

GCSE Citizenship Curriculum Overview

Unit 1: Life in Modern Britain

In this theme students will look at the make-up, values and dynamics of contemporary UK society. They will consider what it means to be British, how our identities are formed and how we have multiple identities. Students will also look at the role and responsibilities of the traditional media, the impact of new media formats and the UK's role in international issues.

What are the principles and values that underpin British society?

- The key principles and values underpinning British society today.
- The human, moral, legal and political rights and the duties, equalities and freedoms of citizens.
- Key factors that create individual, group, national and global identities.

What do we mean by identity?

- The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is comprised of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The impact of this on identity debates.
- Changes and movement of population over time: the impact on different communities in the UK; the nature of immigration and migration to and from the UK.
- The need for mutual respect and understanding in a diverse society and the values that underpin democratic society.
- Identity and multiple identities; the diverse nature of the UK population.

What is the role of the media and the free press?

- The rights, responsibilities and role of the media and a free press in informing and influencing public opinion, providing a forum for the communication and exchange of ideas and opinions, and in holding those in power to account.
- The right of the media to investigate and report on issues of public interest subject to the need for accuracy and respect for people's privacy and dignity.
- The operation of press regulation and examples of where censorship is used.

What is the UK's role in key international organisations?

- Relationships between the United Kingdom and the global organisations including the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, NATO, the European Union (EU), The Council of Europe, the Commonwealth and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

- The ongoing implications of the UK's former membership of the European Union and examples of decisions that continue to impact the UK.
- How the UK assists in resolving international disputes and conflicts, and the range of methods used.
- How non-governmental organisations (NGOs) respond to humanitarian crises.

How can citizens make their voice heard and make a difference in society?

- The opportunities and barriers to citizen participation in democracy.
- The range of actions a citizen can take who wishes to hold those in power to account; the advantages and disadvantages of joining an interest group or political party, standing for election, campaigning, advocacy, lobbying, petitions, joining a demonstration and volunteering.
- The role of organisations such as; public services, interest groups, pressure groups, trade unions, charities and voluntary groups and how they play a role in providing a voice and support for different groups in society.
- Two different examples of how citizens working together, or through groups, attempt to change or improve their communities through actions to either address public policy, challenge injustice or resolve a local community issue.
- How those who wish to bring about change use the media.

Citizenship skills, processes and methods

Each of the questions that frame the subject content for this section helps establish a question or hypothesis. This will enable students to develop the citizenship skills, processes and methods listed in this specification. Many of the skills, processes and methods listed can also be developed through the use of a case study approach.

Unit 2: Rights and Responsibilities

In this theme students will look at the nature of laws and the principles upon which laws are based, how the citizen engages with legal processes, how the justice system operates in the UK, how laws have developed over time and how society deals with criminality. Students will consider also how rights are protected, the nature of universal human rights and how the UK participates in international treaties and agreements. This theme also considers how the citizen can both play a part and bring about change within the legal system.

What laws does a society require and why?

- The fundamental principles of law to ensure rights and freedoms, the presumption of innocence and equality before the law.
- The nature of rules and laws in helping society to deal with complex problems of fairness, justice and discrimination.
- Rights in local to global situations where there is conflict and where rights and responsibilities need to be balanced.

What are a citizen's rights and responsibilities within the legal system?

- The operation of the justice system:
 - the role and powers of the police
 - the role and powers of the judiciary
 - the roles of legal representatives
 - how the different criminal and civil courts work
 - tribunals and other means of dispute resolution.

- Rights and legal entitlements of citizens at differing ages: the age of criminal responsibility and other legal ages when young people become legally responsible for their actions (drive, marry, vote, join the forces).

- How civil law differs from criminal law.

- How the legal systems differ within the UK:
 - England and Wales
 - Northern Ireland
 - Scotland.

How has the law developed over time, and how does the law protect the citizen and deal with criminals?

- How citizens' rights have changed and developed over time, from the importance of Magna Carta (1215) to today and the Human Rights Act (1998).

- Common law, legislation and how they differ.

- The right to representation; the role and history of trade unions in supporting and representing workers; the role of employers' associations.

- The nature of criminality in the UK today:
 - differing types of crimes
 - profile of criminality in the UK
 - factors affecting crime rates in society and strategies to reduce crime.

- How we deal with those who commit crime:
 - differing forms of punishment available in the UK
 - the purposes of sentencing
 - the effectiveness of differing types of sentence
 - how the youth justice system operates.

What are the universal human rights and how do we protect them?

- The importance of key international agreement and treaties in regard to human rights:
 - the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights
 - the European Convention on Human Rights
 - the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - the Human Rights Act (1998).

- The role of international law in conflict situations:

- to protect victims of conflict
- how international humanitarian law helps establish the rules of war.

How do citizens play a part to bring about change in the legal system?

- Students through their study, research, investigations or interaction with members of the community should understand the roles undertaken by citizens within the legal system and how the role of the citizen has been seen to be pivotal to our justice system. Students should understand the responsibilities and roles of citizens in the legal system; as a juror, witness, a victim of crime, magistrate, special constable, police commissioner or member of a tribunal hearing.
- The roles played by pressure and interest groups, trade unions, charities and voluntary groups, public institutions and public services in providing a voice and support for different groups in society campaigning to bring about a legal change or to fight an injustice.
- Students should be aware of the different forms of democratic and citizenship actions people can take to bring about change and hold those in positions of power to account in regard to issues relating to human rights and the justice system: joining an interest group; campaigning; advocacy; lobbying; petitions; joining a demonstration; volunteering.

Citizenship processes, skills and methods

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Unit 3: Politics and Participation

In this theme students will look at the nature of political power in the UK and the core concepts relating to democracy and government. This includes how government operates at its various levels within the UK, how decisions are made and how the UK parliament works and carries out its functions. It also looks at the role of political parties, the election system, how other countries govern themselves and how the citizen can bring about political change.

Where does political power reside in the UK and how is it controlled?

- The concept of democracy and different forms of democracy, including representative democracy.
- The values underpinning democracy: rights, responsibilities, freedoms, equality, the rule of law.
- The institutions of the British constitution: the power of government, the Prime Minister and cabinet; the sovereignty of Parliament; the roles of the legislature, the opposition, political parties, the Monarch, citizens, the judiciary, the police and the Civil Service.
- How the relationships between the institutions form an uncodified British constitution and examples of how this is changing.

What are the powers of local and devolved government and how can citizens participate?

- The role and structure of elected local government; the services provided by local government for citizens in local communities; roles and accountability of councillors.
- The nature and organisation of regional and devolved government: Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.
- How powers are organised between the Westminster Parliament and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; how relations are changing between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; the debate about 'English votes for English laws'.
- Who can stand for election and how candidates are selected.
- Who can and cannot vote in elections and why; debates about the voting age.
- Issues relating to voter turnout, voter apathy and suggestions for increasing voter turnout at elections.
- How public taxes are raised and spent by government locally and nationally.
- The practice of budgeting and managing risk and how it is used by government to manage complex decisions about the allocation of public funding.
- Different viewpoints and debates about how governments and other service providers make provision for welfare, health, the elderly and education.

Where does political power reside: with the citizen, parliament or government?

- The nature of the 'First Past the Post' system based on parliamentary constituencies; the frequency of Westminster elections.
- Other voting systems used in UK elections, including proportional systems and the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- The difference between the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the monarchy. The nature of bicameral Westminster parliament, the respective roles of and the relationship between the House of Commons and the House of Lords and the role of the monarch.
- The major political parties contesting UK general elections; key philosophical differences between the political parties operating in UK general elections.
- How parliament works: scrutinising government and making it accountable; parliamentary questions, committees, debates.
- The role of MPs; representing their constituencies, debating policy; scrutinising legislation.
- Ceremonial roles including Black Rod; key parliamentary roles including the Speaker, whips, front bench and back bench MPs.
- The legislative process; parliamentary debates and deliberation of public issues and policy.
- The formation of government by the leader of the political party with a majority in the House of Commons, or by a coalition of parties.
- The role of the Prime Minister, cabinet and ministers; the power of the Prime Minister and cabinet.

- The organisation of government administration into departments, ministries and agencies; role of the civil service.

How do others govern themselves?

Key differences in how citizens can or cannot participate in politics in one democratic and one non-democratic political system that is outside the UK.

How can citizens try to bring about political change?

- How citizens can contribute to parliamentary democracy and hold those in power to account.
- How digital democracy, social media and other measures are being developed as a means to improve voter engagement and the political participation of citizens.
- The different forms of action citizens can take to hold those in power to account for their actions; how the citizen can contribute to public life by joining an interest group or political party: standing for election; campaigning; advocacy; lobbying; petitions; joining a demonstration; volunteering.
- The roles played by public institutions, public services, interest and pressure groups, trade unions, charities and voluntary groups in providing a voice and support for different groups in society.

Citizenship skills, processes and methods

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Unit 4: Active Citizenship

This specification is developed around the overarching principle of how citizens can try to make a difference in society. Whilst the three content-based themes enable students to develop their citizenship knowledge base, the last section of each theme enables students to explore through case study approaches and by their own actions how citizens are able to try to make a difference.

The investigation: Taking Citizenship Action

Taking citizenship action may be defined as a planned course of informed action to address a citizenship issue or question of concern and aimed at delivering a benefit or change for a particular community or wider society. Taking citizenship action in a real out-of-classroom context allows students to apply citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills, and to gain different citizenship insights and appreciate different perspectives on how we live together and make decisions in society. It requires students to practise a range of citizenship skills including research and enquiry, interpretation of evidence, including primary and secondary sources, planning, collaboration, problem-solving, advocacy, campaigning and evaluation.

Students will be expected, either alone or working with others, to carry out an investigation into a citizenship issue based upon any part of the subject knowledge content. The investigation will lead to citizenship action as defined above. This will enable students to demonstrate the application of the citizenship skills, processes and methods listed below.

- Understanding the range of methods and approaches that can be used by governments, organisations, groups and individuals to address citizenship issues in society, including practical citizenship actions.
- Formulating citizenship enquiries, identifying and sequencing research questions to analyse citizenship ideas, issues and debates.
- Presenting their own and other viewpoints and representing the views of others, in relation to citizenship issues, causes, situations and concepts.
- Planning practical citizenship actions aimed at delivering a benefit or change for a particular community or wider society.
- Critically evaluating the effectiveness of citizenship actions to assess progress towards the intended aims and impact for the individuals, groups and communities affected.

The investigation will be assessed through a set of questions in Paper 1 section A. The questions will seek to draw upon the knowledge and understanding of the skills, methods and processes students have gained from taking citizenship action.