Subject specific vocabulary

The following subject specific vocabulary provides definitions of key terms used in our GCSE Citizenship Studies specification (8100). Students should be familiar with and gain understanding of these terms.

Active citizen
A person who actively takes responsibility, becomes involved in areas of public concern and tries to make a difference.

Active citizenship
Participating in society to bring about change.

Advocacy
Representing or supporting a person or an organisation by writing, speaking or taking action on behalf of that person or organisation.

British values
A set of standards which reflect the ideals of the British society.

By-election
An election to a public office that occurs when a post holder dies or resigns between elections.

Campaigning
Actions or events organised by an individual or a group of people to achieve an aim.

Censorship
The control of information or ideas within a society.

Charities
Local, national or international organisations which are set up to help those in need. The term also has a legal status as charities registered with the Government receive some tax benefits.
Citizenship
Being a citizen of a country and being vested with the rights and responsibilities of that state.

Civil law
Law that deals with disputes between individuals or groups. There are civil courts which award damages (a money payment).

Civil service
Individuals who are employed by the Government.

Coalition
An agreement between political parties to form a government.

Common law
Law made by the decisions of judges over the years.

Commonwealth
An international association between the UK and the countries which were previously part of the British Empire.

Council of Europe
An intergovernmental organisation founded in 1949, which encourages European countries to cooperate with each other. It is an independent body and should not be confused with the European Union, which is a completely separate organisation. The European Court of Human Rights is the best known body in the Council of Europe.

Criminal law
Law which deals with individuals who break the law, and which punishes offenders because they have broken laws that Parliament has stated we must all obey.

Democracy
A system of government, where the citizens are able to vote in regular and fair elections for representatives, who will make laws and decisions on their behalf.

Demonstration
A public meeting or march protesting against a specific issue.
Devolution
The transfer of some powers from the Government to the Welsh Assembly, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament.

Direct democracy
Where the people decide on the policy directly, for example through a vote or referendum on each issue.

Equal opportunities
Allowing all people access to the same opportunities, regardless of their disability, religion, age, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

Executive
The branch of the Government, which is responsible for putting laws or decisions into effect.

EU (The European Union)
An economic and political union between a number of European countries, who work closely together.

First past the post
The voting system used in the UK to elect members of some local councils and members of Parliament, whereby the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins.

General election
When the citizens of a country vote to elect a new government. A general election in the UK usually happens once every 5 years.

Government
The individuals who have been elected to run the state, led by the Prime Minister (PM) in the UK.

House of Commons
An elected body currently consisting of 650 members of Parliament. It is the lower house of Parliament and meets in the Palace of Westminster.

House of Lords
The upper house of Parliament, meeting in the Palace of Westminster. It comprises of life peers and hereditary peers, who scrutinise the bills approved by the House of Commons.
Human rights
Basic rights and freedoms which all people are entitled to.

Immigration
The process of people moving from one country to another to live and work.

Interest group
An organisation which tries to influence the government to adopt certain policies on a particular issue.

Judiciary
Branch of the state that is responsible for enforcing the law. It comprises Judges and other legal officials.

Juries
A group of local people who are chosen randomly to make a decision in a legal case.

Justice
The fairness as a result of the application of a Law, usually by a judge, in society.

Legislature
The law making body of the state ie the Parliament.

Lobbying
A person or group of people meeting or taking action (eg writing letters, demonstrating, petitioning) to try to persuade a politician to take up their cause.

Local government
A system of government that operates at a local level providing services to its community.

Localism
When people in a particular local area are able to make decisions about policies which affect their local area.
The media
A means of communication.

- mass media – television, radio and printed media which can reach a large number of people.
- new media – the internet and social media.

Migration
The movement of people between different countries.

Monarchy
A form of government in which a king or queen reigns as the head of state. The UK is a constitutional monarchy.

Multiple identities
When an individual is able to assume a range of different identities. These identities may clash.

Multiculturalism
The co-existence of different ethnic races, cultures or religions.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation)
An international military defence organisation comprising of different countries who work together to try and settle disputes amongst nations.

NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation)
A non-profit, voluntary group of citizens who work on a local, national or international level to achieve an aim. They are not controlled by the government, but will often work closely with them. An example of an NGO is Save the Children.

Parliament
The institution of Government in the UK. It comprises of three parts: the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the monarch.

Petition
A formal, written request, usually signed by many people, which appeals to the authorities to bring about change in regard to a particular issue.
**Police**
An official state organisation which is responsible for maintaining public order by preventing and detecting crime.

**Pressure group**
An organised group of people who take action together to try to bring about change regarding a specific issue.

**Prime minister**
The head of a government.

**Public spending**
The money spent by the state.

**Referendum**
A general vote by the electorate on a single issue which has been referred to them for a direct decision. It is a form of direct democracy.

**Representative democracy**
When the citizens of a country elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf.

**Responsibilities**
A duty that we are expected to do as a citizen of a country.

**Rights**
A right is something we are entitled to by law.

**Sentencing**
The process of giving a punishment to a person found guilty in a court case.

**Society**
The people living together in an ordered community.

**Taxation**
The way in which the government finances some of its spending by imposing charges on citizens and corporations.
Trade unions
A group of workers in the same trade or profession who have joined together to protect their rights.

UN (United Nations)
An international organisation comprising of most countries in the world which aims to promote peace, security and international cooperation. The UK is a permanent member of the Security Council with the ability to veto any decision.

Volunteering
When one person gives their own time to help others without being paid.

Voter apathy
When a lot of people decide not to vote in an election.

WTO (World Trade Organization)
An international organisation which deals with the global rules of trade between nations.