

2. The *Life in the UK* citizenship test and the urgent need for its reform¹

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INTRODUCTION

The *Life in the United Kingdom* test is an important part of British immigration policy attracting cross-party support, but it is also much misunderstood. This chapter examines how the test was launched, the problems with different versions of the test and, most importantly, recommendations for how it can be reformed. My research has found the test impractical, inconsistent, focused more on the purely trivial than practical trivia, gender imbalanced and already outdated. In short, the UK citizenship test is like ‘a bad pub quiz’.²

The analysis is not only critical, the government could choose to change the law and end use of the test. This would be one way to end many of the problems that the test has caused by itself. But another option is to reform the test urgently along the lines indicated below and, crucially, with the thus far absence of naturalised British citizens that have experienced the test first-hand. Such consultation is essential to ensuring the test lives up to its original purposes and can win public confidence. Neither is true at present so inaction is not an option.

BACKGROUND

The *Life in the United Kingdom* test has become an integral part of British immigration policy launched on 1 November 2005.³ All applicants for ‘per-

¹ This chapter updates and expands on Thom Brooks, ‘The Life in the United Kingdom citizenship test: Is it unfit for purpose?’ (Durham: Durham University, 2013).

² Jonathan Brown, ‘Citizenship test is little more than “bad pub quiz”’, *The Independent* (13 June 2013), url: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/citizenship-test-is-little-more-than-bad-pub-quiz-8658104.html>.

³ BBC News, ‘New UK citizenship test starts’, url: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4391710.stm.

manent settlement'⁴ or naturalisation require successful completion of tests demonstrating satisfactory English language proficiency and knowledge about British culture and institutions.⁵ There are two options for passing this requirement.⁶ Originally, there were two options: complete successfully a special ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) course or pass the *Life in the United Kingdom* test. Since October 2013, all new applicants for permanent settlement or citizenship must pass the citizenship test. This chapter focuses exclusively on this *Life in the UK* test.

Over two million tests have been conducted since its introduction in 2005 at about 180,000 or more each year. Approximately 70% pass it annually. Success rates vary widely by country of origin. One study found that Americans and Australians had a pass rate of about 98% while Bangladeshis and Turks had a pass rate of about 45%.⁷

The test has 24 multiple choice questions selected randomly. Applicants have 45 minutes to complete the test and must answer 18 or more (75%+) questions correctly to pass. Applicants can sit the test at about 60 test centres across the United Kingdom.⁸ Applicants must register with a test centre online or by calling a UK Test Helpline.⁹ A test can be taken no less than seven days from its booking.¹⁰ The test costs £50 and is paid online after a test session is booked.¹¹ Applicants must bring to the test centre appropriate photographic

⁴ This is normally treated as 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'. See UK Border Agency, 'Settling in the UK', url: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/settlement/>.

⁵ EU citizens are not required to apply for permanent settlement in order to be resident in the UK. If an EU citizen nonetheless applied for Indefinite Leave to Remain or British citizenship, he or she would normally be expected to satisfy the requirement of a test. See s33(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 and s49(3) of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. There may be exceptions, such as for Republic of Ireland citizens: see s31 of the British Nationality Act 1981.

⁶ UK Border Agency, 'Demonstrating your knowledge of language and life in the UK', url: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/settlement/knowledge-language-life/demonstrating/>.

⁷ BBC News (2010), 'British citizenship test: One in three immigrants fails', url: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8707152.stm.

⁸ UK Border Agency, 'Life in the UK Test', url: <http://lifeintheuktest.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

⁹ See *ibid*. The Life in the UK Test Helpline is 0800 0154245.

¹⁰ UK Border Agency, 'Booking the Test: how do I book my test?', url: http://lifeintheuktest.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/htmlsite/booking_10.html.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

identification, such as a passport or British driving licence and proof of address with a postcode, such as a bank statement or utility bill.¹²

Test questions cover information in an official handbook, entitled *Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents*.¹³ It is the bestselling publication listed on the TSO website when this report went to press. Applicants may purchase additional, official Home Office publications to assist preparation for the test. These publications include *Life in the United Kingdom: Official Practice Questions and Answers* which contains over 400 questions spread across 17 sample tests.¹⁴ There is also an *Official Study Guide* that combines edited information about each chapter in the official handbook with sample tests after each chapter.¹⁵

The *Life in the UK* test is part of successive governments' policies on immigration control. It was introduced by the Labour government led by Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2005, but its roots extend back much earlier. In 2002, the then Home Secretary David Blunkett MP, announced a consultation entitled 'The "Life in the United Kingdom" Advisory Group' on reforms to citizenship on 9 September 2002.¹⁶

The Group was led by Sir Bernard Crick, then Emeritus Professor of Politics at Birkbeck College, and they published *The New and the Old: The Report of the 'Life in the United Kingdom' Advisory Group* in 2003.¹⁷ The report states that 'The more we all know about each other, both new and settled inhabitants taking pride in our control, the less likely are serious problems to arise'.¹⁸ The report highlights the need to address the 'lack of English or limited awareness of cultural differences' as well as increasing 'participative citizenship and community development'.¹⁹

¹² Ibid. Appropriate photographic identification includes originals of items such as a passport, British driving licence (with photo), European Union Identity Card, Immigration Status Document and Biometric Residence Permit. Appropriate proof of postcode includes originals of a gas, electricity or water bill; a Council Tax bill, bank or credit card statement, British driving licence or a letter from the Home Office with the applicant's name and address.

¹³ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition.

¹⁴ Michael Mitchell (2013) *Life in the United Kingdom: Official Practice Questions and Answers* (London: TSO).

¹⁵ Jenny Wales (2013), *Life in the United Kingdom: Official Study Guide* (London: TSO).

¹⁶ Home Office, 'Experts to Advise on Citizenship Reforms', 9 September 2002.

¹⁷ Bernard Crick, et al. (2003) *The New and the Old: The Report of the 'Life in the United Kingdom' Advisory Group*. London: Home Office Social Policy Unit.

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 2.2.

¹⁹ Ibid., paras 2.2–2.3.

The Advisory Group reaffirmed a central finding in the Denham Report published in 2001: 'It is ... essential to establish a greater sense of citizenship based on common principles that are shared by all sections of the community. This concept of citizenship would also place a higher value on cultural differences.'²⁰ The Advisory Group recommended a flexible programme of studies incorporating six broad categories: 'British national institutions in recent historical context', 'Britain as a multicultural society', 'knowing the law', 'employment', 'sources of help and information' and 'everyday needs'.²¹ The Group further recommended that the government publish a 'Living in the United Kingdom' handbook free of charge that would include all relevant information.²²

These recommendations led to the launch of the *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* handbook published on behalf of the Advisory Group in 2004.²³ The handbook contained eight chapters covering the broad categories recommended by the Advisory Group. Its contents were informed through extensive consultation via the Citizenship Foundation, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Employability Forum.²⁴ Sir Bernard Crick led the drafting of the handbook and he was the sole author of the chapters 'The Making of the United Kingdom' covering key dates in British history and 'How Britain is Governed' providing an overview of UK politics.²⁵ Not all eight chapters were covered on the original test and the first chapter, 'The Making of the United Kingdom' covering British history, was omitted.²⁶

The Home Office published a second edition of the *Life in the UK* handbook in 2007. Passing either the test or ESOL became a requirement for all applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain and naturalisation. The second edition updates and revises material in the first edition without much substantive revision. The Home Office also published a new *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* containing 200 practice questions for preparation for the test.²⁷ The *Study Guide* states that the practice questions 'are **not** the actual questions... in the test'.²⁸ This is not my experience: the practice questions and prospective

²⁰ Ibid., para. 2.3. The Denham report is John Denham, et al. (2001), *Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion* (London: Home Office).

²¹ Ibid., paras 3.2–3.8.

²² Ibid., para. 4.2.

²³ Home Office (2004), *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* (London: TSO).

²⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 9 note 1.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁷ Home Office (2007), *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* (London: TSO).

²⁸ Ibid., p. v. Emphasis given.

answers were virtually identical, if not the same, as those found in the test when sat in 2009.²⁹

A third edition of the handbook was published in 2013. It is substantially different from the first and second editions, including a new subtitle: *Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents* (instead of 'A Journey to Citizenship').³⁰ The third edition also saw publication of a revised practice questions guide to replace the *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* of the second edition.³¹ The third edition saw publication of a new, third book confusingly entitled the *Official Study Guide* although it is not linked to the *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* of the second edition.³²

There are several costs for applicants including the price of sitting the test and acquiring test materials. The test has risen in recent years from £32.24 in 2009 to £50 today. This cost is per test: applicants that fail and have to be reassessed must pay £50 for each test they sit.

The cost of test materials has risen since 2004. The first and second editions of the handbook cost £9.99. The third edition is £12.99. The first edition had only the handbook for purchase. The second edition added an optional practice question guide that cost £5.99 and the third edition version is £7.99. The third edition has introduced a new study guide that costs £7.99. The handbook, practice question guide and new study guide are all official publications of the Home Office. The costs of the test and official test materials, including the *Life in the UK* handbook, have risen about 61% from £48.22 in 2009 to £78.97 in 2013. The costs of the test and official materials for someone taking the test twice have risen about 62% from £80.46 to £128.97. The costs of a third test sitting have risen about 63% from £112.70 in 2009 to £178.97. The Home Office does not subsidise the costs of producing the *Life in the UK* handbook.³³ These costs do not include visa and citizenship application fees.³⁴

²⁹ See Thom Brooks, 'The British Citizenship Test: The Case for Reform', *The Political Quarterly* 83, pp. 560–61.

³⁰ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition.

³¹ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*.

³² Wales, *Official Study Guide*.

³³ Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 14 February 2011, c515W. Green further confirmed that the Home Office 'has not spent any money on citizenship training in the last three years' (ibid.).

³⁴ See the UK Border Agency website for information on fees, url: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

PROBLEMS WITH EARLIER EDITIONS

Several problems have been identified with the first two editions of the *Life in the UK* handbook. These problems created a need for a new third edition. This chapter discusses the problems found and how they were addressed.

The First Edition

The first edition was criticised shortly after publication for its errors. These errors include falsely attributing to former Prime Minister Winston Churchill the words ‘Never in the course of human conflict have so many owed so much to so few’.³⁵ Instead, Churchill actually said ‘Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few’.³⁶ Another mistake was the claim that Charles II was recalled from exile in France: he had been in Holland.³⁷ Not all mistakes were historical: Northern Ireland was identified as part of Great Britain when, in fact, it includes only England, Scotland and Wales.³⁸

These errors are all found in the first chapter on British history (‘The making of the United Kingdom’) which was single-authored by Sir Bernard Crick.³⁹ His response to criticisms about these errors was that it was part of a rushed effort that had to be rushed. Crick told *The Guardian*: ‘There are errors in it because it was done fairly quickly because we didn’t want to keep immigrants waiting for their citizenship’.⁴⁰ The first edition noted further that updates and corrections would be confirmed on a new website.⁴¹ The handbook appears to confirm the swiftness through which it was constructed. Crick states ‘We have tried hard to check all facts cited, and we apologise if there are mistakes or important omissions’.⁴² Perhaps the biggest problem with the first edition was not its errors, but its poor presentation. The handbook is not well written and there are several typographical errors which may be unsurprising given the relatively short timeframe for its drafting and publication.⁴³

³⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 37.

³⁶ This quotation is included in Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 57.

³⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 28.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Lee Glendinning, ‘Citizenship guide fails its history exam’, *The Guardian*, url: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/apr/29/immigration.immigrationpolicy>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9 note 1. The url given is http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/0/reports/life_in_the_uk.html.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9 note 1.

⁴³ For one example, compare ‘(see pp. 23–9)’ and ‘(see pp.67–8)’ where one has a space and another does not at Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 51.

Many of the errors in the handbook proved somewhat inconsequential because the chapter containing them was included for informational purposes only and it was not a part of the test. Nonetheless, the test received widespread criticism for the information that was included in the test. This led to the handbook's description as 'the funniest book currently available in the English language' in the *London Review of Books*.⁴⁴ Particular attention was paid to a section on 'pubs' in a wide-ranging chapter on 'Everyday Needs' where the handbook states: 'If you spill a stranger's drink by accident, it is good manners (and prudent) to offer to buy another.'⁴⁵ Such statements are unrepresentative of the handbook's contents although the pub extract attracted widespread criticism.⁴⁶

The handbook included other information that was either incorrect or outdated. For example, the first edition falsely claimed there are 645 constituencies in the UK.⁴⁷ In fact, there were 646 Parliamentary constituencies and this is correctly noted in the second edition.⁴⁸ This error has not been discovered previously. The error may be due to the fact that only 645 seats were contested in the 2005 General Election because the election in a 646th constituency, Staffordshire South, was postponed because one of the candidates had died.⁴⁹

The Second Edition

The second edition, published in 2007, has been described as 'even more about life in the United Kingdom than its predecessor had been' including additional information about government programmes and practicalities including a new glossary.⁵⁰ The second edition is a more polished and readable version of the original handbook. It corrects historical inaccuracies and other errors found in the first edition and updates as well as revises the content.

The second edition retains the title and subtitle for the handbook – *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*. Several chapter titles are amended from 'Britain' to the 'UK' as in Chapter 3 (from 'Britain today: a

⁴⁴ Andrew O'Hagan (2006), 'Short Cuts', *London Review of Books* 28(23) (30 November): 22, url: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n22/andrew-ohagan/short-cuts>.

⁴⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 101.

⁴⁶ See James Slack, 'The migrant test', *Daily Mail* (16 June 2005), url: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-352444/The-migrant-test.html>.

⁴⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 61.

⁴⁸ 2nd ed., p. 44.

⁴⁹ BBC News, 'Voters decide on next government', url: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/frontpage/4514981.stm.

⁵⁰ Kerry Ryan (5 March 2013), 'Citizenship by the booklet', *Inside Story*, url: <http://inside.org.au/citizenship-by-the-booklet/>.

profile' amended to 'UK Today: A Profile') and Chapter 4 (from 'How Britain is governed' to 'How the United Kingdom is Governed').

Most chapter subtitles remain unchanged. The exceptions are Chapter 3 where the second edition amends 'religion and toleration' to 'religion' and 'the regions of Britain' is revised to read 'the nations and regions of the UK'. Chapter 4 on British politics combines several chapter subtitles to two: 'The British Constitution' and 'The UK in Europe and the World'.⁵¹ Chapter 4 ('Everyday Needs') removes the subtitle of 'Identity documents'. Chapter 6 ('Employment') revises 'Children at work' to 'Childcare and children at work'. Several changes are made to the chapter 'Knowing the Law' which is included in both handbooks, but not part of the first or second edition tests.⁵² The second edition offers an expanded section 'Sources of Help and Information'.⁵³ There is a new chapter on 'Building Better Communities' that is not part of the test which includes information about good citizenship and volunteering in local communities. Additionally, there is a new 'Glossary' to conclude the second edition of the handbook containing over 400 terms.

There are few changes of substance in the second edition of the handbook. Much of the text corrects, revises or expands upon the first edition. The first edition begins its first chapter on the subject of British history with the words: 'To understand a country well and the character of its inhabitants, some history is needed'.⁵⁴ The second edition revises this sentence to read more easily: 'To understand a country it is important to know something about its history'.⁵⁵ Other lines are revised, such as 'At the end of the Second World War' is revised to read 'After the Second World War (1939–45)'.⁵⁶

A further change is the reduction of telephone numbers listed. The first edition includes 31 telephone numbers and 49 websites, such as the telephone number for the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the

⁵¹ Chapter subtitles combined are 'The working system', 'The British constitution', 'The formal institutions', 'Devolved administration', 'Britain in Europe and the world', 'The ordinary citizen'.

⁵² The first edition has chapter subtitles, 'The rights and duties of a citizen', 'Human rights', 'Marriage and divorce', 'Children', 'Consumer protection', 'Criminal Courts', 'Civil Courts' and 'Legal advice and aid'. The second edition revises and reorders these subtitles to 'The rights and duties of a citizen', 'Criminal courts', 'Civil courts', 'Legal advice and aid', 'Human rights', 'children' and 'consumer protection'.

⁵³ This section has been switched with 'Knowing the Law' in the table of contents to follow that chapter.

⁵⁴ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Home Office (2007), *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition (London: TSO), p. 7.

⁵⁶ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 43 and Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 27.

UK (01242 260010, fax 01242 258611) and the website for the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (www.pdsa.org.uk).⁵⁷ The telephone numbers and websites could generate 80 unique test questions for more than three unique tests.

The second edition includes 36 telephone numbers and 23 websites, such as how to contact Members of Parliament or regional assemblies in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland as well as emergency services. There are others like the Association of British Credit Unions website (www.abcul.coop) and the telephone number for Energywatch (0845 906 0708).⁵⁸ The telephone number for NARIC remains included.⁵⁹ The second edition contains enough numbers and websites for 59 unique questions for more than two unique tests. There are no questions about either telephone numbers or websites in the 200 study questions published in a companion *Official Citizenship Study Guide*.

Need for a Third Edition

There are three problems with the second edition handbook that made necessary a new, third edition. The first problem is the handbook required revision and updating shortly after its publication.⁶⁰ The handbook was published in March 2007 and not revised in a third edition until March 2013. During this time, the 'correct' answer for many questions was factually untrue because of various changes over this period. For example, the *Official Citizenship Study Guide* includes a question about the approximate population of the UK. The options presented are '56 million', '58 million', '60 million' and '62 million'. The correct answer for the test is 60 million. This is misleading because the question pertains to the 2001 census and the population is now over 62 million.⁶¹

Particularly striking are the number of questions about British politics that became outdated. The *Official Citizenship Study Guide* asks about the number of Parliamentary constituencies with options of 464, 564, 646 and 664.⁶² The 'correct' answer for the test is 646, but the factually correct answer is 650. The *Guide* includes a question about the number of seats held by the UK in

⁵⁷ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, pp. 102, 109.

⁵⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 58, 61.

⁵⁹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 76.

⁶⁰ The second edition also includes typographical errors, such as 'up to £3,000 per year' and not '£3,000 per year'. Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 68.

⁶¹ Home Office (2007), *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* (London: TSO), p. 38.

⁶² Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 54.

the European Parliament listing options of 58, 68, 78 and 88.⁶³ The ‘correct’ answer is 78, but the factually correct answer is 73. Applicants must answer questions inaccurately to pass the test while correct answers are often not an option.

There are questions about programmes and departments that have since been merged or closed. For example, one test question asks: ‘Young people from families with low income can get financial help with their studies when they leave school at 16’.⁶⁴ Applicants must reply with the answer ‘Education Maintenance Allowance’ to get this answer correct, but this programme had been scrapped a couple of years ago. Test takers are asked to confirm information about programmes that have been discontinued.

Another question asks about ‘Which TWO places can you go if you need a National Insurance number?’ with the correct answers of ‘Jobcentre Plus’ and ‘Social Security Office’ and incorrect answers of ‘Department of Education and Skills’ and ‘Home Office’.⁶⁵ There are several problems with this question. First, one of the correct answers (‘Social Security Office’) and one of the incorrect answers (‘Department of Education and Skills’) had either closed or merged. Secondly, this question was a part of the sample test that all applicants sat prior to beginning the official test. This sample test has four questions and its answers are revealed so applicants can have a sense of how prepared they are for the actual test.⁶⁶ Applicants may leave the test centre without a refund after the sample test, if they wish. It was a concern that applicants might become deterred from sitting the test on the basis of factually untrue answers presented as ‘correct’ on the official sample test. So, the test required fairly substantial revision of typographical errors and outdated information about demographical data, British politics and government programmes.

A further problem with the second edition test is that it continued the practice started in its first edition of including chapters in the handbook that are not covered in the test. These chapters cover the topics of basic law, British history and culture. These absences are notable.⁶⁷ The citizenship tests used by other countries have typically included questions about its history. Australia

⁶³ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 56.

⁶⁴ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 72.

⁶⁵ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 14.

⁶⁶ These questions are found in Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, pp. 13–14.

⁶⁷ I argue for their inclusion in a BBC Radio 4 interview on the ‘You and Yours’ programme (10 October 2011), url: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b015mzl2/You_and_yours_Chris_Tarrant_on_dramatic_pauses/. The Prime Minister confirmed inclusion of British history and culture in the test in an announcement a few hours later. David Cameron, ‘Prime Minister’s speech on immigration’, 10 October 2011, url: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-immigration/>.

has a booklet for test preparation with three parts that are tested covering the meaning and responsibilities of Australian citizenship, Australian history, and culture and Australian politics and governance.⁶⁸ The United States has a booklet with 100 questions and answers. Nearly all are about either American politics and governance or US history.⁶⁹

A third problem is more fundamental and concerns the need to rethink our expectations about immigrant knowledge.⁷⁰ Most citizens will never need to pass a citizenship test. The test is an obstacle for persons who are currently non-citizens, but it should consider whether its purpose is to create a new barrier or build a new bridge with prospective future citizens. The test's importance is not merely that its failure may leave some unable to become members, but that passing the test may open the door to membership to others. What should serve as our expectations about immigrant knowledge? How might this be effectively delivered by a citizenship test? How might the current test be improved to perform its role for immigration policy better?

These questions focus narrowly on the place and purpose of the citizenship test for British public policy. There is no clear evidence that any government has grappled with them in any substantive way after the first edition handbook was published. Perhaps surprisingly, there has been no concerted effort to engage with new citizens who have passed the citizenship test and met the requirements for becoming a British citizen. This could have helped inform improvements in handbook design, the range and kinds of knowledge tested and provide constructive feedback about the test's utility from the standpoint of its users.

PROBLEMS WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW *LIFE IN THE UK* TEST

A new, third edition of the *Life in the UK* test was launched in 2013 after several delays. The first, official announcement that a third edition of the test would be published was made by former Prime Minister David Cameron on 10 October 2011, as part of a major speech outlining new immigration reforms.⁷¹ This came after BBC Radio 4 broadcast an interview noting serious problems

⁶⁸ See Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 'Citizenship Test', url: http://www.citizenship.gov.au/learn/cit_test/.

⁶⁹ See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Learn about the United States: Quick Civics Lessons for the Naturalization Test*, M-638 (rev. 01/13), url: <http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship>.

⁷⁰ See Brooks, 'The British Citizenship Test', pp. 563–4.

⁷¹ David Cameron, 'Prime Minister's speech on immigration', 10 October 2011, url: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-immigration/>.

with the test the same day.⁷² The interview with Dr Thom Brooks noted concerns that the test contained serious flaws, such as factual inaccuracies, and argued that some element of British history and culture should be incorporated into the test.⁷³

In Cameron's speech, he affirmed that one of the proposed changes to the test would be to incorporate questions about British history and culture.⁷⁴ The Prime Minister claimed a new *Life in the UK* test would be published the following autumn in 2012.⁷⁵ This was confirmed in November 2011 by the then Minister of State for Immigration, Damian Green MP, who said: 'The Prime Minister announced on 10 October [2011] that we would change the test and put British history and culture at the heart of it. We plan to have a revised test in place by autumn 2012'.⁷⁶

The government continued to confirm it would publish a new test in late 2012 about a year later. In September 2012, in response to Chi Onwurah MP,⁷⁷ Damian Green confirmed:

A new edition of the handbook 'Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship' is currently being finalized with the aim of publishing it later this year. We are aware that the existing handbook has some out-of-date information, which will be remedied by the publication of a new edition. In the meantime, questions for the Life in the UK test which are no longer valid have in any case been removed from the question bank so candidates should not suffer any adverse effects'.⁷⁸

⁷² Thom Brooks, BBC Radio 4 interview on the 'You and Yours' programme (10 October 2011), url: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b015mzl2/You_and_yours_Chris_Tarrant_on_dramatic_pauses/. I also argued that some element of the chapter on 'Knowing the Law' should be incorporated.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Cameron, 'Prime Minister's speech on immigration', 10 October 2011, url: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-immigration/>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 22 November 2011, c248W. This is also confirmed by a personal correspondence from Ann Robertson, Policy Leader on Migration Policy in the Home Office, letter dated 14 November 2011 and by Lord Henley in response to a question from Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno in a House of Lords debate about British citizenship held on 31 July 2012.

⁷⁷ The questions posed to Damian Green MP about: (1) when the Home Office plans to update the *Life in the UK* handbook; and (2) what estimate had been made about 'of the number of inaccuracies' in the *Life in the UK* handbook and their effect on applicants by Chi Onwurah MP arose from criticisms raised in Brooks, 'The British Citizenship Test'. See Chi Onwurah MP, HC Debate, 5 September 2012, c350W.

⁷⁸ Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 5 September 2012, c350W.

The new handbook was not published until 28 January 2013, some months after the original launch date planned for autumn 2012.

There was a delay between the publication of the new *Life in the UK* handbook in January and the launch of the new test deferred until 25 March 2013. Persons sitting the *Life in the UK* test had two months to prepare in advance. All questions on the test come from the handbook and the test was designed so that knowledge about the handbook would ensure successful completion of the test.

One problem concerning this delay that escaped attention concerns an important omission in the new handbook. The second edition of the handbook states on its cover that it is 'The official publication valid for tests taken from April 2007'. This is clarified in the handbook's preface where it confirms that the handbook is the official resource for preparing for the *Life in the UK* test for tests taken from 2 April 2007.⁷⁹

However, the third edition of the handbook omits any mention of the date from which it is the official handbook for the *Life in the UK* test. The third edition states on its cover that it is 'The ONLY OFFICIAL handbook for the Life in the UK test' under the year '2013'.⁸⁰ The handbook claims it 'will help prepare you for taking the Life in the UK test' and that test questions 'are based on ALL parts of the handbook' and, specifically, the third edition of the handbook.⁸¹ It informs applicants that requirements concerning English language proficiency will change from October 2013 (see Chapter 6) and that, more generally, 'requirements for citizenship applications may also change in the future'.⁸²

The problem is that the third edition handbook is the official handbook, but *only* for tests taken from 25 March 2013. The second edition of the handbook was available concurrently and it remained the source from which *Life in the UK* test questions were based until 25 March. Neither the handbook, its *Official Study Guide* or *Official Practice Questions and Answers* includes this important fact. An applicant planning to sit the test between January and mid-March 2013 would have found two different editions of the handbook that each claim to be the only 'official' resource for the *Life in the UK* test. It would be possible for someone to purchase the third edition handbook by mistake to sit a *Life in the UK* test based on the second edition handbook. This problem has not been identified previously.

⁷⁹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, preface.

⁸⁰ Emphasis given.

⁸¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

There is another problem with the launch of the new test. The second edition saw the introduction of a new supplementary book with practice questions and answers to help applicants prepare. The *Life in the UK* test is a multiple-choice test somewhat unique in format. Citizenship tests used in other countries, such as Australia and the United States, provide applicants with four choices where one correct answer must be supplied. The *Life in the UK* test brings together a combination of different formats: some questions require applicants to choose successfully the one correct answer from four options, but other questions require the selection of two correct answers from four options and other questions ask applicants whether a statement is true or false.

While knowledge about the facts given in the second edition handbook is sufficient to pass the test, the handbook is silent about the different kinds of questions asked. Complete information about the test's format is only provided by the supplementary study guide with practice questions. Someone lacking knowledge about the somewhat unique format of the test may be surprised by this format because of its novelty and because nothing is said about it in the official handbook. It is problematic that the official handbook of the test lacks information about the test itself and that this is left to an 'optional' supplementary book.

The third edition of the *Life in the UK* test is a substantial departure from the first two editions in many respects. The third edition says of this test that it 'consists of 24 questions about important aspects of life in the UK'.⁸³ It does not say how many questions must be answered correctly or the format the questions would take. Nor is it obvious that the test would continue to require at least 18 correct answers or its earlier format especially in light of several other major changes.

Applicants taking the third edition test would have had no clear confirmation about the number of questions to be answered correctly or the test format. This information is published in only one book – the supplemental *Official Practice Questions and Answers*. Neither the official handbook nor the newly launched *Official Study Guide* confirms how many questions must be answered correctly out of 24 provided in the test. Both supplemental texts – the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* and *Official Study Guide* – provide information about the test format, but not the one required text for applicants taking the test, the official *Life in the UK* handbook. The supplemental texts confirm that applicants must continue to answer 18 or more questions correctly to pass the test and the test format is unchanged from the second edition.

The third edition handbook says nothing about the distribution of questions by chapter beyond this statement: 'Questions are based on ALL parts of the

⁸³ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10.

handbook'.⁸⁴ It is difficult to confirm the distribution of questions across chapters for the new test in the absence of any specific guidance and the non-publication of actual tests in use for persons not administering or sitting the test. Some insight may be provided through a close examination of the 17 practice tests published in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers*.⁸⁵ Each practice test has 24 questions like the actual test and 408 questions are provided in total. The practice tests follow a clear pattern of no more than one question from the chapters 'The values and principles of the UK' and 'What is the UK?', normally eight questions from the chapter 'A long and illustrious history', about seven questions from the chapter 'A modern, thriving society' and seven or eight questions from the last chapter, 'The UK government, the law and your role'. If an accurate predictor, then applicants should expect about one-third of questions to be on British history and most questions to come from the last three chapters. Since applicants must correctly answer 18 or more from 24 questions, then it is possible to pass the test – if the above distribution is correct – without studying the first two chapters about British values and political geography.

The new test was launched on 25 March 2013. The supplementary materials providing the only information about the number of questions to be answered correctly in order to pass and the test format were not released until 28 March 2013 and so *after* the test's launch. In response to a written question by Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno about this delay,⁸⁶ Lord Taylor of Holbeach said that 'all the information necessary to pass the test' is contained in the *Life in the UK: A Guide for New Residents* handbook.⁸⁷ While the handbook does provide the facts to be tested, the handbook does not, in fact, contain information about test requirements and format. This statement by Lord Taylor is also the first time the government noted the new subtitle for the handbook, changing it from *A Journey to Citizenship* to *A Guide for New Residents*.

Lord Taylor adds:

The Stationery Office (TSO) produces a study guide and a practice question and answer book, which supplement the handbook. These are not Home Office publications, although the Home Office is aware of their content and has confirmed their accuracy. TSO needed to check the content of these companion products against the official handbook after its publication to ensure they were of greatest use to the reader, and used its best endeavours to publish as soon as possible.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10. The chapters in the second edition are of approximately similar lengths.

⁸⁵ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*.

⁸⁶ This question came after noting this problem to his office.

⁸⁷ Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 22 April 2013, c354W.

⁸⁸ Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 22 April 2013, c354W.

The claim is that the delayed publication of the supplementary materials was caused by the need to check them for accuracy. Or, in other words, the delayed confirmation of the contents for the new official handbook further delayed work in producing its supplementary texts.

It is surprising that the government did not publish the three texts together. The handbook provides incomplete information about the test that is supplemented in the other texts that were published after the test was launched. One reason for proceeding anyway might be the need to launch a new test given the many problems with the second edition. It is nevertheless unclear why the government did not wait until all official texts were prepared given it would have meant a delay of no more than an additional two months. Nor are the two publications produced after the launch of the new test well synchronised. Each lists sample practice questions and provides answers, but using somewhat different formats: the *Official Study Guide* refers its readers to the relevant *page number* in the official handbook, but the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* refers readers to the relevant *page number* and *chapter* in the official handbook. All practice questions and answers were written by the same author, Michael Mitchell, so this difference is particularly surprising.

Delays in the publication of the handbook and test were not because the government was waiting for any consultation to be completed. One important statement on this matter is by Lord Taylor of Holbeach in a House of Lords debate where he states that: ‘We have not as yet received any direct representations, although public comment on the new handbook has been broadly positive.’⁸⁹ This brief statement appears to suggest that the handbook was not subject to any official consultation prior to its publication. It is perhaps likely that the new third edition handbook was designed by ministers and a relatively small team in isolation from engagement with new citizens who successfully passed the test previously, academics and other persons who could have fed into this process externally.

One further issue concerning the launch of the new test is authorship of the supplemental texts. All three editions of the *Life in the UK* handbook are copy righted by the Crown. The second edition’s *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* is copyrighted by The Stationery Office without any named author. The third edition’s supplemental texts are also copyrighted by The Stationery Office with the brief statement in small font on their front cover ‘Supporting the official Home Office/TSO publication *Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents* (3rd edition)’. Both name a single author: Michael Mitchell is the author of the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* and Jenny Wales is the author of the *Official Study Guide*. Wales is author of

⁸⁹ Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 26 February 2013, c954.

several other books about British citizenship for Edexcel.⁹⁰ There is no official announcement from the Home Office concerning the appointment of authors for these texts or mention in Hansard.

IMPROVEMENTS OVER EARLIER EDITIONS

The third edition provides several improvements over earlier editions, specifically the second edition.

Improved Look

The first edition contains no images. The second edition is mostly black and white with a few colour images. The third edition is the first to be published in full colour. The covers have gone from blue with white lettering (first edition) and purple with white lettering (second edition) to vibrant multi-coloured texts in red (*Official Study Guide*), white (*Life in the UK* handbook) and blue (*Official Practice Questions and Answers*). Full colour images are reproduced in the handbook and *Official Study Guide* of both famous British citizens and photos of important landmarks.

The third edition reads less like a policy report than earlier editions although there remains uneven editing in the distribution of chapters and the presentation of information. Chapters vary widely in their number of pages and the final chapter ('The UK government, the law and your role') covers much more than this, including information about driving, organ donation and recycling formerly presented across multiple chapters. The new edition includes text boxes with important information to be remembered kept over from the second edition alongside several text boxes noting significant individuals and moments in British history.

Fewer Telephone Numbers and Websites

Past editions make regular references to telephone numbers and websites. This has been reduced significantly in the third edition where most of such information is provided for websites only. The first edition includes 31 telephone numbers and 49 websites that might be tested and the second edition lists 36 telephone numbers and 23 websites, but the third edition notes only five telephone numbers and 34 websites that might be tested. The five telephone

⁹⁰ See Jenny Wales (2009), *Citizenship Today – Student's Book: Endorsed by Edexcel*, 3rd ed. (London: Collins) and Jenny Wales (2010), *Collins Revision – GCSE Citizenship for Edexcel* (London: Collins).

numbers are the House of Commons (020 7729 3000), Holyrood (0131 348 5200), the Welsh Assembly (0845 010 5500), the National Domestic Violence helpline (0808 2000 247) and the HMRC self-assessment helpline (0845 300 0627). No telephone number is given to contact the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont in Belfast.

The inclusion of telephone numbers and websites is controversial. The second edition's *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* does not include any practice questions about telephone numbers or websites. The third edition's *Official Study Guide* and *Official Practice Questions and Answers* lack any practice questions about them as well. No one has confirmed having sat a question on the *Life in the UK* test asking for a telephone number or website. It would be difficult to justify the inclusion of 50 or more telephone numbers and websites. Nonetheless, there is a problem if the government approved handbook claims that such information might be tested, but in fact, it has not and will not be tested. It would suggest that the handbook includes more information in chapters covered by the test than included in any test. This gap between the information included in the handbook versus the information examined in the *Life in the UK* test is a serious problem for the new test and is discussed below.

Factual Errors Corrected

All factual errors in the second edition have been corrected in the third edition. It is noticeable that these errors have been corrected in several instances through their omission. For example, previous versions of the test included questions about various government programmes and departments. Problems arose where these were amended, merged or ceased. The third edition overcomes this problem by cutting out most, if not all, references to government programmes and departments.

Another example concerns the number of MPs and MEPs. The second edition was correct at the time of publication, but outdated soon afterwards. The third edition overcomes this problem by noting neither the number of MPs or MEPs. (However, the handbook *does* include the number of representatives sitting in Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly.⁹¹) So the problem of factual errors in past tests about the British government and its programmes has been addressed by removing information about them from the test.

⁹¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 136.

Sample Online Test

There is a free, sample online test that appears to offer a useful sample of what the test might be like. It gives applicants 45 minutes to answer 24 questions where 18 or more must be answered correctly for a pass. The test is unofficial and for practice only. All questions offered are found in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* text. Multiple choice questions list possible answers in the same order as found in the text. When the test is completed, applicants are told whether they have achieved a pass and the correct answers to any wrongly answered questions are provided.

This test is a welcome preparation for new applicants that provides some insight into what they might expect when taking the test. Previously, it was possible to find sample online tests, but at non-official websites where some used questions from the official study guide and others did not with few, if any, providing a realistic guide to what might be expected on the actual test.

Broader Coverage

Criticisms of the second edition focused on the proliferation of factually untrue ‘correct’ answers and the restricted subject-matter of the test.⁹² All three editions have contained a chapter on British history and culture along with a chapter on basic elements of British law. These chapters include information about the *Magna Carta*, the Reformation, the English Civil War and how to contact the police to report a crime. The third edition is the first to make this information a part of the test. This is to be broadly welcomed. Citizenship tests have typically included some element of historical knowledge and the *Life in the UK* test is now more closely aligned with similar tests elsewhere, such as used in Australia and the United States.

It must be noted that this broader coverage is often a result of expanding upon existing content. Consider the discussion of the Romans. The second edition states:

In 55 BC the Romans, who had an empire covering most of the Mediterranean lands, first came to Britain with Julius Caesar. Nearly a hundred years later they came back and began a conquest of all of Britain except the highlands of Scotland. There was strong opposition from the native tribes who fought to try to keep the Romans out.

⁹² See Brooks, ‘The British Citizenship Test’. See also Thom Brooks, *Becoming British: UK Citizenship Examined* (London: Biteback, 2016).

A famous tribal leader who fought the Romans was Boudicca, the queen of the Iceni in what is now eastern England.⁹³

The third edition reads:

Julius Caesar led a Roman invasion of Britain in 55 BC. This was unsuccessful and for nearly 100 years Britain remained separate from the Roman Empire. In AD 43 the Emperor Claudius led the Roman army in a new invasion. This time, there was resistance from some of the British tribes but the Romans were successful in occupying almost all of Britain. One of the tribal leaders who fought against the Romans was Boudicca, the queen of the Iceni in what is now eastern England. She is still remembered today and there is a statue of her on Westminster Bridge in London, near the Houses of Parliament.⁹⁴

This example makes clear that the newly designed chapter ‘A long and illustrious history’ introduces new historical facts into the handbook, but mostly to expand already existing information about British history found in the first and second editions. This is also true of British culture, as the second edition includes information covered in the test about sport and important dates like Remembrance Day. The third edition does not so much introduce British culture into the test, but rather greatly expands the amount of information in this area.

NEW PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT TEST

The third edition of the *Life in the United Kingdom* handbook corrects and revises several problems found in the second edition. However, the third edition introduces several new problems as well.

Impractical

The *Life in the UK* test has been designed to test not ‘Britishness’, but the ability to live in and contribute to British life. The first edition handbook notes that it is ‘essentially a compendium of useful information helpful to those new

⁹³ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 8. Compare with the first edition: ‘The Romans, who had conquered and given law and order to the whole Mediterranean world, began to expand into Britain some decades after Julius Caesar had made an exploratory foray into Britain in 55 BC. Not until the following century did they return to conquer and establish control of the entire island except Wales and the north. There was strong opposition from the native inhabitants; one great revolt is still remembered in the name of Boudicca, the Queen of the Iceni tribe in eastern England’. Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 18.

⁹⁴ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 17.

arrivals settling in to this country'.⁹⁵ Similarly, the second edition states that the handbook can be used to prepare for the test 'or simply to increase your knowledge of British life and institutions'.⁹⁶ The third edition says that its 'hope' is that readers will find the book 'useful and interesting'.⁹⁷ It states that it will help applicants 'integrate into society and play a full role in your local community'.⁹⁸

One problem with the new test is that it has become impractical and its reform has rendered it much less helpful as a 'compendium of useful information'.⁹⁹ The Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, told Parliament that the *Life in the UK* test would no longer require candidates to know 'about water meters and how to claim benefits' and instead enable 'people to participate fully in our society'.¹⁰⁰ This statement was echoed by Mark Harper MP, Minister for Immigration: 'We've stripped out mundane information about water meters, how to find train timetables, and using the internet, the new test rightly focuses on values and principles at the heart of being British. Instead of telling people how to claim benefits it encourages participation in British life'.¹⁰¹

The government was critical about what it perceived as an overemphasis on the practical minutiae of daily life in the *Life in the UK* test. One area of concern is the number of telephone numbers and websites listed in previous editions: they have been substantially reduced in the third edition and this move is welcome. The second edition of the handbook includes information about how to claim Jobseeker's Allowance and receive help with childcare.¹⁰² The *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* notes practice questions covering job references, how to find details of trade unions and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.¹⁰³

A major problem for the new handbook is that it has become impractical, largely as a result of the removal of far too much information from previous handbooks. Applicants need no longer know how to register with a GP, contact

⁹⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 10.

⁹⁶ John Reid MP, 'Foreword' in Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition.

⁹⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 162.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ House of Commons debate, 25 March 2013, c1277.

¹⁰¹ Mark Harper MP, 'New Life in the UK test goes live', Home Office Announcement (25 March 2013), url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-life-in-the-uk-test-goes-live--2>.

¹⁰² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 81, 84.

¹⁰³ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, pp. 81, 85, 87.

an ambulance or report a crime.¹⁰⁴ Applicants need not know the kinds of educational qualifications available and the subjects taught in schools. Such information has been removed in favour of new requirements that applicants know the approximate age of Big Ben ('over 150 years old')¹⁰⁵ and height of the London Eye in both feet and metres ('443 feet' and '135 metres').¹⁰⁶ If the government remains committed to a handbook designed to help applicants 'integrate into society and play a full role' as well as ensure applicants possess 'a broad general knowledge', then this commitment appears undermined by the omission of information about education and schools, health care and the NHS, and policing and neighbourhood safety from the handbook – each a fundamental part of what might be necessary for immigrants to integrate and play a full role.

The government has justified its removal of information found in previous tests saying it 'removed questions on topics that those living in the UK should already be aware of like public transport, credit cards and job interviews'.¹⁰⁷ This was restated by Lord Taylor when asked about widely reported analysis by Dr Thom Brooks that the *Life in the UK* test was 'unfit for purpose'.¹⁰⁸ Lord Taylor states:

The Government do not share Dr Brooks' view that the handbook goes too far by including information about British culture and history at the expense of practical knowledge ... The majority of those applying will have been in the UK for at least five years and should therefore be aware of practical matters, such as how to contact the emergency services'.¹⁰⁹

There is an apparent distinction made between (a) the information new migrants are expected to know and should be tested and (b) the information

¹⁰⁴ The only mention of the NHS is found in the chapter 'A long and illustrious history' in the section 'Britain since 1945' covering post-war British history. Neither the 'NHS' nor the terms 'GP', 'health' and 'health care' appear in the index. See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 60, 172–80.

¹⁰⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 108.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁰⁷ Home Office, 'New Life in the UK test goes live', 25 March 2013, url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-life-in-the-uk-test-goes-live--2>.

¹⁰⁸ See Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno, HL Debate, 21 May 2013, c43W. See also Press Association, 'UK Citizenship Test for Foreign Nationals is "Unfit for Purpose" says Academic', *The Huffington Post*, 17 March 2013, url: [The Scotsman, 18 March 2013, url: <http://www.scotsman.com/news/uk/expert-citizens-test-is-unfit-for-purpose-1-2842326> and *The Times*, 18 March 2013, p. 9.](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/03/17/british-citizenship-test-unfit_n_2896938.html?utm_hp_ref=uk?ncid=GEp; Tom Wilkinson, 'Citizenship test is)

¹⁰⁹ Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 21 May 2013, c44W.

new migrants are expected to be aware of and should not be tested. The government's argument is that information about how to contact an ambulance or report a crime and information about educational qualifications are information we should expect migrants to know and so need not test them: new migrants should 'be aware' of such matters.¹¹⁰

This justification is without merit and it is unclear how any such distinction can be made across cases. Indeed, new migrants might be expected to be aware of many facts covered in the *Life in the UK*. There is no evidence provided to support the distinction and its application in the third edition.

There is abundant evidence the government continues to test applicants about information we should expect new migrants to know after living in the UK for five or more years. For example, the third edition handbook requires applicants to know that London and Edinburgh are British cities¹¹¹ and London is the biggest in the UK,¹¹² British currency includes the £1 coin and £5 note,¹¹³ Christmas Day is 25th December,¹¹⁴ Boxing Day is a Bank Holiday the day after Christmas,¹¹⁵ Andy Murray is a tennis player,¹¹⁶ the Queen is the head of the State¹¹⁷ and David Cameron is the current Prime Minister,¹¹⁸ people should 'try to keep your garden tidy',¹¹⁹ people should 'only put your refuse bags and bins on the street or in communal areas if they are due to be collected',¹²⁰ and that the United States is an independent country.¹²¹ Is it *less* certain people living in the UK for five or more years will know about £1 coins and Christmas Day (so these facts should be included in the test) than about what is a 'GCSE' and how to report a crime (so these facts should be excluded from the test)? Are facts about coinage and Christmas *less* 'mundane' than facts about how to register with a GP or phone an ambulance? There is no clear rationale provided by the government to justify this distinction and its use.

The test is impractical in other ways, such as being incomplete. The section 'How you can support your community' includes a subsection on 'Helping in schools'.¹²² This is the only place where information about schools can be

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 72.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 73.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 74.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 121.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 154.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 43.

¹²² Ibid., pp. 155–6.

found. The handbook states that applicants can ‘support your community and be a good citizen’ in several ways, such as through helping in schools.¹²³ The first eight sentences of this section note that ‘parents can often help in classrooms’ and one way is through helping schools raise money through ‘book sales, toy sales or bringing food to sell’.¹²⁴ The final nine sentences focus exclusively on school boards where applicants are encouraged to become school governors and how applicants in England might apply online.¹²⁵ The handbook adds: ‘In England, parents and other community groups can apply to open a free school in their local area’ and a website is provided to find more information about launching a free school.¹²⁶

These 17 sentences about education and schools replace the 115 sentences across four pages in the handbook’s second edition.¹²⁷ The new, third edition has removed the following information previously available in the second edition: education in the UK is free and compulsory;¹²⁸ a parent or guardian may be prosecuted if his or her child fails to attend school;¹²⁹ there are primary and secondary schools;¹³⁰ how places are allocated at schools;¹³¹ there are costs relating to school uniforms and gym clothes, as well as school outings;¹³² children from low income families can receive help with costs including the cost of school meals;¹³³ there are faith schools and independent schools;¹³⁴ there is a National Curriculum and the subjects included;¹³⁵ students in Wales learn Welsh;¹³⁶ and information about A-levels and university study.¹³⁷ This information is practical and useful. The government provides no rationale for its removal. The reduction of information about education in the handbook by 85% is surprising given its importance in the daily lives of many residents.¹³⁸ There is nothing said in the current handbook about compulsory background checks for adults working with children.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 155.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 156.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 66–9.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 68–9.

¹³⁸ 85% is the reduction in sentences about education from 115 to 17.

Information removed about the NHS is surprising. Evidence confirms that immigrants to Britain use less health care services than most English-born persons.¹³⁹ The evidence further suggests that immigrants are less likely to register with a GP.¹⁴⁰ One possible explanation is that immigrants lack information about how to register. If knowledge about using the NHS has been removed because immigrants should be expected to use the service without the need for practical guidance in a citizenship handbook, then this rationale may be undermined by the available evidence.

These questions raise serious concerns about the government's decisions about which information should be included and which excluded. The test is presented as practical and useful, but much of its practical and useful information has been removed rendering the test more impractical than past editions.

Inconsistent

There are several inconsistencies in the third edition and its relation to past editions. For example, the second edition of the test saw the launch of a new *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* with the words 'Study Guide' in large font. This official *Study Guide* included 200 practice questions and answers to help applicants prepare for the test. The third edition rebrands this text as the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* text and the new edition launches a new text, the *Official Study Guide*. The launch of a very different text with the same name as an existing text for the second edition may create unnecessary confusion. This confusion is exacerbated by the fact that the original *Official Study Guide* and the very different new *Official Study Guide* both provide the most information about how to book and prepare for taking the test.

The new *Official Study Guide* incorporates information from both the handbook and the *Official Practice Questions and Answers*. The purpose of the *Official Study Guide* is somewhat unclear and problematic. The *Guide* states that it is 'designed to be used with' the official handbook.¹⁴¹ The *Guide* says further that it 'offers a summary of the content' to help its readers 'learn the material' needed to pass the test.¹⁴² The *Guide's* chapters and chapter subtitles follow the official handbook and no new information is introduced although there are images in the *Guide* (such as the chamber of the House of Lords)¹⁴³

¹³⁹ See Adam Steventon and Martin Bardsley (2011), 'Use of Secondary Care in England by International Immigrants', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy* 16(2): 90–94.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁴¹ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 7.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 116.

that are not included in the official handbook. Applicants must know information provided in the official handbook to pass the test. Much of the information in the handbook is not included in the *Official Study Guide*. It is unclear why the government has approved for publication an 'official' book like this *Guide* which will not by itself prepare its readers satisfactorily for the test.

Another inconsistency is that the practice questions and answers in the *Official Study Guide* are different from those presented in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* book. For example, the *Official Study Guide* asks 'Which TWO things do you need to apply for UK citizenship or permanent residency?' with the correct answers of 'An understanding of life in the UK' and 'To read and speak English' (and incorrect options of 'A knowledge of maths and science' and 'Access to a computer').¹⁴⁴ The *Official Practice Questions and Answers* asks: 'To apply for UK citizenship or permanent residency, which TWO things do you need?' with the correct answers of 'An ability to speak and read English' and 'A good understanding of life in the UK' (and incorrect options of 'A UK bank account' and 'A driving licence').¹⁴⁵ Several questions and answers are similar between these two texts.¹⁴⁶

It could be argued that these variations of how questions and answers are presented might benefit applicants. If no questions in either book are found presented exactly the same on the test, then perhaps applicants might benefit from engaging with a diversity of different ways that questions might appear on the test and so become better prepared. However, this is unlikely as such a view is not presented in either book and their differences are unacknowledged. Most strikingly, all questions for both books were written by Michael Mitchell so it is puzzling why such variety exists.¹⁴⁷

There are further inconsistencies about the information included in the handbook. For example, the third edition no longer requires applicants to know the number of Members of Parliament in Westminster. However, the handbook does require knowledge about the number of members in the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly.¹⁴⁸ There is no clear rationale to justify this difference. Another example of inconsistency is that applicants must know the telephone numbers to contact the House of Commons, the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament, but not the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 124.

¹⁴⁶ On the Bill of Rights 1689 see Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, pp. 123, 128, and Wales, *Official Study Guide*, pp. 77, 80.

¹⁴⁷ Mitchell is listed as the author of the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* and acknowledged for writing all practice questions in Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 136.

Northern Ireland Assembly.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, applicants are required to know about Magistrates' Courts, Justice of the Peace Courts, Crown Courts, Sheriff Courts, Youth Courts and County Courts.¹⁵⁰ However, the handbook omits mention of the UK Supreme Court. No rationale is provided or obvious for this omission. The five telephone numbers included in the handbook do not include 999 or 111.

Inconsistencies can be found in the use of quotations. The third edition handbook includes several quotations from plays and poetry, such as famous passages in the writings of William Shakespeare,¹⁵¹ the poetry of Rudyard Kipling¹⁵² and other poets.¹⁵³ However, only the quotations of three speeches by Winston Churchill – all made in 1940 – are presented in **bold** typeface.¹⁵⁴

Other inconsistencies concern British life and governance. The chapter subtitle 'Languages and dialects' states that 'The English language has many accents and dialects'.¹⁵⁵ Previous editions have highlighted specific dialects, such as Cockney, Geordie and Scouse.¹⁵⁶ The third edition notes that there are dialects, but omits any mention of what these dialects might be.¹⁵⁷ The chapter subtitle 'The government' notes that the Home Secretary is 'responsible for crime' and 'policing'.¹⁵⁸ Later in this chapter, the handbook states that publicly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) 'are responsible for the delivery of an efficient and effective police force' and appoint local Chief Constables.¹⁵⁹ No mention is made of the relationship between the Home Secretary and PCCs. Nor is there mention of the Justice Secretary. The chapter subtitle 'Respecting the law' provides information about 'examples of criminal laws' to confirm for applicants various crimes, including smoking in public places.¹⁶⁰ There is no mention of how to report a crime. Nor is there mention of individual rights upon arrest.

A final inconsistency concerns the images used in the handbook and supplemental texts. The *Official Study Guide* reproduces several images that are also

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 126, 136.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 144–7.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 99–100.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁵⁶ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 52; Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 37 and Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, pp. 38, 43, 45.

¹⁵⁷ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 74.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 140–41.

found in the official handbook, such as the Giant's Causeway and the Lake District.¹⁶¹ However, only the *Official Study Guide* provides any acknowledgement of photographic credits.¹⁶² The official handbook does not acknowledge any photographic credits for the images reproduced in its pages.

Gender Imbalance

Women are much less visible than men in the official handbook. There are 29 men and only four women – Florence Nightingale, Emmeline Pankhurst, Margaret Thatcher, Mary Peters – listed with dates of birth or death in the chapter 'A long and illustrious history'.¹⁶³ Interestingly, neither of the Queen's birthdays are mentioned. Other women are mentioned, but primarily as the wives of more important husbands.¹⁶⁴ The most commonly found examples include monarchs, such as the wives of King Henry VII, King Henry VIII and William of Orange.¹⁶⁵ Sake Dean Mahomet is the only non-monarch whose wife is named: 'He then moved to Ireland and eloped with an Irish girl called Jane Daly'.¹⁶⁶ All other women noted are queens, such as Boudicca,¹⁶⁷ Mary, Queen of Scots,¹⁶⁸ Queen Elizabeth I¹⁶⁹ and Queen Anne.¹⁷⁰

Eleven men and six women are noted in sport and culture as well as three women for contributions as authors or writers.¹⁷¹ There are no female musicians, artists or poets noted, but for men there are seven musicians, nine artists, six authors or writers and five poets noted.¹⁷² Together, this adds up to 67 men and only 13 women. Former Turner Prize winners mentioned include Damien Hirst and Richard Wright.¹⁷³

The Home Office announcement on the launch of the new test celebrated the inclusion of artistic and cultural heritage. The Home Office said: 'the new

¹⁶¹ See Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 101 and Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 111, 116.

¹⁶² Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 5.

¹⁶³ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 49, 51, 66, 67.

¹⁶⁴ The only exception is the Queen. See *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 27, 36–7.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9, 31.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 38–9.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 84–100.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 99. Elizabeth Browning is listed alongside Robert Browning, but only the latter has his poetry included. All substantive discussion about poetry is about poems written by men and not women.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

test focuses on British culture, history and traditions as well as the events and people that have shaped Britain into the country it is today'.¹⁷⁴ The announcement notes nine men.¹⁷⁵ No women are mentioned.

Gender imbalance is a serious problem found in the new test where the achievements of men receive more prominence than those by women. Furthermore, the imbalance may be exacerbated by the omission of previously included information about childcare, maternity leave and schools. This is mitigated by the inclusion of information about laws against discrimination on the basis of several factors, including sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexuality or marital status.¹⁷⁶ There is also information about domestic violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.¹⁷⁷

Spurious Facts

The handbook includes more facts than are likely to be tested or should be tested. The third edition handbook contains about 3,000 facts.¹⁷⁸ These facts include the five telephone numbers and 34 websites included in the handbook: there are no practice questions among the 600+ published that ask about telephone numbers and websites.

The official handbook notes about 278 dates. These include the Roman invasion of Britain, the start of the Black Death and the year of America's Independence. The dates of birth and death are given for about 77 people, including William Shakespeare, Isaac Newton, Florence Nightingale and William Beveridge. The persons with the most dates associated with their names are Margaret Thatcher (6), Sake Dean Mahomet (5) and Emmeline Pankhurst (5). Other historical dates include the year that the Roman Emperor Claudius invaded Britain (43 AD).¹⁷⁹

It does not appear that applicants must know, in fact, many dates of birth or death, if any. Neither the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* nor the *Official Study Guide* include questions that ask applicants for the date of any person's birth or death. Only a handful of people have dates of birth or death

¹⁷⁴ Home Office, 'New Life in the UK test goes live', 25 March 2013, url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-life-in-the-uk-test-goes-live--2>.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 149–50.

¹⁷⁸ See Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno, HL Debate, 26 February 2013, c954.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 17. This fact about the Emperor Claudius is new to the third edition: it does not appear in the first two editions of the handbook. There is no mention in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* or *Official Study Guide*.

listed by their name in the *Official Study Guide*: Alexander Fleming,¹⁸⁰ Dylan Thomas,¹⁸¹ Roald Dahl,¹⁸² Clement Atlee,¹⁸³ William Beveridge¹⁸⁴ and RA Butler¹⁸⁵ – with no women noted. This evidence strongly suggests such questions are not part of the test.

The only date to be memorised is the year women first received the right to vote (1918).¹⁸⁶ There are two questions – about John Constable¹⁸⁷ and Robert Burns¹⁸⁸ – that give their dates of birth and death so applicants need not know them because they are given. The only dates to be memorised are the last year England was invaded successfully (1066)¹⁸⁹ and year of D-Day (1944).¹⁹⁰

The official handbook claims that former Prime Minister Winston Churchill ‘was voted the greatest Briton of all time by the public’.¹⁹¹ This fact is noted as a true or false question in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers*.¹⁹² It is not included in the *Official Study Guide*. Churchill receives the most treatment in the official handbook in terms of column inches and he is the only person with multiple quotations (and in bold). Churchill is the only person noted as ever having received such a distinction as the greatest Briton.

The claim that Churchill is ‘the greatest Briton of all time’ as voted for by the public may suggest that this is a representative view of the public. Closer scrutiny reveals several concerns. First, the claim is qualified by ‘in 2002’.¹⁹³ This raises questions about the significance of such a vote at that time and whether this has sufficient importance for a test published over a decade later. Secondly, the official handbook provides no evidence for the claim that the public so voted in 2002. In fact, this appears to refer to a series of BBC television programmes. The public vote was by telephone: the public was charged for each vote and could vote as often as they wished or not vote at all. Ten people were pre-selected where each would have a special programme devoted to him or her and moderated by a media ‘champion’ with all proceeds to fund

¹⁸⁰ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 67.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁸⁷ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 87.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁹¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 57.

¹⁹² Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 57.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

a permanent memorial to the winner.¹⁹⁴ The vote is unscientific and no confirmation about which person the public believes might be the greatest Briton. It is deeply concerning that the result of a pay-to-vote television contest over 10 years ago is touted as a sufficiently important moment in British national life that new residents are expected to know.

The third edition includes several poems by famous British poets. These are Robert Browning's *Home Thoughts from Abroad*,¹⁹⁵ Lord Byron's *She Walks in Beauty*,¹⁹⁶ William Wordsworth's *The Daffodils*,¹⁹⁷ William Blake's *The Tyger*¹⁹⁸ and Wilfred Owen's *Anthem for Doomed Youth*.¹⁹⁹ No poems were included in previous versions of the test. Only men are mentioned. Applicants are required to know the name of the poet, the years of his birth and death, the title of the poem and about four lines from that poem. For example, applicants must know that Lord Byron died in 1824,²⁰⁰ that 'host' is the missing word in Wordsworth's *The Daffodils* where it states 'A ____ of golden daffodils'²⁰¹ and the fourth line in Owen's *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is 'Can patter out their hasty orisons'.²⁰²

The only questions in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* about poets and their poems are a true or false question about 'William Blake, Lord Byron and Robert Browning were all famous golfers';²⁰³ a question about whether *Beowulf*, *The Tyger* and *She Walks in Beauty* is a poem, film, play or novel (answer: poems)²⁰⁴ and a question about where Dylan Thomas was from (answer: Wales).²⁰⁵ The *Official Study Guide* notes that British poetry has 'a long tradition' and there is a Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.²⁰⁶ The *Guide* does not include any poems and it gives no dates of birth or death for poets. It does list poets by century.

¹⁹⁴ BBC News, 'Churchill voted greatest Briton' (24 November 2002), url: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/2509465.stm>. The top ten were (1) Churchill, (2) Brunel, (3) Diana, Princess of Wales, (4) Darwin, (5) Shakespeare, (6) Newton, (7) John Lennon, (8) Elizabeth I, (9) Nelson and (10) Oliver Cromwell. See BBC Press release, url: http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressrelease/stories/2002/10_october/19/great_britons.sht.

¹⁹⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 99.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, pp. 107, 110.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 54, 58.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 156, 160.

²⁰⁶ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 98.

One problem with the *Official Study Guide* is that it states that applicants should ‘find out’ on their own the following information: first, they should discover examples of British poetry ‘for each century since the Middle Ages’; secondly, they should be able to ‘explain the inspiration’ for British poetry; and, thirdly, they should know ‘famous lines...written by Robert Browning, Lord Byron, William Blake and Wilfred Owen’.²⁰⁷ The *Guide* lists poets by century, but this no such list appears in the corresponding handbook. The only centuries noted for poets in the handbook after the Middle Ages are the 19th and 20th centuries: the handbook does not identify poets writing in the 16th, 17th or 18th century in its section on ‘British poets’.²⁰⁸ Since test questions come from the handbook and not the *Official Study Guide*, this suggests there are no questions on the test about the century in which poets wrote because this is largely absent in the handbook. While the *Official Study Guide* says nothing about the inspiration for different poets, the handbook notes only four sources of inspiration: ‘religious views’ (John Milton), ‘nature’ (William Wordsworth), ‘Scotland’ (Sir Walter Scott) and the First World War (Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon).²⁰⁹ Romantic poets, such as John Keats, Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, are noted, but their sources of inspiration are not.²¹⁰

The *Official Study Guide* claims that applicants should know ‘famous lines’ by Browning, Byron, Blake and Owen, but says nothing about what a ‘line’ is nor which should be learned.²¹¹ The *Guide* lacks a glossary and index. ‘Line’ and ‘poetry’ are not included in the handbook’s glossary and index, too. Poems by Browning, Byron, Blake and Owen are included in the handbook, but only about four lines from each.²¹²

The poet with the most lines listed (8) is Rudyard Kipling from his poem *If*.²¹³ There are no questions about Kipling in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* or *Official Study Guide*. The *Guide* says of Kipling that he ‘wrote books and poems reflecting the strengths of the Empire’ and no more.²¹⁴ The handbook states the poem *If* ‘has often been voted among the UK’s favourite poems’.²¹⁵ There is no evidence provided to confirm this. The BBC ran a competition in 2009 to find Britain’s favourite poet. This was won by T S Eliot and

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 99.

²⁰⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 99.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 99.

²¹² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 99–100.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 52.

²¹⁴ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, pp. 61–2.

²¹⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 52.

Kipling did not make the top ten.²¹⁶ However, *If* was selected in an earlier BBC competition conducted in 1995 as Britain's favourite poem.²¹⁷ It is unclear why this earlier survey merited inclusion in the handbook, but not more recent indicators. Nor is it clear what other competitions are reflected in the statement that *If* 'has often been voted' among the best British poems.

Britain's most famous author is William Shakespeare. He is listed in the *Official Study Guide* in the section 'Poets' as an author of 'sonnets' without further comment.²¹⁸ He is also included in the first and second editions of the handbook.²¹⁹ In its earlier chapter on British history, the *Guide* notes that Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon and his famous plays include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*.²²⁰ Applicants are recommended to 'find out' on their own about the 'topics' his plays 'explore'.²²¹ The handbook does not list Shakespeare in its list of nine 'notable authors and writers from Jane Austen to JK Rowling'.²²² Shakespeare is mentioned in the chapter 'A long and illustrious history' which notes the famous plays mentioned above with a line from each of five works, such as 'To be or not to be' from *Hamlet* and 'The darling buds of May' from his Sonnet 18 ('Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?' although the handbook incorrectly states this title without its question mark).²²³ Applicants would have to know more lines by all other poets whose poems are included in the handbook than lines by Shakespeare.²²⁴ However, Shakespeare receives the most attention in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* with questions about the types of literature that made Shakespeare famous (plays, sonnets),²²⁵ that he wrote the lines 'To be or not to be',²²⁶ the types of genres that made Shakespeare 'famous for writing' (plays, poems)²²⁷ and the name of two plays

²¹⁶ BBC, 'The Nation's Favourite Poet Result', url: http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/vote_results.shtml.

²¹⁷ See *The Independent*, 'Rudyard Kipling's "If" Voted Nation's Favourite Poem', 13 October 1995, url: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/rudyard-kiplings-if-voted-nations-favourite-poem-1577258.html>.

²¹⁸ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 99.

²¹⁹ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, pp. 20, 25 and Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 14.

²²⁰ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 46.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²²² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 98.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 99–100.

²²⁵ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, pp. 15, 19.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 173, 178.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 169.

he wrote (correct: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*; incorrect: *Pride and Prejudice* and *Oliver Twist*).²²⁸

The available evidence suggests that the handbook requires applicants to know far more facts than appear in the tests. Telephone numbers, websites, dates of birth and death, the century in which poets wrote and lines from select poems are all among the about 3,000 facts found in the handbook and which may not appear in any test.

Mistakes and Omissions

One mistake is the aforementioned omission of women that contributes to the significant gender imbalance found in the third edition. There are also typographical errors²²⁹ and errors of omission, such as inclusion of phone numbers for the House of Commons, Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament, but not the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont in Belfast.²³⁰

Other mistakes include information about obtaining a National Insurance number. The previous test included a sample test which had a question about obtaining this number. The problem with the question was that the 'correct' answer became factually untrue, but remained part of the test. The third edition states that 'If you have permission to work in the UK, you will need to telephone the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to arrange to get a National Insurance number'.²³¹ However, it remains true that applicants can phone Jobcentre Plus instead to acquire their number. The government's website recommends Jobcentre Plus to acquire a National Insurance number.²³² This website does not mention the DWP.

²²⁸ Ibid., pp. 34, 38.

²²⁹ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 30: there should be a question mark at the end of 'Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day'. See also 'member of Parliament' and not 'Member of Parliament' in Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 64.

²³⁰ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 126, 136.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 152.

²³² HM Government, 'Get a National Insurance number', url: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>.

GLOSSARY

The second edition of the handbook introduced a glossary at its end. The glossary covers over 413 terms in the last 31 pages.²³³ Terms included are 'Bank Holiday',²³⁴ 'devolution',²³⁵ 'first past the post',²³⁶ and 'liberty'.²³⁷

The third edition significantly reduces the glossary to 110 entries over seven pages, a reduction of about 73%.²³⁸ The 303 terms that have been removed include 'academic course',²³⁹ 'ante-natal care',²⁴⁰ 'assessment methods (education)',²⁴¹ 'asylum',²⁴² 'bursary',²⁴³ 'code of practice',²⁴⁴ 'contraception',²⁴⁵ 'disability',²⁴⁶ 'discrimination',²⁴⁷ 'divorce',²⁴⁸ 'emergency services',²⁴⁹ 'free press',²⁵⁰ 'harassment',²⁵¹ 'higher education',²⁵² 'immigration',²⁵³ 'legal aid',²⁵⁴ 'L-plates',²⁵⁵ 'maternity leave',²⁵⁶ 'mental illness',²⁵⁷ 'mortgage',²⁵⁸ 'outpatient',²⁵⁹ 'paternity leave',²⁶⁰ 'pressure group',²⁶¹ 'racially-motivated crime',²⁶²

²³³ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 114–45.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 124.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 127.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

²³⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 164–70.

²³⁹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 116.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 117.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 121.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 122.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 124.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 128.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 129.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 135.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 138.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 139.

‘sick pay’,²⁶³ ‘torture’,²⁶⁴ ‘tuition fees’,²⁶⁵ ‘victim’²⁶⁶ and ‘welfare benefits’²⁶⁷ amongst others.

Terms retained in the new edition include ‘civil service’,²⁶⁸ ‘constituency’,²⁶⁹ ‘Houses of Parliament’,²⁷⁰ ‘to go on strike’,²⁷¹ ‘terrorism’²⁷² and ‘volunteer’.²⁷³ Other retained terms are listed without capital letters (so no longer ‘Bank Holiday’, but ‘bank holiday’²⁷⁴ although ‘General Election’²⁷⁵ is capitalised in the third edition only). Some terms have been amended slightly, such as ‘criminal offence’ defined as ‘an illegal activity...for which the criminal may be prosecuted’²⁷⁶ in the second edition has been changed to ‘criminal law’ as ‘the legal system that deals with illegal activities’²⁷⁷ in the third edition.

New terms introduced in the third edition of the handbook include ‘civil war’,²⁷⁸ ‘House (history)’ defined as ‘a family (for example, House of York)’²⁷⁹ ‘illegal’,²⁸⁰ ‘medieval/Middle Ages’,²⁸¹ ‘Pale (history)’²⁸² ‘Protestants’ (note: Roman Catholics and other religious affiliations are not included although mentioned in the handbook²⁸³),²⁸⁴ ‘rural’,²⁸⁵ ‘sonnet’²⁸⁶ and ‘*The Phone Book*’.²⁸⁷

The rationale provided for including terms is unchanged in the recent editions. The third edition states that the glossary ‘will help readers to understand the meanings of key words that appear in this handbook’.²⁸⁸ This is similar to

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 142.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 143.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 144.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 145.

²⁶⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 165.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 170.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 166.

²⁷⁶ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 123.

²⁷⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 166.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 168.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid., pp. 76–7.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 170.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 164.

what is stated in the second edition.²⁸⁹ Many terms that have been excluded in the third edition relate to education, health care and housing. Their exclusion from the glossary is consistent with their absence from the main text.

It remains unclear whether there has been some effort by the Home Office to investigate which terms should be included in the glossary to benefit applicants. Their presence appears linked only to their inclusion in the main text of the handbook. There is evidence noted above that there has been little, if any, consultation with new citizens who have immigrated. It would be useful to consult with these persons to learn more about how current information might be improved and perhaps expanded in general and, more specifically, the terms that could be more usefully included in a glossary of this kind.

CONCLUSION: TWELVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The third edition of the *Life in the United Kingdom* test is in urgent need of reform. A new, fourth edition of the test should satisfy these twelve recommendations:

1. **The relevant texts should retain their reader-friendly format.**
2. **The test should retain its broad coverage.** The inclusion of British history and culture is a welcome addition to the test's coverage. This report does not recommend the test cover additional or fewer areas.
3. **Each edition should make clear the date from which it is the official source for the test.** This will help avoid the problem of there being in circulation at the same time different handbooks published by the Home Office as the only 'official' sourcebook for use on the test.
4. **All information for each edition of the test should be published concurrently.** This will help avoid the problem of applicants failing to have relevant information before sitting the test. The recommendation is that the handbook and supplemental texts should be published at the same time rather than spread out over several months.
5. **All test information should be consistent in their content and format.** Current texts differ in information provided and their format. Greater care should be taken to ensure uniformity across related texts to avoid unnecessary confusion. This includes providing photographic credits where necessary.
6. **All information should be revised to correct errors and omissions.** There are typographical and other errors that should be corrected. There are also important omissions that should be addressed. Applicants should

²⁸⁹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 115.

know the number of MPs and MEPs if they must still know the number of members in the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly. Alternatively, there should be some clear rationale for this apparent inconsistency. Likewise, the UK Supreme Court should be included in a new, fourth edition if it remains required for applicants to know about other courts. Other omissions should also be corrected. For example, if applicants should know there are regional dialects in the UK, then there should be some examples of them. Furthermore, if applicants should know specific telephone numbers or websites, 999 must be included.

7. **All information should be revised to address imbalances.** There is a clear gender imbalance in the third edition that should be corrected in the next edition. Other similar imbalances should be investigated and corrected where found.
8. **The official handbook should become a complete resource for information about the test.** The *Life in the UK* test examines information presented in the official handbook alone. The information that will be tested, in fact, should be clearly presented. The official handbook should contain more information about the test format and what applicants might expect in terms of the kinds of questions asked and advice on test preparation. It should not be necessary to purchase additional supplemental texts – as is the case at present – to ascertain the test format and gain advice on test preparation.
9. **The official handbook should include information that is not tested and clearly stated as such.** Information that may be useful, but not required for the test, should be included in the handbook, but clearly identified as such in a preface and/or appendix. This information includes not only the glossary, but also important telephone numbers, postal addresses and websites. It might further include important historical dates and popular lines from British poets.
10. **The imbalance between chapters should be corrected.** Chapters are presented in widely varying lengths. This should be corrected in their redesign. This should be undertaken with a view towards each having greater equality of representation on the test. This change would overcome the current imbalance whereby an applicant need only study some chapters and not others to pass the test comfortably.
11. **There should be a proper consultation with persons who have sat the *Life in the United Kingdom* test.** No such effective consultation has appeared to take place. The very recent and brief survey from The Stationery Office is problematic and should be corrected. It might be useful to have evidence from applicants about their views. This could reveal unrecognized omissions or problems that should be addressed.

12. There should be more evidence found to inform the future of this test.

The *Life in the United Kingdom* test has become an integral part of British immigration policy. But what purpose should it serve? What evidence can be found to support whether or not the test fulfils its purpose?

To conclude, the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement published its final report in 2018. It quotes from my evidence to them:

Professor Brooks was scathing in his criticism of the [test] book, stating: ‘The test is regularly seen as the test for British citizenship that few British citizens can pass, with many migrants seeing it as an opportunity by the Home Office to extract increasingly more expensive fees through a test of random trivia meant to make more fail.’ We agree. The current test seems to be, and to be regarded as, a barrier to acquiring citizenship rather than a means of creating better citizens.²⁹⁰

The Select Committee goes on to recommend an Advisory Group launching a public consultation in redrafting a new test, accepting several of the recommendations above.

Six months or more later there is still no action or response from government beyond agreement the test must be reformed. This chapter spells out why, where and how. The *Life in the UK* test can serve an important role for immigration purposes, but only if the above recommendations are enacted in full without any further delay.

²⁹⁰ See House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement, p. 116 (para. 468).