

Elements of Program Quality for Adult Citizenship Education

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines adult citizenship education as follows: “Adult citizenship education provides the content knowledge and English language skills needed to prepare for naturalization.”

USCIS has identified eight Elements of Program Quality (Elements) that outline the basic components of an adult citizenship education program:

Element 1: Program Planning and Outcomes

Element 2: Instructional Staff Recruitment and Professional Development

Element 3: Curriculum

Element 4: Instruction

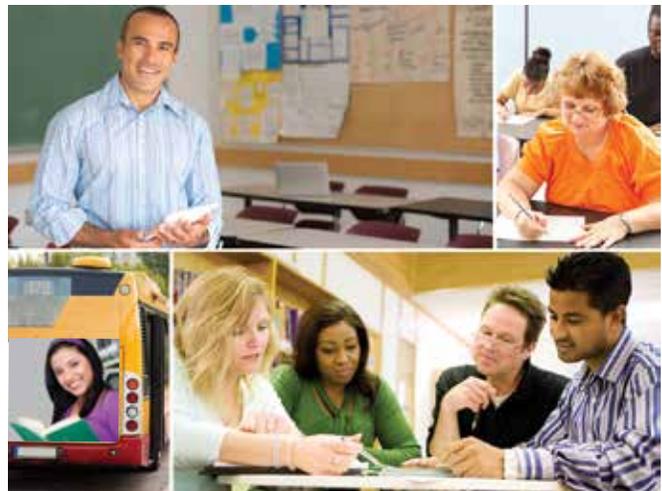
Element 5: Learner Assessment

Element 6: Learner Recruitment, Orientation, and Retention

Element 7: Support Services

Element 8: Program Environment

USCIS developed the Elements with a panel of adult education experts and based them on state and federal standards for adult education. They provide a general framework for preparing permanent residents for the civics and English components of the naturalization interview and test. Program administrators and teachers can use these Elements when designing, enhancing, or evaluating their adult citizenship education programs.



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

Elements of Program Quality for Adult Citizenship Education

Element 1: Program Planning and Outcomes

The Program Planning and Outcomes Element outlines basic management structures that an adult citizenship education program can use. These include program planning, personnel structures, target population interaction, and measuring program effectiveness.



1a: The program has a strategic planning process that focuses on continuous improvement.

1. The program has a written mission statement, goals, and a strategic plan for implementing an adult citizenship education program. This may be included in the overall adult education plan.
 2. The plan addresses internal and external stakeholders, learners, program staff, and community needs.
 3. The plan contains specific program performance targets for serving prospective citizens in the community.
 4. The plan contains program goals and progress toward those goals is frequently reviewed.
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1b: The program defines its management and personnel structure.

1. The personnel structure clearly states titles, roles, and responsibilities of all staff (e.g., an organizational chart).
 2. The program communicates and explains the management structure to all program staff.
 3. The program maintains sufficient personnel to coordinate and implement all program activities.
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1c: The program responds to the needs of the target population.

1. The program conducts periodic assessments of the target immigrant community to identify changing adult citizenship education needs and required services.
 2. The program develops and maintains connections with immigrant services, local government agencies, and community-based organizations (CBOs).
 3. The program has established a process for using input from meetings, surveys, and other evaluation measures to change program practices to improve outcomes.
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1d: The program has a process for collecting and analyzing data to measure program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

1. The program uses a variety of evaluation instruments to collect qualitative and quantitative data.
 2. The program accesses current sources of demographic data (e.g., census data) to describe the demographics of its target citizenship education population.
 3. The program trains staff to use the data collection instruments.
 4. The program establishes specific timelines for completing evaluation tasks.
 5. The program analyzes the data, including comparisons of the target population and the actual population it serves with respect to age, country of origin, educational background, and other variables that relate to citizenship education and outcomes.
 6. The program compares its actual performance with targeted performance in its strategic plan (e.g., pre- and post-testing).
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Element 2: Instructional Staff Recruitment and Professional Development

Adult citizenship education is a discipline that requires knowledge of English as a Second Language (ESL), U.S. history, U.S. government, geography, and the naturalization process. An instructor must also have the expertise or skills to put all of those fields together in a coherent lesson.



The Instructional Staff Recruitment and Professional Development Element describes standards and qualifications for recruiting instructional staff and providing systemic professional development opportunities.

- 2a: The adult citizenship education program uses identified standards or qualifications to recruit instructional staff.
1. The program's job announcements indicate minimum educational qualifications and professional experience.
 2. The program selects instructional staff by using a standardized process that reflects expected qualifications (e.g., education level, professional certifications, teaching credentials, work experience).
 3. The program seeks to recruit instructional staff from local communities if possible.
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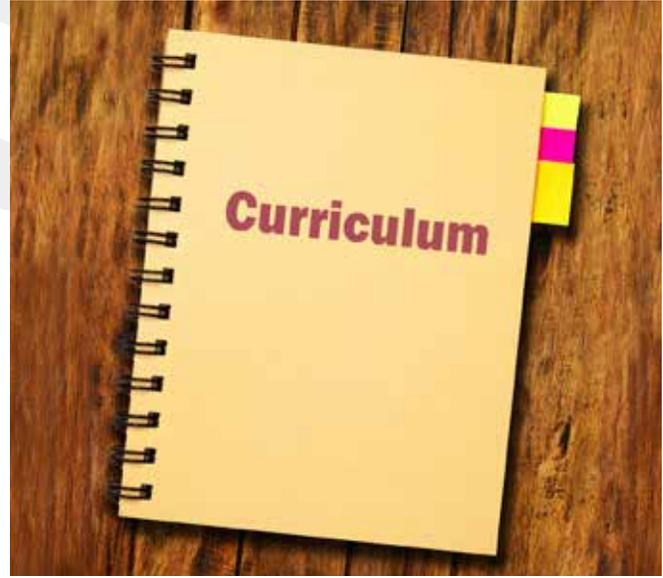
2b: The program offers and promotes systemic and ongoing professional development activities.

1. The program provides orientation for new instructional staff that focuses on integrating citizenship content with literacy and language development.
 2. The program provides resources, including training materials, related to integrating citizenship-based content and English language skills.
 3. The program makes professional development resources easily accessible to instructional staff.
 4. The program consistently updates training materials and other resources.
 5. The program uses a variety of approaches for professional development in order to address the needs of individual teachers and volunteers as well as the citizenship program in general.
 6. The program conducts periodic needs assessments of instructional staff to identify changing professional development needs, and schedules relevant training sessions as required.
 7. The program uses a professional development assessment plan to collect and analyze data on the relevance, accessibility, and quality of professional development activities (e.g., staff evaluation forms, surveys, feedback) and makes changes as needed.
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Element 3: Curriculum

A solid curriculum is the foundation of a highly effective citizenship education program. The Curriculum Element describes an ideal adult citizenship education curriculum. This Element is based on current theories and practices in the fields of citizenship education and second language acquisition for adults. It addresses course syllabi, course goals, measurable objectives, outcomes, and evaluation measures.



3a: The program bases its written curriculum on the content of the naturalization interview and test.

1. The program includes course goals, measurable objectives and outcomes, and evaluation measures in its written curriculum.
2. The program provides course syllabi that list the topics that will be taught within a given timeframe (e.g., a semester).
3. The program bases its written curriculum on the knowledge and skills needed to pass the naturalization test.
4. The program organizes its written curriculum into themes based on appropriate U.S. history, U.S. government, integrated civics, and Form N-400, *Application for Naturalization* content.
5. The program's written curriculum incorporates **citizenship foundation skills and knowledge clusters** and resources established by USCIS.
6. The program's written curriculum differentiates instruction for diverse cultural backgrounds, learning styles, prior formal education experience, and English language proficiency levels.
7. The program's written curriculum reflects the current theories and practices of citizenship education and second language acquisition for adults.
8. The program's written curriculum instructional materials are easily accessible and up to date.

3b: The program regularly revises its curriculum to adapt to learner needs and current naturalization requirements.

1. The program reviews the written curriculum on a regular basis and revises as needed.
 2. The program adjusts the content as necessary to reflect current naturalization requirements.
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Element 4: Instruction

The Instruction Element describes instructional methods used to help learners gain English language skills and learn the citizenship content required for the naturalization interview and test.



4a: The program uses instructional materials that are up-to-date and easily accessible.

1. The program uses a curriculum and course syllabi to guide instructional staff.
 2. The program uses lesson plans, lesson and activity ideas, and student handouts.
 3. The program uses an adult citizenship textbook series to guide instruction.
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4b: The program promotes contextualized instruction.

1. The program focuses on developing proficiency in the citizenship foundation skills and knowledge required to understand U.S. history, U.S. government, geography, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
 2. The program's instructional activities integrate English language and literacy skills with citizenship content.
 3. The program seeks to develop listening and speaking skills for the naturalization interview.
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4c: The program employs a variety of strategies and activities to engage learners.

1. The program uses a variety of instructional approaches and activities, based on the needs of learners.
 2. The program provides multiple levels of instruction to accommodate the different skill levels of learners.
 3. The program's instructional activities provide opportunities for students to engage in interactive activities and group work.
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4d: The program integrates technology into instruction.

1. The program uses instructional activities that let learners develop competency in various technologies.
 2. The program uses multimedia platforms to enhance and individualize instruction.
 3. The program helps learners develop digital literacy skills, including how to access citizenship resources (e.g., [USCIS Citizenship Resource Center](#)).
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Element 5: Learner Assessment

Assessment is a crucial and integral part of any adult education program. The Learner Assessment Element outlines how to assess and place learners into appropriate course levels, and how to measure progress in citizenship content and English language skills.



5a: The program uses assessments to place learners in appropriate levels of instruction.

1. The program uses at least one nationally normed standardized test (e.g., TABE, BEST Plus, CASAS) to identify learners' initial placement levels according to the National Reporting System (NRS).
2. The program uses multiple measures to assess language skills, knowledge of citizenship content, and related skills.
3. The program has a process to inform instructional staff of learners' initial proficiency levels.

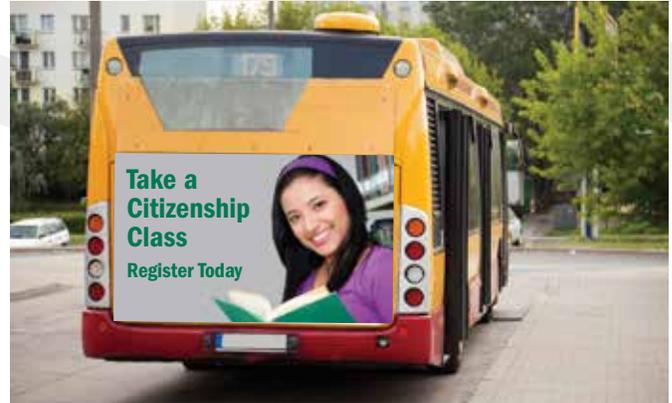
5b: The program assesses learner progress toward mastering the citizenship content and related English language skills needed for the naturalization interview and test.

1. The program uses multiple measures (e.g., unit tests, writing samples, checklists, applied performance assessments) to assess learner progress in both citizenship content and language skills.
2. The program uses a uniform system for collecting and reporting data on learner progress and outcomes.
3. The program provides multiple opportunities for alternative assessment through the use of simulated or mock interviews.
4. The program provides instructional staff with written guidelines on how to conduct ongoing learner assessment.
5. Program staff document both formal and informal assessment results.

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Element 6: Learner Recruitment, Orientation, and Retention

The Learner Recruitment, Orientation, and Retention Element describes how to market a program to prospective students, obtain relevant contact and background information, and retain students. It also offers strategies for publicizing the program and its services.



6a: The program has a written plan to recruit learners.

1. The program specifies procedures for identifying and recruiting potential citizenship students using community demographic data if possible.
2. The program uses a range of outreach and recruitment strategies such as personal contacts, outreach to community groups, networking with CBOs, peer referrals, advertising through print, broadcast media, and electronic lists and websites.
3. The program reaches out to a wide range of agencies and organizations in its recruitment efforts (e.g., CBOs, employers, faith-based organizations, social services, schools).
4. Recruitment materials and activities are linguistically and culturally appropriate for different subgroups.
5. When designing recruitment strategies, the program enlists insights and feedback from learners and community leaders.

6b: The program has a recruitment assessment plan.

1. The program documents the number of learners who enter the program as a result of recruitment strategies.
2. The program documents what community groups are or are not present at recruitment events and whether those groups could be helpful in reaching out to potential learners.
3. The program conducts periodic reviews of recruitment strategies and makes appropriate adjustments with input from learners and community groups.

6c: The program has a uniform intake and registration process.

1. The program has written guidelines for intake and orientation.
 2. The program uses appropriate intake strategies to determine if learner background and expectations match what the program can provide.
 3. The program has a process for determining learners' barriers to successful participation and referring learners to specialized support services.
 4. The program provides an orientation session that provides learners with information on the course goals, objectives, and materials as well as expectations for learners.
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6d: The program employs strategies to retain learners.

1. The program analyzes enrollment, scheduling, and attendance procedures to identify possible factors to improve retention.
 2. The program schedules classes to accommodate learners waiting to enter the program (e.g., waiting list, orientation).
 3. The program has a system for contacting learners who do not participate regularly and has strategies for helping these learners return.
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Element 7: Support Services

The Support Services Element describes how to run a referral system for support services, maintain meaningful relationships with agencies providing these services, and ensure confidentiality and proper legal referrals.



7a: The program maintains a referral system to help learners access support services.

1. The program uses a needs assessment to identify and document potential special needs such as child care, transportation, translation, or legal services.
2. The program has a system, such as a referral database or list of support agencies, that identifies the services that individual learners may be eligible for.
3. The program shares information on available social services and organizations, especially during orientation and individual sessions.
4. The program provides program staff with written guidelines on when and how to make appropriate referrals.

7b: The program maintains relationships with agencies that provide support services.

1. The program has written plans for collaborating with local social service agencies or organizations.
2. The program collaborates with local and national agencies or organizations that serve immigrants.
3. The program identifies staff in collaborating agencies that are able to communicate with limited English proficient (LEP) students in their native languages.
4. If not provided through the agency, the program collaborates with local ESL programs to provide services to students functioning at a lower English language skill level.

7c: The program ensures the confidentiality of learners' personal information and records.

1. The program uses a written plan that lists the procedures for ensuring confidentiality of learners' personal information and records.
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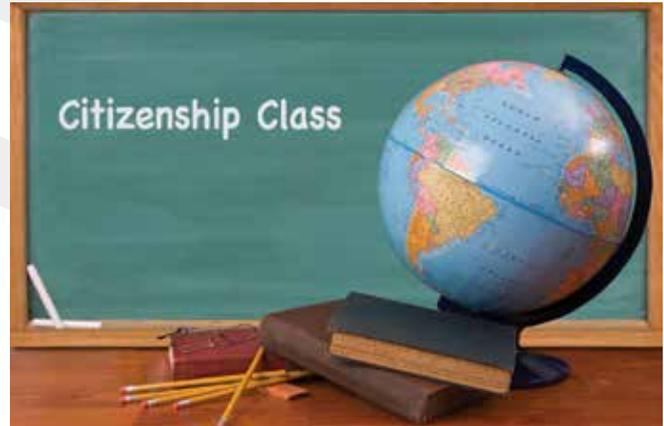
7d: The program uses Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) recognized organizations and accredited representatives for legal referrals.

1. The program maintains a list of BIA recognized organizations and accredited representatives or organizations that provide legal advice and support services.
 2. The program has written guidelines for program staff that describe when and how to make legal referrals.
 3. The program has written guidelines to prevent program staff from engaging in the unauthorized practice of immigration law (UPIIL).
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Element 8: Program Environment

The Program Environment Element is an important consideration for any adult education program. It addresses the physical safety and accessibility of students and staff and helps staff establish an optimal adult learning environment.



8a: The program maintains a safe physical and adult-appropriate learning environment.

1. The program's building and classroom furnishings are in good repair.
2. The program's learning environment has adequate ventilation and appropriate lighting.
3. The program displays facility inspection reports or certificates.
4. The program posts signage for emergency exits in languages appropriate for the population it serves.
5. The program has a schedule for emergency drills.
6. The program provides training on emergency communication and exit procedures.
7. The program provides sufficient access to security personnel as needed.

8b: The program provides reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

1. The program provides access to its building and facilities for learners with disabilities (e.g., handicapped parking and restrooms, ramps).
2. The program provides classroom accommodations as needed for learners with disabilities (e.g., interpreters, magnifiers, enlarged print texts).
3. The program identifies compliance areas and has a process to monitor compliance such as a checklist.

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External Resources

1. Teacher or Program Guides

Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

Information to support states in developing and using content standards to improve the quality of adult education programs. Includes examples of content standards for reading and English language acquisition from a variety of states and organizations.

Citizenship Teacher Tutorials

Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC)

Tutorials for teachers on citizenship instruction, professional development, ESL, and English Language/Civics (EL/Civics). Includes downloadable handouts.

Curriculum Framework for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and English Language/Civics (EL/Civics) Administration

Utah State Office of Education, Adult Education Services

Provides information on standards for English language instruction for LEP adults, learner and classroom needs assessments, benchmarks, and developing a curriculum framework.

EL/Civics “How-To” Manual

CUNY Bronx Community College

Instructions for establishing and managing an EL/Civics program. Includes information on program development and management, curriculum, and using technology.

Florida Department of Education English Literacy and Civics Education Instructor Handbook

Florida Department of Education

Handbook for teachers in adult ESL programs that includes lesson-planning tools, teaching strategies, and a list of state, national, and federal resources.

Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in West Virginia

West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development

ESL instructor resource that includes information on intake forms, needs assessment and screening, standardized skill assessment, curriculum, and ESL resources.

2. Citizenship Education Program Development

Citizenship Instruction

Minnesota Literacy Council

Provides teachers, volunteers, and organizations with resources to establish or improve citizenship classes. Includes information on instructional resources for citizenship, volunteer resources, legal and application resources, and starting a citizenship education program.

Toolkit for BIA Recognition and Accreditation

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)

Provides general information on BIA accreditation and recognition, preparing and applying for BIA accreditation, considerations for practice after BIA accreditation, and immigrant community education materials.

3. Naturalization Interview and Test Preparation

Integrating Civics and U.S. Citizenship Education into the Adult ESOL Classroom

Rappahannock Area Regional Adult Education, Committee on U.S. Citizenship Education

Provides curriculum and classroom activities for beginning, intermediate, and advanced ESOL proficiency levels. Includes activities for incorporating vocabulary from *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization*, naturalization test question topics, and corresponding activities.

Orienting a New Citizenship Student

Minnesota Literacy Council

Provides information to share with new citizenship students before beginning class. Includes information to help new students prepare for the classroom and understand *Form N-400, Application for Naturalization*.

4. Assessment

National Reporting System (NRS)

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

Information on the NRS outcome-based reporting system for the state-administered, federally-funded adult education program.

NRS Implementation Guidelines

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

Measures and methods for the NRS for adult education.