Demos – written evidence (CCE0233)

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1. Demos considers that citizenship in the modern age should encompass more than the rights and responsibilities we experience in our life in Britain, but also to extend towards education on global citizenship. In particular, to better emphasise learning about the value of positive international relations and connectivity, and the benefits these offer on a range of economic, social, cultural and diplomatic levels.

2. Citizenship education is often defined within the confines of the nation state, but the school system can play a stronger role in developing civic mindsets that extend beyond parochialism, to consider our individual and collective responsibilities and rights in a globalised world. There is an opportunity to develop an understanding of both our patriotic and dutiful citizenship as it pertains to Britain, and also our common interests and shared agency to address challenges on a global level.

3. In an age of truly international flows of information, greater physical mobility and interdependence between markets and national interests, it is critical that we ensure that all young Britons are able to develop an understanding of Britain’s place in the world and our role in promoting global security and prosperity.

4. This knowledge will be valuable both in terms of fostering national support for our important multilateral institutions and bilateral relationships, and also to open the opportunities that international engagement offers to a greater proportion of the next generation. It is also an important pathway to empower citizens to feel agency around their individual and shared capacity to influence global outcomes. Moreover, educating young Britons about the importance of cultural and educative exchange for Britain will help to promote greater social cohesion, tolerance and understanding of the benefits that diversity can bring in communities at home.

5. The Global Learning Programme, funded by the UK Government 2012-17, has made positive strides towards embedding a global consciousness in its participating schools, yet its programme is largely focused on a lens of development and sustainability. While these are also essential learning areas, there exists a gap in the resources available to teachers and students to build knowledge around the importance of foreign policy, strategic cooperation and economic interdependence – in addition to the important humanitarian perspectives it currently promotes.

6. Demos recommends that greater cooperation is promoted between DfE, the FCO and the British Council, to support the development of a more comprehensive agenda of compulsory ‘global citizenship’ education in schools. As part of this initiative, we suggest that Britain’s diplomatic corps and FCO staff, as well as Members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, could become more involved in making school visits – particularly to less socio-economically prosperous communities typically less likely to be able to participate in formal and informal international activities.

7. Furthermore, while Key Stage 4 requirements for citizenship education stipulate that students should be taught local, regional and international governance and the United
Kingdom’s relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the wider world – Demos would like to see this explicitly include teaching about the value, both strategic and symbolic, of these relationships, as is made clear in the areas of the curriculum focusing on individual citizenship.