

Citizenship Studies

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J269**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J029**

Examiner's Report

January 2011

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

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A342 Identity, Democracy and Justice – Understanding our Role as Citizens

General Comments

This was the third sitting of the new A342 Citizenship paper. This paper constitutes 40% of the marks for the short course and 20% of the marks for the full course. It is available for both January and June sessions with one option of a resit for candidates.

Marks awarded to candidates ranged from 40 to 0 with some very good work seen at the top level. There was evidence that candidates in many centres had been prepared well for the exam but there were other centres in which teaching and learning was much less strong and where significant parts of the specification content seemed not to have been covered. This was shown by the relatively weak performance of candidates from some centres on the multiple choice and short answer questions (1 – 10).

Comments on Individual Questions

Questions 1 – 5

The multiple choice questions are differentiated and therefore some are harder than others. Some candidates used a process of elimination in which they crossed off alternatives that were definitely wrong so as to narrow down their choice.

Question 1

83% of candidates identified the European Union as, "a number of European countries in an economic and political alliance." This showed a much improved understanding of the role of the European Union than in previous papers.

Question 2

This question differentiated particularly well between those candidates who had studied the specification content thoroughly and those who had not. 48% of candidates correctly identified "decides sentences" as the best description of a judge in a criminal court. Many candidates thought that judges decided guilt or innocence, forgetting the important role of a jury.

Question 3

This question also presented few problems for candidates who had studied and revised the specification content. 60% of candidates correctly matched "representative democracy" to the description "a system of government where the electorate selects people to make decisions on their behalf". Many of the remainder incorrectly matched "proportional representation" with the description.

Question 4

"Community cohesion" is a key concept in the specification content and 68% of candidates were able to correctly identify its meaning as, when "people support one another and there is little discrimination or anti-social behaviour".

Question 5

Only 17% of candidates were able to show a correct understanding of the term "International Humanitarian Law" as "laws that control the conduct of war and the treatment of those involved." Those that selected this alternative correctly usually went on to score well on the rest of the paper.

Questions 6 to 10

These questions enable candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the specification content. As for questions 1 – 5, these questions are differentiated. All questions were worth one mark and had the command word "state". Candidates are required only to give short answers rather than to write full sentences. For example, the phrase "for employment" would be an adequate response to question 6.

Question 6

The majority of candidates (92%) gave a correct reason why people have come to live in the UK. Some candidates stated a valid reason why people may have left their home country while others stated why the UK was an attractive alternative.

Question 7

57% of candidates answered this question correctly. Many of the correct responses stated that solicitors, the Citizens' Advice Bureau or the police were sources of legal advice. A significant minority of candidates misread the question and gave a piece of legal advice to the examiners by suggesting that breaking the law should best be avoided. While grateful for the advice, examiners were unable to give credit for this type of response.

Question 8

This question differentiated well between candidates with 54% able to identify one way in which human rights might be harmed in a dictatorship. Lack of voting rights or free speech were amongst the most common correct responses. It was clear that a significant minority of candidates were unfamiliar with the term "dictatorship" and so were unable to respond with any authority.

Question 9

Only 22% of candidates were able to use their understanding of the role of Parliament to state accurately how it "holds the Government to account". The minority of well informed candidates were able to mention debating, asking question of ministers or voting on legislation. Many answers lacked specificity to mention elections while others were incorrectly claimed that Parliament selected the Prime Minister or the Cabinet. 26% of candidates did not attempt the question.

Question 10

This question asked candidates to state one right the media has in a democracy. A significant minority of candidates stated one of the media's responsibilities but 68% offered a correct response the most popular of which were "writing what they want" and "using freedom of speech".

Question 11

Candidates did well on this question as long as they used the bullet points to help them structure their answer. This helped them to focus on the need to describe two laws to gain some credit. Only 5% of candidates failed to answer the question at all. Just under 50% of candidates gained more than two marks. Those that scored well noticed the command word "explain" and were able to give valid reasons why laws should be obeyed. Most candidates justified obeying the law in terms of respecting the human rights of others. A significant minority of candidates used their understanding of democracy to justify obedience to the law. These candidates tended to score full marks.

Questions 12 and 13

Most candidates were able to interpret data in the table correctly to answer at least one of these questions accurately. Candidates were slightly less successful with question 13 than with question 12 and would have benefitted from more practice on this more demanding type of question.

Question 14

As with questions 11 and 17, the use of PEE – point, evidence, explanation helps candidates to reach higher levels in this type of question. Evidence or an example to back up a point made is extremely important to score higher marks. Very few candidates gave specific valid examples in answer to this question. Those that did so were among the few who gained full marks. A minority of candidates realised that the data in Document 1, used for their answers to questions 12 and 13, could be referred to helpfully in their answer to this question.

97% of candidates attempted this question. A significant minority were unsure about the role of the United Nations and some confused it with the National Health Service or social services. Other candidates began their response with a brief description of the UN's role and this helped most to focus their answer on the different components of the question. Explanations of why research is important for the UN were sometimes too vague. These responses usually included the statement "to find out what is going on" rather than anything a little more specific such as "to identify the parts of the world where child health is least strong". Good answers showed a clear understanding of the role of the United Nations and explained the reasons for its research into issues such as child health. There were some good reasons given, including references to the need for a focused international response to the worst problems and the need to commission further medical research. 16% of candidates scored full marks on this question.

Questions 15 and 16

Almost all candidates attempted these questions and most had a fair understanding of aspects of the law as it related to the cases described. A significant minority of candidates stated incorrectly that, as a 15 year old, Sarah would be exempt from the involvement of the police. Others stated in error that bullying at school was not a criminal offence. A small minority also took the incorrect view that the young people featured in question 16 would not be subject to police action. Candidates were marginally more successful at answering question 16 but few understood the significance of the command word "explain" in addressing the rights or responsibilities of either Sarah (question 15) or the police (question 16). Good answers to question 15 pointed out that Sarah had the right to have her parents with her at an interview with the police because of her age and explained the police's responsibilities with reference to public protection.

The majority of candidates scored at least two marks on these questions but many could have done far better if they had given reasons why Sarah or the police had the rights or responsibilities that had been described in the scenario.

Question 17

95% of candidates attempted this question and most were prepared to write detailed answers. A small minority of candidates misread the question and wrote about why people had migrated to the UK or took the opportunity to express their views about other ethnic groups. These candidates were massively outnumbered by those who clearly valued cultural diversity.

Candidates who used the bullet points to help them structure their answer were able to produce more worthwhile responses than those who did not. Very many candidates were able to use evidence to support the view that the UK is culturally diverse. Valid evidence included references to food, religion and dress. Most candidates were unclear about the cultural traditions and values that "give people a sense of community" and a significant minority agreed, incorrectly, that there are "few" of these. A minority were able to discuss British values with confidence. Where candidates were able to do this and to express their own opinion on the viewpoint, they almost invariably scored high marks.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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