PASSPORTS (GENERAL HANDLING)

1. Acknowledgements

1.1 Post Room will acknowledge passports, or enclosures of a similar nature, accompanying an application. Where documents are received direct in ICD, they should be acknowledged on receipt, if the sender has requested this specifically.

2. Marking of passports and police registration certificates with file number

2.1 The Home Office file number should be endorsed in ink on the inside of the back cover of the passport (or alternative identity document) and police registration certificate which is sent to the Border and Immigration Agency. In some instances this will already have been done by other Border and Immigration Agency staff but, if not, it should be done by the caseworker.

3. Circulation of passports

3.1 **Officers should bear in mind that passports are valuable documents and that considerable inconvenience may be caused to holders of passports which are lost or cannot quickly be found. After being dealt with in the Post Room, a passport should always be in one of two places: on the person's file or in a passport "bank".**

3.2 **It is important that passports received in CMUs are placed on the correct file as soon as possible. The linking of passports should therefore take precedence over other linking (except call notes and other correspondence requesting the return of documents - see 5.3 below).**

3.3 A passport on file should be placed in one of the special buff document pouches, together with any other original documents that are to be returned to the applicant in due course, and not in any other kind of pouch or enclosure cover. All other non-returnable papers, including copies, should be tagged to the file in the usual way. Worn pouches should be discarded and replaced with new ones, except where they have been stamped or annotated to record the receipt of documents. The pouch should bear the person's name and file number, and care should be taken to ensure that any "old" details on the envelope are deleted. The flap of the pouch should be securely pinned so that the passport cannot fall out, and it should be tagged firmly **on the top** of the right hand side of the file. If further correspondence is received, it should be placed underneath the document pouch. The file jacket should have a "PASSPORT ENCLOSED" flag attached.

3.4 A passport should always accompany the person's file when it is submitted to a Senior Officer or elsewhere in the Border and Immigration Agency. However, except as indicated below, a passport should never accompany a file that is being sent outside the Border and Immigration Agency. The exception to this rule is where a passport is to be returned to the holder through a Member of Parliament when it should be placed in the pouch of the Minister's case file.

4. **Custody of passports**

4.1 Each CMU should have a passport "bank" consisting of one or more trays or a drawer of a filing cabinet in which the passports should be stored in one of the special grid envelopes marked "PASSPORT" in alphabetical or file numerical order. When a passport is taken from a file the envelope should be checked to see that it is endorsed with the holder's name and file number. A note should be attached to the envelope showing the date of application and the marking for the file (including the date).

4.2 A monthly check should be made of every passport in the bank. Where the marking on the front of the passport envelope shows that the file has not been returned to the group within a reasonable time, the passport should be referred to the appropriate caseworker to consider whether enquiries should be made to discover when it will be returned (i.e. to ensure that it has not been mislaid). It should not normally be necessary to keep a passport for a lengthy period. However, if a case is likely to take some time to resolve, it may be preferable to return the passport. If this is done, a PASSPORT RECORD form should first be completed, or a photocopy made, and held in the "bank" in place of the passport pending the return of the file.

5. **Return of passports**

5.1 Before returning a passport to an applicant for any reason, the outstanding application should, if at all possible, be decided on the basis of information already available. If it is not possible to reach a decision, either a photocopy should be made or full details noted on a PASSPORT RECORD form. This should avoid the need to see the passport again later in the consideration process.

5.2 **WHERE A REQUEST IS MADE FOR THE RETURN OF DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE DECISION TO GRANT OR REFUSE HAS BEEN TAKEN, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT STAFF DEAL WITH IT WITHOUT DELAY, ESPECIALLY WHEN A PASSPORT IS NEEDED FOR URGENT TRAVEL.**

5.3 If the passport cannot be located, the applicant (or the person requesting the return of the passport) should be informed of the situation and the steps being taken to find the passport.

5.4 Where no prior request for return of passports has been received, documents should be returned immediately before grant action 1 or, in the case of unsuccessful applications, at the time of refusal action.

5.5 Separate arrangements apply to the return of Home Office Travel Documents to the Travel Documents Section. See "**HOME OFFICE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**".

6. **Loss of contact with applicants**

6.1 **Chapter 6** explains that, when an application has been made, it must be

determined either by grant or refusal. Paragraph 5 of **this** Instruction further explains that any documents, including passports, should be returned immediately before grant action 1 or at the time of refusal action. If the package is subsequently returned to us by the Post Office, all reasonable steps should be taken to trace the holder. In naturalisation cases we should try to obtain a current address by contacting the referees, employers etc, preferably by telephone. It will not normally be possible to make these enquiries in registration cases, although any promising leads should be followed up.

6.2 If contact cannot be made, the passports should be removed and placed in a special passport envelope as described in paragraph 4 above. The flap of the envelope should be **stapled** and **tagged securely** onto the right-hand side of the file and a note worded as follows pinned to the envelope: "DOCUMENT(S) WITHIN TO BE RETAINED ON FILE". A "PASSPORT ENCLOSED" flag should again be attached to the file jacket. The file should be clearly minuted to show when this action took place and why, and then laid by.

7. Lost passports

7.1 The only reasons for passports being lost within the Agency are failure to comply with the instructions for general handling of passports or carelessness. Where a passport cannot be traced after a thorough search within the CMU and every other likely space, consideration should be given to arranging a local or special search. The applicant or representative should be notified (see paragraph 5.3 above).

7.2 If the holder of a passport claims compensation for its loss within the Agency, the procedure in the instruction on ex gratia payments (**Chapter 56**) should be followed.

8. Forged passports

8.1 RESTRICTED - NOT AVAILABLE FOR DISCLOSURE

8.2 Caseworkers should always be aware of the possibility that forged or falsified passports can be used to support an application for citizenship. A completely forged passport is a rarity: a passport is more usually falsified by:

- changing the photograph **or**
- altering personal particulars; **or**
- removing or substituting pages

8.3 Any forgeries or falsifications will usually have been identified by the IO at the port of entry, but caseworkers should remain alert to the possibility of receiving them, and any suspect passport should be referred to INPD(L) Policy Section (EOP1) who will liaise with the Immigration Service.

8.4 If caseworkers suspect that documents or endorsements have been forged or falsified, reference should be made to the Instruction on "**FORGERY AND**

FRAUD".