

## **CIVICS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**(GCCE-101)**

### **DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to provide students with fundamental knowledge about civics, citizenship, and community engagement. Students will learn about the essentials of civil society, government, civic responsibilities, inclusivity, and effective ways to participate in shaping the society which will help them apply theoretical knowledge to the real-world situations to make a positive impact on their communities.

### **COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate fundamental understanding of civics, government, citizenship and civil society.
2. Understand the concept of community and recognize the significance of community engagement for individuals and groups.
3. Recognize the importance of diversity and inclusivity for societal harmony and peaceful coexistence.

### **Definition of civics, citizenship, and civic engagement.**

Civics is the study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a society. It encompasses the principles, structures, and processes of governance, focusing on the relationship between individuals, communities, and the state.

Civics education aims to equip citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate actively in democratic processes and contribute to the well-being of their community.

### **Definitions of civics:**

"Civics is the study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society, including the study of government, politics, and the functioning of the civic institutions that shape our daily lives." (*The National Council for the Social Studies*)

"Civics is the knowledge and skills necessary for informed, effective, and responsible participation in the civic life of one's community and country." *The American Bar Association (ABA)*:

"Civics refers to the education and training that equip citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate actively in democratic processes and contribute to the well-being of their communities." *UNESCO*

### **Citizenship**

Citizenship is the relationship between an individual and a state or nation, characterized by rights, duties, and responsibilities. It can be defined as: "The status of being a citizen of a particular country or nation, involving certain rights, duties, and responsibilities, and typically conferred by birth, naturalization, or other legal means."

### **Civic engagement**

Civic Engagement is the cornerstone of democratic societies, fostering active citizenship and community participation. It involves various forms of involvement, from voting and volunteering to activism and advocacy. Through civic engagement, individuals shape public policy, hold leaders accountable, and build stronger communities. Effective civic engagement requires informed, empowered, and diverse citizenry. It promotes social cohesion, equality, and justice, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard. "Civic engagement refers to the active participation of citizens in the democratic process, community life, and public affairs".

### **Historical evolution of civic participation.**

Civic participation has undergone significant evolution throughout history, shaped by changing societal values, technological advancements, and political landscapes. Its roots date back to ancient democratic societies, where participation in public life was considered a civic duty<sup>1</sup>.

### **Early Forms of Civic Participation**

In ancient Greece, citizens engaged in direct democracy, discussing and voting on laws and policies. This model inspired modern democratic systems, emphasizing the importance of citizen involvement<sup>1</sup>. The concept of civic participation continued to evolve through the Middle Ages, with the emergence of guilds and community organizations.

### **Modern Era**

The 20th century saw significant advancements in civic participation, particularly during the civil rights movement. Activism and advocacy became prominent forms of engagement, with citizens pushing for social change and policy reforms<sup>1</sup>. The women's suffrage movement also marked a pivotal moment in civic participation, securing women's right to vote.

### **Digital Age**

The digital revolution has transformed civic participation, offering new platforms and tools for engagement. Social media, online petitions, and digital advocacy campaigns have made it easier for citizens to participate in civic life<sup>1 2</sup>. Platforms like WeSolve enable individuals to contribute to community projects and engage with policymakers.

### **Contemporary Trends**

Today, civic participation continues to adapt to changing societal needs. The rise of youth activism, environmental movements, and community-led initiatives demonstrates the evolving nature of civic engagement<sup>3</sup>. Technology remains a key driver, facilitating global connections and mobilization.

### **Key Milestones**

- Ancient Greece: Direct democracy and citizen involvement
- Middle Ages: Guilds and community organizations
- 20th century: Civil rights movement and women's suffrage
- Digital age: social media, online petitions, and digital advocacy

- Contemporary era: Youth activism, environmental movements, and community-led initiatives<sup>1 2 3</sup>

Civic participation's historical evolution reflects the dynamic relationship between citizens, governments, and societal needs. As technology continues to shape civic engagement, its impact on democracy and community development remains vital.

### **Types of citizenship: active, participatory, digital, etc.**

Citizenship is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses various forms of membership, participation, and identity within a community or nation-state. Over time, different types of citizenship have emerged, reflecting changing societal values, technological advancements, and global interconnectedness.

#### **Active Citizenship**

Active citizenship involves engaged, informed, and participatory membership in a community. Characteristics include voting, volunteering, community involvement, and advocacy.

##### **Characteristics:**

1. Informed citizenship: Staying updated on current events and issues.
2. Civic engagement: Participating in elections, town hall meetings, and public hearings.
3. Volunteering: Contributing time and skills to community organizations.
4. Advocacy: Supporting causes and policies that promote social justice.
5. Community involvement: Engaging in neighborhood initiatives and local projects.

#### **Participatory Citizenship**

Participatory citizenship focuses on direct involvement in democratic processes and decision-making. Examples include town hall meetings, public hearings, and citizen juries.

##### **Characteristics:**

1. Direct participation: Citizens engage directly in decision-making processes.
2. Inclusive decision-making: All stakeholders have a voice.

3. Transparency: Open communication and access to information.
4. Accountability: Leaders answerable to citizens.
5. Collaborative governance: Partnership between citizens, government, and organizations.

### **Digital Citizenship**

Digital citizenship encompasses online engagement and participation in civic life, including social media activism, online petitions, and e-government.

#### **Characteristics:**

1. Digital literacy: Understanding online technologies and tools.
2. Online etiquette: Respectful communication and behavior.
3. Digital rights and responsibilities: Awareness of online freedoms and obligations.
4. Civic engagement: Participating in online democratic processes.
5. Critical thinking: Evaluating online information and sources.

### **Global Citizenship**

Global citizenship recognizes shared global responsibilities and interconnectedness. Characteristics include international cooperation, human rights advocacy, and environmental awareness.

#### **Characteristics:**

1. Global awareness: Understanding global issues and perspectives.
2. International cooperation: Collaboration across borders.
3. Human rights advocacy: Promoting universal human rights.
4. Environmental stewardship: Protecting the global environment.
5. Cultural exchange: Embracing diversity and cross-cultural understanding.

### **Cultural Citizenship**

Cultural citizenship celebrates diverse cultural identities and promotes inclusivity. Examples include cultural exchange programs, diversity initiatives, and language preservation.

#### **Characteristics:**

1. Cultural awareness: Understanding diverse cultural practices.
2. Cultural competence: Effective communication across cultures.
3. Cultural diversity: Valuing diverse cultural identities.
4. Inclusive policies: Promoting equal access to cultural resources.
5. Cultural exchange: Encouraging cross-cultural understanding.

### **The relationship between democracy and citizenship.**

Democracy and citizenship are deeply intertwined. In a democratic system, citizens are the backbone of the government, and their participation is crucial for its success.

#### **Key Characteristics of Citizenship in a Democracy:**

1. Civic Participation: Citizens participate in the decision-making process through voting, joining political parties, and attending community meetings.
2. Respect for Law and Authority: Citizens must respect the laws and institutions that govern their society.
3. Cultural Competence: Citizens should understand and appreciate the diversity of cultures within their society.
4. Critical Thinking and Education: Citizens should be educated and critically think about the issues affecting their society.

#### **Benefits of Citizenship in a Democracy:**

1. Promotes Accountability: Citizens hold elected officials accountable for their actions.
2. Fosters Community Engagement: Citizens participate in community development and decision-making.
3. Protects Individual Rights: Citizens are protected by the rule of law and have recourse to justice.

#### **Challenges Facing Citizenship in a Democracy:**

1. Political Polarization: Citizens may become divided along party lines, leading to social unrest.
2. Disinformation: Citizens may be misled by false information, undermining trust in institutions.
3. Voter Suppression: Citizens may face barriers to voting, undermining democratic participation.

#### **References:**

1. Dahl, R. A. (2000). On Democracy. Yale University Press.

2. Marshall, T. H. (1950). Citizenship and Social Class. Cambridge University Press.
3. Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. Simon and Schuster.
4. Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Harvard University Press.
5. United Nations. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

