

New citizens, you need to...

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- * Complete an online tutorial and quiz
- * Take a half-day tour to key national institutions
- * Have a sharing session with grassroots leaders
- * Complete entire programme within two months

All would-be citizens aged between 16 and 60 will now have to undergo a compulsory orientation programme before they can attain the pink identity card.

As part of the newly launched Singapore Citizenship (SC) Journey, they have to complete an online tutorial and quiz, a half-day tour to key national institutions and a sharing session with grassroots leaders.

And they must go through the entire programme within two months or risk having their citizenship approval withdrawn.

The new requirement, which is intended to help newcomers integrate and adjust to life here, applies to applicants who receive their approval-in-principle for citizenship from Feb 28.

Details of the SC Journey were shared at a briefing this week by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), which handles immigration and population policies.

Said an NPTD spokesman: 'It is a structured naturalisation process that will help all new citizens to better appreciate and understand the fundamentals of Singapore society and our values.'

Analysts say the move could go some way towards allaying concerns among Singaporeans that the newcomers are not doing enough to integrate and contribute to society.

The idea to have such a programme was first mooted by the Government in 2009 as the number of new citizens grew.

The number of foreigners granted citizenship yearly has grown from 13,209 in 2006 to a peak of 19,928 in 2009. It dropped to 18,758 last year.

Under the new programme, would-be citizens must complete the online tutorial and quiz, known as the Singapore Citizenship e-Journey.

The tutorial, available only in English, consists of five modules covering topics such as national symbols, governance and defence. After each module, they have to answer seven questions correctly before they can move on to the next.

They are, however, allowed an unlimited number of attempts to clear the quiz.

The rest of the programme includes a half-day tour to the National Museum of Singapore, the Urban Redevelopment Authority's City Gallery and Parliament House, as well as a sharing session with grassroots leaders.

Malaysian Tan Ann Nee, 36, who went on the tour with her husband and son on Thursday, said: 'I've lived here since 1997, so I already know a lot of things. But it was fun and interesting, especially the visit to Parliament.'

Ms Yoon Joo, 31, a South Korean, said: 'It's useful, and it's not much to expect new citizens to invest half a day to discover more about the country that will be their new home.'

Singapore Management University political observer Eugene Tan said the SC Journey may help address concerns that new citizens are not doing enough to integrate.

But some feel the online quiz falls short of a citizenship test proposed by some.

Deputy Prime Minister Wong Kan Seng revealed in Parliament this month that a citizenship test was considered, but it was felt that a test may not accurately assess or ensure the long-term commitment of new citizens.

Dr Leong Chan Hoong, a research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said some Singaporeans may feel that the SC Journey lacks rigorous assessment, but added: 'I think it is important to bear in mind that this is not a test but a rite of passage, a learning process for would-be Singaporeans.'

'Not everyone can arrive to be a 'proper' Singaporean if we apply the same citizenship criteria in judging ourselves.'