are influenced by what they see or read in the media, so they want it to be a positive image.

Candidate F

Citizens can post on social networking sites that they don't like certain upcoming policies. Or they can make a page and get people to like the page. They can also do complaints on programmes such as Question Time or The News. Politicians will take notice of the media coverage because if the coverage shows lots of people are of the same opinion, they will change their decision as these people are the electorate and vote for the decision makers.

Mark scheme for Question 14, 2015

Level 2

For 3 marks

Candidate shows a clear knowledge of how citizens can use the media to influence decision making by stating two ways in which citizens use the media. Candidate also gives a sound explanation, perhaps making one clear point, of why politicians take notice of media coverage.

For 4 marks

Candidate gives a thorough explanation of why politicians take notice of media coverage with at least an implicit reference to the need for the politician to remain 'popular' with the voters.

Level 1

For 1 mark

- Candidate states one valid way in which citizens can use the media to influence decision making.

For 2 marks

- Candidate states **one** valid way in which citizens can use the media to influence decision making and develops the point in detail.
- **OR** candidate states **two** valid ways.
- **OR** candidate makes a clear point about why politicians take notice of media coverage.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary

Commentary from the Principal Examiner on Question 14, 2015

Examiners expected candidates to draw on their experiences of campaigning to state two ways in which citizens can use the media to influence the decision making process. Examiners then expected candidates to explain why politicians take notice of the media when making their decisions.

Relatively few candidates mentioned two specific ways in which citizens can make use of the media when campaigning. Those that did so correctly used examples such as blogs, e-petitions and, quite surprisingly, letters to a newspaper. Others made the valid point that that protests can be 'newsworthy' and so come to the attention of decision makers. Many candidates were insufficiently specific in this context and so missed out on the highest marks.

Most candidates were more confident at explaining why politicians take notice of the media when making decisions. The most popular explanations mentioned the importance of taking account of different opinions or listening to the general public's view. Less convincing explanations included references to politicians' fear of scandal or concern over press opposition.

Such comments were often coloured by candidates' knowledge of the 2015 general election campaign. Examiners gave particular credit to those candidates who were able to draw upon their understanding of the democratic process to explain that politicians rely on public support and so must take note of public opinion and media coverage.

Some candidates interpreted this question differently. In the light of their general election experience, a significant minority of candidates described how the media can influence people's voting behaviour. Such descriptions were rarely well-developed but Examiners gave such responses credit where possible.

As with question 11, candidates tended to achieve well when they focused on the substantive question but were also guided by the bullet points.

Most of those candidates who ran out of space for their answer used a continuation sheet from their invigilator to extend their response and develop their points. Unfortunately a significant minority of candidates seemed to 'stop' after running out of answer space on the main question paper. Such candidates often wrote too little on one of the key parts of the question. This meant that their marks failed to match their level of knowledge and understanding may have deserved.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary (continued)

The candidates' response in Activity 4

Candidate C

This candidate has misread or misunderstood the question and not used either of the prompts. There is no mention of how citizens can use the media to influence decision making. This means it is not possible to award a mark.

Candidate D

The question asks for two ways in which citizens can use the media but only one example is given here. This means the response cannot reach level 2. This is a pity because the response does include a description why politicians take note of the media. This candidate needs to read questions more carefully and follow all the instructions.

Candidate E

This response includes a valid but slightly vague description of two ways in which citizens can use the media. There is also a sound explanation of why politicians take notice of media coverage but it needed clearer reference to the need for politicians in a democracy to remain “popular” with voters. This candidate should make their descriptions more precise by including clear, specific examples. They also need to show a clearer understanding of the links between democracy, the role of the media and the accountability of politicians.

Candidate F

Although this is a relatively simple response, it refers clearly to two different ways citizens use the media to influence decision makers. There is a thorough explanation about why politicians take notice of the media which includes the important point about the importance of remaining popular with voters.

Question 17

This question offers candidates the opportunity for deep thinking and sustained writing. They should evaluate a viewpoint by selecting, organising and applying specific arguments, evidence and examples from their studies. There are sometimes two aspects to the stated viewpoint, as in this example. Encourage learners to look out for this.

Activity 5: Exploring candidates' responses to Q17 (2014)

Evaluate the following viewpoint:

"The Commonwealth is just a random group of countries. It does nothing and the United Kingdom (UK) should stop being a member."

In your answer, you should:

- Describe what the Commonwealth is.
- Describe what the Commonwealth does.
- Use examples to support your points.
- Evaluate how far you agree with the statement above.

(12 Marks)

Candidate G

The Commonwealth is where all of the countrys relie on each other to equip there own countrys with things like oil, iron and coal that they can necasarily get or make from the own country. The Commonwealth dose good things for the UK but it is an opinnion that can decide that and not one person, without it Im sure that their could be some good that could come out of it but Im sure also that their could be some bad that dose as well. The UK cant have everything that it dose now in it if we weren't in it. But their is also some bad thing that come out of it that people don't like. Like paying for benefits and loods of people from other countrys coming here and living here. I suppose I do agree with this a little as the UK is pretty self surfisiant and if we did it onece before we can do it again. But the person that has made this comment feels that it "does nothing". That might be because it might not effect him but there are a lot of people out there that it dose effect and a lot of people that relie on it to make a lieing, have a house and a family.

Candidate H

The Commonwealth is a group of countries that try to bring countries together to stop conflict over the world. The Commonwealth has many countries in it and it allows countries to do many different things.

One of these things are that all the countries in the Commonwealth have easy access to trade between them. They also help each other when a country inside the Commonwealth is in serious debt.

If there is a natural disaster in a country which is inside the Commonwealth then all the other countries in the Commonwealth support that country through aid.

One way in which the Commonwealth bring all these countries together is by holding events like the Commonwealth games. This event is a similar event to the Olympics. This event is held in one of the countries of the Commonwealth then all the countries go up against each other and this is a way of bringing countries together.

So overall I disagree with this statement because the Commonwealth allows countries to come together and stops any wars or conflicts breaking out between countries. The Commonwealth also allows a lot of trade between countries in the Commonwealth.

Candidate I

The Commonwealth is a group of countries that were once under British rule but now have independence. For example, Australia and India are in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth does a large array of things. The Commonwealth Games is a large part of the Commonwealth, and trade and alliance is also a large part. I strongly disagree with this statement. This is because the Commonwealth strongly contributes to Britain's social interaction and economy.

The Commonwealth contributes to the UK's economy through the Commonwealth games. The Commonwealth games is a competition in which the Commonwealth countries compete in an Olympic type competition. Many groups support these games, for example the BBC, who often give people coverage of the games. The games often bring tourism to the UK, people watch the games in stadiums. This greatly contributes to the UK's economy and gives many opportunities for economic growth which is helped by the coverage of the games from the BBC.

On the other hand, the UK should leave the Commonwealth because Britain no longer controls them, so we do not gain any profit from them. For example, the EDL believes that Britain should leave the Commonwealth as they believe there is no gain to be had from it. Therefore we should leave the Commonwealth because things such as the Commonwealth games are draining economy more than we are gaining. However this point may not be true. This is because there is still big money being made from trade with the Commonwealth so there is still economic gain. Therefore we shouldn't leave it.

Furthermore the Commonwealth allows for good immigration and travel. It is part of our human rights that we have a right to live where we choose peacefully. Therefore we should stay in the Commonwealth. This is because it further strengthens human rights, which governments must aim to do to help citizens & the population.

Overall I strongly disagree with this statement. This is because the Commonwealth is a strong group of countries that strengthens the UK's economy and allows Governments to comply to human rights, also helping people. The Commonwealth is important for both the population and Government, so we mustn't leave.

Candidate J

The Commonwealth is a group of 53 countries that were generally formerly part of the British Empire. They all recognise the British monarch as the head of the Commonwealth and, in most cases (largely ceremonial) head of state. All member nations have signed the Commonwealth Charter, participate in the Commonwealth Games.

On the one hand, Britain should be a member of the Commonwealth because it fosters co-operation and competition. This is epitomised in the Commonwealth Games which has member nations competing in sporting events and is a highly regarded event which would hurt British sporting talent if we withdrew from the group.

Another major point for staying in is that generally Commonwealth countries have a great deal in common owing to the Commonwealth Charter. This guarantees certain human rights for all people in the member states, and the UK being a member (being that we are a member of the G8 and a permanent member of the UN Security Council) adds credibility to them and thus improves the impact of the message meaning more people are better off.

In addition, since our monarch is the de-facto head of the Commonwealth, and we played a large role in founding it based on our beliefs of equality, democracy and personal freedoms, leaving it would be tantamount to betraying those principles and would send the wrong message to the international community – resulting in a loss of power on the international stage as we are seen as anti- personal freedoms.

However some would say that the principles laid out in the Commonwealth Charter are not adhered to in some cases and so it is a waste of time. For example, India is a Commonwealth country and yet has an appalling lack of gender equality – something guaranteed in the Charter. This could mean that Britain is tainted by association and that is understandable to say the least. Also the Commonwealth has, to date, never dismissed a member for misconduct and, as such, is seen as a ‘toothless tiger’. This makes the UK appear weak as part of this group as it has not held by its principles and so we should leave.

There is the view that since the group is composed of former members of the British Empire, it is reminiscent of the old colonial era and, during that period, Britain regularly violated the principles laid out in the charter (it didn’t exist at the time but still) and see it either as the Empire reborn (bad as it was undemocratic for conquered states and showed Britain at its worst). Both the Empire and Commonwealth had the British monarch as the nominal ruler (if not in practise).

In conclusion I mostly disagree with the statement as the Commonwealth is a specific group of countries with a specific aim and owing to the benefits, such as improved international human rights, we should remain a member.

Mark scheme for Question 17, 2014

Level 4. 10–12 marks

An informed and well-argued personal response to the viewpoint based on a thorough analysis and evaluation of a range of evidence. At this level, the response will contain specific references to work of the Commonwealth based on a clear understanding of why it exists. Some examples will be given. The candidate may argue that the Commonwealth is much less significant than it used to be. There will be a good and convincing summary of their case in response to the viewpoint.

- Informed and well-argued evaluation of the viewpoint
- Thorough explanation of why the Commonwealth exists or why it is less significant than in the past
- Specific examples of the Commonwealth's work

Text is legible. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate. Meaning is communicated clearly.

Level 3. 7–9 marks

- Some valid evaluation of the viewpoint
- Sound description of what the Commonwealth is
- Sound description what the Commonwealth does.

Text is legible. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are mostly accurate. Meaning is communicated clearly.

Level 2. 4–6 marks

- Limited evaluation of the viewpoint
- Sound description of either what the Commonwealth is or what the Commonwealth does.

Text is legible. There are mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation; however, meaning is still communicated clearly for most of the answer.

Level 1. 0–3 marks

- Personal opinion on the viewpoint
- Some limited but valid points about the Commonwealth.

Information is organised at a simple level to aid communication but frequent mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation sometimes impede communication of meaning.

Allocating a mark within a level

Lowest mark in the level. Meets most of the criteria for the level but will have some mirror omissions from the level descriptor.

Middle mark in the level. No doubts. Meets the criteria for the level satisfactorily.

Top mark in the level. A good response matching the criteria for the level well.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary

Commentary from the Principal Examiner on Question 14, 2015

Many candidates struggled to move beyond a level 1 response simply because they were unaware of what the Commonwealth is or what it does. Many confused the Commonwealth with other organisations such as the UN and EU. As a consequence, some detailed responses gained few marks as they were not sufficiently focused on the specific work of the Commonwealth.

On the other hand, some candidates had studied the UK's membership of the Commonwealth in sufficient detail to be able to discuss the importance of the Commonwealth's shared values, its promotion of democracy and the significance of the organisation's cultural programme. There were some outstanding answers in which candidates were able to

compare the significance of Commonwealth membership with the UK's membership of both the European Union and the United Nations. Such responses usually reached level 4.

Most of those students who had some knowledge of the Commonwealth were able to explain that the Commonwealth Games was significant in promoting a shared identity across member nations or gave some accurate information about the Commonwealth's origins. Typically such responses reached level 2.

Candidates who used the bullet points to help them structure their answer were able to produce more worthwhile responses than those who did not. Those candidates who knew what the Commonwealth was often used reasonable evidence to support their views but a minority wrote without examples. Such responses were often limited to level 2.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary (continued)

The candidates' responses in Activity 5

Candidate G

This is a level 1 response worth 2 marks.

The candidate makes a personal response which includes some limited points. These could apply to the Commonwealth but may, more validly, apply to the EU. The answer is vague and the point about immigration no longer applies to the Commonwealth as much as it does to the EU. However, the points about the importance of countries being able to rely on each other in a group and deterrence of conflict are sufficient for the candidate to gain some credit for the answer even though these points do not apply specifically to the Commonwealth.

There is some simple evaluation here but the poor understanding of either what the Commonwealth is or what it does, prevents this being a level 2 response.

Candidate H

This is a solid level 2 response worth 5 marks. It differentiates the Commonwealth from other international groupings through the example of the Commonwealth Games but other references to what the Commonwealth does are not supported by examples. The point about trade is no longer as significant as 40 years ago and applies much more validly to the EU. It is a pity that there are no examples to support the point about aid in response to natural disasters.

is a simple evaluation of the viewpoint which links well to the points made in the essay.

Unfortunately the candidate shows an understanding of what the Commonwealth does in only the most general terms – a group of nations. This prevents the response being sufficiently “sound” for level 3.

Candidate H

The Commonwealth is a group of countries that try to bring countries together to stop conflict over the world. The Commonwealth has many countries in it and it allows countries to do many different things.

← *This is too vague. The statement could apply to the European Union (EU) or United Nations.*

One of these things are that all the countries in the Commonwealth have easy access to trade between them. They also help each other when a country inside the Commonwealth is in serious debt.

← *This is much less significant than in the past.*

← *This point applies to the EU but not to the Commonwealth.*

If there is a natural disaster in a country which is inside the Commonwealth then all the other countries in the Commonwealth support that country through aid.

← *This point does apply to the Commonwealth but an example would 'nail it'.*

One way in which the Commonwealth bring all these countries together is by holding events like the Commonwealth games. This event is a similar event to the Olympics. This event is held in one of the countries of the Commonwealth then all the countries go up against each other and this is a way of bringing countries together.

← *Some simple EVIDENCE is used to support a point.*

So overall I disagree with this statement because the Commonwealth allows countries to come together and stops any wars or conflicts breaking out between countries. The Commonwealth also allows a lot of trade between countries in the Commonwealth.

← *A simple EVALUATION of the viewpoint. Unfortunately it shows too little understanding of what the Commonwealth really does.*

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary (continued)

The candidates' responses in Activity 5 (continued)

Candidate 1

This is a solid level 3 response worth 8 marks. It shows a sound understanding of what the Commonwealth is – supported by evidence. No confusion here with the EU or UN.

Some simple examples are used to show what the Commonwealth does – even though there is over-reliance on the Commonwealth Games to illustrate the Commonwealth's purpose. The candidate makes some rather vague references to economic and political factors but a good point about human rights. This point is not developed sufficiently to be convincing. Nevertheless the description of what the Commonwealth does is sound overall.

A sound final evaluation of the viewpoint fits with the rest of the essay. The answer lacks the thoroughness and specific references needed for level 4.

Text is legible. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are mostly accurate. Meaning is communicated clearly.

Candidate 1

The Commonwealth is a group of countries that were once under British rule but now have independence. For example, Australia and India are in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth does a large array of things. The Commonwealth Games is a large part of the Commonwealth, and trade and alliance is also a large part. I strongly disagree with this statement. This is because the Commonwealth strongly contributes to Britains social interaction and economy.

The Commonwealth contributes to the UK's economy through the Commonwealth games. The Commonwealth games is a competition in which the Commonwealth countries compete in an Olympic type competition. Many groups support these games, for example the BBC, who often give people coverage of the games. The games often bring tourism to the UK, people watch the games in stadiums. This greatly contributes to the UK's economy and gives many opportunities for economic growth which is helped by the coverage of the games from the BBC.

On the other hand, the UK should leave the Commonwealth because Britain no longer controls them, so we do not gain any profit from them. For example, the EDL believes that Britain should leave the Commonwealth as they believe there is no gain to be had from it. Therefore we should leave the Commonwealth because things such as the Commonwealth games are draining economy more than we are gaining. However this point may not be true. This is because there is still big money being made from trade with the Commonwealth so there is still economic gain. Therefore we shouldn't leave it.

Furthermore the Commonwealth allows for good immigration and travel. It is part of our human rights that we have a right to live where we choose peacefully. Therefore we should stay in the Commonwealth. This is because it further strengthens human rights, which governments must aim to do to help citizens & the population.

Overall I strongly disagree with this statement. This is because the Commonwealth is a strong group of countries that strengthens the UK's economy and allows Governments to comply to human rights, also helping people. The Commonwealth is important for both the population and Government, so we mustn't leave.

← Sound understanding of what the Commonwealth is. No confusion here with the EU or UN.

← Some simple examples are introduced to show what the Commonwealth does – even though trade is much less important now.

← The candidate states their own view at the start. This is a good tactic to make sure the essay stays 'on track'.

← Some simple EVIDENCE is used to support a point but the importance of the Commonwealth Games on Britain's economy is overstated here. The candidate should have moved on to some other points more quickly.

← A vague POINT about the reasons for withdrawal. The candidate admits that they are not sure whether the point is 'true'. This underlines their uncertainty about the question.

← The candidate mentions some economic and political factors but, again, this is too vague. The points about immigration and trade apply to EU membership. However, the point about human rights is valid. A pity it has not been developed further.

← A sound final EVALUATION of the viewpoint which reinforces the valid point about human rights.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary (continued)

The candidates' responses in Activity 5 (continued)

Candidate J

This is a very good response at level 4. It gains full marks because it would be unreasonable to expect much more from a 16-year-old at GCSE level.

There is a very comprehensive description of what the Commonwealth is and how it works. The references to the Commonwealth Charter throughout are helpful and lead to a comprehensive evaluation of the Commonwealth in relation to the principles in the Charter. The candidate shows a clear understanding of why people might be critical of the Commonwealth while stating their own overall support. Although some additional examples of the Commonwealth's work would have been useful, this is a well-argued and convincing essay that demonstrates some original thinking based on an easy familiarity with the course content. The error about Commonwealth discipline for member countries is insignificant given the impressive nature of the essay overall.

Text is legible. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate. Meaning is communicated clearly.

Candidate J

The Commonwealth is a group of 53 countries that were generally formerly part of the British Empire. They all recognise the British monarch as the head of the Commonwealth and, in most cases (largely ceremonial) head of state. All member nations have signed the Commonwealth Charter, participate in the Commonwealth Games.

On the one hand, Britain should be a member of the Commonwealth because it fosters co-operation and competition. This is epitomised in the Commonwealth Games which has member nations competing in sporting events and is a highly regarded event which would hurt British sporting talent if we withdrew from the group.

Another major point for staying in is that generally Commonwealth countries have a great deal in common owing to the Commonwealth Charter. This guarantees certain human rights for all people in the member states, and the UK being a member (being that we are a member of the G8 and a permanent member of the UN Security Council) adds credibility to them and thus improves the impact of the message meaning more people are better off.

In addition, since our monarch is the de-facto head of the Commonwealth, and we played a large role in founding it based on our beliefs of equality, democracy and personal freedoms, leaving it would be tantamount to betraying those principles and would send the wrong message to the international community – resulting in a loss of power on the international stage as we are seen as anti- personal freedoms.

However some would say that the principles laid out in the Commonwealth Charter are not adhered to in some cases and so it is a waste of time. For example, India is a Commonwealth country and yet has an appalling lack of gender equality – something guaranteed in the Charter. This could mean that Britain is tainted by association and that is understandable to say the least. Also the Commonwealth has, to date, never dismissed a member for misconduct and, as such, is seen as a 'toothless tiger'. This makes the UK appear weak as part of this group as it has not held by its principles and so we should leave.

There is the view that since the group is composed of former members of the British Empire, it is reminiscent of the old colonial era and, during that period, Britain regularly violated the principles laid out in the charter (it didn't exist at the time but still ...) and see it either as the Empire reborn (bad as it was undemocratic for conquered states and showed Britain at its worst). Both the Empire and Commonwealth had the British monarch as the nominal ruler (if not in practise).

In conclusion I mostly disagree with the statement as the Commonwealth is a specific group of countries with a specific aim and owing to the benefits, such as improved international human rights, we should remain a member.

Clear understanding of why the Commonwealth exists. This is reinforced throughout the essay. Examples are used frequently to show the candidate's impressive knowledge.

Relevant EVIDENCE is used to support a strong and valid opening point.

A second POINT about a social and political advantage of Commonwealth membership is made quickly and clearly. Reference to the Commonwealth Charter. This shows a strong understanding of the Commonwealth's purpose and work.

Strong EVALUATION of the viewpoint supported by further important EVIDENCE.

A very good and detailed EXPLANATION is given in this paragraph about why people might oppose Commonwealth membership. The example of gender inequality in India is well-chosen to support one point.

This is inaccurate as member nations have been expelled over human rights issues.

A short but valid summary of the candidate's own view that relates well to the rest of the essay.

Activity 6: Exploring candidates' responses to Q17 (2015)

Study question 17 from 2015. Then study the candidates' responses and the mark scheme.

For each of the candidates (K, L and M):

- Annotate the responses in a similar way to that shown on pages 16, 18 and 20. (You should highlight features of the mark scheme such as – good understanding of the values, suitable use of examples, connections between the values and a reasoned conclusion.)
- Decide a level for each of the three responses with reference to the mark scheme and your annotations.
- For responses K and L, explain what the candidate could have done to reach the next level.
- Compare your decisions and explanations with the Principal Examiner's commentary.

Question 17 (from the 2015 paper)

Evaluate the following viewpoint:

I know that there are five values that contribute to being British. The rule of law is the most important of these. The others, such as personal freedom and equal opportunity, are much less important.

In your answer you should:

- Describe the rule of law and explain why it is important.
- Describe the terms personal freedom and equal opportunity and explain why they are important.
- Describe the other British values and say why they are important.
- Evaluate how far you agree with the viewpoint above.

Candidate K

The rule of law is the rule to keep civilisation. It keeps humans from doing crimes such as murder or rape. This is important as it means we can live in a society where we don't need to fear that we will be killed by another human.

Personal freedom is having the freedom to move and speak. This is important because everyone has a lifetime and to do so you need to be able to move freely and have freedom of speech. Equal opportunity is the law that means no matter where you come from, what gender or race you are, you still have an equal opportunity as everyone else. This is used to determine what businesses would like to work for them and the only way you are differentiated is on your ability to work and your education.

Other British values that are important are free press and freedom of speech. Free press is important as it is needed in a democracy. Free press means that the press can say whatever they want about how the country is being run as long as it does not disobey human rights.

Freedom of speech is important in a democracy as well. This is also because people can say what they want about one another unless it is offensive or against people's rights.

In conclusion I do agree with this statement as it supports my opinion that the rule of law is the most important British value. However I feel that personal freedom is almost as important.

Candidate L

The rule of law is important but then so are the other British values. In my answer I shall explain both sides of this viewpoint.

The rule of law is that the law applies to everyone. It is important because it means that everyone must abide by the same values. For example, the police are the people that enforce the law. However, if they do not abide by it, then the law becomes less effective and unfair. So the rule of law is important to make sure all British citizens abide by the same law.

Personal freedom is the value that people are free to express their opinions. So anyone can criticise the Government, politicians and religious leaders. It is important because it allows people to express their views and opinions. Also it gives comedians something to say and this value allows them to do so, so they can make fun of politicians and other important people.

Equal opportunity is the value that ensures that no one is discriminated against for their age, gender, sexuality or race. This is important because it means that everyone has a fair chance and it is judged on their skill and ability. For example, people going for a job will not be chosen because of their age, gender or race. They will be chosen for their ability.

Representative democracy is the value that allows people to vote for who they want to represent them. For example, the 2015 general election allowed the public to vote for who they wanted to represent them. This is important because it gives people a say in how the country is run.

Tolerance and respect for diversity ensures that no one is discriminated against for their race or religion. This is important because it ensures that no one is mistreated because of their race or religion.

In conclusion I agree with the viewpoint that rule of law is the most important British value because, in my opinion, it is the umbrella value. So all of the other values would not work if people did not obey the law.

Candidate M

The rule of law applies to everyone. Everyone must be treated fairly and given a fair trial and everyone – including politicians, police, and judges – must obey the law. If no law existed there would be no trust between people and crime and violence levels would be extremely high.

Another British value is personal freedom. This means everyone has the right to live freely – unless imprisonment restricts this – travel and work where they like provided permission is given – and live where they like. They should be able to choose what they want to do with their lives and go about the day as they like.

In addition, equal opportunity is another British value. This means everyone should have the opportunity and equal chance to achieve their ambitions. This means there should be no discrimination against anybody.

Two other British values are ‘tolerance and respect for diversity’ and ‘representative democracy’. ‘Tolerance and respect for diversity’ means that no discrimination should take place whether racial, sexual or age or any other type. We should, as a country, have high levels of community cohesion and accept those who come from different backgrounds. The UK is a diverse place. With London having about 300 different languages being widely used, diversity is what makes our sense of identity.

‘Representative democracy’ is where citizens elect a small number of people to make decisions on their behalf who try to represent our feelings and thoughts as well as possible. This means we still get a say in what happens but have other people to voice our opinions.

The viewpoint that the ‘Rule of law’ is the most important British value and that personal freedom and equal opportunity are much less important is a viewpoint I disagree with.

Although the rule of law is very important, so are the others and without them the rule of law would be worthless.

If tolerance and respect for diversity didn’t exist, there would be low levels of community cohesion and this would easily lead to people’s human rights being breached and the law being broken.

Without equal opportunity people from different backgrounds would be discriminated against which again results in the law being broken.

For the rule of law to work, all the other British values need to work with it, so I feel they are equally important.

Mark scheme for Question 17, 2015

Level 4. 10–12 marks

An informed and well-argued personal response to the viewpoint based on a thorough analysis and evaluation of a range of evidence. At this level, the response will contain specific and accurate references to the three values mentioned in the stimulus (rule of law, equal opportunity and personal freedom) and at least one of the other values (tolerance and respect for diversity or representative democracy).

Some examples will be given.

The candidate will assess the relative importance of at least four values and come to a reasoned conclusion about which one (s) are the most significant.

At this level he / she should also suggest that some of the values are interconnected.

He / she may also want to argue that they have an equal weight.

There will be a good and convincing summary of their case in response to the viewpoint.

- Informed and well-argued evaluation of the viewpoint.
- Thorough explanation of their position on the relative merits of the British values.
- Specific examples of the values in action.
- A reasoned conclusion about which one (s) are the most significant.

Text is legible. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate. Meaning is communicated clearly.

Level 3. 7–9 marks

- Some valid evaluation of the viewpoint
- Sound description of three values. These could include those mentioned in the stimulus (rule of law, equal opportunity and personal freedom) or democracy and, tolerance and respect for diversity.
- A reasoned conclusion about which value (s) are the most significant.

Text is legible. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are mostly accurate. Meaning is communicated clearly.

Level 2. 4–6 marks

- Limited evaluation of the viewpoint
- Sound description of at least one of the values in the stimulus or an outline understanding of at least one of the other values.

Text is legible. There are mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation; however, meaning is still communicated clearly for most of the answer.

Level 1. 0–3 marks

- Personal opinion on the viewpoint
- Some limited but valid points about one or more of the values mentioned in the stimulus or any one other valid value.

Information is organised at a simple level to aid communication but frequent mistakes.

Understanding the marks awarded – commentary

Commentary from the Principal Examiner on Question 17, 2014

Examiners intended that candidates should demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the British values identified by the specification i.e. the rule of law, personal freedom, equal opportunity, tolerance and respect for diversity, and representative democracy. The first three of these values were mentioned in the question's stimulus. This stimulus also introduced the viewpoint that the rule of law is more important than personal freedom, equal opportunity or the other British values.

Most candidates showed a sufficient understanding of personal freedom, equal opportunity or both to make at least a limited attempt to respond to the viewpoint. However many candidates attempted to do this without showing an understanding that the law applies equally to everyone. Consequently their evaluation could be only partial at best and their achievement was capped at level 2.

Relatively few candidates introduced the two values from the specification omitted from the stimulus. Those that did mention either 'tolerance and respect for diversity', or equal opportunity usually gained marks within level 4 as long as they also understood the rule of law. Some candidates substituted British traditions and institutions for values by mentioning the significance of fish and chips, the Royal family or the Grand National horse race. No credit was given for such examples.

Examiners were also expecting candidates to evaluate the viewpoint and to give valid reasons for their conclusions. Many candidates found this challenging and some felt that a powerful assertion of their own view, unsupported by examples or evidence, would be sufficient to impress the Examiners, which it would not.

The best candidate responses always included a reasoned and often very thoughtful, consideration of the viewpoint exploring connections between the values before reaching a valid and convincing conclusion. Such responses often included examples of how 'British values' can be said to promote

community cohesion and patriotism. High achieving candidates understood the rule of law and its effect on citizens' respect for the law and their faith in the justice system. A small minority of candidates chose to question the extent to which the rule of law really does apply across the UK. These candidates gained credit for their answers as long as they evaluated the viewpoint properly, supported their points with evidence or examples and considered the significance of other British values.

Candidates who used the bullet points to help structure their answer produced more worthwhile responses than those who did not.

The candidates' responses in Activity 6

Candidate K

Misunderstanding of the 'Rule of Law' leads to a very weak conclusion. However, 'personal freedom' (free speech) and 'equal opportunity' are described well with good use of examples. This places the response within level 2 as there is a sound description of a least one British value. Unfortunately there is only a limited evaluation of the viewpoint. Nevertheless, the good description 'personal freedom' (free speech) and 'equal opportunity' means that the response can be awarded 6 marks.

Candidate L

This response shows a good understanding of each value. Appropriate examples are used to reinforce that understanding. The conclusion is relatively weak and few links are made between the values. As a result, the response misses 4. Nevertheless this is an impressive level 3 answer worth 9 marks.

Candidate M

This is a clear, straightforward and thorough response which shows a good understanding of all the British values identified in the specification. The conclusion helps to make this a well-argued personal response. There is a clear understanding that the values are interconnected. This is a good level 4 response which was awarded 11 marks. More specific examples of values in action were needed for top marks.

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