

The ACT guide to completing the Curriculum and Assessment form

The Department for Education's Curriculum and Assessment review, led by Becky Francis, offers a critical opportunity to re-centre the role of Citizenship in schools. As valued supporters of ACT and champions of Citizenship education, we know that you will be keen to have your voice heard.

To help guide your individual responses, below you will find an overview of our response to the Curriculum and Assessment review, outlining our four key suggestions.

We have also included suggestions to help build answers to specific questions that are especially relevant to Citizenship education. These insights can help to support and strengthen your answers.

You can [fill in the form online](#) or email your response directly to curriculum-assessment.review@education.gov.uk

Some key advice:

- **You do not need to answer every question** - focus on the questions that you feel are most relevant.
- **Use personal experience**, case studies and any school/setting based evidence that you have to hand.
- **Repetition is allowed**. Some questions cover similar content, and repeating previous points will help to drive your points across.
- The DfE will be using AI to help review responses. **Use subheadings, keywords and bullet points** to present your ideas clearly.
- If you are short on time, just answer **Section 5, Question 22** which focuses on primary, secondary and GCSE content.

ACT's response is focused on four key ideas:

1. Re-prioritise National Curriculum Citizenship as essential for democratic knowledge and skills

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.*¹

¹ Curriculum and Assessment Review: Review Aims, Terms of Reference and Working Principles - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6699698f49b9c0597fdb0010/Curriculum_and_assessment_review_-_aims_terms_of_reference_and_working_principles.pdf

ACT believes:

- Citizenship must continue as a **statutory foundation national curriculum subject** with **clear, cohesive and progressive** curriculum content that is essential to help young people become **informed and active citizens**.
- Citizenship education fosters critical competencies, such as information evaluation, deliberation, advocacy, and oracy, which are vital for civic engagement.²
- Re-prioritising this subject in the upcoming review is vital, as it contributes directly to the health of national democracy and the wellbeing of citizens.
- Citizenship and Citizenship teachers have a key role to play should the voting age be lowered in the future.

Re-prioritising Citizenship education in the National Curriculum will:

- Set out the key knowledge, skills and concepts needed to prepare young people to become informed and active citizens.³
- Better prepare young people to navigate the complexity of today's world, where social, political, technological, commercial and environmental conditions are rapidly changing.
- Teach digital and active citizenship skills to build resilience to misinformation and empower students to take positive action on major issues like climate change and the value of diversity in society.
- Help young people build an understanding of diverse communities, and spark interest in democratic processes, which will help students appreciate their role in society and encourage participation in democratic life.⁴
- Support key aspects of the way schools carry out their statutory duties to address aspects of violence and extremism, misinformation and political impartiality.

2. Create a universal entitlement for all, with updated statutory programmes of study for Citizenship from primary through to post-16

Citizenship is currently a statutory foundation National Curriculum subject at key stages 3 and 4, with a non-statutory programme of study for Citizenship in key stages 1 and 2. Making Citizenship education a statutory subject across all education phases would provide universal access and equal opportunities, ensuring consistent development of democratic knowledge and skills for all students.⁵ This means making the primary programme of study for Citizenship statutory in the future.

² Supported by comments made by Michelle Codrington-Rogers at the ACT panel event, 'Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review', 12 November 2024.

³ House of Lords 2nd Reading of PM Bill on Education (Values of British Citizenship) - 18 October 2024.

⁴ Educating for Public Good: A critical exploration of active Citizenship and children's agency in primary schools' - Ali Body, University of Kent, presenting for Chartered College of Teaching

⁵ 'Educating for Social Good: Part 1, Mapping children's active civic learning in England' - Body, Lau, Cameron, Cunliffe p. 4

Research suggests that countries with comprehensive, statutory Citizenship education demonstrate higher civic knowledge and stronger democratic values in students.⁶ Establishing Citizenship as a universal entitlement from primary through post-16 will help to foster informed, empowered citizens capable of contributing thoughtfully to society.

Introducing Citizenship education and concepts such as democracy, rights, responsibilities, and social justice at primary school, would lay a strong basis for progression in secondary school.⁷ Starting Citizenship education in KS1 and KS2 helps to foster respect and inclusivity, by helping young learners to appreciate and engage with different identities and perspectives. This, in turn, promotes social cohesion and reduces divisiveness.

Extending Citizenship education to post-16 would support students' continued civic engagement, especially through pathways such as an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in Citizenship.⁸ This would offer formal recognition of civic skills, enhancing readiness for further study, work, and community involvement.

3. Retain GCSE Citizenship Studies, update assessments and performance table incentives

Evidence suggests that countries with structured Citizenship education frameworks yield students with greater political efficacy and democratic values.⁹ Retaining and strengthening GCSE Citizenship Studies would help to embed this framework and provide further recognition of the subject's importance.

The benefits of GCSE Citizenship Studies:

- It provides a structured pathway for recognising their civic learning, especially if alternative qualifications are unavailable or inaccessible.
- It provides an important qualification path that students across all backgrounds can pursue, supporting Citizenship knowledge and political literacy for everyone.
- When GCSE Citizenship Studies is in place, schools are more likely to invest in specialist teachers, improving the quality of Citizenship teaching and ensure more regular teaching time for the subject.

Updates to assessment:

- A reduction in content specified by DfE will give exam boards more flexibility to vary content
- More content choices for teachers within specifications e.g. depth studies
- Greater weighting of active citizenship projects and investigations in the overall grade.

⁶ 'Education for Citizenship in Times of Global Challenge: IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022' - Schulz, Fraillon, Ainley, Losito, Agrusti, Damiani, Friedman, p.266-280.

⁷ Based on responses from ACT Council meeting, October 2024

⁸ Ideas supported by parties involved in the ACT events, 'Engaging young people in democracy; exploring the role of enhanced Citizenship education' on 14 October 2024 and 'Make Space for Citizenship - a discussion focussed on the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review' on 12 November 2024, including support from the Association of Colleges

⁹ 'IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022' - Schulz, Fraillon, Ainley, Losito, Agrusti, Damiani, Friedman, p.124

Revision of performance table measures:

- Performance measures like the EBacc do not include Citizenship, which disincentivises schools from offering or prioritising it.
- Reform of Progress 8 to ensure Citizenship qualifications are treated with the same parity of esteem as other national curriculum foundation subjects with GCSEs.
- Adding Citizenship to these metrics would encourage schools to ensure a universal offer of the subject to pupils, employ specialist teachers and allocate resources and time to high-quality Citizenship education.

4. Improve clarity, coherence and progression of curriculum content in programmes of study e.g. law, rights, (children’s rights, human rights) democracy, equity, sustainability and media and information literacy.

Improving the clarity and coherence of Citizenship curriculum content would enable students to gain a clear, structured understanding of essential concepts and areas of study, such as law, human rights and children’s rights, democracy, and equity. A well-organised curriculum would ensure that students build foundational knowledge at earlier stages, that is progressively deepened through each key stage, preparing them to actively engage with complex civic issues.

Our consultation in response to the call for evidence with Citizenship teachers, including those on ACT’s Council, has suggested that coherent content progression helps students connect areas of study in Citizenship to real-world issues.¹⁰ Issues like sustainability and media literacy are highly relevant to contemporary society and a clear, progressive curriculum supports students in applying these concepts to engage with current challenges and issues.

We would like to see:

- More clarity in the curriculum content would reduce variability in content coverage, helping ensure all students have access to a comprehensive Citizenship education.
- A coherent curriculum that progresses logically from primary through secondary stages would support teachers in teaching high-quality Citizenship lessons by providing structured guidelines and explicit and consistent expectations across all schools.
- A ‘golden thread’ and coherent sequence of learning that is developed through the key stages to ensure a robust understanding of democracy, rule of law, equity, diversity, and social justice issues.

¹⁰ Based on responses from ACT’s ‘Call for Citizenship views’ consultation, and the ACT Council meeting, October 2024