Leaving Certificate Politics and Society

Guidelines for the Citizenship Project and Report

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NCCA

Guidelines for the Citizenship Project and Report

1. Introduction

The inclusion of a citizenship project as an element of the assessment of Leaving Certificate Politics and Society arises from the nature of the subject. The development and interplay of skills of research, critical thinking, analysis, planning, collaboration and reflective action is at the heart of teaching Politics and Society, and the citizenship project is designed to allow students opportunities to develop these skills further. Therefore the citizenship project is an integral part of the learning in Politics and Society and it is directly related to the aim and learning outcomes of the specification: *Politics and Society aims to develop the student's capacity to engage in reflective and active citizenship, informed by the insights and skills of social and political sciences*.

The citizenship project directly addresses the learning outcomes of Strand 2 of the specification. Strand 2 has a strong focus on developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes and values needed to be an effective active citizen. The citizenship project allows students to do this as they

- identify meaningful action for change, informed by their learning of insights from social and political sciences
- justify and defend the aims and methods of their action in light of their learning from the course
- evaluate ways for taking action in communities
- justify why they might undertake one action instead of others
- evaluate the impact of taking action
- reflect on their learning from being an active participant in civic, social and political life.

It also provides unique opportunities for students to develop key skills needed for democratic action, in particular, the skills of being personally effective and working with others.

It is important to note that students are not assessed on the citizenship project itself, but on their report on the citizenship project. The report on the project accounts for 20% of the total marks.

## Active citizenship across all learning in Politics and Society

An integral part of the learning in Politics and Society is the development of skills of active citizenship. These skills should be developed throughout the course, as students engage in learning across all the topics. Therefore, it would not be appropriate if students of Politics and Society only engaged in active citizenship to fulfil the assessment task, as a once-off exercise in citizenship. It is expected that students will engage in smaller citizenship actions as a natural part of the learning process throughout the course.

A process for approaching the topics in Politics and Society is suggested within the specification. This involves 6 steps (although, not always followed in the same order):

- learners begin to engage with a topic through exploring how it applies to their own lives or to a context that is meaningful to them
- then they explore the topic in more detail through applying a range of different arguments or through examining relevant data
- they explore how various activists and thinkers have contributed to the development of some of these key ideas
- they compare how the topic applies in their own context to another context at national, European or wider world level
- they develop their skills of discussion and debate and of analysing information and, using these skills, they come to conclusions
- they ask what is the meaning of the learning for my life? They use skills of democratic participation to plan and implement an action, based on their learning and reflection.

The learning cycle within a Politics and Society classroom is depicted in the graphic on the next page. This shows how learning can lead to students coming to an informed

decision on action and as students engage in this learning cycle on an ongoing basis they will develop the practice and skills needed for approaching the citizenship project.
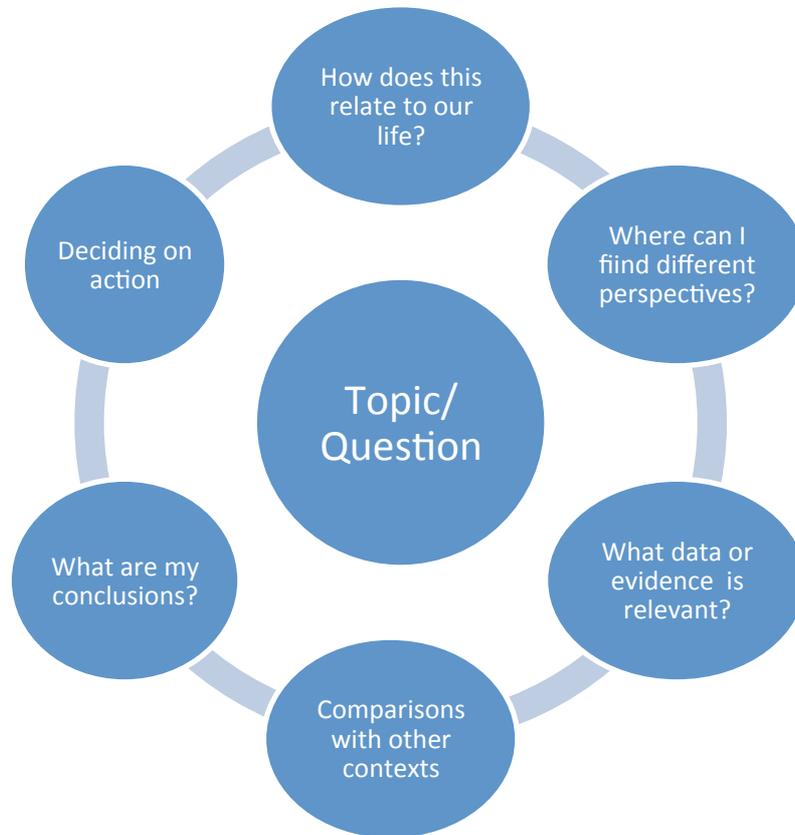
2. The Citizenship Project

The citizenship project will be based on a brief issued in December of year one by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The brief will outline four project titles each year from which students will choose one for their citizen project. The brief will also outline the parameters for the report and arrangements for the presentation of the report.

Students will choose a title from those specified by the SEC in the following areas:
- Power and decision making
- Human rights and responsibilities
- Globalisation and identity
- Sustainable development

While the titles will mainly relate to each of the above areas, students may draw on learning from other areas in completing the project.

Great care is needed in the selection of a project and the choice should be made in consultation with the teacher. Students will need to be able to justify and defend the aims and methods of their action in light of their learning from the course. The aims and methods of action which make up the citizenship project will arise from consultation with other relevant people and groups (teacher, other students, groups or organisations addressing issues related to this topic). Students should not undertake substantive work on the project until the teacher has approved a submitted plan. Where the title selected for the citizenship project derives from an area of genuine interest to the students, the project can help students to link the theory and practice of politics and sociology and empower young people in becoming more active, effective and reflective citizens.

Working collaboratively on the citizenship project

In undertaking the project, students are encouraged to work collaboratively. If students are working on the same project then it is important to ensure that different approaches are taken and that the role and contribution of each student is clear and significant so that it can be authenticated by the teacher. It is advisable that groups are not generally larger than four students, to ensure that all students can make a significant contribution to the project and work effectively together.

Each student must complete and submit an individual report on a citizenship project which can be authenticated by the teacher. While the candidates will refer to their work as part of a group (specifically, the group aims, group actions and group project management skills) the main focus of each candidate's individual report will be on their own individual role, aims, actions, learning, development, and reflection.

Where more than one group of students within a class are working on the same project title, it is important to ensure that each project approaches the title differently.

The teacher's role

The teacher has an important role to play in supporting and supervising this project. Specifically, the teacher will need to:

- Look at the citizenship project titles and see where they link to the specification. Pay particular attention to the learning outcomes directly related to the titles, as well as to the learning outcomes related to Strand 2, as it is these that will be assessed through the citizenship project.
- Identify what you need to teach in order to facilitate the choice of citizenship project titles. For example, you might need to teach some topics or sub-topics that you had planned to teach later on.
- Prompt the student's critical thinking in relation to the topics chosen through questions such as: How can your learning in Politics and Society inform the project? Where can you access data and information to inform and justify your course of action? What are the range of possible actions that can be taken? What is the rationale for taking one action over another? How can this project facilitate you in developing your skills of working with others and being personally effective?
- Ensure that each member of the group undertakes research and has a clear and meaningful role in all aspects of the project
- Supervise the work in compliance with the regulations as set down by the SEC.

Types of citizenship projects

Possible types of citizenship projects that might be undertaken include

- Gathering data on a topic through a survey, series of interviews and/or consultation, analysing it and using it to inform an action.
- Designing and promoting a campaign using the media
- Supporting an existing campaign group/organisation that is working at a local or national/international level on this topic
- An investigation of the impact of a policy on young people
- A comparative case-study, leading to action
- Conducting a detailed investigation on a question or topic of concern and using the information to inform an action

Students would be expected to use the findings of their research to inform further subsequent actions in their projects.

On occasion, titles may be set that relate to a specific topic or issue of current interest.

See Appendix 1 for sample titles.

Time needed

The citizenship project should take approximately 30 hours of student work, over about a 10 week period, including both activities undertaken in-class and out-of-class. On completion of the project each student must produce an individual Report under teacher supervision during class time. The level of teacher oversight has to be such that it is possible to authenticate the work as that of the individual student.

3. The Citizenship Project Report

A common brief and set of topics will be issued for all students. This takes into account the fact that at the time of undertaking the project and writing up the Report students may not yet have decided what level of written paper they will take. Therefore the Report will be marked at the same time as the written paper and differentiation will take place at that point.

The completion date for submission of the Report is the end of April (precise date set by the SEC via a circular).

Format of the report

Candidates are required to submit the Citizenship Project Report in two formats:
- An electronic copy in PDF format, using the template provided by the State Examinations Commission
- A printed hard copy of the same

The maximum length of the report should not exceed 1,700 words, excluding the list of sources.

The following sets out the information which should be submitted in the Report:

Section A: Rationale and research (Learning outcomes 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.4)

This sets out the rationale for the citizenship project that the student has chosen to undertake and a summary of the research undertaken. It should include:

- a rationale which makes clear how learning from the course impacted upon the topic and course of action chosen. The rationale should include a justification of the action chosen in light of the ideas studied in the course and available alternatives.
- a clear account of the aims of the citizenship project and an action plan setting out the means chosen to achieve those aims
- a summary of the research undertaken including the key research findings (data) which informed the action
- the sources of information that were used in deciding on a project and those which informed the work, such as web-based materials, literature, interviews, discussions and other sources. (See Appendix 2 for guidance on referencing)

Section B: Execution of citizenship project (Learning outcomes 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3)

It should provide:

- a summary of the processes undertaken by the candidate (individually and collectively) in applying the knowledge and concepts of Politics and Society in carrying out the project
- a critical analysis of the various elements of the action plan (e.g. roles, resources, targets, timeframes), including as appropriate any challenges encountered and how these challenges were dealt with
- a description of the outcomes of the project.

Students may also provide a small number of additional graphs, charts or images that are directly related to the project and provide evidence of elements of either the process or outcomes of the project (e.g. survey tool, summary chart of data gathered, photo of key moment/event, etc.).

Section C: Reflections on the knowledge gained and skills developed during the project (Learning outcome 3.6)

It should describe:

- the knowledge gained
- the skills developed, including judgement and decision-making skills, through engagement in the citizenship project, with particular reference to working with others and being personally effective
- the roles their own reflection, feedback from others and their learning from the course played in this learning
- what helped their learning of these skills and/or what made learning of such skills difficult and specific examples to illustrate.

Citizenship Project Report assessment weighting OL and HL

Section	Content	No of words	Assessment Weighting OL and HL
A	Rationale and research	Max 500 (excluding sources of information in appendix)	35
B	Execution of citizenship project	Max 900	45
C	Reflections on knowledge gained and skills developed	Max 300	20
TOTAL			100 marks

Assessment criteria for the citizenship project report

The assessment of the report will be based on the following criteria:

- capacity to provide a clear rationale for the group/initiative/organisation chosen/formed and for the activity undertaken in the context of the brief issued by the SEC

- evidence of good planning and research which is informed by sources relevant to the subject
- capacity to use the knowledge and concepts of Politics and Society to make judgements as to how to be active in communities
- evidence of knowledge and understanding of what constitutes effective citizenship action
- capacity to demonstrate learning gained from the project and personal insights gleaned from taking part in the project
- capacity to provide a clear account of skills learned while undertaking the project and the use of evidence to support this.

A high level of achievement is characterised by thorough and personal responses to the task. The candidate's report provides clear rationale for the activity undertaken and an excellent capacity to reflect upon the experience and evaluate the outcomes. The report is purposeful and clear. The narrative outline is sufficiently detailed to provide concrete evidence of the candidate's experience but moves beyond a mere re-telling to focus on insights and learning gained. The candidate demonstrates an excellent ability to plan, research and use the knowledge and concepts of Politics and Society to make judgements as to how to be active in communities. Where the project was carried out by a group, the report will focus clearly on the role or part played in the process by the candidate. The candidate shows a clear capacity to reflect on how the learning has influenced the student's skills, attitudes, opinions and/or behaviour.

A moderate level of achievement in the citizenship project report presents a good personal response to the task. A rationale is provided for the activity undertaken and there is evidence of good research and planning and a good ability to use the knowledge and concepts of Politics and Society to make judgements as to how to be active in communities. There is some evidence of a candidate's ability to reflect upon the experience and evaluate the outcomes. The narrative is clear and, in the main, provides evidence of the candidate's experience and some insights on the learning gained. Where the project was carried out by a group, the report will focus clearly on the role or part played in the process by the candidate. There is some evidence of a

capacity to reflect on how the learning has influenced the student's skills, attitudes, opinions and/or behaviour.

A low level of achievement in the citizenship project report is characterised by a basic response to the task. While the candidate provides some rationale for the activity undertaken there are few personal insights or evidence of a capacity to reflect upon the experience and evaluate its outcomes. The report provides a summary of the project but the candidate demonstrates a limited ability to plan, research and use the knowledge and concepts of Politics and Society to make judgements as to how to be active in communities. Where the project was carried out by a group, the candidate's personal role or part played in the process is not clear. There is limited evidence of a capacity to reflect on how the learning has influenced the student's skills, attitudes, opinions and/or behaviour.

Differentiation

In the case of the report on the citizenship project, differentiation will be effected at the point of assessment through the application of separate Higher and Ordinary level marking schemes based on the criteria set out below. The scheme to be used will be determined by the level at which the candidate takes the written examination.

In addition to the assessment criteria previously set out in this document, the following table sets out points of differentiation between Ordinary and Higher level student expectations.

Differentiation	
Ordinary level students will be expected to…	Higher level students will be expected to…
• show evidence of research and planning with reference to a limited range of sources of information • be able to draw on the knowledge and concepts of Politics and Society to inform their citizenship project • show evidence of their role in the citizen action • show some evidence of a capacity to reflect on the learning and skills	• use a range of sources of information in completing the research element of the project • show deep understanding of the title and be able to approach it from a variety of perspectives, drawing on major schools of thought and thinkers in Politics and Society • show evidence of taking a meaningful and significant role in the citizen action • show a clear capacity to reflect critically

gained through the citizenship project	on the learning and skills gained through the citizenship project
• produce a report that is within a recommended range of 1200 and 1700 words	• produce a report that is within a recommended range of 1200 and 1700 words

Practical advice for students

Students should be advised of the importance of maintaining a journal throughout their active citizenship learning in Politics and Society. The journal will be helpful in providing

- a complete and comprehensive overview of the student's learning about active citizenship through the course

- a record of their research and planning in relation to participating in active citizenship

- a summary of theorists, activists, organisations, or data related to active citizenship

- a list of useful sources (texts, websites, etc) related to active citizenship

- personal reflections on their learning

Then when it comes to doing the citizenship project and subsequently, the report, the practice of researching, planning, recording and reflecting on actions is well established and students can draw on their prior learning

On occasions, students might write up their journal as part of homework and sometimes it might be done in class, arising from discussion and group work. It is important for students to build up the habit of regularly recording and reflecting on their learning related to Stand 2 (both knowledge and skills) so that over time they build up the skills needed for completing their report on their citizenship project. This will provide an important basis upon which the students will base their Citizenship Report.

Citizenship Project Report

Sample project titles

1. Focusing on <u>one</u> aspect of quality of life (health, employment, education, leisure etc.) conduct a study on how socio-economic factors affect the life chances of young people in Ireland. Use the findings to inform an action.

2. Imagine you are working with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and must produce a progress report highlighting the areas where the Irish State is doing well in implementing the UNCRC and where improvements are needed. Gather data that will provide evidence of both. Then decide how to share the findings with a person/persons who can influence change.

3. Create an awareness raising campaign or event aimed at promoting understanding amongst your peers about the phenomenon of Islamic State **or** the growth of xenophobia, with particular reference to the ideologies and factors that influence its growth in both the western and non-western world.

4. Conduct a detailed examination of how your purchase of a particular product can contribute to sustainable development – either positively or negatively. Then design a campaign using different media to share information on this or support an existing campaign/ organisation that is working on this issue.

Appendix 2

Guidance on referencing sources

- All research sources used [books, articles, web-sites, person-to-person interviews, etc.] must be duly acknowledged.
- Where candidates are citing written sources, they should give the author's name, the title of the book or article, and the name of the publisher and date of publication.
- Where candidates wish to refer to an internet site, there should be enough accurate detail to enable the examiner to authenticate the reference. It is recommended that they should supply the author's name, the title of the page or article, the website address or URL and the date on which the material was read or downloaded.
- In addition to quoting and citing sources within the Report, students should also provide a bibliography at the end of the report as set out in this example:

Huntington, S. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations*. London: Penguin.

University of Oxford. *Good practice in citation and the avoidance of plagiarism*. Available at:
http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pgexaminers/annexef/
(accessed 28/05/2015)

- Plagiarism is a serious offence and occurs when a student uses other people's work without clear acknowledgement of one's sources.
- Direct copying of material from secondary sources – other than essential references, e.g. definitions, short quotations - is not permitted.