

## **Written Response to the Call for Evidence by the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement**

### **Background**

1. The Political Studies Association (PSA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the House of Lords Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement.
2. The PSA was founded in 1950 to 'promote the study of politics'. The Association is formed of some 1,900 academics, students, researchers, policy makers, journalists and teachers. We are the primary association for the study of political science in the UK and provide resources and events connecting academic research to wider audiences throughout the year. We are also the professional subject association for Politics teachers in UK schools. The Association has pursued our focus on the promotion of the study of politics in a nonpartisan way and to audiences across and beyond the United Kingdom.

### **Response to Question 5: What should be the role of education in teaching and encouraging good citizenship? At what stages, from primary school through to university, should it be (a) available, and (b) compulsory? Should there be any exemptions? Should there be more emphasis on political participation, both inside and outside classes? How effective is current teaching? Do the curriculum and the qualifications that are currently offered need amending?**

3. Young people are the future of our democracy and their engagement with politics and society is crucial for its long-term vitality and survival. Teachers and the teaching profession are clearly critical to this, as they play such a central role in the development of young people's understanding of the world outside the classroom.
4. Political education through both the Citizenship curriculum and the A level in Politics is key to enabling students to think critically about their surroundings and empowering them to take their part in our political institutions and democratic life. The PSA supports political and citizenship education from primary age onwards and across a student's entire lifetime at school.
5. The Politics A level has recently been reformed and its first teaching is taking place from September 2017. This qualification requires much broader and more detailed knowledge than the previous iteration of this award. The PSA supports this and thinks that it will be beneficial in providing pupils with the required theoretical background for understanding and engaging with politics.
6. Specifically, elements of the Politics A level focus on the conceptual underpinnings of political participation. Students are required to learn about many of the facets that inform active participation in our democracy, including: different typologies of democracy and electoral systems; the British Constitution; the British political party system; the role and function of Parliament; and human rights in their contemporary and historical context.
7. The reformed Politics A level also requires entrants to learn about key political ideologies, including Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism. This provides further insight into how important thinkers conceive of the political world and often the place of individuals within politics. Options

such as feminist and anarchist ideology provide critical reflection on these dominant discourses. This enables students to better understand the breadth of ideas across political parties and a background for decision making about their own political preferences.

8. The A level also offers a comparative element to examine political participation in the USA and an examination of Global Politics more generally. This enables A level students to think more deeply about the British political system and its strengths and weaknesses and therefore enables them as better-informed citizens to engage with the UK political system.

9. The number of students undertaking the Politics A level has been growing over recent years. The latest figures show a 12.8% increase from 15,540 entries in 2016 to 17,523. The PSA welcomes this increase as well as any measure to increase political knowledge amongst UK school children.

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