

Assessment & Progression in Citizenship CURRICULUM BRIEFING (2014)

Curriculum context

The DfE announced the removal of level descriptions for subjects when the 2014 National Curriculum was published. This means schools have new freedoms to innovate and design their own assessment approaches and there are no longer nationally specified standards for subjects.

However, many schools are continuing to use the practice of ‘levelling’ as a means to track and record pupil performance and teachers are looking for support in particular with pitch and progression when judging pupil progress and attainment over time. Ofsted have confirmed they do not expect to see fully implemented assessment systems during 2014-15 but inspectors will be looking at formative and summative assessment approaches, a wide range of evidence of pupils’ progress and meaningful reporting of progress and attainment to parents. (Ofsted, June 2014).

This briefing has been developed by the DfE Expert Group for Citizenship and ACT Council. It provides a short guide on how to assess citizenship as part of effective planning and gives advice on pitch and subject progression.

Citizenship knowledge

National Curriculum attainment targets are no longer set out as level descriptions. Each National Curriculum subject now has the same attainment target which states:

‘By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.’ (DfE, 2014)

This represents a clear shift from attainment targets that prescribe knowledge, understanding and skills attained at different stages of learning, to ones that are in effect flat and non specific about the standards required.

What’s the big idea?

There are a number of big ideas that are important for the effective assessment of citizenship. At the heart of effective assessment is effective planning and high quality teaching. The three questions within the ‘Big Picture for Outstanding Citizenship’ are helpful to bear in mind when considering planning, teaching and assessment:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- How can we organise learning?
- How will we know if we are successful?

Assessment as part of effective teaching and learning helps pupils understand quality and how to improve and gives teacher invaluable feedback on whether pupils are learning and making good progress. Effective assessment should:

- Maximize the progress of all pupils
- Be integral to planned teaching and learning
- Draw on a wide range of evidence of learning
- Give regular, timely and targeted feedback to pupils
- Help identify clear learning targets for improvement
- Use assessment tasks appropriately
- Inform future planning and teaching
- Embrace the involvement of pupils in assessment including through peer and self assessment

There are a number of key considerations to ensure these principles are translated into assessment practice and these are explored in the remainder of this guidance document.

The CURRICULUM BRIEFING series

This guidance offers Citizenship teachers advice on assessment in the light of the abolition of national curriculum levels. ACT has also produced a series of topic briefings which are designed to explain the new areas of content in the programmes of study for Citizenship and to provide a starting point for teachers as they review their plans. Topics include:

1. The electoral system and party politics
2. The constitution and political system
3. Active citizenship & volunteering
4. Money, finance and the Economy
5. Justice, the legal system and international law

These, along with guidance on SMSC and other whole school issues, are available to members on the ACT website, teachingcitizenship.org.uk

“Each subject matter field has its own cognitive strategies. Critical or higher order thinking skills therefore cannot be taught in isolation; knowledge of civics or government is necessary to case an intelligent vote, to understand public issues or to join with others to solve problems”

(Quigley et al., 2005)

(i) Constructive alignment

Learning is most effectively planned for when there are links between:

- Objectives/ learning intentions
- Intended outcomes/success criteria
- Learning activities
- Assessment strategies

This is sometimes described as ‘constructive alignment’ (Biggs, 1996) and is applicable to individual lessons and to sequences of lessons over a period of time. In simple terms this involves the teacher knowing in advance:

- the learning intention of the lesson(s)
- what progress will look like
- the opportunities within learning activities that will enable pupils to make progress; and
- how you will assess whether pupils have learned what was intended and how well they have made progress

This means assessment should start with a clear sense of what the learning intentions should be, so that these can be identified and measured during the process of teaching. (Bhargava, 2014) To achieve this, teachers need to identify the key concepts and skills to be developed through a sequence of lessons (medium term planning) and over the year or key stage (long term planning).

(ii) Assessing concepts and skills

Pupils and teachers need a conceptual framework in order to connect and make sense of knowledge and understanding in relation to the ideas, issues and topics they are studying in citizenship. In the 2014 National Curriculum programmes of study, the concepts and skills are less explicit than in the curriculum for 2008, but they are there.

The 2014 key stage 3 programme of study states:

‘Teaching should develop pupils’ understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens’

The key stage 4 programme of study states:

‘Teaching should build on the key stage 3 programme of study to deepen pupils’ understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens’

The broad concepts outlined in the programmes of study link to other citizenship concepts. However often these overlap and interrelate (see figure 1). The 2014 National Curriculum requires the development of skills and provides an indication of progression:

‘Pupils should use and apply their knowledge and understanding while developing skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take information action’. (key stage 3)

‘Pupils should develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh up evidence, make persuasive arguments and substantiation their conclusions. They should experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society’. (key stage 4)

The skills that pupils should be developing need to be identified along with concepts to establish clear learning intentions. The skills are also helpful in considering what kinds of learning activities would be used within lessons. For example, for pupils to develop the skills to argue a case and respond to challenges and counter arguments, they will require regular and planned opportunities to develop these skills and make progress. Concepts and skills are best planned for in tandem and to keep things manageable it is best to plan for one concept and one or two skills within a lesson or across a sequence of lessons.

Figure 1	Democracy	Government	Rights and responsibilities
'Nested' citizenship concepts	Representation Freedom Cooperation Equality Rule of law Diversity	Power Authority Legitimacy Mandate	Fairness Justice Human rights Law

(iii) Designing effective success criteria

Pupils should understand how they are being assessed and how to assess themselves as they learn. Effective success criteria help to clarify learning goals, guide pupils in making progress towards those goals and help teachers and pupils recognise whether learning goals have been achieved.

Many teachers now provide success criteria either for individual activities, lessons or across sequences of lessons. Research shows that the use of success criteria is more effective when pupils have been involved in the development of the criteria. This is because when pupils are involved in constructing criteria, they are being cognitively challenged in identifying important knowledge, understanding and skills that need to be demonstrated through learning and they have a better grasp of what is expected.

When developing success criteria it is important to consider:

1. *Involving pupils to help them recognise quality.*

For example, using modelling by asking pupils to analyse a good piece of work to identify the knowledge and skills that should be present in their own work.

2. *Using common success criteria rather than differentiated criteria.*

It has been common practice to differentiate success criteria (e.g. all / most / some statements) but one unintended effect of this might be to lower expectations for some students, especially as the 'all' statement is often a minimal outcome, which is generally easy to achieve. For that reason we believe it will be better in most classes to use common criteria and to provide differentiated support to help all learners meet the desired criteria. This changes the nature of the criteria, shifts the focus on to what we need to do to help the child achieve it and makes different criteria the exception (for exceptional circumstances) rather than the norm.

3. *Avoid over specificity in success criteria.*

Teachers should be open minded about what pupils say should be included in success criteria, and encourage flexibility. For example, if pupils are determined to use a petition as part of action project, the teacher may encourage the success criteria to allow for different forms of action so that pupils can demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a range of ways.

“Assessment is *for* learning. The level descriptors cannot get anywhere near achieving this. They do not define the changing ideas, patterns of reasoning and layers of knowledge that make up *progression*... and they certainly do not offer guidance for designing the detailed *learning paths* that will secure such progression”

Burnham & Brow (2005)

An example framework for planning and assessing Citizenship: a sequence of lessons on the youth justice system

Objectives/learning intentions	Success criteria	Learning activities	Assessment and evidence
<p>Concept: Justice</p> <p>Skills: Make an argument based on evidence to argue in favour or a cause or idea (<i>advocacy</i>)</p>	<p>Carry out an enquiry into whether the youth justice system treats young people fairly</p> <p>Use evidence to construct and sustain an argument to support their case</p> <p>Respond to other point of views, evidence and counter arguments and adjust or reinforce position appropriately</p> <p>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the youth justice system, citing appropriate examples to support their viewpoint of whether it is fair</p>	<p>An enquiry into how crime affects young people as both victims and perpetrators of crime followed by a debate on the youth justice system and whether it treats young people fairly</p>	<p>Enquiry and research diary showing research questions and sources</p> <p>Plan for their own role in the debate including lines of argument and how they will draw on their evidence</p> <p>Critique of a section of a parliamentary debate on crime</p> <p>Peer observation and feedback from practice debate activity</p> <p>Teacher observation and video of formal debate</p>

Providing quality feedback to pupils

High quality, regular and timely feedback is key to helping pupils move forward and make improvements in their learning. The quality, not the quantity of learning is that is key - so it's how deep, broad, complex and coherent the knowledge and understanding is rather than how much they have learned. Wiliam (2011) highlights quality feedback in his five essential strategies of formative assessment.

By asking questions of pupils regularly, teachers can gather invaluable information that helps to identify the type and quality of learning within and across lessons and provide evidence that is useful for framing quality feedback to pupils. The types of questions used needs careful consideration both to establish what kind of learning is going on and to help pupils think more deeply.

For example:

- What do you mean by that? Can you give me an example?
- Why would someone say that?
- What evidence do you base that argument on?
- What other questions might help us find that out?
- What is the main idea we are dealing with?
- On what information is your conclusion based?

Hattie (2011) outlines three questions that should guide teachers and pupils:

Where am I going? What are my goals? What does success look like?

How am I going to get there? What progress is being made towards the goal?

Where to next? What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?

These question help to both clarify what the learning intentions are, but also whether they are met and what to do next to continue to improve.

“In examinations, the foolish ask questions the wise cannot answer.”

(Oscar Wilde)

“Write an article on what it means to be British”

(GCSE exam question, 2013)

Feedback can be given at different points in the learning process but research shows that teachers should feedback given ‘in the moment’ is particularly effective rather than at some point later say when exercise books have been marked. Leahy and Wiliam (2009) describe this as ‘rapid formative assessment’ where teachers’ feedback within lessons and activities and as pupils are working towards a learning objective or goal.

Progression in Citizenship

The removal of level descriptions means there are now no nationally specified standards or descriptions for National Curriculum subjects including Citizenship. However the practice of ‘levelling’ continues in many schools. Some teachers are using adaptations of the 2008 level descriptions and/or versions of Bloom’s taxonomy to help them plan the pitch of their teaching and when making judgements about pupil progress and attainment.

Progression might be defined as the learning steps made by pupils who demonstrate what they know, understand and are able to do in the study of the subject.

Progression in the subject is the way in which we understand knowledge and skills to develop, deepen and extend over time, and which is sometimes related to outcomes attained by particular stages or ages.

Progression in citizenship can be understood in two ways. Firstly, progress in relation to the progress of individual pupils for example progress made within a lesson or over a longer period of time; and secondly in relation to the stages of progress we might normally expect over time during the study of the subject.

The progression statements on the next page provide one attempt to provide some benchmarking statements. These have been devised by members of the DfE Citizenship Expert Advisory Group and members of the ACT Council to provide teachers with some broad notion of how they might pitch their expectations and how they might measure their students’ achievement against overall expectations. These are not definitive, but they do represent a starting point for teachers. ACT is undertaking further development work to find better ways of describing progression in relation to individual skills and knowledge, and is also willing to publish other models that are developed by practitioners which prove useful. In the progression statements we have tried to build on the kinds of processes with which people would be familiar from the 2008 national curriculum.

- We have addressed knowledge in the section ‘Understanding of UK government, democracy and rights and responsibilities’, which attempts to explain how a students’ understanding of the subject might develop. The organising units here are the key concepts, as these account for students’ increasingly sophisticated understanding of citizenship. This builds on Bloom’s generic language and attempts to show how students may progress from knowing about rights or democracy, to being able to explain the world around them in relation to the abstract concepts, and finally to being able to understand how these concepts help us to explore the complexity of the world around us. We have no doubt that students thinking develops more subtly over time, but we wanted to convey some of the ways in which conceptual understanding might be addressed in planning and assessment.
- The first set of skills are described in the section ‘Critical enquiry and discussion of public issues’, which incorporates the old processes of ‘critical thinking and enquiry’ & ‘advocacy and representation’. These skills also relate to ‘democratic action’ insofar as students are required to devise action plans and justify them in relation to their analysis of the problem and the context in which the action will be undertaken.
- The second set of skills are described in the section ‘Taking informed and responsible action’, which is similar to the old process ‘understanding and taking democratic action’. This highlights the characteristics of progression we want to see as students develop skills to take increasingly independent citizenship actions with others to address issues and problems of concern.

Progression in Citizenship concepts and skills – end of key stage 3 example

	Working towards <i>Descriptive</i>	Working at <i>Analytical</i>	Working beyond <i>Evaluative</i>
	Each subsequent descriptor includes and builds on earlier ones		
Understanding of UK government , democracy, rights & responsibilities	Students offer basic definitions of concepts, which demonstrate basic understanding of some key features of UK democracy, government, rights and responsibilities	Students use key concepts accurately to describe and explain aspects of citizenship and governance in the UK and beyond and in doing so they demonstrate a sound understanding of the concepts. For example they explain elements of government and how these work democratically.	Students begin to use concepts confidently to explore connections and think deeply about citizenship issues. They are aware of debates in relation to each concept (i.e. what is democracy?) and how these concepts relate to each other (e.g. the role of rights in democracy). Concepts enable greater criticality, for example, enabling students to discuss the extent to which an aspect of parliament does or does not function democratically.
Critical enquiry and discussion of public issues	Students draw on a limited range of source material to inform their opinion. At this level pupils will largely demonstrate accurate comprehension of sources. Students will also be able to identify some reasons to support an opinion or proposition in a debate. Students will acknowledge differences of opinion, but may be unable to accommodate or respond to other perspectives.	Students can identify relevant sources of information to help think about a political issue from a range of perspectives. They move beyond ‘face value’ reading and demonstrate critical interpretation in relation to the context in which the information was generated and the relevance of the information to their enquiry question. Students can articulate reasons which logically support a proposition, and which draw on evidence and relate to concepts. They can identify alternative perspectives and reasons for holding different opinions. They can also participate productively in debate / discussion to explore an issue thoroughly and are able to articulate the learning that occurred.	Students look for resources which express views of under- represented groups and begin to critically discuss dominant themes in media coverage of public issues from a variety of perspectives. They engage confidently in a debate / discussion in which they can adapt their own position and / or their argument in the light of emerging arguments and additional evidence. They demonstrate confident use of core concepts and principles (i.e. democracy, justice etc.) to support and question positions in the debate.
Understanding and taking democratic action	Students make reasonable suggestions in support of possible action, making limited use of knowledge of the context. They can work with others, undertaking agreed upon roles. They can also identify ways in which action was successful or not and suggest some reasons.	Students are able to analyze a situation and propose and defend a proposed action in relation to contextual factors and clear aims. They can also plan and organize action with others and work with others to implement their plans, using time and resources appropriately. They can evaluate the process to identify learning (e.g. personal or political learning).	Students demonstrate creativity and flexibility in identifying possible action, which shows a thorough understanding of the context. They work well with others, adopting leadership and collaborative skills as required. They are able to reflect on their action as they work and adapt their plans to changing circumstances.

“Now that education for citizenship has been introduced, we will need to ensure that it isn’t undermined by mindframes of accountability. ... multiple choice tests may serve to trivialize learning. Official guidelines classify levels of understanding in the most absurd manner... issues such as poverty, racism, globalization are marginalized, distorted and trivialized when treated this way.”

Terry Wrigley

Sources of evidence

Opportunities to monitor and assess students’ learning occur during everyday situations within and beyond the classroom through:

- watching students as they work
- listening to students as they talk about their learning
- questioning students discussing and reviewing students’ work with them
- marking students’ work
- asking students to assess their work or the work of their peers.

Progress and attainment is demonstrated during a learning process as well as through the outcome of that process. The range of evidence of learning used by teachers to judge student performance should draw on both. The evidence that can be used to make an informed, periodic judgment about student progress and attainment in citizenship is very wide and can include:

- oral contributions when talking about their work, debating or working together in groups and finished presentations, all of which may be recorded;
- written work including preparatory notes, plans as well as essays and finished pieces;
- project work undertaken as part of an investigation or active citizenship project;
- homework tasks.

Specific assessment tasks and tests results might also inform a periodic judgment, perhaps to top up or recheck students have understood something, but should not be used in isolation from the wider range of evidence

“What shall I do now there are no levels?”

Using assessment information to track progress & report to parents

Many teachers are facing an immediate problem in the aftermath of the demise of levels—how to demonstrate and record progress. The first observation to make in regard to this problem is that is fundamentally not an issue to do with assessment, rather it is an issue of data recording and departmental monitoring. Many school systems require teachers to add regular numerical / letter grades (4a, 3c etc.) to a database, which generates class profiles, tracks individual progress and highlights areas for attention. Before the advent of levels in Citizenship, many subject specialists will remember having to create such grades in the past in the absence of nationally agreed levels.

The problem for the subject community before 2008 (before Citizenship levels) is now the same problem facing the entire profession and every school will devise its own solution. Some schools are simply re-using the national curriculum levels (with appropriate editing to reflect the new curriculum) in order to generate the appropriate data for the school’s tracking system, others are creating their own levels, and others are adapting their tracking systems so that different forms of data can be used for the monitoring purpose (percentage scores; towards / at / beyond; traffic lighting etc.).

It is impossible at this stage to provide one answer for everyone about what to do in order to generate such data. Ultimately teachers will have to adapt what they did in the past, or adopt a new method for these ‘snapshot judgments’. However, we see this as an opportunity to be even clearer about the different purposes of assessment. The regular summative judgments teachers make for monitoring and tracking purposes are not synonymous with the formative assessment that drives good progress, nor do they even have to be the same as the summative judgment that is made about a student’s achievement overall in a unit of work. If a teacher has devised a meaningful system of providing (and recording) formative assessment within a unit of work, and of making summative judgments at the end of a unit or work, then they will have the information they require to determine what data is entered into the tracking system. The principles of good practice relating to the first two processes are explained in this guidance, but the third process is, at the moment, an issue determined by the individual school context and therefore is not open to a universal answer.

Teachers need to use the principles outlined in this guidance to ensure the evidence of pupil progress and attainment is robust and then find appropriate ways to reflect this within the particular system a school has chose to use. Annual subject reports on citizenship to parents remain a requirement for each student in key stage 3 and 4. Reports should identify strengths and areas for development based on assessment that draws on a wide range of evidence during the course of the year.

Ofsted guidance to inspectors on assessment (June 2014) says:

‘Inspectors will not expect to see a particular assessment system in place and will recognise that schools are working towards full implementation of their preferred approach.’

However, inspectors will:

- ***spend more time looking at the range of pupils’ work to consider what progress they are making in different areas of the curriculum;***
- ***talk to leaders about schools’ use of formative and summative assessment and how this improves teaching and raises achievement;***
- ***evaluate how well pupils are doing against age-related expectations as set out by the school and the national curriculum (where this applies).’ (Ofsted, June 2014)***

We hope schools take time to plan and find appropriate assessment, recording and reporting mechanisms and ensure the principles in this guidance are central to whatever approach they decide to use. We also want to share examples of practice which emerge through the ACT journal Teaching Citizenship.

Whilst there are everyday demands on your time to comply with data management systems for pupil ‘tracking’, there are some principles which we believe can be used to underpin effective assessment and the requirement to track students progress over time:

Do	Don’t
<p>See assessment as a dynamic process, in which feedback is used to drive learning in the short, medium and longer term. Plan for clear progression in schemes of work—in conceptual understanding and key citizenship skills.</p> <p>Explain clearly to learners what it is they are going to learn and why, how it will develop their understanding and skills and what’s the criterion for success.</p> <p>Recognise the way that a range of evidence drawn from key tasks across a sequence of lessons can be used to provide learners and you with formative feedback on progress towards objectives and success criteria.</p> <p>Review progress within your teaching of a unit of work so you can give feedback to students on how well they are doing and negotiate adjustments, which may affect individuals, groups or the whole class.</p> <p>Ensure students receive feedback on their developing knowledge and their skills; on their achievement and the processes they undertake to get there.</p> <p>Ensure that summative assessment reflects a range of evidence against students’ achievement of the key learning intentions.</p> <p>Ensure that tasks are sufficiently well-designed to enable you and the students to judge performance.</p>	<p>Rely on using end of unit assessment tasks or tests for an overall judgment of success in a scheme of work. Use such tasks to ‘top-up’ information when there are gaps in assessment information and as an additional piece of evidence rather than the only piece of evidence.</p> <p>Assess knowledge as though it were simply right or wrong—provide students with opportunities to demonstrate the depth of their conceptual understanding. Use generic descriptors / levels for specific projects and tasks—devise your own criteria to describe successful outcomes in learning and engage learners in assessing their progress against these regularly.</p> <p>Provide very generic feedback to learners (e.g. on research or presentation skills) without also highlighting the citizenship specific aspects (e.g. conceptual learning). Allow a number (3b, 4c) to represent achievement for the child—take time to ensure the students understand what they have achieved in relation their Citizenship learning.</p> <p>Blend lots of assessment approaches together (e.g. formative feedback on citizenship learning + summative grading + other frameworks such as English speaking and listening). Such an approach will inevitably confuse learners. Stick to regular formative assessment feedback and find another way to use the other frameworks that are often required in schools.</p>

Useful reading

Bhargava, M. 'Assessing Citizenship' chapter in L. Gearon (Ed) 'Learning to Teach Citizenship in the Secondary School' (2nd edition), London: Routledge.

This is one of the few resources which combines a genuine understanding of assessment with a deep knowledge of Citizenship as a school subject. As such it is a good starting place for thinking about moving on your practice. NB a new edition is due out in the autumn term 2014 with 2 new chapters on assessment.

Clarke, S. (2008) 'Active learning through formative assessment', London: Hodder

A practical and insightful book on how to embed formative assessment into good classroom practices

QCA (2006) 'Assessing citizenship. Example assessment activities for key stage 3'

London: QCA

These materials were designed before the introduction of level descriptions to illustrate practical approaches to assessment based on work in real schools and includes examples of pupils work at different standards.

Jerome, L. (2008) 'Assessing Citizenship Education' chapter in J. Arthur, I. Davies & C. Hahn (Eds) 'Education for Citizenship and Democracy', London: Sage

This chapter explores some of the principles of effective assessment and discusses the distinctive features of this 'domain of knowledge' which could be assessed.