

Section 2 - General views on curriculum, assessment, and qualifications pathways

10. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways are working well to support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

Citizenship, what is working well

- Citizenship as a subject has a clear and distinct purpose in the curriculum
- Learning important lessons from the past to help build a strong Citizenship curriculum for the future
- Strong foundational concepts of the Citizenship curriculum enable localisation
- Learning from international and national experiences of civics and citizenship education
- Implementation of Citizenship curriculum and GCSE based on evidence
- Citizenship curriculum case studies of what works well.

Citizenship as a subject has a clear and distinct purpose in the curriculum

In a world where social, political, technological, commercial and environmental conditions are rapidly changing, the Citizenship curriculum sets out the key knowledge, skills and concepts needed to prepare young people for the future. Many agree that education is part of the solution for building democratic resilience to counter the many negative forces in society, addressing localised concerns about fragmentation in communities and ensuring pupils are well prepared for life and work. Public support for Citizenship education remains consistent since 2019 when YouGov tracker polling began. In August 2024 YouGov polling showed that 61% of respondents believe the subject is very or quite important and just 8% say it is not important at all.

Citizenship is a national curriculum subject that clearly supports pupil progress towards becoming informed and empowered citizens, enabling children and young people to *develop the knowledge and skills required to thrive as citizens, in work and throughout life*. In particular the subject of Citizenship works well where the school/setting values and understands the subject, its ambition and purpose, and recognise that Citizenship:

- has a distinct body of knowledge to provide pupils with what they need to develop as informed citizens and be aware of their rights, duties and agency as active participants in society
- contributes directly to the health of national democracy by teaching about different identities, belonging, communities, and what it means to be a citizen in a diverse society
- fires pupils' interest in democracy, politics, voting, justice, human rights and the law, and broadens perspectives and understanding of the wider world
- helps inoculate young people with the digital and active citizenship skills and knowledge to be resilient to misinformation and to engage in positive action to help address the big issues, from climate change to the value of diversity in society
- develops essential competencies, including evaluating information and statistics, as well as using oracy and advocacy in discussions and deliberations
- includes statutory teaching about financial education and the economy
- supports key factors in the way schools carry out their statutory duties to address aspects of violence and extremism, misinformation and political impartiality.

Learning important lessons from the past to help build a strong Citizenship curriculum for the future

The relatively recent history of Citizenship in England gives the advantage of being able to track and analyse its development and learn from recent mistakes. Although calls for Citizenship education in England can be traced back at least to the rise of facism in the 1930s, we have more detailed accounts of calls for the subject from just before the national curriculum began, and this is well established through the academic literature. (Citizenship Education in England: Policy and Curriculum, Moorse, 2019; England's Citizenship Experiment. State School and Student Perspectives, Jerome, 2012)

Strong Foundational Concepts of the Citizenship curriculum enable localisation

When the subject of Citizenship was introduced in England in 2000, its foundations were built on a conceptual framework developed from the work of Professor Sir Bernard Crick and others as outlined in their report on p44 of 'Teaching Citizenship and Democracy in Schools' (QCA, 1998). The pairs of key concepts identified in the report remain the basis of many of the areas of study for the subject today, although the minimally specified 2014 Citizenship programmes of study make this less apparent than it might have been. The advantage of the concept-driven curriculum is that it has a clear 'spine', through which teaching and learning can be developed using contemporary issues, events and problems to help make abstract ideas more concrete and to build critical thinking. This enables teachers flexibility to localise and personalise, by drawing on the issues and case studies that reflect the interests or help address the needs of the pupils and communities they serve, and develop and build conceptual understanding over time.

Learning from international and national experiences of civics and citizenship

The development of Citizenship as a new subject drew on experiences of those working internationally to introduce Civics and Citizenship education, and from those closer to home in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. So-called "policy copying" was not the aim; rather, the goal was to learn from others to develop an approach that worked within the context of education in England, where the national curriculum was, and still is, dominated by strong, identifiable subjects and ongoing debates about curriculum time. More recently, particularly in 2007, attempts to create a strong statement of values, aims, and purpose for the national curriculum helped cement the central role of Citizenship and align it with the reason many entered teaching in the first place: to make a difference in society. Once Citizenship was established in law as a new foundation national curriculum subject, the challenge was how to ensure implementation in schools. Any major reform needs time and a consistent commitment from those leading education, as well as investment in teaching, to ensure those who take on the responsibility for the subject are equipped and supported with training. The four year period of stability between the initial teaching of Citizenship in 2002 and the beginning of the next curriculum review in 2006 was clearly insufficient to embed such ambitious change, as was the lack of serious investment in specialist teacher training. Going forward, this provides important learning about how to ensure Citizenship becomes successfully embedded as a subject and universal entitlement for all.

Recently, many countries have been revisiting their curriculum frameworks to strengthen their approaches and address the challenges facing democratic societies today. For those in Europe a key driver has been to implement the Council of Europe's Reference Framework for Democratic Culture which focuses on Citizenship education that teaches democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It's time for England to do the same. We are in a strong position to continue learning from others through the IEA Civics and Citizenship Study, especially if we participate in the 2027 survey, as well as through our engagement with the Council of Europe's policy network on democratic citizenship and human rights education.

Implementation of the Citizenship curriculum based on evidence

Citizenship is working well in those schools and settings where it is properly resourced and supported by the leadership team and where there is curriculum time for discrete teaching and regular Citizenship lessons. Where specialist Citizenship teachers exist, the curriculum is translated into coherent, well-sequenced and progressive teaching. Where these conditions are in place, pupils can and do make progress and achieve well. (National Citizenship Education Study, ACT). We also know from regular discussions with teachers and our work since this call for evidence that public qualifications for Citizenship (GCSE Citizenship Studies) can support the amount of teaching time given in the curriculum at Key Stage 4, as well as recognising and celebrating student achievement, attainment and progress. Teachers tell us that GCSE Citizenship Studies improves the status of the subject in the eyes of parents and students. The early Ofsted inspection subject monitoring reports and leadership conference for Citizenship (Ofsted, 2005, 2010, 2013) support many of these findings, and in the absence of anything more recent, remain an important source of evidence.

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This key issue now is to ensure that we quickly move to a position of clarity about the future, so there is no ambiguity in the eyes of any teacher, parent, carer, or pupil about the role, purpose or ambition of the subject of Citizenship, and that it becomes a universal entitlement for all pupils across primary, secondary and post-16 phases of education.

Citizenship case studies of what works well

Citizenship Case Study 1: Highlands School and Sixth Form College

Nahyan Islam, Head of Citizenship at Highlands School and Sixth Form, emphasises the transformative power of Citizenship education in fostering active, informed young citizens. At Highlands, Citizenship is a core, standalone subject from Years 7 to 11, covering crucial areas of study such as politics, voting, government, media literacy and community engagement. The school uses experiential learning to bring politics to life, including through online engagements with politicians to discuss contemporary political debates, debate clubs, and visits to Parliament. Students gain a direct and memorable experience that helps to deepen understanding of democracy and political processes. Nahyan believes that teaching democracy and civic responsibility is essential for empowering students to become change-makers in their communities, and advocates for greater support to expand specialist Citizenship teaching in schools.

Citizenship Case study 2: ACT's Parallel Election Project and The Petersfield School

Using real events is key to bringing Citizenship teaching to life, and the recent 2024 General Election was such a moment. The ACT Parallel Election Project involved nearly 30,000 students across 413 schools, giving them hands-on experience of the democratic process. Students worked in teams to participate in activities that mirror the real election, from analysing party manifestos to organising vote registration, holding hustings, carrying out the election, and comparing the school result with the local constituency. The project was supported with tailored resources and videos by elections expert, Sir Professor John Curtice, to ensure as many students as possible learned about voting and party manifestos, and engaged in political debates. At The Petersfield School, Headteacher Mark Marande highlighted students' enthusiasm in questioning local candidates and understanding political commitments, emphasising the project's role in building lifelong skills in active citizenship and informed decision-making.

Evidence and references:

ACT Parallel Election Project - July 2024 Results <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/act-parallel-election-project-results/>

ACT Parallel Election Project - Results <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/act-parallel-election-project-results/>

Citizenship consolidated? A survey of citizenship in schools, 2013. Ofsted.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/citizenship-consolidated-a-survey-of-citizenship-in-schools>

Citizenship established? Citizenship in schools 2006/09, 2010. Ofsted. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/1094/1/Citizenship%20established.pdf>

Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture>

Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in School, QCA, 1998

Education for Citizenship in Times of Global Challenge - IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 International Report

<https://www.iea.nl/sites/default/files/2023-11/ICCS2022-International-Report.pdf>

'Government launches Curriculum and Assessment Review' - press release and Terms of Reference

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-curriculum-and-assessment-review>

Jerome, L. England's Citizenship Education Experiment: State School and Student Perspectives, 2012

Moorse, L. Citizenship Education in England: Policy and Curriculum, 2019. In: Peterson, A., Stahl, G., Soong, H. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Citizenship and Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67905-1_22-1

National Citizenship Education Study, Survey with Teachers 2023-24 (ACT, forthcoming)

11. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways should be targeted for improvements to better support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

In order to better support and recognise educational progress for children and young people:

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- the Citizenship curriculum needs to be made statutory across primary, secondary education and post-16 education
- Citizenship needs to be specified in the national curriculum as a subject and taught discretely
- subject standards need to be more clearly and coherently mapped across the national curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways.

The Citizenship curriculum needs a 'golden thread'—clear sequences of learning that map progression within and between Key Stages, building on the early years foundation stage. There is a need for standards to be mapped out more clearly through assessment baselines and end-of-Key Stage statements of standards. In particular, progression in active citizenship needs to be more clearly recognised. Because Citizenship is not statutory in primary schools and uneven in secondary, pupil's progress is uneven and inconsistent. The starting point for Key Stage 3 is lower than it should be.

The models for Citizenship education with the greatest impact rely on statutory status and a clear specification of the subject to be taught. The better the quality of the curriculum at national level and the clearer the subject specification (knowledge, understanding and skills), the better chance we have of implementing teaching that enables Citizenship outcomes for students to be achieved and progress to be recognised. Clarity at the level of national specification also saves teachers time when it comes to planning, teaching and assessing pupil progress in the subject.

The evidence to support this includes the ICCS 2022 findings—according to which—teaching Civic and Citizenship education as a discrete curriculum subject offers the best outcomes for pupils. By focusing on comprehensive coverage of civic areas of study, countries that adopt this model tend to have students with higher levels of civic knowledge and political efficacy, and a strong understanding of democratic values. This is supported in ACT's Research with Middlesex University, the National Citizenship Education Study 2021-25. This national research finds good evidence to suggest that as students encounter more Citizenship areas of study more frequently in the curriculum, they also become more tolerant, grow in their support for democracy, develop their sense of efficacy and optimism, and increase their intentions to vote. In addition, curriculum time is associated with higher levels of knowledge, increased intentions to participate as an adult including intentions to vote, increased levels of toleration, and higher levels of support for democracy. (ACT, National Citizenship Education Survey. Student Survey Report 2023-24 forthcoming)

Evidence and references:

Education for Citizenship in Times of Global Challenge - IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 International Report - <https://www.iea.nl/sites/default/files/2023-11/ICCS2022-International-Report.pdf>

ACT, National Citizenship Education Survey. Student Survey Report 2023-24 (forthcoming)

ACT National Citizenship Education Study 2021-25 Research briefings 1-4 <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/research/>

Section 3 - Social justice and inclusion

12. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation (class ceilings) for learners experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage?

- For all learners to have equal opportunities to access and participate in Citizenship education, and to progress and demonstrate attainment, Citizenship must be a universal entitlement for all, not a privilege for the few.
- A universal entitlement to Citizenship requires a commitment to statutory provision of the subject from Key Stages 1 to 4, and a new commitment to providing Citizenship as part of an entitlement post-16 education.

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Learners experiencing socio-economic disadvantage face barriers to attainment, progress, access and participation, because Citizenship education is unevenly distributed across schools. This is particularly clear in primary schools, where Citizenship is not a statutory national curriculum subject. A new study of primary education at the University of Kent shows that “distribution of opportunities [for active civic learning] is uneven: children from more privileged communities have greater access to opportunities to develop their civic skills and practise their civic-ness. This suggests, from an early age, these children are more likely to be prepared for civic life than those from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus potentially cementing inequalities in civic education from early on.” Also, according to the same research, schools in less affluent areas face over twice as many barriers to offering civic engagement opportunities, meaning that those in more affluent groups are better prepared for active engagement and their voices are likely to become increasingly dominant as they get older. ACT believes that in order to remove these barriers, a statutory entitlement for the subject of Citizenship in primary schools must be established.

Teachers regularly report that qualifications in Citizenship help raise the status of the subject in the eyes of parents, students and employers, and show public value for pupils' achievements. However, barriers to participation and attainment at secondary level include the uneven availability of GCSE Citizenship Studies or other qualifications suitable for those at level 1 or below. According to 2023 DfE school-level data, GCSE Citizenship Studies is offered in just over 20% of schools and colleges as a qualification at Key Stage 4. Findings from our National Citizenship Education Study 2023–24 data show that, for schools working with ACT, this rises to 29%, with 12% making it compulsory for pupils to study the qualification.

The DfE workforce survey shows a 53% decrease in teaching time for Citizenship since 2011. In ACT's research for those schools where the GCSE is offered, only 37% of teachers said Citizenship had the same timetabled time as other comparable subjects. The squeeze on teaching time for Citizenship through competition with other subjects remains very apparent.

Current figures from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) show that the number of candidates who sit the GCSE examination has been stable at ~22,000 over the past three years. This is significantly lower than in 2009, when 94,600 candidates sat the examination. It is notable that at this point, GCSE Citizenship Studies was available as a short course and counted towards Performance Tables as a subject in its own right.

At present, there is also uneven distribution of opportunities for Citizenship education for post-16 learners. There is no curriculum framework or entitlement for the subject even though post-16 provision does include funded, non-qualification hours for employment, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) time. In terms of qualifications, the A-level Social Science: Citizenship was offered for ten years, starting in 2008, but was discontinued during the last round of qualification reforms due to uncertainty from exam boards about support for the subject and the cost of redevelopment. There is no provision for Citizenship in T levels, or very few other vocational qualification pathways, that include opportunities for Citizenship learning or assessment. In the past, Citizenship had been included as modules in a number of vocational subjects, including the now discontinued BTEC Public Services.

This situation could be easily remedied with two commitments. First, to specify Citizenship as a requirement in EEP—with a programme of study that provides a framework for learning that progresses from pre-16 provision in terms of concepts, skills and contexts. Second, a requirement to revisit the range of qualifications available for post-16 learners. In particular, we feel there is merit in exploring an Extended Project Qualification for Citizenship which is suitable for all pathways. Both ideas have been supported by those attending ACT CAR events to discuss the curriculum review and Citizenship, including the Association of Colleges.

Recommendations:

- All pupils should be guaranteed the opportunity to study Citizenship to age 16 and to have their attainment recognised through GCSE Citizenship Studies, or approved Citizenship qualifications including for those working below level 1.

- Any barriers that limit provision of Citizenship, or discourage the study of Citizenship to GCSE or other approved qualifications, must be removed—including Ebacc measure in performance tables and the current formulation of Progress 8.

Evidence and references:

'Academic year 2022/23 - Key stage 4 performance' - DfE <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance>
'Educating for Social Good: Part 1 - Mapping children's active civic learning in England'
<https://research.kent.ac.uk/children-as-philanthropic-citizens/wp-content/uploads/sites/2520/2023/01/Educating-for-Social-Good-Part-1.pdf>
Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) GCSE results 2001 - 2023 <https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results-archive/>

13. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation which may disproportionately impact pupils based on other protected characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity)?

We have requested data to explore these questions at the pupil level, as opposed to schools/settings level, from the DfE. At the moment none has been made available.

We have highlighted issues with the uneven provision of the national curriculum for Citizenship and the limited offer of Citizenship qualifications as creating a barrier to pupil achievement and attainment and particularly those in schools/settings with high levels of socio economic disadvantage. See our responses to questions 22, 27 and 32.

Examining GCSE results data over time seems to imply that overall boys do worse than girls in GCSE Citizenship Studies. (Joint Council for Qualifications)

Evidence and references:

G-EPIC Gender Empowerment through Politics in the Classroom programme - <https://www.g-epic.eu/>
Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) GCSE results 2001 - 2023 <https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results-archive/>

14. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers in continuing to improve attainment, progress, access or participation for learners with SEND?

See responses to questions 12 and 13.

15. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any enablers that support attainment, progress, access or participation for the groups listed above?

- For all learners to have equal opportunities to access and participate in Citizenship education, and to progress and demonstrate attainment, Citizenship must be a universal entitlement for all, not a privilege for the few.
- A universal entitlement to Citizenship requires a commitment to statutory provision of the subject from Key Stages 1 to 4 and a new commitment to providing Citizenship as part of an entitlement post-16.

Learners experiencing socio-economic disadvantage face barriers to attainment, progress, access and participation because Citizenship education is unevenly distributed across schools. This is particularly clear in primary schools, where Citizenship is not a statutory national curriculum subject. A new study of primary education at the University of Kent shows that “distribution of opportunities [for active civic learning] is uneven: children from more privileged communities have greater access to opportunities to develop their civic skills and practise their civic-ness. This suggests, from an early age, these children are more likely to be prepared for civic life than those from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus potentially cementing inequalities in civic education from early on.” Also, according to the same research, “Schools in less affluent areas face over twice as many barriers to offering civic engagement opportunities” meaning that those in more affluent groups are better prepared for

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active engagement so that their voices are likely to become increasingly dominant as they get older. ACT believes that in order to remove these barriers, a statutory entitlement for the subject of Citizenship in primary schools must be established.

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Recommendations:

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- Any barriers that limit provision of Citizenship, or discourage the study of Citizenship to GCSE or other approved qualifications, must be removed—including Ebacc measure in performance tables and the current formulation of Progress 8.

Evidence and references:

'Academic year 2022/23 - Key stage 4 performance' - DfE

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance>

'Educating for Social Good: Part 1 - Mapping children's active civic learning in England'

<https://research.kent.ac.uk/children-as-philanthropic-citizens/wp-content/uploads/sites/2520/2023/01/Educating-for-Social-Good-Part-1.pdf>

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) GCSE results 2001 - 2023 <https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results-archive/>

Section 4 - Ensuring an excellent foundation in maths and English

16. To what extent does the content of the national curriculum at primary level (Key Stages 1 and 2) enable pupils to gain an excellent foundation in a) English and b) maths? Are there ways in which the content could change to better support this aim? Please note, we invite views specifically on transitions between Key Stages in section 9.

We are not commenting in detail on English and maths. However, it is important to set out here that Citizenship makes a beneficial contribution to developing aspects of English and maths that add value to what is taught in those subjects. For example, in relation to spoken language, reading, writing, including using vocabulary accurately and in context, critical literacy, making presentations and contributing to debates in English; and in relation to working mathematically, handling numerical and statistical information, problem solving and understanding mathematical concepts in maths.

In addition, there are specific relationships in relation to subject content between English, maths and Citizenship. For example, media and information literacy, critical literacy and concepts relating to the purposes and uses of English language; and to maths in relation to teaching financial literacy and economic literacy. For example, maths may teach about the method to calculate the impact of interest rate changes on different households; Citizenship explores the effects of the interest rate change on different people and groups in society and the implications for the economy.

17. To what extent do the English and maths primary assessments support pupils to gain an excellent foundation in these key subjects? Are there any changes you would suggest that would support this aim?

18. To what extent does the content of the a) English and b) maths national curriculum at secondary level (Key Stages 3 and 4) equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need for life and further study? Are there ways in which the content could change to better support this aim?

19. To what extent do the current maths and English qualifications at a) pre-16 and b) 16-19 support pupils and learners to gain, and adequately demonstrate that they have achieved, the skills and knowledge they need? Are there any changes you would suggest that would support these outcomes?

20. How can we better support learners who do not achieve level 2 in English and maths by 16 to learn what they need to thrive as citizens in work and life? In particular, do we have the right qualifications at level 2 for these 16-19 learners (including the maths and English study requirement)?

21. Are there any particular challenges with regard to the English and maths a) curricula and b) assessment for learners in need of additional support (e.g. learners with SEND, socioeconomic disadvantage, English as an additional language (EAL))? Are there any changes you would suggest to overcome these challenges?

Section 5 - Curriculum and qualification content

- 22. Are there particular curriculum or qualifications subjects where:**
- a. there is too much content; not enough content, or content is missing;**
 - b. the content is out-of-date;**
 - c. the content is unhelpfully sequenced (for example to support good curriculum design or pedagogy);**

d. there is a need for greater flexibility (for example to provide the space for teachers to develop and adapt content)?

Please provide detail on specific Key Stages where appropriate.

Curriculum and qualification content for Citizenship from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4

A clear and well-sequenced, statutory national curriculum for Citizenship will support teachers and schools as they decide how to plan and teach the content in their particular context. National and International research indicates curricula designed with this in mind lead to the best outcomes for pupils. (ACT, 2023, 2024, forthcoming, Shultz, IEA, 2022)

ACT is well-positioned to provide exemplary progression frameworks and curriculum and assessment models across the Key Stages and for qualifications. Progression in Citizenship is a particular issue because the current programmes of study and GCSE content for the subject were developed at different points in time—primary in 2001, secondary in 2013, GCSE in 2016—and do not offer conceptual coherence or clarity about the standards expected. We have provided an example of a progression framework that takes key areas of study across Key Stages 1 to 4, and which is available in the [ACT CAR supplementary evidence folder](#). This is based on five of the key areas of study in the subject:

- Democracy and government
- Rights and equity
- Law and justice
- Identities and diversity
- Active Citizenship.

Below, we have outlined key points to consider in regards to reviewing Citizenship curriculum content in primary and secondary education, including a focus on GCSE Citizenship Studies. This has been put together following discussions with primary and secondary teachers, and others from more than 100 organisations since the call for evidence was launched. We have also drawn on many sources of research and evidence which are listed at the end of this section.

We would like to see:

- An unambiguous, progressive and clear statutory Citizenship national curriculum across all Key Stages and including post-16 education.
- This review to clarify—and make much more explicit—teaching requirements and standards of knowledge and understanding expected in Citizenship across different phases.
- Greater flexibility for localisation within the curriculum to allow exploration of current areas of study that engage students meaningfully, meeting their needs and interests.
- An included focus on areas of study relevant to contemporary life, such as digital media's influence on democracy, misinformation, and the role of international institutions in addressing global issues like climate change and human rights.

Citizenship has long had a tradition of using contemporary issues, events and problems as a focus for developing conceptual knowledge and understanding. Citizenship is also a creative subject that enables students to **develop and acquire knowledge and understanding whilst using and applying** skills, including research, investigation, critical thinking, oracy, advocacy, deliberation and exploratory talk, problem solving, collaboration, evaluation, synthesis and citizen action.

Primary Citizenship

Key points regarding primary Citizenship content:

- Citizenship education at Key Stages 1 and 2 must be made statutory to level out unevenness of provision in schools and ensure progression from early years into secondary Citizenship.

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- Health-related content in the current Citizenship programmes of study is inappropriate for the subject, and duplicates aspects addressed elsewhere in the curriculum.
- Content for some key aspects of Citizenship remains too limited to clearly set out expected standards and is hidden in content that is more suited to P/RSHE.
- Key areas of study need to be made more explicit in the current programme of study, such as democracy and active citizenship; rights, rules and laws; identities, diverse communities and people who help us live together; nature, the environment and sustainability; financial literacy, economic literacy; and skills including research, information, news and media literacy, decision-making, working together, oracy and communication.

The primary programmes of study for Citizenship have not been updated since 2001. Rather than too much content in the programme of study, there is inappropriate content which duplicates aspects addressed elsewhere in the curriculum or needs updating. For example, some teaching requirements that relate to health and relationships could be removed, as these are better addressed in Science or P/RSHE. This is important to establish a clear and consistent approach to Citizenship that builds from Citizenship in the Early Years Framework and progresses to secondary Citizenship.

Content for some key aspects of Citizenship is too limited to clearly set out expected standards. In the current programme of study, there are certainly areas that we would look to keep and build on, for example, democracy and active citizenship, rights, rules and laws, identities, diverse communities and people who help us live together, nature, the environment and sustainability, financial literacy and citizenship skills including research, information, news and media literacy, thinking skills, decision-making, working together, oracy and communication.

If Citizenship education is made statutory at Key Stage 1 and 2 as we suggest, with a clear and progressive curriculum in place, it would have a positive impact on students' understanding of key subject concepts and skills. By the time they reach Key Stage 3, pupils would have stronger foundational Citizenship knowledge and understanding, allowing for a more effective and equitable curriculum that builds on their prior knowledge.

Evidence of Primary Citizenship

Research from the University of Kent, 'Educating for Social Good' states that research highlights 'middle childhood and primary school years (ages 4-11 years) as crucial in the development and normalisation of civic behaviours'.

Teachers we spoke with during the ACT teacher meetings, our CAR events and the ACT CAR survey, highlighted the need to ensure that the definition, purpose and aims of Citizenship across all Key Stages are made clear. A particular focus on this is required at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, to establish clarity about what Citizenship should address in the primary curriculum. The overarching statement of subject purposes and aims should be revised and updated to clarify and reflect the key concepts, including democracy, rule of law, justice, rights, equality, diversity etc. as well as skills essential experiences that should be part of the subject for all pupils.

Recommendations for Primary Citizenship:

Below are some of the key areas of study ACT recommends are made more explicit at Key Stages 1 and 2.

At Key Stage 1

Cover areas of study including:

- **Rights** - an exploration of what basic rights are, including for children, and why we need them. An introduction to concepts of fairness and respect, considering the impact their behaviour has on others.

- **Democracy, power and influence** - pupils start by looking at who makes decisions on their behalf within a home and school environment, and how they can make their views heard by these people.
- **Who makes the rules (home, school and community)** - pupils begin to explore how rules change in different contexts, who gets to decide what those rules are, and some of the contexts for where they apply.
- **Identity and community** - exploring what makes a community, the idea of belonging, and what roles different communities play in their lives. Pupils consider their likes and dislikes but take this further to explore what makes them unique and their individual characteristics and how these contribute to the different communities they are a part of.
- **How can we be active citizens at school?** - exploring what an active citizen is and activities facilitated in their school/class environment to develop active citizenship skills such as teamwork and communication.

At Key Stage 2

Taking the above Key stage 1 examples, these would progress to cover areas of study such as:

- **Rights and equity** - pupils develop their knowledge of basic human rights, social rights (including data rights) and children's rights, exploring the concepts of fairness, equality and equity. They also learn about how these rights are protected in society including through the law.
- **Democracy, power and influence** - exploring how decisions are made in their local communities and across society, who is responsible for those decisions and how those people are chosen. This aids understanding of the impact that those decisions have on their lives and the role they play in decision-making.
- **Rules and laws** - an examination of the purpose of rules and laws, an exploration of who's who in the justice system and consideration of the impact these people have on them.
- **Identity and community** - pupils explore the basic idea of multiple identities, differences between individual and group characteristics, the different people and contributions that form groups and communities, as well as how people, groups and communities can change over time.
- **Active citizenship** - pupils look at the role of organisations such as charities, people, groups and decision-makers in the school, local and wider community and how citizens can become involved and help shape decisions that affect us.

We would like to see amendments to the following from the Programme of Study:

KS1: Developing a healthier and safer lifestyle - this should be removed as it is more directly linked to P/RSHE and Science

KS2: Developing a healthier and safer lifestyle - this should be removed as it is more directly linked to P/RSHE and Science

Secondary Citizenship

Key points regarding secondary Citizenship content:

- The 2014 programme of study revisions reduced specificity, creating ambiguous phrases (e.g., "precious liberties" in Key Stage 3) that add complexity when translating requirements into teaching units and lessons. A clearer set of teaching requirements would be more efficient and impactful and save teachers time.
- There is a need for progression, coherence and structured sequencing from primary Citizenship to secondary and then to post-16.
- There is a need for greater clarity and specificity in teaching requirements to ensure the expected standards for Citizenship are clear and progressive in terms of knowledge, concepts and skills.

- Some aspects need greater specificity to better reflect modern Citizenship education and issues relevant to contemporary life.
- Missing content at Key Stage 3 includes: roles of the media and critical media literacy and information literacy; identities, diversity and communities; equity, social rights and human rights; local government and democracy; and the role of groups, movements in a changing democracy and civil society; explicit active citizenship as distinct from 'voluntary activity'.
- Missing content at Key Stage 3 and 4, which was removed from Citizenship in 2014, includes sustainability, environmental and climate education, and the economy and economic literacy which is different to financial literacy.
- As rights education only begins at Key Stage 4, UK international obligations on rights education are currently being neglected.
- Many areas of study need to be updated and made more explicit: digital democracy and digital citizenship; changes in UK relations with Europe including the role of the UK at the Council of Europe—which is key to promoting democracy, human rights, justice and the rule of law; explicit teaching of the law in relation to equality and equity in supporting; protected characteristics and countering all forms of discrimination, racism and hate; active citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills, and the roles of groups and movements in creating positive change in democratic society.
- A clearer and more coherent Citizenship curriculum based on concepts and skills gives flexibility for teachers to adapt to their own context and pupils and to use localised examples and contemporary case studies and issues to bring the subject to life.

One example of the need to be more explicit, is the teaching of sustainability and climate education, which is approached in Citizenship education through a number of conceptual lenses (politics, law, justice, equity, human rights) and through active citizenship. It was removed from the secondary programme of study in 2014, (but retained in the primary Citizenship curriculum), and a statutory teaching requirement should be reinstated. ACT's research with Middlesex University shows that currently teaching of this area is less regular than other areas of study in Citizenship and this is likely to be because of the removal of an explicit teaching requirement in the subject at secondary level. (ACT, National Citizenship Education Survey. Teacher Survey Report 2023-24 forthcoming).

Teaching sustainability and climate through Citizenship would address:

- at the international level: the role of the UN and the international political cooperation required to address climate change as a trans-global issue involving human rights, climate justice and equity and the unequal effects of climate change in different parts of the world;
- at the national level: the role of law in supporting and protecting the environment and biodiversity, and how parliament—through debate and select committee work—can bring about policy change and hold organisations/businesses accountable for improving sustainability, as well as highlighting the economic opportunities that come with furthering sustainability and 'greening' business;
- at the local level: how well the different political solutions led by the local government counter the effects of climate change such as policy that promotes biodiversity and protects nature, encourages sustainable practices and ways of living for businesses and citizens, including changing consumer behaviour.

Part of studying this area of content lends itself well to active citizenship, where students can take forward investigations and work together on practical actions, developing skills (democratic and life skills) with others to further their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and climate change, and to try to make a positive difference through a course of action which seeks to improve sustainability or change behaviours and protect nature. This links well with the current DfE sustainability and climate strategy, the work of national partners including the Natural History Museum and Reading University and the drive for schools to have a Climate Action Plan in place by 2025.

Recommendations for secondary Citizenship:

Below are some of the key areas of study ACT recommends are made more explicit at Key Stages 3 and 4. These should clearly build on the foundations set through a statutory curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2.

We should emphasise that if primary Citizenship becomes statutory, then the starting points for teaching in year 7 at Key Stage 3 should change which will allow for greater progress in studying the subject.

The list below is not exhaustive, but exemplifies some of the areas of study that need to be considered in relation to updating and clarifying teaching requirements for Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4.

- **Rights, human rights and social rights** - including the struggle for human rights and the key principles and conventions that set out what human rights are, human rights law and examples of the extent to which children's rights, human rights, social rights and data rights are supported and can be challenged in the UK and other parts of the world; balancing competing rights; cases, legal process for challenging/supporting rights based issues including role of the courts.
- **How democracy changes**: including through digitisation and AI; and how active citizens, groups and movements play a legitimate part in shaping public life and contributing to democratic life; democratic reforms locally and nationally such as to voting, parliament and devolved assemblies; devolution.
- **The role of the UK in Europe and the wider world** - including in international governance and how the UK contributes to cross-national and global issues such as climate change and sustainability, migration, crimes such as fraud and people trafficking, and the promotion of human rights and democracy internationally.
- **Media and information literacy** - including the development and effects (positive and negative) of digital media, news and information, and how these shape and inform individual and public opinion; the role of the media in holding those in power to account; and the need for critical media literacy and information skills to help protect and prevent the negative consequences of mis-, dis- and malinformation for individuals and wider society
- **Sustainability and climate change** - including approaches to sustainability locally to globally, the role of the law and international conventions to protect the environment and challenge individual, group and corporate behaviour to positively address climate change; the role of government in leading global change.
- **Citizenship skills** - including research, investigation, critical thinking, oracy, advocacy, argumentation, weighing evidence, deliberation and exploratory talk, problem solving, collaboration, evaluation, synthesis, and especially active citizenship and democratic citizen actions.

In addition, content that relates to teaching **identities, diversity, representation and understanding how society changes** should be updated in line with our recommendations made in response to questions 23 and 24.

GCSE Citizenship Studies

Key points regarding content:

- GCSE Citizenship Studies: The current DfE content for GCSE forms 100% of content, leaving little room for variation or focus areas that might be of local or thematic interest across exam board specifications
- While all the Key Stage 4 Citizenship programme of study requirements are addressed in the GCSE content, financial education is not included at the personal level
- GCSE overload: Teachers say GCSE Citizenship Studies is close to overloaded, meaning they struggle to cover it within the given curriculum time.

Citizenship Studies GCSE was developed in 2001 and introduced to coincide with the establishment of the subject in the National Curriculum. Initially, the content in the Key Stage 4 programme of study provided the basis of the content for the GCSE qualifications. In the early days of the subject it was felt that a short course

qualification would be sufficient to address and assess the content. In 2010, 94,600 students achieved the GCSE Citizenship Studies short course qualification (JCQ).

After two periods of qualification reforms which updated content, changed the approach of weightings of assessments (from 60% active citizenship 40% examination, to 40% active citizenship, 60% examination), a full course Citizenship Studies GCSE was developed. Numbers of candidates for the full course qualification grew quite quickly, and initially, Citizenship was statistically the fastest growing full course GCSE qualification subject. In the past three years, numbers have stabilised and currently are at just less than 22,000. In 2024, 708 out of 4,485 schools and colleges offered GCSE Citizenship Studies (JCQ).

The short course GCSE was phased out over time as demand decreased, which was in part as performance table requirements changed and no longer recognised the qualification. In the most recent qualification reforms, the short course was not continued by the exam boards.

GCSE Citizenship Studies content was expanded at the request of the then-minister, leading to a new DfE GCSE subject content document for revised qualifications, to be taught from 2016. There was a separation of the content from the Key Stage 4 programme of study at this point. The DfE subject content currently sets out 100% of the content in current specifications. Active citizenship is now only assessed via examination, raising questions of validity, reliability and fitness for purpose— given the purpose of active citizenship is to encourage students to demonstrate what they know and understand through experiential and practical action.

The DfE subject content document provides comprehensive and coherent content to be covered by specifications in considerable detail when compared with the Citizenship national curriculum Key Stage 4 programme of study. All of the programme of study requirements are addressed in the GCSE content. However, some of those involved in the Financial Education Forum, including Russell Winnard at Young Enterprise, have criticised the lack of inclusion of personal financial education. Currently, the DfE subject content makes up 100% of the GCSE specification content leaving little room for flexibility or variation.

Feedback from teachers from ACT teacher meetings, our CAR events and the ACT CAR survey, tells us that the content is on the cusp of being overloaded. Some say they struggle to complete teaching the content in the curriculum time they have. However, ACT's 2023-24 teacher survey research shows just 37% of teachers report GCSE Citizenship Studies receiving comparable teaching time with other GCSE qualification subjects (ACT, National Citizenship Education Survey with TeachersReport 2023-24, forthcoming). So it is difficult to tell whether this sense of overload would be different if teachers had the full amount of teaching time.

Recommendations for GCSE Citizenship Studies:

- Reducing content specified by the DfE at GCSE could allow more focus on deep learning, and would enable exam boards more flexibility to vary content
- Allowing choice of content for depth studies would offer greater flexibility for teachers to meet the needs, interests and contexts of their students
- Teachers would like to see pre-released themes for active citizenship projects and investigations (something which was done previously), adjusted weighting for active citizenship within assessment and new modes of assessment including non-examined assessments (NEA).

Post-16 Citizenship

To ensure a universal entitlement with coherence and progression throughout mandatory education, Citizenship should be continued into post-16 education. We make specific comments and recommendations about this in question 33.

Evidence and references:

ACT CAR events:

- Online panel discussion: engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education - 14 October 2024
<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>
- Shaping the Future of Primary Citizenship - 7 November 2024 <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/shaping-the-future-of-primary-citizenship/>
- Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024
<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/make-space-for-citizenship-a-discussion-focussed-on-the-dfe-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>

ACT Citizenship Progression Framework, 2024 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rAV0q4j1aS3a_SGyvrJIZQ_q7g51JQ8Gu9jC60tMWbc/edit?usp=sharing

Body, A. (2023) *Educating for Social Good. Part 1*, University of Kent

<https://research.kent.ac.uk/children-as-philanthropic-citizens/wp-content/uploads/sites/2520/2023/01/Educating-for-Social-Good-Part-1.pdf>

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 1 and 2 - 2001

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75a83a40f0b67b3d5c8310/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 - 2008

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75a83a40f0b67b3d5c8310/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 - 2014

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f324f7ad3bf7f1b1ea28dca/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Citizenship.pdf

DfE Sustainability and Climate Strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/9317e6ed-6c80-4eb9-be6d-3fcb1f232f3a>

DfE Sustainability Support for Schools <https://www.sustainabilitysupportforeducation.org.uk/>

Education for Citizenship in Times of Global Challenge - IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 International Report

<https://www.iea.nl/sites/default/files/2023-11/ICCS2022-International-Report.pdf>

GCSE Citizenship studies content overview

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6287a835d3bf7f1f433ae19a/GCSE_subject_content_citizenship_studies_May_2022.pdf

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) GCSE results 2001 - 2023 <https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results-archive/>

National Citizenship Education Study, Survey with Teachers 2023-24 (ACT, forthcoming) <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/research/>

Sustainability and Climate Education through Citizenship concepts

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/sustainability-and-climate-education-through-citizenship-concepts/>

The Impact of Citizenship Education: A review of evidence for school leaders

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/the-impact-of-citizenship-education-a-review-of-evidence-for-school-leaders/>

23. Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification content) is more diverse and representative of society?

- Diversity and representation are important in the Citizenship curriculum—both for teaching about diversity, equity and representation in our society and democracy—as well as developing respect and understanding.
- It is empowering for pupils if they see themselves, and those like them, in the Citizenship curriculum and across the whole national curriculum.
- Teachers need support in accessing and selecting diverse examples and case studies to use to support teaching. Case studies can be a powerful way for teachers to think beyond their own experiences, inspire pupils.

In the 2008 national curriculum Citizenship programmes of study, there was a clearer focus on teaching about the nature of diversity in the UK and how diversity changes over time. This followed the work of Sir Keith Ajegbo, which led to an important report, *Curriculum Review. Diversity and Citizenship, 2007*, which informed the redevelopment of the Citizenship programme of study and how diversity was addressed in other subjects across the national curriculum as a whole.

In 2014, the curriculum teaching requirements were pared back and less explicit. Diversity, identities and community is not included until Key Stage 4, when pupils must be taught, ‘diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding’.

The 2008 Citizenship national curriculum requirements included references to:

- the diversity of beliefs, cultures, identities and traditions in the UK;
- reasons for migration; and

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- the implications of the interconnections between the UK and the rest of the world.

Most teachers tell us they introduce the study of identities, communities, equality and diversity earlier in Key Stage 3. For example: when teaching about rights, law, equality, protected characteristics; forms of discrimination including racism or when exploring multiple and changing identities and communities; or representation in relation to society including in groups, councils, public office, politics and parliament including the campaigns for equal representation for women in parliament. Progression from the primary phase also needs to be developed and the current content in the GCSE Citizenship Studies will need to be updated.

Research by academics from Birmingham University, in *Youth engagement with race and faith at school: National pupil survey headline findings report (2023)*, highlighted fewer than half of students felt their schools taught them about real-life issues that affect their lives or taught them about people from their ethnic background. Pupils are interested in how people's lives are influenced by different factors (including race, gender, class, religion etc) and the diverse experiences of people in different parts of the UK. (The Agenda for Citizenship Education research by Jerome and Hyder 2024).

Diversity and Representation in Citizenship Recommendations:

- National curriculum Citizenship teaching requirements should include different aspects of the nature of diversity, including: in relation to identities, communities, equity and rights in society; representation in work places, public life including government and parliament; and understanding how communities and society changes over time. In secondary Citizenship, this should include the exploration of why there can be tensions in communities and society.
- Citizenship skills developed through the national curriculum should ensure pupils engage with a diverse range of perspectives on a wide range of citizenship issues, especially when discussing controversial and sensitive issues. This is key to deliberation.
- The representation of those included in teaching as examples and case studies should reflect the diversity of the UK and consider local context and needs of pupils, including the representation of women and girls. The G-EPIC (Gender Empowerment through Politics in the Classroom) programme finds the importance for girls in particular of hearing from female MPs.
- Flexibility in the Citizenship national curriculum allows teachers to localise and personalise content to the students they teach, in order to encourage diversity and representation.

Evidence and references:

2014 National Curriculum Programmes of Study Citizenship

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study-for-key-stages-3-and-4>

Ajebgo, K. *Curriculum Review: Diversity and Citizenship*, 2007 DfES https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/6374/7/DfES_Diversity_%26_Citizenship_Redacted.pdf

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 - 2008

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75a83a40f0b67b3d5c8310/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf

G-EPIC Gender Empowerment through Politics in the Classroom programme <https://www.g-epic.eu/>

Jerome, L. Hyder, F. *The Agenda for Citizenship Education*, 2024 <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/agenda-for-citizenship-education>

The Deliberative Classroom Project, ACT 2018 <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/the-deliberative-classroom-project/>

Youth engagement with race and faith at school: *National pupil survey headline findings report (2023)*, Birmingham University

<https://more.bham.ac.uk/youth-engagement/wp-content/uploads/sites/70/2023/11/National-Pupil-Survey-Report-Final.pdf>

24. To what extent does the current curriculum (including qualification content) support students to positively engage with, be knowledgeable about and respect others? Are there elements that could be improved?

- Citizenship education explicitly supports students to engage with, be knowledgeable about and respect others, but it is unevenly taught across schools.
- Ensuring that Citizenship remains a statutory national curriculum foundation subject at secondary school, is part of the range of post-16 pathways, and is made statutory at primary school, would encourage a more coherent approach and support teaching in relation to the value of respect.

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Current guidance from the DfE asks schools to *support* fundamental British values, including ‘mutual respect and understanding.’ However, in Citizenship, explicit teaching is required to explore these concepts and should include consideration of why such ideas are contested and controversial. (ACT Deliberative Classroom project 2018). This was also the subject of recent debate about Citizenship, values and education in the House of Lords, which highlights the role of Citizenship education as a subject in teaching values of democracy, justice, rule of law and toleration of diversity. (ACT 2024, ‘Lords Debate Underscores Urgency for Citizenship in Curriculum Review’)

Recommendations:

- The revised Citizenship national curriculum should state, within an overarching subject purposes and aims statement, the contribution that Citizenship makes to teaching about and developing understanding of respect for others.
- Citizenship content and teaching requirements for each Key Stage should be updated and clarified in line with our response in question 23 on diversity.

Evidence and references:

Education (Values of British Citizenship) Bill [HL] 18 October 2024

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-10-18/debates/30B1EB5F-C4F6-4EA5-896C-0A13C1639149/Education\(ValuesOfBritishCitizenship\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-10-18/debates/30B1EB5F-C4F6-4EA5-896C-0A13C1639149/Education(ValuesOfBritishCitizenship)Bill(HL))

‘Lords Debate Underscores Urgency for Citizenship in Curriculum Review’, ACT 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/lords-debate-underscores-urgency-for-citizenship-in-curriculum-re>

The Deliberative Classroom Project, ACT 2018 <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/the-deliberative-classroom-project/>

25. In which ways does the current primary curriculum support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for life and further study and what could we change to better support this?

- Citizenship education supports primary school pupils with the skills and knowledge they need for life and further study.
- For this to become an entitlement for all pupils, Citizenship must be made statutory at primary level.
- The programmes of study at KS1 and 2 should be revisited to demonstrate progression in knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills.

We have addressed the required changes to primary Citizenship programmes of study in question 22.

26. In which ways do the current secondary curriculum and qualification pathways support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?

The Citizenship curriculum and qualification pathways support pupils with a range of skills and knowledge for future study, life and work, in particular to support their future democratic participation including through active citizenship.

Citizenship skills are essential for study, life and work and include: research, investigation, critical thinking, oracy, advocacy, deliberation and exploratory talk, problem solving, collaboration, evaluation, synthesis, democratic participation skills, active citizenship and citizen action.

The subject of Citizenship provides the foundational platform for learning about diversity, identity and belonging, and helps pupils to grow as active and informed citizens, aware of their rights, duties and responsibilities. It supports pupils to know that they can be part of the solution to local and global community challenges, building their self-esteem and self-efficacy.

A statutory, and discrete, Citizenship curriculum is vital for this to be developed systematically across all schools and phases of education. Feitosa (2020) notes that students had the most improved outcomes when they experienced formal citizenship lessons. The NFER longitudinal evaluation of the introduction of citizenship education in England (Keating et al, 2010), also identified regular specialist teaching as having a positive impact on a range of citizenship outcomes for students. Keating and Janmaat's (2016) follow-up work, with a smaller group of young people after they had left school, demonstrated that experiencing citizenship until year 11 had the biggest impact into adulthood, suggesting that consistency of citizenship education throughout schooling was important.

Evidence and references:

Effective Teaching for Active Citizenship: A systematic evidence review (ACT, 2023)

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Teacher-Briefing-Final1.pdf>

Feitosa, F. (2020). *Does Civic Education Foster Civic Duty?* Canadian Journal of Political Science, 53(4), 887-901.

Keating, A. & Janmaat, J.G. (2016). *Education Through Citizenship at School: Do School Activities Have a Lasting Impact on Youth Political Engagement?*

The Impact of Citizenship Education: A review of evidence for school leaders, ACT 2023

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/the-impact-of-citizenship-education-a-review-of-evidence-for-school-leaders/>

27. In which ways do the current qualification pathways and content at 16-19 support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?

Current qualification pathways and content for students aged 16-19 offer limited opportunities for developing Citizenship skills and knowledge which are essential for future study, life and work. A trawl of the national qualifications database shows, there are just six qualifications that remain active for levels 1 and 2. Entry level and level 3 have no Citizenship qualifications at all. Previously qualifications were available from ASDAN, SFJ and City and Guilds alongside those from AQA, Pearson Edexcel, OCR.

Some challenges faced are:

- **Limited access to Citizenship education through qualifications and content at 16-19:** Since the removal of A-level Citizenship in 2018, post-16 students have few structured options for Citizenship education. No requirement exists for Citizenship in vocational or technical qualification pathways, resulting in uneven and sporadic access.
- **Uneven 'enrichment' opportunities:** Non-qualification programmes sometimes include Citizenship-related content, often through volunteering rather than structured active citizenship projects. This variability can leave many students without essential civic knowledge and democratic participation skills for the future.

Recommendations:

- **A new post-16 Citizenship qualification:** ACT proposes an "Extended Project for Active Citizenship" qualification. This would broaden the curriculum, providing formal recognition of students' citizenship knowledge and achievements, and better progression opportunities for future study, life and work.
- **Pathways to related A-Levels:** General qualifications like A-level Politics, Law, Sociology, and Economics cover specialised areas that build from those introduced by pre-16 Citizenship education. However, these pathways don't provide the same breadth of content or active citizenship and they are taken by a limited number of post-16 students.
- **Vocational education offering:** The discontinuation of the BTEC in Public Services, which previously provided a good progression route for Citizenship students, has reduced vocational options. To maintain Citizenship education continuity, ACT suggests integrating Citizenship elements into vocational courses, especially if voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds are introduced. The Council of Europe has led work on Citizenship and VET.
- **Support for guaranteed Citizenship content post-16:** ACT aligns with the Association of Colleges' recommendation for mandatory Citizenship education post-16, covering political literacy and active citizenship. This could be integrated into employment, enrichment, and pastoral (EEP) programmes, offering structured progression from pre-16 education into further study, work, and civic engagement.

- **Better continuity and relevance:** Embedding Citizenship in post-16 education would support a seamless transition from GCSE/KS4 Citizenship studies and help equip students with skills for future study, professional life, and informed, active citizenship.

Evidence and references:

Council of Europe Citizenship and VET

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/vocational-education-and-training#:~:text=This%20initiative%20aims%20to%20support,VET%20teachers%2C%20trainers%20and%20learners.>

Recommendations based on responses from ACT's 'Call for Citizenship views' consultation and CAR events.

ACT CAR events:

Online panel discussion: engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education - 14 October 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>

Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/make-space-for-citizenship-a-discussion-focussed-on-the-dfe-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>

Section 6 - A broad and balanced curriculum

28. To what extent does the current primary curriculum support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

To ensure the primary curriculum supports pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum, the Citizenship programmes of study should be made statutory, and revised and updated in line with recommendations in question 22 including the following points.

Primary Citizenship

Key points regarding primary Citizenship content:

- Citizenship education at Key Stages 1 and 2 must be made statutory to level out unevenness of provision and ensure progression from early years into secondary Citizenship.
- Health-related content in the current Citizenship programmes of study is inappropriate for the subject, and duplicates aspects addressed elsewhere in the curriculum.
- Content for some key aspects of Citizenship remains too limited to clearly set out expected standards and is hidden in content that is more suited to P/RSHE.
- Key areas of study need to be made more explicit in the current programme of study, such as democracy and active citizenship; rights, rules and laws; identities, diverse communities and people who help us live together; nature, the environment and sustainability; financial literacy, economic literacy; and skills including research, information, news and media literacy, decision-making, working together, oracy and communication.

The primary programmes of study for Citizenship have not been updated since 2001. Rather than too much content in the programme of study, there is inappropriate content which duplicates aspects addressed elsewhere in the curriculum or needs updating. For example, some teaching requirements that relate to health and relationships could be removed, as these are better addressed in Science or P/RSHE. This is important to establish a clear and consistent approach to Citizenship that builds from Citizenship in the Early Years Framework and progresses to secondary Citizenship.

Content for some key aspects of Citizenship is too limited to clearly set out expected standards. In the current programme of study, there are certainly areas that we would look to keep and build on, for example, democracy and active citizenship, rights, rules and laws, identities, diverse communities and people who help us live together, nature, the environment and sustainability, financial literacy and citizenship skills including research, information, news and media literacy, thinking skills, decision-making, working together, oracy and communication.

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If Citizenship education is made statutory at Key Stage 1 and 2 as we suggest, with a clear and progressive curriculum in place, it would have a positive impact on students' understanding of key subject concepts and skills. By the time they reach Key Stage 3, pupils would have stronger foundational Citizenship knowledge and understanding, allowing for a more effective and equitable curriculum that builds on their prior knowledge.

Evidence of Primary Citizenship

Research from the University of Kent, 'Educating for Social Good' states that research highlights 'middle childhood and primary school years (ages 4-11 years) as crucial in the development and normalisation of civic behaviours'.

Teachers we spoke with during the ACT teacher meetings, our CAR events and the ACT CAR survey, highlighted the need to ensure that the definition, purpose and aims of Citizenship across all Key Stages are made clear. A particular focus on this is required at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, to establish clarity about what Citizenship should address in the primary curriculum. The overarching statement of subject purposes and aims should be revised and updated to clarify and reflect the key concepts, including democracy, rule of law, justice, rights, equality, diversity etc. as well as skills essential experiences that should be part of the subject for all pupils.

Recommendations for Primary Citizenship:

Below are some of the essential areas of study that ACT recommends are included at each Key Stage for primary. This is not yet fully formed, nor does it include all of the content to address the key Citizenship concepts. The Citizenship areas of study should clearly build on learning from the early years and help with good foundational progression into Key Stages 3 and 4:

At Key Stage 1

Cover areas of study including:

- **Rights** - an exploration of what basic rights are, including for children, and why we need them. An introduction to concepts of fairness and respect, considering the impact their behaviour has on others.
- **Democracy, power and influence** - pupils start by looking at who makes decisions on their behalf within a home and school environment, and how they can make their views heard by these people.
- **Who makes the rules (home, school and community)** - pupils begin to explore how rules change in different contexts, who gets to decide what those rules are, and some of the contexts for where they apply.
- **Identity and community** - exploring what makes a community, the idea of belonging, and what roles different communities play in their lives. Pupils consider their likes and dislikes but take this further to explore what makes them unique and their individual characteristics and how these contribute to the different communities they are a part of.
- **How can we be active citizens at school?** - exploring what an active citizen is and activities facilitated in their school/class environment to develop active citizenship skills such as teamwork and communication.

At Key Stage 2

Taking the above Key stage 1 examples, these would progress to cover areas of study such as:

- **Rights and equity** - pupils develop their knowledge of basic human rights, social rights (including data rights) and children's rights, exploring the concepts of fairness, equality and equity. They also learn about how these rights are protected in society including through the law.
- **Power and influence** - exploring how decisions are made in their local communities and across society, who is responsible for those decisions and how those people are chosen. This aids understanding of the impact that those decisions have on their lives and the role they play in decision-making.
- **Rules and laws** - an examination of the purpose of rules and laws, an exploration of who's who in the justice system and consideration of the impact these people have on them.

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- **Identity and community** - pupils explore the basic idea of multiple identities, differences between individual and group characteristics, the different people and contributions that form groups and communities, as well as how people, groups and communities can change over time.
- **Active citizenship** - pupils look at the role of organisations such as charities, people, groups and decision-makers in the school, local and wider community and how citizens can become involved and help shape decisions that affect us.

We would like to see amendments to the following from the Programme of Study:

KS1: Developing a healthier and safer lifestyle - this should be removed as it is more directly linked to P/RSHE and Science

KS2: Developing a healthier and safer lifestyle - this should be removed as it is more directly linked to P/RSHE and Science

Evidence and references:

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 1 and 2 - 2001

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75a83a40f0b67b3d5c8310/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf

Educating for Social Good: Part 1 - Mapping children's active civic learning in England

<https://research.kent.ac.uk/children-as-philanthropic-citizens/wp-content/uploads/sites/2520/2023/01/Educating-for-Social-Good-Part-1.pdf>

Recommendations based on responses from ACT's 'Call for Citizenship views' consultation and CAR events.

ACT CAR events:

Online panel discussion: engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education - 14 October 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>

Shaping the Future of Primary Citizenship - 7 November 2024 <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/shaping-the-future-of-primary-citizenship/>

Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/make-space-for-citizenship-a-discussion-focussed-on-the-dfe-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>

29. To what extent do the current secondary curriculum and qualifications pathways support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

The secondary citizenship national curriculum programmes of study and qualification pathways need amending in line with our recommendations in question 22 and question 27 including the following points.

Secondary Citizenship

Key points regarding secondary Citizenship content:

- The 2014 programme of study revisions reduced specificity, creating ambiguous phrases (e.g., “precious liberties” in Key Stage 3) that add complexity when translating requirements into teaching units and lessons. A clearer set of teaching requirements would be more efficient and impactful and save teachers time.
- There is a need for progression, coherence and structured sequencing from primary Citizenship to secondary and then to post-16.
- There is a need for greater clarity and specificity in teaching requirements to ensure the expected standards for Citizenship are clear and progressive in terms of knowledge, concepts and skills.
- Some aspects need greater specificity to better reflect modern Citizenship education and issues relevant to contemporary life.
- Missing content at Key Stage 3 includes: roles of the media, critical literacy and information literacy; identities, diversity and communities; equity, social rights and human rights; local government and democracy; and the role of groups, movements in a changing democracy and civil society; explicit active citizenship as distinct from ‘voluntary activity’.
- Missing content at Key Stage 3 and 4, which was removed from Citizenship in 2014, includes sustainability, environmental and climate education, and the economy and economic literacy which is different to financial literacy.
- As rights education only begins at Key Stage 4, UK international obligations on rights education are currently being neglected.

- Many areas of study need to be updated and made more explicit: digital democracy and digital citizenship; changes in UK relations with Europe including the role of the UK at the Council of Europe—which is key to promoting democracy, human rights, justice and the rule of law; explicit teaching of the law in relation to equality and equity in supporting; protected characteristics and countering all forms of discrimination, racism and hate; active citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills, and the roles of groups and movements in creating positive change in democratic society.
- A clearer and more coherent Citizenship curriculum based on concepts and skills gives flexibility for teachers to adapt to their own context and pupils and to use localised examples and contemporary case studies and issues to bring the subject to life.

One example of the need to be more explicit, is the teaching of sustainability and climate education, which is approached in Citizenship education through a number of conceptual lenses (politics, law, justice, equity, human rights) and through active citizenship. It was removed from the secondary Citizenship programme of study in 2014, but retained in the primary Citizenship curriculum and a statutory teaching requirement should be reinstated. ACT's research with Middlesex University shows that currently teaching of this area is less regular than other areas of study in Citizenship and this is likely to be because of the removal of an explicit teaching requirement in the subject. (ACT, National Citizenship Education Survey. Teacher Survey Report 2023-24 forthcoming).

Teaching sustainability and climate through Citizenship would address:

- at the international level: the role of the UN and the international political cooperation required to address climate change as a trans-global issue involving human rights, climate justice and equity and the unequal effects of climate change in different parts of the world;
- at the national level: the role of law in supporting and protecting the environment and biodiversity, and how parliament—through debate and select committee work—can bring about policy change and hold organisations/businesses accountable for improving sustainability, as well as highlighting the economic opportunities that come with furthering sustainability and 'greening' business;
- at the local level: how well the different political solutions led by the local government counter the effects of climate change such as policy that promotes biodiversity and protects nature, encourages sustainable practices and ways of living for businesses and citizens, including changing consumer behaviour.

Part of studying this area of content lends itself well to active citizenship, where students can take forward investigations and work together on practical actions, developing skills (democratic and life skills) with others to further their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and climate change, and to try to make a positive difference through a course of action which seeks to improve sustainability or change behaviours and protect nature. This links well with the current DfE sustainability and climate strategy, the work of national partners including the Natural History Museum and Reading University and the drive for schools to have a Climate Action Plan in place by 2025.

Recommendations for secondary Citizenship:

Below are some of the key areas of study ACT recommends are made more explicit at Key Stage 3 and 4. These should clearly build on the foundations set through a statutory curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2.

We should emphasise that if primary Citizenship becomes statutory, then the starting points for teaching in year 7 at Key Stage 3 should change which will allow for greater progress in studying the subject.

The list below is not exhaustive, but exemplifies some of the areas of study that need to be considered in relation to updating and clarifying teaching requirements for Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4.

- **Rights, human rights and social rights** - including the struggle for human rights and the key principles and conventions that set out what human rights are, human rights law and examples of the extent to which children's rights, human rights, social rights and data rights are supported and can be challenged

in the UK and other parts of the world; balancing competing rights; cases, legal process for challenging/supporting rights based issues including role of the courts.

- **How democracy changes:** including democratic participation through digitisation and AI; and how active citizens, groups and movements play a legitimate part in shaping public life and contributing to democratic life; democratic reforms locally and nationally such as to voting, parliament and devolved assemblies; devolution.
- **The role of the UK in Europe and the wider world** - including in international governance and how the UK contributes to cross-national and global issues such as climate change and sustainability, migration, crimes such as fraud and people trafficking, and the promotion of human rights and democracy internationally.
- **Media and information literacy** - including the development and effects (positive and negative) of digital media, news and information, and how these shape and inform individual and public opinion; the role of the media in holding those in power to account; and the need for critical media and information skills to help protect and prevent the negative consequences of mis-, dis- and malinformation for individuals and wider society.
- **Sustainability and climate change** - including approaches to sustainability locally to globally, the role of the law and international conventions to protect the environment and challenge individual, group and corporate behaviour to positively address climate change; the role of government in leading global change.
- **Citizenship skills** - including research, investigation, critical thinking, oracy, advocacy, argumentation, weighing evidence, deliberation and exploratory talk, problem solving, collaboration, evaluation, synthesis, and especially active citizenship and democratic citizen actions.

In addition, content that relates to teaching **identities, diversity, representation and understanding how society changes** should be updated in line with our recommendations made in response to questions 23 and 24.

We discuss the need for adjustments to GCSE Citizenship and qualifications in question 30.

Evidence and references:

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 - 2008

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75a83a40f0b67b3d5c8310/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 - 2014

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f324f7ad3bf7f1b1ea28dca/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Citizenship.pdf

GCSE Citizenship studies content overview

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6287a835d3bf7f1f433ae19a/GCSE_subject_content_citizenship_studies_May_2022.pdf

Recommendations based on responses from ACT's 'Call for Citizenship views' consultation and CAR events.

ACT CAR events:

Online panel discussion: engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education - 14 October 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>

Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/make-space-for-citizenship-a-discussion-focussed-on-the-dfe-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>

30. To what extent do the current qualifications pathways at 16-19 support learners to study a broad curriculum which gives them the right knowledge and skills to progress? Should anything change to better support this?

Current qualification pathways and content for students aged 16-19 offer limited opportunities for developing Citizenship skills, which are essential to progress. Some challenges faced are:

- **Limited access to Citizenship education:** Since the removal of A-level Citizenship in 2018, post-16 students have few structured options for Citizenship education. No requirement exists for Citizenship in vocational or technical qualification pathways, resulting in uneven and sporadic access.
- **Uneven 'enrichment' opportunities:** Non-qualification programmes sometimes include Citizenship-related content, often through volunteering rather than structured active citizenship projects. This variability can leave many students without essential citizenship and civic knowledge and skills.

Recommendations:

- **A new qualification:** ACT proposes an "Extended Project for Active Citizenship" qualification. This would broaden the curriculum, providing formal recognition of students' citizenship knowledge and achievements, and better progression opportunities.
- **Pathways to related A-Levels:** General qualifications like A-level Politics, Law, Sociology, and Economics cover specialised areas introduced by pre-16 Citizenship education. However, these pathways don't provide the same breadth of active citizenship training.
- **Vocational education offering:** The discontinuation of the BTEC in Public Services, which previously provided a good progression route for Citizenship students, has reduced vocational options. To maintain Citizenship education continuity, ACT suggests integrating Citizenship elements into vocational courses, especially if voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds are introduced.
- **Support for guaranteed Citizenship content post-16:** ACT aligns with the Association of Colleges' recommendation for mandatory Citizenship education post-16, covering political literacy and active citizenship. This could be integrated into employment, enrichment, and pastoral (EEP) programmes, offering structured progression from pre-16 education into further study, work, and civic engagement.
- **Better continuity and relevance:** Embedding Citizenship in post-16 education would support a seamless transition from GCSE/KS4 Citizenship studies and help equip students with skills for future study, professional life, and informed, active citizenship.

Evidence and references:

Recommendations based on responses from ACT's 'Call for Citizenship views' consultation and CAR events.

ACT CAR events:

Online panel discussion: engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education - 14 October 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>

Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024

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31. To what extent do the current curriculum (at primary and secondary) and qualifications pathways (at secondary and 16-19) ensure that pupils and learners are able to develop creative skills and have access to creative subjects?

Citizenship like many subjects contributes to creativity in the curriculum.

- **Pearson report on creative curriculum:** The 2024 Pearson report, '*Cultivating A Creative Curriculum*', advocates for more space in the curriculum for subjects which foster advocacy, collaborative discussions, and prioritise speaking and listening skills.
- **Importance of integrating creativity:** The report stresses that a creative curriculum helps students develop essential skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork, which are vital for personal and professional growth.
- **Citizenship as a creative subject:** Citizenship is inherently a creative subject, promoting skills like research, investigation, critical thinking, oracy, advocacy, deliberation, problem-solving, collaboration, evaluation, and citizen action.
- **Development of creative skills:** Citizenship education enables students to develop and apply creative skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving, which are essential for their future success.
- **Challenges to creative subjects:** Negative perceptions of certain subjects, including Citizenship, and restrictions like the Ebacc framework, limit curriculum flexibility and the opportunity for students to engage in a broad curriculum that encourages creative skills.
- **Need for curriculum flexibility:** To better support the development of creative skills, the curriculum should allow more flexibility and support for subjects that promote creativity, like Citizenship.

Developing creative skills and approaches through Citizenship

Creativity is developed through a range of subjects, including Citizenship. As the recent Pearson report, '*Cultivating A Creative Curriculum*' argues, it is important to integrate creativity in education, with creative

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curricula that allow students to explore and develop essential skills like critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork. The report advises that more space is made in the curriculum for subjects, like Citizenship, that aim to develop students' ability to advocate and engage in collaborative discussions and that prioritise speaking and listening skills.

Citizenship education is an often overlooked but highly valuable subject in fostering creative skills. At its core, Citizenship requires pupils to think critically about complex societal issues, engage with diverse perspectives, and collaborate on problem-solving. These activities promote creativity in the sense of exploring multiple solutions to problems, thinking outside the box, and developing communication and empathy—all essential components of creative thinking.

Making Citizenship statutory at Key Stages 1 and 2, with a clear, progressive framework, would provide an opportunity to embed creative skills development from an early age. These skills include research, investigation, critical thinking, oracy, advocacy, deliberation and exploratory talk, problem solving, collaboration, evaluation, synthesis and citizen action. By integrating creative thinking within the context of real-world issues, such as democracy, human rights, and social responsibility, pupils would not only acquire knowledge but also develop the critical, reflective, and creative skills necessary for active, informed citizenship and for their future lives.

For qualifications, negative perceptions including among students about the value of certain subject choices - particularly creative subjects - is a likely driver of qualification subjects in decline. The Pearson report also points to the impact of the Ebacc framework in limiting curriculum flexibility, potentially restricting students' ability to engage in a broad and balanced curriculum which encourages creative skills. It highlights that senior leaders are not supportive of extending the Ebacc or mandating subject choice.

Recommendations:

- Making Citizenship statutory at Key Stages 1 and 2 with a clear progressive framework including creative skills development
- Clarifying the importance of creative skills and an integrated approach to developing them across the curriculum including through Citizenship
- Reviewing the approach to performance tables to ensure Citizenship is included (see response to 33).

Evidence and references:

Cultivating A Creative Curriculum¹ - Pearson, 2024

https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/news-and-policy/news/2024/10/welcoming-the-curriculum-and-assessment-review.html?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social-organic&utm_campaign=GBEDGS1024CAR&utm_content=launch

32. Do you have any explanations for the trends outlined in the analysis and/or suggestions to address any that might be of concern?

ACT is concerned about three particular trends in relation to Citizenship.

1. Citizenship when taught in combination with PSHE/RSHE and predominantly by non-specialist teachers results in a decline in rigour and outcomes for pupils.
2. Curriculum time for teaching Citizenship appears to have been negatively effected since the 2014 national curriculum was introduced. Citizenship has also been negatively impacted by the addition of RSHE statutory guidance and the very substantial increase in content requirements, some of which duplicate what is already in the national curriculum for Citizenship. This means many schools are not compliant with national curriculum requirements for the subject.
3. GCSE Citizenship Studies candidate numbers have declined following changes in performance table measures, a lack of investment in the subject, falling teaching time and falling number of specialist teachers (JCQ, GCSE results - 2008 - 2023, DfE, School workforce in England).

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ACT research shows, despite Citizenship being a statutory national curriculum subject at KS3 and KS4, some schools continue to teach Citizenship as a subset of PSHE/RSHE including through non specialist teachers in tutor time or assemblies and this, means a consequent loss of rigour and progression in the subject (ACT, The Impact of Citizenship Education, Ofsted 2010 and 2013, DfE, 2008). The addition of RSHE has added considerably to the content that has to be addressed by schools. Despite the DfE establishing a principle that what was already addressed in the national curriculum should not be duplicated, many saw RSHE as taking precedence over existing subjects like Citizenship. The balance needs to be realigned and the overall requirements for RSHE reduced by removing such duplication and cross referencing to the national curriculum. For example in relation to media and information literacy, rights, active citizenship, equality and identities.

The DfE Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) reported, 'since 2002, a large proportion of schools are combining citizenship teaching with PSHE. However, the modelling of the longitudinal data in this report has suggested that this can have a negative effect on received citizenship and citizenship outcomes'. In contrast, international research shows that teaching Civic and Citizenship education as a discrete curriculum subject offers the best outcomes for pupils (ICCS 2022). By focusing on comprehensive coverage of civic areas of study, countries that adopt this model tend to have students with higher levels of civic knowledge and political efficacy, and a strong understanding of democratic values.

This is supported in ACT's Research with Middlesex University which finds good evidence to suggest that as students encounter more Citizenship areas of study more frequently in the curriculum, they also become more tolerant, grow in their support for democracy, develop their sense of efficacy and optimism, and increase their intentions to vote. In addition, curriculum time was associated with higher levels of knowledge, increased intentions to participate as an adult including intentions to vote, increased levels of toleration, and higher levels of support for democracy (ACT, National Citizenship Education Survey. Student Survey Report 2023-24).

The DfE analysis published with the Call for Evidence, notes that GCSE Citizenship Studies has a low uptake compared with other national curriculum subjects, and that curriculum time for Citizenship in Y10 and Y11 is squeezed. ACT analysis using the data provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications going back to 2008-9 reminds us that 96,200 students sat GCSE Citizenship Studies in that year. This was at a point where Citizenship was better supported in schools, and performance table data counted GCSE Citizenship Studies in its own right as a valid short course GCSE qualification. Since then and following a series of reforms to qualifications and changing to performance table measures, in combination with the lack of policy attention and resources for the subject, numbers of candidates achieving GCSE Citizenship Studies have declined and are currently at 22,000.

DfE data also shows us that in 2024, 708 out of 4,485 schools and colleges offered GCSE Citizenship Studies. There are many reasons for this, including:

- the decision to remove GCSE short courses from counting in performance tables and the introduction of the Ebacc; and
- the current formulation of Progress 8 'buckets' which limited the uptake of subjects like Citizenship which sit outside the Ebacc and led to a narrowing of the secondary curriculum
- the lack of Ofsted inspection and reporting of Citizenship in particular in relation to non-compliance with national curriculum requirements.

In theory Citizenship should be provided to all Key Stage 4 students as it remains a statutory national curriculum subject with a programme of study. However, we think that is unlikely in many schools and Ofsted do not report on non-compliance. In fact Ofsted rarely reports on Citizenship at all. See response regarding Ofsted to question 44. One consideration here is to rethink the nature of Ebacc so that it includes both qualifications and non-qualification requirements and that would ensure Citizenship would be recognised for all students.

In addition, DfE workforce data showed 4,156 Citizenship teachers in 2021/22, down from 9,958 in 2011/12. In spite of this, there has been no offer of bursaries or other incentives to increase the recruitment of specialist Citizenship teachers.

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Recommendations:

The following recommendations to improve and address subject decline and concerning trends include:

Retention of Citizenship as a foundation national curriculum subject. It is for this reason that ACT recommends a focus on *what* is taught discretely in Citizenship within any revised national curriculum subject programmes of study to ensure clarity, coherence and progression across Key Stages 1 to 4 and to post-16 education. The revised Citizenship programmes of study need to provide absolute clarity about the value, aims and purpose of the subject and the standards expected. This fact alone will help drive quality, remove the conflation of a 'topics led approach' often seen in P/RSHE and reinvigorate demand for specialist teachers for Citizenship.

Removal of duplicated content from the RSHE guidance and clearer signposting schools to the national curriculum subjects.

Reform Performance tables to include Citizenship. Whether or not Ebacc is retained, performance tables should be rethought to include GCSE Citizenship Studies and non-qualification national curriculum requirements for Citizenship.

Demand a level playing field for all subjects is upheld through Ofsted Inspection. The question of *where* the subject is taught should remain a matter for schools to determine and allow for local contexts, pupil needs and content flexibility. However, this does not prevent the inspection of the quality with which schools meet their statutory duty to provide Citizenship. This should be examined separately to personal development and P/RSHE. Any new inspection framework must ensure parity of esteem is established and that Citizenship is inspected with the same rigour as other national curriculum subjects and reported on publicly. See our response to question 44.

Reinvigorate specialist and initial teaching training for Citizenship and support and incentivise those who want to train with a financial bursary.

Evidence and references:

Academic year 2022/23 - Key stage 4 performance - DfE <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance>

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https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1cuqbe0DUiKlaMWjxPBnhOSRdKLB_vv7tb3gWWoQsJSw/edit?usp=sharing

Citizenship consolidated? A survey of citizenship in schools, 2013. Ofsted

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/citizenship-consolidated-a-survey-of-citizenship-in-schools>

Citizenship Education in England 2001-2010: young people's practices and prospects for the future. DfE Research Report

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b6c07e5274a319e77f2fc/DfE-RR059.pdf>

Citizenship established? Citizenship in schools 2006/09, 2010. Ofsted <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/1094/1/Citizenship%20established.pdf>

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 1 and 2 - 2001

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75a83a40f0b67b3d5c8310/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 - 2008

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a75a83a40f0b67b3d5c8310/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf

Citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4 - 2014

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f324f7ad3bf71b1ea28dca/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Citizenship.pdf

Education for Citizenship in Times of Global Challenge - IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022 International Report

<https://www.iea.nl/sites/default/files/2023-11/ICCS2022-International-Report.pdf>

GCSE Citizenship studies content overview

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6287a835d3bf7f1f433ae19a/GCSE_subject_content_citizenship_studies_May_2022.pdf

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) GCSE results 2001 - 2023 <https://www.icq.org.uk/examination-results-archive/>

School workforce in England - DfE

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england#dataBlock-29fe55f4-d366-4de1-a51a-1350b94477c7-tables>

The Impact of Citizenship Education: a review of evidence for school leaders

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/the-impact-of-citizenship-education-a-review-of-evidence-for-school-leaders/>

33. To what extent and how do pupils benefit from being able to take vocational or applied qualifications in secondary schools alongside more academically focused GCSEs?

34. To what extent does the current pre-16 vocational offer equip pupils with the necessary knowledge and skills and prepare them for further study options, including 16-19 technical pathways and/or A levels? Could the pre-16 vocational offer be improved?

See response to question 30

Section 7 - Assessment and accountability

35. Is the volume of statutory assessment at Key Stages 1 and 2 right for the purposes set out above?

For Citizenship education at Key Stages 1 and 2 there is no formal requirement for end of Key Stage assessment. A reformed Citizenship curriculum with better defined standards would make formative assessment of the subject easier, and pupils could be encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in creative ways through presentations, journals and discussions and through both individual and group work.

Reinstating a simple requirement to make annual Citizenship subject reports to parents/carers would encourage schools to recognise and value the subject and monitor pupil progress over time.

36. Are there any changes that could be made to improve efficacy without having a negative impact on pupils' learning or the wider education system?

As with other national curriculum foundation subjects, Citizenship education should be included in the annual reporting to parents.

37. Are there other changes to the statutory assessment system at Key Stages 1 and 2 that could be made to improve pupils' experience of assessment, without having a negative impact on either pupils' learning or the wider education system?

Unless there are changes across all primary national curriculum subjects, there should not be a formal statutory assessment requirement for Citizenship. However a requirement to report on pupil progress in Citizenship to parents should be reintroduced.

Using a range of formative assessment approaches in Citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2 will enable pupils of all abilities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in creative ways including through:

- different kinds of presentations and communication of Citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills including orally, via use of drama and art, use of school space to house exhibitions of work
- teacher/peer observation of discussions using guided assessment criteria frameworks
- reflective and creative writing and other forms of communication including in relation to active citizenship such as through use of journals, video diaries, as well as through individual and group work.

Evidence and references:

ACT Briefing, Assessing Citizenship in Secondary School (2023) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kqtcxQ3FSjezieRV7rMWNegBxgoG8AE-/view?usp=sharing>
Assessing Citizenship, QCA (2006)

38. What can we do to ensure the assessment system at Key Stages 1 and 2 works well for all learners, including learners in need of additional support in their education (for example SEND, disadvantage, EAL)?

See response to 37.

39. Is the volume of assessment required for GCSEs right for the purposes set out above? Are there any changes that could be made without having a negative impact on either pupils' learning or the wider education system?

We have identified a number of approaches in our response to question 40 that could be considered regarding the volume of assessments required for GCSEs. Including:

- Capping the number of assessment per subject
- Opening up discussions about non-examined assessments, teacher assessment and coursework as valid and reliable assessments for key areas of GCSE such as active citizenship
- Reducing the overall volume and size of all GCSE qualifications and thereby reducing the content to be assessed via examination.

40. What more can we do to ensure that: a) the assessment requirements for GCSEs capture and support the development of knowledge and skills of every young person; and b) young people's wellbeing is effectively considered when assessments are developed, giving pupils the best chance to show what they can do to support their progression?

a) the assessment requirements for GCSEs capture and support the development of knowledge and skills of every young person

Ensuring GCSE assessment captures Citizenship knowledge and skills:

- A GCSE in Citizenship Studies should continue to be offered to maintain parity for this subject.
- Teachers and ACT Council members note that the knowledge and skills in Citizenship are not always best assessed through a single formal written exam.
- Active Citizenship, in particular, is not well suited to written exam formats.

b) young people's wellbeing is effectively considered when assessments are developed

Exploring alternative GCSE assessments and approaches to recognition:

- Assessment approaches should be designed with pupils' wellbeing in mind, ensuring they have the best opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and support their progression.
- Consider the feasibility of reducing the number of exam papers and capping the number of exams per qualification subject
- Teachers report that the current content is too broad and detailed, often leading to a focus on knowledge at the expense of skills, particularly those related to Active Citizenship.
- It would be beneficial to allow more focus on Active Citizenship within the GCSE specifications.
- The assessment should better capture and reflect the skills developed through Active Citizenship, not just the ability to write about it. Non-examined assessments should be re-explored for GCSE Citizenship Studies.
- There is a need for a more effective way to assess Active Citizenship skills using non-examined assessment, rather than simply evaluating students' written responses. Students with SEND who demonstrate strong participation in projects may struggle to express their experiences in a written exam, so alternative methods of assessment should be considered.
- Reforms are needed to ensure that the GCSE in Citizenship Studies is offered in more schools, broadening access to the subject and improving the quality of citizenship education across the board.
- Non-qualification forms of public recognition for Active Citizenship could also be explored for some students.

Enabling pupils to show what they can do in Citizenship

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While GCSEs remain the principal qualification used for students aged 14-16 phase, it is important for there to be parity of esteem across qualification subjects. Rigour is often the subject of intense media scrutiny and in the past a pecking order of difficulty has created an unhelpful negativity around some subjects. The size of GCSE content is a problem across many subjects and to address this content reductions coupled with reducing the overall size of the qualification and number of assessments should be considered, with a reduction in the guided learning hours. Leaving more space for teaching time and creating opinions for localisation and personalisation of teaching and learning.

Ofqual recently published a report that showed GCSE Citizenship Studies was found to be increasing in difficulty. Between 2023 and 2019, Citizenship Studies increased its difficulty rank by 7 positions at the overall subject level, and by 10 positions at grade 9. This suggests that Citizenship Studies became notably more challenging relative to other subjects during this period. This fact plus the 100% exam based assessment approach to assessing GCSE Citizenship Studies, together with the squeeze on breadth, are likely to be key contributing factors to the lower take up of the qualification in areas of socio-economic deprivation. In an older compatibility study, designed to evaluate 'standards of achievement required for a GCSE or A level award meet the regulatory requirements for quality, rigour, fairness and consistency within and across qualifications, across awarding bodies and over time', it was found that there was comparability between the different GCSE specifications offered by exam bodies.

The GCSE in Citizenship Studies remains a highly valued qualification subject used by schools across the country and we have set this out in more detail in question 22. We see scope for increasing the range of types of qualifications available and for creating non qualification based recognition for students who do not take the subject forward in this way. An Active Citizenship award scheme is one way to achieve this.

Teachers raised the validity, reliability and fitness-for-purpose of the GCSE assessments as an issue. Active Citizenship knowledge and skills which is a central part of GCSE Citizenship Studies is not necessarily best evidenced through, the current 100% end of course, formal written examinations. This mode of assessment limits the assessment of the full range of action skills. Exam based assessment does mean that students who can write about their action project are likely to score higher in assessment than those who perform well in areas of the action process, such as planning, collaborating with others, researching and undertaking the action. In other qualification subjects non-examined assessment is permitted and this needs revisiting for Citizenship Studies. In the past GCSE Citizenship Studies specifications required candidates to respond to exam questions about their active citizenship project and to fulfil teacher assessed coursework requirements (non-examined assessment). This approach also permitted some flexibility of time frames so that this aspect of the qualification was completed and submitted in advance of the written examinations. In the future orals and coursework options should be considered.

The number of examinations is reported as increasingly problematic for pupils and their wellbeing. In GCSE Citizenship Studies, one exam body requires 3 exam based assessments and the other two exam bodies use two exam based assessments. Ofqual have reported, the numbers of candidates requesting special requirements and additional examination time has escalated to one in three and these increases have been noted by Citizenship teachers as well.

Recommendations:

- consider the feasibility of reducing the size of all GCSE qualification subjects by reducing guide learning hours and the overall number of examination papers per GCSE subject including for GCSE Citizenship Studies
- consideration should be given to re-weighting assessments so that a higher proportion of the grade is allocated to active citizenship
- more creative ways of assessing students should be re-explored, including through non-examined assessment, including the use of orals and teacher assessed components for the active citizenship requirement

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- difficulty and subject comparisons should continue to be monitored by Ofqual
- options for non-qualification Awards for Citizenship and different approaches to public recognition for some students should be further explored.

Evidence and references:

GCSE short course citizenship studies comparability study, QCA 2007

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7580e040f0b6397f35eef6/0307_OCA_GCSE_citizenship.pdf

Inter-Subject compatibility in GCSEs and A-levels, Ofqual 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inter-subject-comparability-in-gcse-and-a-levels-in-summer-2023/inter-subject-comparability-in-gcse-and-a-levels-in-summer-2023#results-and-discussion>

Ofqual Access Arrangements 2022-23

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/access-arrangements-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-2022-to-2023-academic-year/access-arrangements-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-2022-to-2023-academic-year>

Recommendations based on responses from ACT's 'Call for Citizenship views' consultation and CAR events.

ACT CAR events:

Online panel discussion: engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education - 14 October 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>

Shaping the Future of Primary Citizenship - 7 November 2024 <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/shaping-the-future-of-primary-citizenship/>

Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/make-space-for-citizenship-a-discussion-focussed-on-the-dfe-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>

41. Are there particular GCSE subjects where changes could be made to the qualification content and/or assessment that would be beneficial for pupils' learning?

- Teachers report that the current GCSE Citizenship Studies content is broad and detailed, often leading to a focus on knowledge at the expense of skills, particularly those related to Active Citizenship.
- GCSE specifications for Citizenship Studies should include a higher assessment weighting for Active Citizenship.
- GCSE assessments should better capture and reflect the skills developed through Active Citizenship, not just the ability to write about it in an exam.
- Students with SEND who demonstrate strong participation in projects may struggle to express their experiences in a written exam.
- Non-examined assessment including oral assessments and the use of teacher assessed coursework are suggested as alternatives to examination for active citizenship.
- Public value and recognition is hindered where GCSE Citizenship Studies is not offered to pupils. This is driven by performance tables.

Recommendations:

- Assessments should be fit for purpose. Assessment of Active Citizenship skills and knowledge should not rely on evaluating students' written responses, so alternative methods of assessment including non-examined assessment should be considered.
- Reforms are needed to ensure that the GCSE in Citizenship Studies is offered in more schools, broadening access to the subject and improving the quality of citizenship education across the board.

Evidence and references:

Recommendations based on responses from ACT's 'Call for Citizenship views' consultation and CAR events.

ACT CAR events:

Online panel discussion: engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education - 14 October 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>

Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/make-space-for-citizenship-a-discussion-focussed-on-the-dfe-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>

42. Are there ways in which we could support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes at Key Stage 3?

Statutory National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 Citizenship:

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Making the national curriculum statutory for all schools, including Academies, would ensure that all schools teach Citizenship at Key Stage 3, promoting consistency and improving progress and outcomes for all students.

Clearer and more explicit standards in programmes of study:

Developing clearer programmes of study that map the progression of knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skills would help teachers plan and deliver discrete, focused Citizenship lessons in years 7-9.

Annual Reporting progress to parents:

Progress and outcomes in Citizenship should be reported annually to parents, as part of the regular reporting process, to improve transparency and encourage accountability.

Specialist teacher training and CPD on assessment:

Training more specialist Citizenship teachers and providing funded Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is essential, particularly in understanding and applying various forms of assessment to capture pupil progress and learning.

A requirement for the national curriculum to be statutory in all schools, including Academies, would mean that all schools would be required to teach Citizenship at Key Stage 3, and would support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes across all schools. Clearer programmes of study which map progression of knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skills would support teachers to plan and teach specific and discrete Citizenship lessons in years 7-9.

In the past Citizenship was a formal part of teacher assessment and reported on as a subject annually to parents. (QCA/DfE Annual Assessment and Reporting Arrangements) Progress and outcomes in Citizenship should once again be reported annually to parents as part of a school's regular pattern of reporting, which would improve transparency. Training more specialist Citizenship teachers, and providing funded CPD - particularly in understanding and using different forms of assessment to capture pupil progress and learning - is also vital.

Evidence and references:

ACT Briefing. Assessing Citizenship in Secondary School (2023) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-IFpwO7hUFbNMccKRGHpP8ymagVNhw5w/view>
DfE School Reports on Pupil Performance. Guidance for Headteachers.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-reports-on-pupil-performance-guide-for-headteachers>

43. Are there ways in which we could support pupils who do not meet the expected standard at Key Stage 2?

At present Citizenship is not yet statutory at Key Stage 2. However, approaches to improving pupils' progress in Citizenship will become relevant if the curriculum review results in a coherent and progressive statutory national curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2.

44. To what extent, and in what ways, does the accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?

The accountability system influences the curriculum and assessment decisions schools and colleges make, including in relation to Citizenship, in the following ways.

- Schools and settings are clearly influenced by the accountability systems that drive their data collection, curriculum and public reporting and this is true for Citizenship.
- Ofsted inspected on Citizenship as a subject and reported through subject reports to 2013 when Citizenship was found to be 'good or outstanding' in 2/3 of secondary schools and nearly all primary schools
- Ofsted highlight that in the weakest schools the conflation of Citizenship with PSHE/RSHE has had a negative impact on the quality of Citizenship

- ACT analysis and teacher evidence finds Ofsted's implementation of the 2019 inspection framework which focuses on Citizenship under 'Personal Development' rather than 'Quality of Education' has negatively impacted provision of Citizenship in schools and settings.
- GCSE uptake has declined since school performance tables changed in 2010 to exclude GCSE Citizenship Studies, and since the introduction of the Ebacc and Progress 8 measures narrowed schools' use of GCSE subjects.

Ofsted inspection of Citizenship

Since its introduction, Citizenship as a subject has suffered from a lack of policy stability. Other than a short period from 2002-2006 there has been continuous change and a lack of clarity and stability in relation to the status of the subject. Until 2013 Citizenship was inspected by Ofsted as a subject and reported on in depth through subject monitoring reports. The last detailed subject-specific report by Ofsted, published in 2013, gathered evidence from 32 primary schools and 94 maintained secondary schools. The report stated, 'In nearly all of the primary schools visited in this survey, Citizenship was thriving...Students' achievement in Citizenship was good or outstanding in over two thirds of the 94 secondary schools visited.' Ofsted also concluded in 40 schools the Citizenship curriculum was below satisfactory or inadequate; and in these cases, 'schools were attempting to cover the Citizenship programme in a curriculum period that was labelled both PSHE and Citizenship'; and that '[v]ery few of the schools visited delivered discrete Citizenship across the secondary age range'. Ofsted highlight the failure of such approaches because teaching does not provide enough time, depth and rigour for students to develop and deeply embed substantive knowledge and understanding and make sense of subject concepts. Such approaches can be convenient for those planning timetables, but leads to fragmented teaching and superficial learning for students.

Under the current inspection framework which was implemented from 2019, there have not been 'deep dive' subject inspections for Citizenship, even though it is a national curriculum subject. Citizenship is in theory at least, reported under Personal Development, alongside P/RSHE, which while important is not a national curriculum subject, or conflated with British Values.

The 2024 HMCI annual report stated 93% of those inspected had 'good' or 'outstanding' personal development. However the same report tells us, 'in many schools, different parts of the curriculum are too isolated and not as well-connected to other content as they should be. For this reason, pupils' knowledge does not build over time' and 'the curriculum offer in Citizenship in secondary schools does not typically match the scope and ambition of the national curriculum'.

In the absence of an Ofsted subject monitoring report or evidence review for Citizenship, ACT examined 186 recent Ofsted inspection reports to identify what inspectors were saying about Citizenship explicitly. Of these, 153 were graded 'Good' or 'Outstanding' overall, yet only 24 included a specific mention of Citizenship. Of the 33 who were graded 'Requires improvement' or 'Inadequate' overall, 19 of these received a 'Good' grade for personal development, yet none of these explicitly mentioned Citizenship in their reports. The reality is as far as we can tell is that Citizenship continues to be marginalised in too many schools and that Ofsted are simply not reporting on this or non-compliance with the national curriculum for Citizenship. This also means that, even if there is good or excellent Citizenship provision, it may not be acknowledged or reported by Ofsted. Unless Citizenship is examined through inspection and reported on regularly and systematically at the school level, some schools will continue to make inadequate provision, or no provision at all for Citizenship.

The inadequacy of Citizenship as a subset of P/RSHE or as part of a cross-curricular approach is even more apparent when it comes to assessment. Teachers highlight the complexities for assessment of pupils' achievement in Citizenship if there is no curriculum time and space in which to draw learning together and regularly check and record progress. It is much harder to get consistency of assessment against standards when working with a large number of non specialist teachers who provide a fragment of the overall subject through their teaching. Consequently we find lower performance in terms of Citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills outcomes for students.

Teachers continue to tell us Ofsted inspections demonstrate little understanding of Citizenship education with some inspectors, even this academic year continuing to show surprise when a teacher presents evidence of how they are meeting the teaching requirements of the programmes of study or GCSE. This lack of understanding of the subject remains a source of intense frustration for teachers who work hard to provide quality Citizenship education. Since 2022, ACT has repeatedly reported this to Ofsted and the DfE, as well as given evidence to parliamentary committees about the problem.

Recommendations:

- Citizenship should be inspected and reported on with the same rigour as for other national curriculum subjects
- Schools should be encouraged to base decisions about their Citizenship curriculum provision and assessment on the evidence of what develops substantive subject knowledge, understanding and skills
- Ofsted should be held to account by parliament for discriminating against Citizenship as a subject and the undue distress this causes teachers during inspections and once reports are made public. In our view, Inspectors are failing in their duty to provide a fair inspection system if this is allowed to continue.
- Ofsted should inspect and report explicitly on the breadth and balance of the curriculum provided by schools and settings under a new measure highlighting any national curriculum or statutory subject that is missing.

Evidence and references:

ACT Evidence to House of Lords Liaison Committee, 2022

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/187/liaison-committee-lords/publications/written-evidence/?SearchTerm=Association+for+Citizenship+Teaching&DateFrom=&DateTo=&SessionId=>

Citizenship Consolidated? A survey of Citizenship in schools. Ofsted, 2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/citizenship-consolidated-a-survey-of-citizenship-in-schools>

The Annual Report of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-202223-education-childrens-services-and-skills/the-annual-report-of-his-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-202223>

The impact of performance tables, Progress 8 and Ebacc

There is a great deal of evidence to show that high stakes accountability systems lead to narrowing the curriculum. At primary, the drive to demonstrate improvement in Key Stage 2 SATs can lead to a focus on literacy and numeracy, and on test practice, at the expense of other subjects, particularly in Y5 and Y6.

In secondary, the Ebacc (and its use in Progress 8 measures) has led to a narrower range of subjects offered at GCSE, and a knock on effect to the time given to different subjects in Key Stage 3. Citizenship is too often the subject that is squeezed. At present, Citizenship Studies can form a part of 'Bucket 3' (open), if schools choose to use the qualification. This puts Citizenship Studies in competition with a second English GCSE, along with all arts subjects and vocational qualifications. The recent Pearson report, '*Cultivating A Creative Curriculum*' 2024 highlights that negative perceptions, including among students, about the value of certain subject choices is a likely driver of the decline in some qualification subjects. The report also highlights the effect of the shortage of specialist subject teachers on the ability of schools to offer choice as well as 'inauthentic' assessment and high value placed on knowledge. Although this report does not include GCSE Citizenship Studies some of these findings resonate with what we hear from Citizenship teachers and school leaders.

The performance table approach needs to be adjusted to ensure that Citizenship Studies is recognised and has parity of esteem with other subjects. This will demonstrate the government's recognition of citizenship as a 'core academic subject' that all students should have a strong foundation in and support a more inclusive and socially just approach to recognizing attainment. The move could incentivise stronger investment in delivering discrete citizenship education lessons, and in supporting teachers to develop their skills to deliver the content.

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The Pearson report highlights that senior leaders are not supportive of extending Ebacc or mandating subject choice. We strongly urge that the review looks at new ways to ensure balance across the curriculum and full recognition for the valuable achievement of students through different types of qualifications and awards.

Since the demise of A level Citizenship in 2019, and the discontinuation of the BTEC in Public Services, there are no Citizenship qualifications at Level 3. We also know there is considerable interest in post-16 education pathways and we recommend that a new qualification, Extended Project for Active Citizenship, be considered, and reported in performance tables.

Recommendations:

- Performance measures at key stage 2 need to be reformed so that they are lower stakes for English and maths, to allow more space for teaching other subjects (including Citizenship) in primary schools.
- Citizenship needs to be made statutory in primary schools, and reported alongside other national curriculum subjects.
- The Ebacc and Progress 8 measures need to be reformed, in consultation with the profession, to provide space for a broader curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4, and different types of qualification and award, which will include Citizenship.
- A new qualification, Extended Project for Active Citizenship, should be developed at Level 3 and reported in performance tables.

Evidence and references:

Cultivating A Creative Curriculum' - Pearson, 2024

https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/news-and-policy/news/2024/10/welcoming-the-curriculum-and-assessment-review.html?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social-organic&utm_campaign=GBEDGS1024CAR&utm_content=launch

Data taken from the Register of Regulated Qualifications -

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1X3Xu6_aT2jv8itd4_wkbiiSX_WtLQ2vwyG4whR4ShP8/edit?usp=drive_link

45. How well does the current accountability system support and recognise progress for all pupils and learners? What works well and what could be improved?

See response to 44.

46. Should there be any changes to the current accountability system in order to better support progress and incentivise inclusion for young people with SEND and/or from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds? If so, what should those changes be?

We have outlined our response and recommendations in relation to the accountability system in question 44.

Section 8 - Qualification pathways 16-19

47. To what extent does the range of programmes and qualifications on offer at each level meet the needs and aspirations of learners?

a. Level 3

b. Level 2

c. Level 1 and entry level

- There are currently no entry level qualifications for Citizenship
- There are currently no Level 3 qualifications for Citizenship
- There is no programme specification of non-qualification content for Citizenship

There is a lack of availability and qualification choice for Citizenship, particularly pre-level 1. At present there are six Citizenship qualifications available, none of which cater to entry level learners. The only entry level

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qualification that previously existed ended in 2013. Entry level and level 3 have no Citizenship qualifications at all. Previously qualifications were available from ASDAN, SFJ and City and Guilds alongside those from AQA, Pearson Edexcel, OCR. In the absence of pupil level data, we have mapped the provision of GCSE Citizenship Studies against FSM and EAL institutional level data to see what this tells us and have provided a summary in our [ACT CAR supplementary evidence folder](#). Our analysis of DFE data shows access to GCSE Citizenship Studies is currently more limited in schools and colleges where higher proportions of students receive free school meals (FSM) and/or speak English as an additional language (EAL). Very low numbers of schools with the highest numbers of these students offer GCSE Citizenship Studies. Schools with lower proportions of EAL/FSM students (30-40%) are more likely to offer the qualification. The reasons for this need to be investigated further. Ebacc and Progress 8, size of content, style of assessment are likely to impact this. Limited range of pre L1 qualifications also an issue and limits opportunities to get public recognition for the study of Citizenship.

The lack of qualifications at entry level, denies those learners the opportunity to have their learning and understanding formally recognised. To promote social justice and inclusion, it is essential to ensure that qualifications are available at entry level, enabling all learners to have their achievement and progress recognised and valued.

There is currently provision for Level 1 and 2, however this could be expanded on to provide alternative qualifications outside of GCSE e.g. to recognise active citizenship.

Previously, a short course GCSE in Citizenship studies was available for learners, which was phased out over time as demand decreased, in part as performance table requirements changed and no longer recognised the qualification. The short course may provide some greater flexibility in terms of taking up less teaching time and a valued source of public recognition for some students.

Qualification pathways for Level 3 are also limited. A level Social Science: Citizenship ran for ten years from 2008 and was discontinued during the last round of qualification reforms because of uncertainty from Exam Boards about support for the subject and the cost of redevelopment. Progress from GCSE is now to other A level subjects including Politics, Law and Sociology.

There is no provision for Citizenship in T levels or very few other vocational qualification pathways that include opportunities for Citizenship learning or assessment. In the past Citizenship had been included as modules in a number of vocational subjects including the now discontinued BTEC Public Services.

This gap could be remedied with three commitments:

1. Mandating Citizenship within EEP through a structured programme that builds on pre-16 learning
2. Revisiting the range of qualifications available for post-16 learners at the full range of levels.
3. Revisiting DFE exam performance data metrics to ensure Citizenship is represented.

In regards to point 2, we feel there is merit in exploring an Extended Project Qualification for Citizenship which is suitable for all pathways. Both ideas have been supported by those attending our ACT CAR events and Citizenship including the Association of Colleges.

Evidence and references:

ACT supplementary data folder <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FxUh-ztSf5nVeBySPH9kXDNSuPfrJrK3?usp=sharing>

Data taken from the Register of Regulated Qualifications -

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1X3Xu6_aT2iv8itd4_wkbiiSX_WtLQ2vwyG4whR4ShP8/edit?usp=drive_link

Recommendations based on responses from ACT's 'Call for Citizenship views' consultation and CAR events.

ACT CAR events:

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<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/panel-discussion-engaging-young-people-in-democracy/>

Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review - 12 November 2024

<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/event/make-space-for-citizenship-a-discussion-focussed-on-the-dfe-curriculum-and-assessment-review/>

48. Are there particular changes that could be made to the following programmes and qualifications and/or their assessment that would be beneficial to learners:

- a. AS/A level qualifications**
- b. T Level and T Level Foundation Year programmes**
- c. Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 3**
- d. Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 2 and below**

Teachers that ACT engaged with ACT teacher meetings whilst collating our evidence have recommended the following reforms to qualifications that would be beneficial to all learners in post-16 education and training:

General qualifications

- The re-introduction of AS and A level Citizenship
- Expanding the Extended Project qualification to include EP Active Citizenship
- Developing pre level 1 qualifications for those pupils who are not able to attain GCSE grades.

Vocational qualifications

- The inclusion of Citizenship modules in vocational qualifications to address knowledge and skills including: human rights, sustainability, relevant laws and regulations including equality legislation
- Opportunities for active citizenship and community involvement built into existing vocational qualifications.
- The creation of vocational qualifications which include active citizenship and link work experience with Citizenship.

Please see question 47 for further evidence to support these recommendations.

49. How can we improve learners' understanding of how the different programmes and qualifications on offer will prepare them for university, employment (including apprenticeships) and/or further technical study?

- This comes down to the school's accountability system
- League tables/progress 8 - valuing some subjects over others
- More value should be put on vocational subjects.
- Citizenship should be a required component of all learning programmes regardless of destination.

50. To what extent is there enough scope and flexibility in the system to support learners who may need to change course?

The current system in particular in relation to general education and GCSE qualifications is skewed towards end of course assessments and grading with very limited non-examine assessments or modular assessments. This means there are very limited ways in which students can build any credits for partial completion of qualifications and courses. We have recommended a reconsideration of GCSE assessment including in relation to the active citizenship component of GCSE Citizenship Studies, where it may be feasible to consider grading both aspects separately.

51. Are there additional skills, subjects, or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19 education, regardless of their chosen programmes and qualifications, to support them to be prepared for life and work?

Citizenship education is needed more than ever during post-16 education, especially if plans to lower the vote age come to fruition. This would provide a better understanding of the processes of voting and their role in democratic decision-making, as well as opportunities to wider political processes and ideas, and to become critical explorers of information and opinion. Citizenship education also includes young people's rights as workers and consumers, and is the place where finance education is located. It offers opportunities for debate and discussion, presenting ideas and respecting the rights of others, all of which are vital workplace skills. Active Citizenship encourages the development of skills and knowledge needed to make a difference in young people's local and global communities. See also our responses to questions 47-48.

Section 9 - Other issues on which we would welcome views

52. How can the curriculum, assessment and wraparound support better enable transitions between Key Stages to ensure continuous learning and support attainment?

Teachers tell us they would like consistency of the subject title across phases to help pupils understand the subject is called Citizenship. At present sometimes schools use a range of other headings or just title the subject under PSHE and this means students do not make connections with what they are being taught and Citizenship education.

Consistency in use of the subject name, Citizenship, would also aid clarity and status of the subject and coherence in terms of tracking progress across and between phases of education.

53. How could technology be used to improve how we deliver the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in England?

Subject Associations are the leading subject bodies with expertise in curriculum, assessment and qualifications and utilise websites, digital platforms and technology to support teaching. Most of these organisations also work together under the Council for Subject Associations. In particular subject associations could be commissioned to provide online, on-demand support and CPD for implementing the new national curriculum. If trialling or piloting of revised subject programmes of study is considered, subject associations could be commissioned to work alongside those teachers and schools taking part.

The DfE could point to subject associations more frequently and use them as partners to support the implementation of the curriculum, assessment and qualifications. This would simplify things for schools and settings.

Model curricular, assessment practices and approaches to teaching and preparing students for qualifications are all things that subject associations can do with the right level of resources and together utilise digital platforms, websites, online training and tools to support high quality curriculum development, teaching and assessment practice.

We understand exam bodies are looking at the potential for computer based completed examination responses in GCSE Citizenship Studies. Should such a change be instigated then teachers and pupils will need enough time to develop appropriate skills and strategies. For example, at a basic level those who can 'touch type' and who are familiar with computers at home are likely to gain advantage over those who do not have these skills or access to IT equipment.

54. Do you have any further views on anything else associated with the Curriculum and Assessment Review not covered in the questions throughout the call for evidence?

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In putting our evidence together for this submission we have had many meetings and engagements with individual teachers across phases of education as well as those in organisations in relation to the future of Citizenship education. We thank all those who have helped us with ideas and information as we developed our response to this call for evidence.

AQA - GCSE Citizenship Studies
Amnesty International UK
Association of Colleges
Association for Science Educators
Brunel University
Citizens of Europe
Climate Ambassadors Group - Reading University
College of International Education
The Constitution Society
Council for Subject Associations
The Day
Democracy Classroom - a network of 75 plus democracy focussed organisations and non profits
Economics, Business and Enterprise association
Economic Research Council
The Economist Educational Foundation
Electoral Commission
European Parliament UK Office
Fair Education Alliance
Hear all about it!
Horizons Project
Geographical Association
Greater London Authority
Guardian Foundation
Kingston University, Citizenship with Social Science PGCE
Lancaster University
Loughborough University
Media Education Association
Media and Information Literacy Alliance
Migrant Democracy Project
Money Advice and Pensions Service
NAHT- climate education
National Citizens Service (NCS) Trust
NEU
News Literacy Network
Nottingham Trent University
Ofcom - Media literacy
Pears Foundation
Pearson Edexcel - GCSE Citizenship Studies
Political Studies Association
The Politics Project
RE Council
Sorbonne Nouvelle University
The Royal Society for Economics
United Learning - climate education
UCL Faculty of Education and Society, Citizenship PGCE
UK Parliament Education Team
University College London (UCL)

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Université libre de Bruxelles
University of Brighton - primary teacher training
University of Bristol
University of Chichester
University of Glasgow
University of Kent
University of Lincoln
University of Liverpool
University of Oxford
University of Winchester
University of York
Witwatersrand University
World Toilet Organization
Young Citizens
Young Enterprise