

# Ministers to set° ‘Britishness test’ for immigrants

By David Barrett, Home Affairs Correspondent, PA News, 03 September 2003

Immigrants who want a UK passport should have free English lessons and pass a new “Britishness test”, Home Office° experts said today.

A blueprint° for the compulsory° new exam - designed to make people feel more proud of becoming new British citizens - said applicants° should learn about the history of the UK. [...]

[Members of the working group] rejected the idea that all applicants should reach a certain level of language ability.

Would-be citizens should be assessed° on their progress in English and would have to improve by at least one level on the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) scale.

ESOL teaching should be available free “at the earliest opportunity”, the report recommended.

The minimum standard required would be moving from no English to a level where the pupil could take up° unskilled° jobs, added the panel members. [...]

“The report says that ‘an understanding of the basic history of the United Kingdom can strengthen commitment to common values, as true for the old inhabitants as the new’ and this is a view I [Home Office secretary Mr Blunkett] fully endorse°.

“An understanding of our history underpins° an understanding of life in the UK.” [...]

“We do not want the burden to be onerous° but plainly citizenship is more esteemed° and valued when it is earned and not given.”

To qualify for citizenship, applicants must have lived in the UK for five years without committing any serious offence°, or three years if married to a British citizen. [...]

“I want to encourage people who are permanently settled in this country to apply for citizenship here.

“In common with people in this country from many different cultural backgrounds, I think being British is something to be proud of. [...]

Handbooks prepared for all citizenship applicants should have a section entitled “The Making of the United Kingdom”, it added.

The report said the test should also include etiquette°, good neighbours, changing role of women, sexual equality, youth culture and national holidays.

As part of its recommendations on British history, the panel said the test should feature a section on British national institutions including the monarchy, Prime Minister, Parliament and the Cabinet, political parties since 1945, elections, devolved° administrations, the civil service°, the Commonwealth and “values of toleration, fair play, freedom of speech and of the press”. [...]

Conservative home affairs spokesman Humfrey Malins said: “We will need to study these proposals carefully, but we support the idea of citizenship tests in principle.

“It is absolutely essential that people who wish to become British citizens have an understanding of our language, customs, history and culture. [...]

## Vocabulary

*to set* to arrange sth

*Home Office* the British government department that deals with the law, the police and prisons, and with decisions about who can enter the country

*blueprint* first draft, plan

*compulsory* obligatory

*applicant (to apply for sth)* a person who makes a formal request for sth (job, place at university, citizenship, etc.)

*to assess* to make a judgement about the quality of sb/sth

*to take up a job* to start a job

*unskilled* not having or needing special skills or training

*tuition* school fees

*to endorse* to say publicly that you support sth

*to underpin* to confirm, to support

*onerous* needing great effort; causing trouble or worry

*to esteem* to appreciate, to praise

*offence* crime

*etiquette* the formal rules of correct or polite behaviour in society, manners

*devolved* authority passed over to sb; here: regional, local

*civil service* the government departments in a country, except the armed forces, and the people who work for them

## Additional words

*naturalisation* to give citizenship to a person of foreign birth

*to naturalise* to make sb who was not born in a particular country a citizen of that country

*assignment* a task or piece of work that sb is given to do, usually as part of their job or studies

## Assignment

- Carefully read the text and write a summary.

- Write a paragraph of about ten sentences on your own opinion about the usefulness of a “Britishness test”.

- Discuss the article in class. Consider what requirements immigrants in your own country are supposed to comply with.