UTS International Global Exchange

Sojourner Guide
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Planning for Exchange

Congratulations on your decision to go on Exchange.

You probably know already that there is a lot of planning to do as you work with your Faculty and your exchange university to get your subjects approved and prepare to travel. You are probably already doing some thinking around the practical aspects of exchange:

- planning what to take
- organizing travel
- preparing family and friends and you for departure
- anticipating what life will be like in your host country and doing some reading to find out,
- exploring the differences in study at your host university

The time-lapse between putting in your application and receiving confirmation of a place at your chosen university is a great time to be doing preparation around living and studying in another culture. To make productive use of this time we have provided you with information and activities to assist you to prepare for the intercultural experience of exchange whilst you tackle the practical aspects.

The aim of the information is to support you in making successful cultural adjustments whilst on exchange. It focuses on understanding culture, basic cultural differences and their potential impacts. Immersing yourself in the information should provide you with insights into the skills, attitudes, and behaviors you will find useful, regardless of your exchange destination.

It will support you to realize the extent to which your behavior and preferences are based on core cultural values and assumptions. These assumptions can have strong effects on how you react to those you meet abroad and, just as importantly, how they might react to you. Since the ways people think and act in different countries may differ significantly from your home culture, the more you know about what culture is and how it works, the better you will be able to manage and adapt to a new cross-cultural context.

To assist your exploration of the information there are a few exercises and self-assessment tasks. These are designed to support you learn something about your own cultural values, attitudes to different ways of doing things and communication styles. A number of these activities have been taken from the open access website developed by the University of the Pacific, School of International Studies, Stockton, CA USA. Referenced as:

La Brack, B. 2001-2004, What’s Up with Culture, -
http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/ University of the Pacific, School of International Studies, Stockton, CA USA.
When you have worked through the selection of activities here you might like to go to the website. It includes a wider range of activities and information. It also includes returning home information and activities that you will find invaluable as your exchange comes to an end and you are prepare to re-adjust to your own cultural context.

In addition to these notes we suggest that you:

- Read as much as you can about your exchange country, its culture(s), education system and lifestyles.

- Check out what you read with students from your intended exchange country and, where possible, your exchange university. Most students are really willing to share lots of ideas and issues and would enjoy your support and friendship.

- Take the opportunity to become a Tandem Partner, join Salad Bowl or other appropriate UTS clubs. You might even make friends from your host university…………………….. and for life.

**Activity - Thinking About Exchange**

Later in these notes we will suggest that you keep a journal as a way of documenting and reflecting on the things that happen on exchange so that you develop a deeper understanding of your exchange culture and your developing inter-cultural skills. We suggest that you get a loose-leaf folder or exercise book with a hard cover and write in it on a regular basis.

To start your “journal”, (which should be personal and private) you might like to write your responses to the questions below. Your responses should reflect how you feel right now, ahead of starting your exchange. Documenting these early feelings and understandings may assist you later in assessing some of the changes as a result of your exchange experience. So take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

1. What are the five things that you are most looking forward to in regard to your Exchange?
2. What are the five things that currently worry you most about going overseas?
3. What are the five things (people places, activities, etc) you believe that you will miss most from home when you are on Exchange?
4. What are the five things you believe you will miss least from home when you are on Exchange?
5. What are five things you expect to achieve through your exchange experience?

**How did you go?**

I hope that it was an effective experience and gave you some food for thought around which you might need to do some preparation before heading out on exchange.

**Now read on to affirm and extend your understandings of culture and your own cultural identity……………..**
The Intercultural Experience
(with attribute to Susan King)

Living and studying in a new culture (and possibly negotiating a new language) is a very different experience from being a tourist or a traveler. You are really a ‘sojourner’, that is, someone who is more than a traveler passing through but who is also going to leave and return home.

A lot of studies have been carried out on the ‘sojourner’ experience and these can be helpful to you in understanding more about the transition from one culture to a new one. This is primarily a learning experience as you develop a deeper understanding of another culture (and language) and cross-cultural skills to negotiate it.

Culture learning and Intercultural skills

The main goal of the exchange program is for students to become immersed in another culture and through their study program and interaction with the local cultures to develop - knowledge, understanding and skills. Research has been carried out with overseas students, international development workers and business managers to try to establish criteria for intercultural effectiveness. The intercultural abilities that have been revealed in this research include characteristics such as:

- flexibility
- adaptability to new situations
- tolerance, especially of ambiguity and difference
- diplomacy and negotiation skills
- language and communication skills

In addition successful sojourners respect local culture, try to understand it, socialise with local people, and have realistic expectations of what they can achieve in the time they are overseas (Kealey, 1996 in Landis and Bhagat (eds)).
**Activity:** Initial Sojourner Skills Rating

If you like you can rate yourself on these abilities using the framework below. Think about:

*Can I do this?.... How well can I do this?....* by using scale below.

4 = I already have the skill and can use it effectively  
3 = I have this skill but will need more practice to develop it  
2 = I don’t yet have this skill  
1 = This ability does not seem useful to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal dimension</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• An open mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Flexibility</td>
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<td>• Adaptability to new situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Observation/interpretation skills</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness of my own stereotypes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Willingness to challenge and move beyond stereotypes</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Willingness to listen, observe and learn</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Acceptance of differences in ways things are done</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to accept and deal with ambiguity in new settings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**How did you go?**

Did you find that you rated yourself highly on some things, moderately on others and low on one or two. Did this give you something to think about as part of your preparation? Are there some assessments that challenge you to change over the next little while?

Now if you are really brave you might like to share your assessments with a very close friend and get their reactions. Or you might like to get them to rate you so that you have a perspective on yourself from another’s point of view. It is up to you.

**Cultural “Openness” and Cultural Adjustment**

As identified above successful intercultural adjustments are developed through being flexible, keeping an open mind, a willingness to challenge your own stereotypes and to tolerate a level of ambiguity. However this is only part of the story. We also need to consider the ‘openness’ of the new culture to sojourners. This includes the extent to
which outsiders are welcomed and accepted by locals as well as the ‘distance’ of the new culture from the culture of the sojourners. For example, a sojourner from Australia with a European background may feel less distance when living in Germany where there may be a sense of familiarity with some aspects of the culture, and greater distance when living in China where the culture may seem very different.

People from different cultures often misinterpret each other’s behaviour because of learned cultural differences in the ways they perceive, interpret and evaluate social behaviours. How can you learn about another culture while living and studying in it? Kolb’s model of Experiential Learning is helpful in understanding the kinds of processes that you will go through (Kolb, 1976).

**KOLB’S MODEL OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

The learning cycle has four stages. In the first, immediate *concrete experience* forms a basis for *observation and reflection* in the second stage. These observations and reflections are assimilated in a ‘theory’ in a third stage that is *translated into action* in new situations in a fourth stage. A new cycle is then initiated.

When we come to live and work in a new culture, we usually bring with us a view of what the culture is like - presuppositions, private stereotypes etc. We also bring with us our own cultural identity or ethnocentrism. Our pre-suppositions about the new culture and also our own cultural view of reality can be challenged by concrete experiences such as attending classes in the local university, or trying to get something done in a government office. During and after these concrete experiences in the new culture, sojourners will observe and reflect on what happened. These observations and reflections may lead to the formation of a new ‘theory’ about how things work in the new culture. This new ‘theory’ may then be tried out in some way by the sojourner in the next concrete situation. In addition these reflections will assist the sojourner to learn about themselves and their own cultural influences and values as well as those of their host cultures. Thus: 12

“the role and importance of self-reflection is crucial to the intercultural
encounter as it provides a method for participants to move beyond the superficial exchange of information about the ‘other’. …” (Amita Sen Gupta, 2003 in Killick and Silver, 2004)

Problems may occur in intercultural learning when sojourners try to impose their own culturally based worldviews or cultural stereotypes on to the reality that they are experiencing rather than trying to keep an open mind in order to learn from experience. Successful intercultural learners are forward looking, using new concrete experiences as an opportunity of deepening their understanding of the new culture. Less successful intercultural learners tend to be backward looking, preferring to rely on the knowledge; presuppositions and stereotypes that they brought with them, using this knowledge to ‘confirm’ or reject their subsequent experiences.

Research into expatriates who adjust well when working in different cultures shows they are non-judgemental and non-evaluative when interpreting the behaviour of locals. They tend to make looser or less rigid appraisals and are more willing to change their perceptions and interpretations. Their concern is with description and interpretation, as opposed to the less well-adjusted expatriates who tend to seek early explanations and rapid conclusions (Williams and Bent, 1996 in Landis and Bhagat (eds)).
Activity – Discovering Aspects of your Cultural Identity and Diversity

Your cultural identity is developed over time as you are influenced by significant others in your life – initially your parents and relatives, and as you grow, by the groups to which you belong and the roles you play within them. You can explore something of your identity by thinking about the groups and roles that have had an influence on your life so far. You can then explore the kinds of values you were likely to have learned within them.

Use the diagram below to explore aspects of your own identity. In each of the shapes write key words to describe significant aspects of who you are and how you would choose to identify yourself to others (e.g., sister, university student, Polish-Australian, Catholic, environmentalist). Fill in as many circles as you can with the most significant identities you can think of.

What are the key identities you have chosen? Write them into the table below. What are some of the important values you have learned through some of these identities? Try to list at least two for each identity. For example, values from being a student might be “independence,” “respect for knowledge,” or “question authority.”

Place your answers in the spaces provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Values learned</th>
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To explore aspects of your identity further you might like to answer some of the following questions:

- If you had to pick just one circle, which would it be? Two circles? Why are these the most important parts of your cultural identity?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
• How difficult was it to fill in eight circles? What insights have you gained about yourself from this exercise?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

• Is there an identity that others don’t readily recognize in you? Is this OK? Or is it frustrating?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

• To what degree do you experience conflict between values developed through the different identities that express your cultural diversity? What impact does this have on you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

• How might the identity circles change if you were abroad? For example, did you list your nationality in one of the circles? Your social class? Did you list the languages you speak?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
• How might it feel to be seen as only one circle, such as Australian?
How might the roles you play in Australia be similar and different in your host country?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How did you go?

Did this provide you with some insights into yourself and to your identity? The answers to these questions will be explored within the Culture Awareness Sessions that are provided to assist you to prepare for Exchange. If you have not already booked for one of these sessions then check when they are on by going to the exchange websites at www.iis.uts.edu.au/iexchange and make a booking. They will be held four times each semester so that you can find a convenient session. This is important preparation for you.
DEFINING CULTURE
The Dimensions of Culture

One of the first things you encounter when you go on exchange is something that you cannot really see, but which, if you don’t understand what it is and how it works, can seriously affect how you adjust to and enjoy your time overseas. No matter how similar you feel the society is that you are going into you will experience some differences between your culture and that of your exchange country. You are likely to meet individuals whose behaviours and attitudes you can observe but who have been moulded and motivated by their prior cultural learning, just as you have been moulded by yours. You cannot see their cultures directly because feelings, judgements, and mental concepts are not always on display, although they may become evident through what people say. It is time then that we explore what culture is and general ways that cultures differ. Our first step is to try to define it.

Before going on why don’t you ring a friend (only if it is an acceptable hour) or find someone else and together try to develop a definition. When you have done some research (I hope your friends do not think you stranger than before) you might like to have a go at writing up a definition. Use the space below:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How did you go?
There are many definitions of culture depending on the purposes the definition is to serve. Compare what you have written to just two definitions we provide below:

“culture can be most broadly defined as the shared sets of values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours which are widely held by members of the host culture. A sojourner will not only need to be aware of these cultural patterns but will have to respond to them appropriately” (Kohls, L.R (2001) Survival Kit for Overseas Living. 4th Ed. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, p 21)

or

“(culture )….refers to the broadest conception about the learned knowledge that humans use to fulfill their needs and wants. It refers to the collective historical patterns, values, societal arrangements, manners, ideas, and ways of living that people have used to order their society. It is comprised of all those things we learn
as part of growing up including language, religion, beliefs about economic and social relations, political organization and legitimacy, and the thousands of "Do’s and Don'ts" society deems important that we know to become a functioning member of that group”.

To explore the concept of culture we have chosen a model of culture from “Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business” (Trompenaars, 1998). This is not a definitive model of culture, and has its limitations. However, it is a useful one when trying to understand some of the complexities of living in a new culture. Trompenaars’ research is based on business organisations and focuses on practical issues related to doing business successfully across cultures.

A Model of Culture (Trompenaars 1998:22-24)

The Layers of Culture

The outer layer: explicit products

 Explicit culture is the observable reality of the language, food, building, houses, monuments, agriculture, shrines, markets, fashions and art. They are the symbols of a deeper level of culture. Prejudices mostly start on this symbolic and observable level. We should never forget that each opinion we voice regarding explicit culture usually says more about where we came from than about the community we are judging.

The middle layer: norms and values

Explicit culture reflects deeper layers of culture, the norms and values of an individual group. Norms are the mutual sense a group has of what is “right” and “wrong”. Norms can develop on a formal level as written laws and on an informal level as social control. Values on the other hand determine the definition of “good and bad” and are therefore closely related to the ideals shared by a group.

A culture is relatively stable when the norms reflect the values of the group. When this is not the case, there will most likely be a destabilising tension.

A value serves as a criterion to determine a choice from existing alternatives. It is the concept an individual or group has regarding the desirable. For instance, in one culture people might agree with the value: “Hard work is essential to a prosperous society.” Yet the behavioural norm sanctioned by the group may be: “Do not work harder than the other members of the group because then we would all be expected to do more and would end up worse off.” Here the norm differs from the value.

It takes shared meanings of norms and values that are stable and salient for a group’s cultural tradition to be developed and elaborated.

Why have different groups of people, consciously or subconsciously, chosen different definitions of good or bad, right or wrong?
The core: assumptions about existence

To answer questions about basic differences in values between cultures it is necessary to go back to the core of human existence. The most basic value people strive for is survival.

Each has organised themselves to find the ways to deal most effectively with their environments, given their available resources. Such continuous problems are eventually solved automatically. “Culture” comes from the same root as the verb “to cultivate”, meaning to till the soil; the way people act upon nature. The problems of daily life are solved in such obvious ways that the solutions disappear from our consciousness. If they were not we would go crazy. Imagine have to concentrate on your need for oxygen every 30 seconds. The solutions disappear from our awareness, and become part of our system of absolute assumptions.

Groups of people organise themselves in such a way that they increase the effectiveness of their problem-solving processes. Because different groups of people have developed in different geographic regions, they have also formed different sets of logical assumptions.

Changes in a culture happen because people realise that certain old ways of doing things do not work any more. It is not difficult to change culture when people are aware that the survival of the community is at stake, where survival is considered desirable.

From this fundamental relationship with the (natural) environment individuals and communities take the core meaning of life. This deepest meaning has escaped from conscious questioning and has become self-evident, because it is a result of routine responses to the environment. In this sense culture is anything but nature.

Culture has been aptly compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a small visible section above the waterline and a much larger, invisible section below the water line, so culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be surmised.

To explore how the iceberg metaphor is appropriate as a way of explaining culture.

Activity: Identifying Aspects of Culture – the Iceberg

(Taken from La Brack, B. 2001-2004, What’s Up with Culture, -http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/ University of the Pacific, School of International Studies, Stockton, CA USA.)

The items that appear below are all features of culture. Keeping in mind that observable behaviors belong above the surface of the water, while the invisible aspects of culture belong below the surface use the drawing of the iceberg to make judgments about which features are observable and which are hidden. Write them into the appropriate spaces in the diagram below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facial expressions</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Nature of friendship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gestures</td>
<td>Concept of fairness</td>
<td>General world view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paintings</td>
<td>Childraising beliefs</td>
<td>Work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Understanding the natural world</td>
<td>Rules of social etiquette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday customs</td>
<td>Religious beliefs</td>
<td>Concept of personal space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Importance of time</td>
<td>Styles of dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of beauty</td>
<td>Concept of self</td>
<td>Notion of modesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating habits</td>
<td>Concept of leadership</td>
<td>Religious rituals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How did you go?

How similar is your iceberg to that shown below?

You can see that there is a relationship between those items that appear above the waterline and those that appear below it. In most cases the invisible aspects of culture influence or cause the visible ones. Religious beliefs, for example, are clearly manifest in certain holiday customs, and notions of modesty affect styles of dress.

Discussion

Surface behaviours are influenced by beneath-the-surface values and assumptions. This can partly explain why different cultural behaviours are not easily understood by the sojourner. This in combination with the tendency to interpret behaviours of others in terms of our own values and assumptions helps us to understand why communication can be more complex when working and living in a culture that is not our own.

On the one hand, culture is what makes us all human in a general sense. Every culture, past and present, has had to decide how to satisfactorily solve common human problems and concerns. Some universal categories of human activity that have been addressed for millennia by all cultures are:

- religious beliefs and the relationship of humans to the supernatural
- political power and the exercise of leadership in governance
- concepts of justice, fairness, punishment, and right conduct
- child raising and traditional processes of acculturation
• economic organization and division of labor
• rites of passage (life cycle celebrations), rituals, and ceremonies
• rules and prohibitions around marriage cohabitation and inheritance
• food preferences and rules concerning preparation and consumption
• nonverbal communication patterns and gestures
• concepts of humans' place and role in the natural world
• myths and cultural heroes to explain and commemorate core values
• dissemination of ideas about beauty, love, truth, friendship, and loyalty
• notions of modesty and age-appropriate dress styles and behavior
• ideas of what time is and its relative importance
• concerns about individual versus collective privilege and responsibility
• conceptions about personal space and privacy
• definitions of gender and associated strengths, duties, and roles

Specific cultures have determined how to deal with these issues by developing ideas and constructing their patterns from a wide range of possible alternatives. Most of those choices were made a long time ago. Members of the culture adopted them as part of defining who they are and those patterns represent some of the knowledge a member of their group must know to belong. The original cultural patterns may have been modified over time but the core of values and beliefs tend to remain relatively constant. Therefore, when you arrive in a your exchange country you will be negotiating a new culture that is likely to differ significantly from your familiar way of life. In the course of encountering alternative ways to live life and solve problems, it is possible to experience tremendous intellectual and personal growth and to understand much about your own culture. Becoming skilled at functioning effectively in another country builds a capacity for making all kinds of transitions and for "cultural learning" generally. Entering another country is not just a geographical shift but a psychological one as well. Three things to keep in mind as you begin to consider the role of culture in the sojourn are:

1. All cultures have struggled with the full range of human problems and they have adopted solutions that are at least acceptable to members of that culture.

2. In the process of forming a culture, a group has made decisions about what to emphasize, how to pass it on to a new generation, and what it values above all else…and you can be sure that it excludes or devalues some things another culture holds dear.

3. Because the patterns that exist in various cultures have been passed on by respected leaders and/or elders and have become sanctified over time, they are not
only considered good and proper but natural and normal. This is why cultural matters are deeply rooted and intensely felt by members of a society. Therefore, conflict and change involving core values are always accompanied by tension. Studying on exchange, which promotes encountering cultural difference and, hopefully, crossing cultural boundaries, can be expected to be uncomfortable and even incomprehensible some of the time.

**Linking Behaviour to Values and Beliefs.**

To understand where behavior comes from—to understand why people behave the way they do—means learning about values and beliefs. While the behavior of people from another culture may seem strange to you, it is highly likely to make sense to them. The reason any behavior makes sense is simply because it is consistent with what a person believes or values. Conversely, when we say that what someone has done "makes no sense," what we mean is that the action contradicts what we think that person feels or wants. So if you want to understand something of the culture in which you are a sojourner you will need to observe behaviours and explore the beliefs and values that are likely to underlay them. Remember the iceberg – the behaviours you will see are only a small part of the culture. You will need to do some work to get to the beliefs and values which underlay the behaviours that mystify or challenge you. Some things you will be able to work out if you observe behaviour and ask what is likely to have led to it. You will also benefit from a cultural friend, a person from your exchange culture who you can ask. However you also have extensive experiences of your own culture and can make use of this ahead of checking it out with others. To show that you already have some of the skills try the next activity.
Activity- Linking Behaviour to Values and Beliefs.

(Taken from La Brack, B. 2001-2004, What’s Up with Culture, -http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/ University of the Pacific, School of International Studies, Stockton, CA USA).

In the exercise below, match the behavior in the column on the left to a value or belief in the column on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Value/Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Use of understatement</td>
<td>a. Directness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Asking people to call you by your first name</td>
<td>b. Centrality of family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Taking off from work to attend the funeral of an aunt</td>
<td>c. External control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Not helping the person next to you on an exam</td>
<td>d. Saving Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Disagreeing openly with someone at a meeting</td>
<td>e. Respect for age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Not laying off an older worker whose performance is weak</td>
<td>f. Informality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. At a meeting, agreeing with a suggestion you think is wrong</td>
<td>g. Deference to authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Inviting the teaboy to eat lunch with you in your office</td>
<td>h. Indirectness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Asking the headmaster's opinion of something you're the expert on</td>
<td>i. Self-reliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Accepting, without question, that something cannot be changed</td>
<td>j.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did you go?

Compare your choices with those in the next table. Remember though that many beliefs and values might be behind the behaviour you see. It is often an idea as suggested by Kolb’s learning cycle to reflect and form a “theory” about the beliefs and values and check them out when you next have an opportunity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Sample Countries/Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Use of understatement</td>
<td>h- Indirectness</td>
<td>Malaysia, Korea, China, Thailand, Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Asking people to call you by your first name</td>
<td>f- Informality</td>
<td>Australia, United States and Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Taking off from work to attend the funeral of an distant aunt or second cousin</td>
<td>b- Centrality of family</td>
<td>Mexico, Korea, Italy, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Not helping the person next to you on an exam</td>
<td>l- Self-reliance</td>
<td>Switzerland, Canada, Sweden, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Disagreeing openly with someone at a meeting</td>
<td>a- Directness</td>
<td>Germany, England, USA, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Not firing an older worker whose performance is weak</td>
<td>e- Respect for age</td>
<td>Japan, Malaysia, Korea, China, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- At a meeting, agreeing with a suggestion you think is wrong</td>
<td>d- Saving face</td>
<td>Asia generally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Inviting the teaboy to eat lunch with you in your office</td>
<td>j- Egalitarianism</td>
<td>Cambodia/Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- Asking a senior’s opinion about something on which you’re an expert</td>
<td>g- Deferece to authority</td>
<td>Chile, Asia generally, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- Accepting, without question, that something can’t be changed</td>
<td>c- External Control</td>
<td>Korea, Malaysia, Singapore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

How were your assessments? Did some of your answers line up and some not? Remember the answers that did not match may still be valid since potentially there could be a number of beliefs and values that lead to particular behaviours. However the important point is that it should give you the idea that values are inextricably linked to behaviors. They tend to reinforce one another.

eg Directness as a value may be easily seen in Anglo- Australian cultures in the candid way people often speak to one another, “telling it like it is,” or in the way the educational system rewards speaking out and volunteering answers in the classroom. In much of Asia, it is Indirectness which is valued and can be seen in how people are often much more circumspect and reserved in academic settings and everyday social interactions. Such cultures are likely to interpret direct behaviours as rude and disrespectful not as open and honest as might be the Anglo-Australian assessment.

Being able to identify and understand the values which lie behind people’s actions is an important starting point in learning both how to adapt to a new cultural context and
connect behavior to the motivations behind the "rules and regulations" of a society. A good start towards figuring things all out begins by acknowledging that:

- each person has a complex culture
- some aspects of those cultures will be similar (or may seem familiar)
- some will be different (maybe in ways you can’t even imagine!)

As a sojourner one of your main jobs is to figure out:

what those differences are…
where they come from…
what they mean…
and
how you are going to respond when conflict or misunderstandings arise.

Throughout the process of preparing and going on exchange, it is important to guard against the natural tendency of humans to be critical of cultural practices and attitudes which are different from their own, especially in the early stages of adaptation. It is equally easy to make snap judgments about groups or individuals if things are not going well. While stereotyping may be temporarily satisfying it is destructive and alienating in the long run.

The approach that you can consciously cultivate to avoid stereotyping, and which will prove beneficial to your adaptation is called "cultural generalization" as a step toward understanding the individuals you meet abroad. A cultural generalization, unlike a stereotype, is a categorization of the predominant tendencies in a cultural group; in other words, the tendency of the majority of people to hold certain values and beliefs and engage in certain patterns of behavior. This can be a useful way of managing information and generally anticipating how people will think and behave. However, the people you meet in a particular culture may not fit the generalizations you have about the culture, or they may fit some but not others. To avoid stereotyping, it is necessary to test your generalizations against the actual behavior and values of those you encounter in the culture and to work out whether the behaviours you experience are universal, cultural or personal. Understanding these concepts and learning to distinguish them will assist you in developing the cross-cultural skills to make your exchange successful.

The three can be distinguished as follows:

- **Universal** refers to ways in which all people in all groups are the same;
- **Cultural** refers to what a particular group of people have in common with each other and how they are different from every other group;
- **Personal** describes the ways in which each one of us is different from everyone else, including those in our group.
There are two important points for you to remember:

- Because of universal behavior, not everything about people in a new culture is going to be different; some of what you already know about human behavior is going to apply in your host country.

- Because of personal behavior, not everything you learn about your host culture is going to apply in equal measure, or at all, to every individual in that culture.

So depending on how different your host culture is from your own there will be quite a number of things that will seem familiar and comfortable (universal and cultural behaviours that are similar to your own) and others that might be specific to the individuals you encounter (personal). Knowing the differences among Universal, Cultural, and Personal expressions of culture is a good start towards understanding why specific cultural expressions vary so widely across the globe. It also helps to avoid stereotyping when you realize that while people often conform to society’s cultural rules, they also find ways to assert their individuality. No individual embodies the totality of their culture.
Exploring Intercultural Learning

Now that you have affirmed, and consolidated your understandings of the nature of culture it is timely to explore what happens in the process of adjusting to your exchange culture before discussing some of the ways that cultures themselves differ.

The process of cultural adjustment (sometimes called ‘acculturation’ or cultural learning), is essentially about change, about learning and accommodating to change. You already have made a number of successful changes to your life (going to school, changing from school to university, maybe relocating yourself, developing relationships) and so you already have a number of skills and strategies that you can call on as a sojourner. The following Activity should assist you to recall what the process of change is like and the skills and strategies you have already developed.

Activity - Considering Strategies for a Successful Exchange

Think about a recent major transition (change) that you have experienced in your life. Such changes could include coming to UTS from school, changing schools; relocating to another city/country, taking up a new job, moving out of your parent’s home ……………

Take a few minutes to identify and trace your emotional responses to this change in your life from the time you began the experience to when you began to feel comfortable and at home with it. Use the simple graph provided below to plot these reactions. The grid allows you to plot both uncomfortable and comfortable reactions as you identify the different events and reactions over time.

Eg You hear that your family is going to move interstate– when you first heard the news you may have reacted with some anxiety and so were quite uncomfortable with the prospect. How uncomfortable you felt can be registered by using “-3” for very uncomfortable or “-2” if it was reasonably uncomfortable and so on. Similarly if when you first heard the news you were pleased and saw it as a good move then you might register that by using the “+1, +2, or +3” to indicate your pleasure. Then as plans for the move are realized you may go through a number of emotional changes as you think about the loss of what you have at the moment and you adjust to your new surroundings.

So think of a major transition you have made and plot your emotional reactions as you planned and adjusted to the transition. As you go identify what caused any changes you experienced as you adjusted to the change. Don’t forget to join the dots to show the shape of the graph.
**Graph of Emotional Reactions**

```
+3---------------------------
+2---------------------------
+1---------------------------
0----------------------------
-1----------------------------
-2----------------------------
-3----------------------------
```

**Time/Events of the Change Process**

How did you go?

What do you observe about your graph? Did the change and your adjustment to it cause changes in your emotional state? If it did then you would be like many others adjusting to change. If it was fairly emotionally uneventful (that is the graph was relatively smooth) then it is likely that the transition was not a large one, was reasonably familiar, one which was not particularly important to you or one where you had already developed a number of effective strategies. Soon you will be presented with what is known as the “W curve of cultural adjustment”. It indicates that you are likely to experience a number of emotional ups and downs as you make the adjustment to your exchange culture. How strong those emotional reactions are and how closely your experience is to the curve shown will depend on a large number of things which we will also discuss.

**Activity - Identifying Strategies for Change**

Before we get to exploring the “W curve of cultural adjustment” we need to focus on the strategies you used to adjust to and accept the change you identified. Write down the strategies you used to adjust to the change. Now with hindsight list also the strategies you might have used to make effective adjustments to the change.
What strategies did you identify? Any, some, or all of the following?

- try to understand the positive things about the change and why it is necessary;
- do some planning for the change;
- keep yourself busy;
- seek the support of friends and family;
- confide in special friends and family;
- avoid dwelling on the negative and avoid those who do;
- keep your sense of humour;
- put energy into achieving the change;
- actively seek out new friends; establish a routine as soon as the change has taken place;
- keep contact with old friends;
- keep a diary of events, your feelings and your understanding of what it means;
- set small goals for yourself as high expectations may be difficulty to meet.
- take care of yourself by exercising, getting enough sleep, eating properly and doing things you enjoy.

These are the kinds of strategies that people usually employ when adjusting to change. You will see later that they have similarities to those appropriate to making cultural adjustments.

Now let’s look at what researchers say happens when you become a sojourner and have to negotiate a new culture and change – this is known as intercultural learning. Some aspects of which will be positive and some will be negative. You probably have heard of the term “culture shock” so let’s identify what is meant by that term and place it into a context and in perspective.

**Culture Shock and Intercultural Learning**

The term ‘culture shock’ has been used to describe the sometimes emotionally distressing experience of coming into contact with a new culture and/or language. This is in some ways a misleading term as it implies something negative and also that it only lasts a short time. In fact, individuals respond differently and have different patterns of adjustment to life in a new culture. For example, these patterns can follow a kind of ‘W’ where you have highs and lows in coming to terms new ways of behaving, with a new language, etc.
The term ‘intercultural learning’ is often used now rather than ‘culture shock’ to describe the on-going processes of the transition from an observer to a participant in the new culture. ‘Culture shock’ research tends to focus on the negative side of experiencing a new culture rather than on a holistic understanding of the process of intercultural learning of which ‘culture shock’ may be part (Furnham and Bochner, 1986). However, there are some areas of the study of ‘culture shock’ that are useful to understand.

Sojourners continually have to deal with situations that are unfamiliar to them. They may have to change their behaviour so they can cope with cultural differences. They must sometimes work hard to discover what is meaningful in a situation; keeping in mind that cues learned in their own cultures may not be relevant. Many times they need to tolerate a very ambiguous understanding of a situation. This coping with unfamiliar situations and often, unfamiliar language, can lead sojourners to temporarily feel a lack of competence and a loss of confidence. The originator of the term ‘culture shock’, Oberg (1958) used it as a shorthand descriptor that summarises sojourners’ reactions after they lose their security of familiarity.

Some of the symptoms of culture shock include an excessive preoccupation with personal cleanliness including food and drinking water; irritability towards and over-reactions to helpful suggestions by hosts; negative feelings towards hosts; feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, these symptoms and culture shock itself is a normal reaction to an unfamiliar cultural environment. Sojourners such as exchange students who are well prepared for the new cultural experience and have a support network set up are less likely to experience severe reactions and more likely to learn from initial reactions and move on (Brislin, 1981).

The diagram of the “cross cultural adjustment cycle” is a helpful way of looking at culture shock as part of the learning process rather than a kind of disorder.
Each stage in this process is characterized by “symptoms” or outward signs representing certain kinds of behavior.

The Adjustment Process in a New Culture

Honeymoon Period
Initially, you will probably be fascinated and excited by everything new. Sojourners are at first elated to be in a new culture and the changes it brings.

Culture Shock
The sojourner is immersed in new problems: housing, transportation, food, language and new friends. Fatigue may result from continuously trying to comprehend and use the second language. You may wonder, “Why did I come here?”

Initial Adjustment
Everyday activities such as housing and going to university are no longer major problems. Although the sojourner may not yet be perfectly fluent in the language spoken, basic ideas and feelings in the second language can be expressed.

Mental Isolation
Individuals have been away from their families and good friends for a long period of time and may feel lonely. Many still feel they have not quite adapted to the cultural routines and may not be able to express themselves as well as they can in their native language.
Frustrations, and sometimes a loss of self-confidence, result. Some individuals remain at this stage without active involvement in the routines of the new culture.

**Acceptance and Integration**

A routine (e.g., work, study, and social life) has been established. The sojourner has accepted the habits, customs, food, and characteristics of the people in the new culture. The sojourner feels comfortable with friends, associates, and the language of the country.

**Return Anxiety, Reentry Shock, Reintegration**

These stages should be mentioned, even at Orientation, because of the very important part they play in a sojourner’s stay in the new culture. It is interesting to note that REENTRY SHOCK can be more difficult than the initial CULTURE SHOCK. If you want to know more of this then look at the website suggested earlier. It has a whole section on this and is well worth reading and doing the activities.

La Brack, B. 2001-2004, What’s Up with Culture, - http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/ University of the Pacific, School of International Studies, Stockton, CA USA.

**Suggestions for Dealing with Culture Shock**

Here are some suggestions for approaches to take and things to do to help yourself to effectively adjust to your exchange culture. Many sojourners have identified these as particularly appropriate and useful.

1. Keep in touch with friends and family at home and get them to keep copies of your emails for when you get home.

2. Try to look for logical reasons why things happen. This may help you view your host culture in a more positive light.

3. Try not to dwell on the negative things about your host culture and don’t hang around people who do.

4. Make an effort to restore communication by making friends in your host culture.

5. Keep your sense of humor!

6. Regularly set small goals for yourself. High expectations may be difficult to meet.

7. Speak the language of the country you are in and don’t worry if you sometimes make a fool of yourself doing it! (Talk to children. Their language level will be similar to yours!)
8. Take care of yourself by exercising, getting enough sleep, eating properly and doing things you enjoy.

9. Try to fit into the rhythm of life in your host culture. Adjust to their time schedule for meals and work.

10. Find out where people meet and socialize. Make an effort to go to those places and observe.

11. Draw on your own personal resources for handling stress. You’ve done it many times before and you can do it again!


Do these approaches seem familiar?

Well they are! They are the kinds of strategies that people use to adapt to change and of course entering another culture has much to do with change. So you already have a number of strategies that you have effectively used in the past to assist you to in the intercultural setting. It is also an idea to keep a reflective journal so that you can learn from your experiences. The information below will assist you to keep such a journal. Those who have taken this advice suggest that it was one of the more productive things that they did and it gives them much pleasure to identify the changes they have made. It is also great to read after you return when you are a little “home sick” for your exchange country.
Keeping a Reflective Journal

We suggest that you keep a Reflective Journal during your Exchange program.

It will be
- a record of, and an aid to developing your cross cultural skills
- something you can keep and look back on to see how far you have grown

The reflective journal is private, for your use only. It is like keeping a diary but more focused, as it is a progressive record of your learning experiences as a sojourner in a new culture. When you first start living in your new culture, you will notice many things which, after time, will become everyday to you, so use your NEW EYES when you first arrive to record and reflect on your impressions. Over time, you will notice that the entries to your journal will change.

To assist with your reflections it is usually advisable to make regular entries. Choosing a particular time every couple of days or each week will assist. Choose also a time and place in which to write. This establishes a routine for you. It might be before you go to bed, or as soon as you come back from university.

Activity - Making a Start on Your Exchange Journal

To start your journal you might like to write your own personal responses to the questions below. Your responses should reflect how you feel right now, ahead of starting your exchange. Having documented these early feelings and understandings of your Exchange may assist you later in assessing some of the changes as a result of your exchange experience. It will also facilitate your understanding how expectations realistic and unrealistic, play a role in how well you adapt and how you feel about it in retrospect. so take a time to answer the following questions if you have not done so earlier:

6. What are the five things that you are most looking forward to in regard to your Exchange?
7. What are the five things that currently worry you most about going overseas?
8. What are the five things that you believe that you will miss most from home when you are on Exchange?
9. What are the five things (people places, activities, etc) you believe you will miss least from home when you are on Exchange?

Answering these questions will start the process of documenting and exploring your experiences. However Remember… Exchange is a learning experience, and not all learning is comfortable, although most is valued on reflection.
To help you document and reflect and learn whilst you are on Exchange the following structure to your journal entries are:

**Making a Journal Entry**

**What has happened of note since you last wrote in your journal?**
(Use your emotional responses to the experiences you are undergoing as a trigger for your entries – when you feel challenged, confronted or very excited by an event or experience it is worthwhile documenting. Those activities you find challenging usually indicate that you are bumping up against your own values and beliefs (culture) and so there is an opportunity to explore what is happening and to develop tentative theories about the behaviour and culture of your exchange country. In contrast the events that excite you are generally supporting values and attitudes you hold. Documenting both in the following way will assist you in identifying and developing understandings and strategies for negotiating your exchange culture – the outcome of which is - intercultural competence.

(If you think that you will only have time to document say once a week then carry a small note pad and list events so that you have a brief record of things that you should document and explore).

**Ask yourself and document…**

**What happened?**

Describe the event from your own point of view. Discuss who was involved and what you think was the outcome.

**How did you feel? What impact did the event have on you?**

It is important to express the emotions you felt and the impact of what happened.

**Why do you think this happened? What values and beliefs were involved?**

Take the opportunity to explore the situation further, to pick out the values and beliefs involved and identify what you now understand about your exchange culture and your own.

**How might you use this information in the future?**

To answer this you might make notes to yourself about how to deal with similar situations in the future. You might briefly write about your new understandings of working cross culturally and dealing with others who themselves are also working cross culturally.
Remember your journal is your private record of exchange and so you can…

Be brief, ignore many writing conventions, make use of diagrams, mind maps, newspaper and magazine clippings, metaphors, emails you have written etc to assist your explorations. It does not have to be neat, well laid out, consistent in style.

However if you have made it very private make sure you keep it safe. And if you do you will have a great record of what will probably be an amazing journey.

Now you understand something of the complexity of culture itself and its impact on individuals and societies and you have a strategy for documenting and exploring your inter-culture learning it will benefit you to know something about the ways in which cultures differ. Before we discuss this……

Let’s review what we already understand about culture…..

Culture:

- Involves large groups of people;
- Is a shared set of perceptions;
- Involves beliefs, values, norms and behavior;
- Is learned through interaction with others, the environment and education
- Is dynamic; that is it changes over time
- Underlies all communications;
- Includes universal behaviours common to all humans
Differentiating Cultures

“Humans have evolved to a point where culture has replaced instinct in determining our every thought and action. What we think and how we choose to act is a result of what we have been taught in our culture. Survival is based on how well we learn to adapt to the specific culture in which we find ourselves” N R Goodman 1994.

Here is some information on the way that cultures differ. Knowing the information below should add to your repertoire of information to use in identifying and understanding the behaviours you witness in your exchange culture and the values and beliefs that underlay them.

The basis of cultural differences

We have already suggested that every culture distinguishes itself from other cultures by the specific solutions it chooses to certain common human problems. However studies of numerous cultures have identified some broad fundamental differences that underlie all cultural systems. Although we will discuss these differences as “contrasting sets” they really differ along a continuum but tend to cluster towards either end as in the diagram below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuum - Individualism Versus Collectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(See page 38 of these notes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Collectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism (I)</td>
<td>Collectivism (C)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following pages some major ways in which cultures differ are summarized to provide you with some insights into cultural differences you might encounter.

A. Context of Cultures (High and Low)

One very basic way in which cultures have been found to differ is in the degree of reliance placed on the cultural context for interpreting and communicating ideas and understandings. Cultures can be classified as having either a high or low context. The
communication in **high context** cultures relies much more heavily on shared understanding of the cultural knowledge between the speaker and the listener to make things understood. There is a high use of nonverbal cues, subtle actions, indirect and spiral (non Linear) logic to provide meaning. In order to negotiate such cultures requires more complex cultural knowledge. In **low context** cultures communication is more direct and reliant on linear logic, explicit statements of facts and upon words to carry the meaning. Less cultural knowledge is required in order to interpret communications. High context cultures include much of Asia including Japan, Korea, Arab countries, South America and China. Low context cultures include most of Western Europe (including Germany, France, Switzerland, Scandinavia), America and Australia.

Many behaviours can be linked to these fundamental differences in the context of the cultures. The table below compares low and high context cultures on the following:

- The way people relate to each other,
- The way they communicate with each other,
- The way they treat personal space and time,
- The way they learn.

Remember though that few cultures, and the people in them, are totally at one end of the continuum or the other.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Context Cultures</th>
<th>Low Context Cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>a) Relationships depend on trust, build up slowly, are stable over time. Those inside the group are distinguished from those outside one's circle.</td>
<td>a) Relationships begin and end quickly. Many people can be inside one's circle; the group's boundary is not clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) One's identity is rooted in groups (family, culture, work).</td>
<td>b) One's identity is rooted in oneself and one's accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) How things get done depends on relationships with people and attention to group process.</td>
<td>c) Things get done by following procedures and paying attention to the goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Social structure and authority are centralized; responsibility is at the top. Person at top works for the good of the group</td>
<td>d) Social structure is decentralized; responsibility goes further down (is not concentrated at the top).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Styles</td>
<td>a) High use of nonverbal elements; voice tone, facial expression, gestures, and eye movement carry significant parts of conversation.</td>
<td>a) Low use of nonverbal elements. Message is carried more by words than by nonverbal means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Verbal message is implicit; context (situation, people, non-verbal elements) is more important than words.</td>
<td>b) Verbal message is explicit. Context is less important than words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Verbal message is indirect; one talks around the point and embellishes it.</td>
<td>c) Verbal message is direct; one spells things out exactly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Communication is seen as an art form—a way of engaging someone.</td>
<td>d) Communication is seen as a way of exchanging information, ideas, and opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Disagreement is personalized. There is sensitivity to conflict expressed in nonverbal communication. Conflict either must be solved before work can progress or must be avoided because it is personally threatening.</td>
<td>e) Disagreement is depersonalized. Individuals withdraw from conflict and get on with the task. Focus is on rational solutions, not personal ones. Individuals can be explicit about another's bothersome behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Space</td>
<td>Space is communal; people stand close to each other, share the same space.</td>
<td>Space is compartmentalized and privately owned; privacy is important, so people are farther apart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to Time</td>
<td>High Context Cultures (cont)</td>
<td>Low Context Cultures (cont)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Time is not easily scheduled; needs of people are more important and may interfere with keeping to a set time. What is important is that activity gets done not the time it takes.</td>
<td>a) Things are scheduled to be done at particular times, one thing at a time. What is important is that activity is done efficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Change is slow. Things are rooted in the past, slow to change, and stable.</td>
<td>b) Change is fast. One can make change and see immediate results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Time is a process; it belongs to others and to nature.</td>
<td>c) Time is a commodity to be spent or saved. One’s time is one’s own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of Learning</th>
<th>High Context Cultures (cont)</th>
<th>Low Context Cultures (cont)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Knowledge is embedded in the situation; things are connected, synthesized, and global. Multiple sources of information are used. Thinking is deductive, proceeds from general to specific.</td>
<td>a) Reality is fragmented and compartmentalized. One source of information is used to develop knowledge. Thinking is inductive, proceeds from specific to general. Focus is on detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Learning occurs by first observing others as they model or demonstrate and then practicing.</td>
<td>b) Learning occurs by following explicit directions and explanations of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Groups are preferred for learning and problem solving.</td>
<td>c) An individual orientation is preferred for learning and problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Accuracy is valued. How well something is learned is important.</td>
<td>d) Speed is valued. How efficiently something is learned is important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the brief descriptions of behaviours above are extended below to make the concepts clearer.

**B. Relationships with people**

There are five orientations covering the ways in which human beings deal with each other.

1. **Individualism versus collectivism**

Do people regard themselves primarily as individuals or primarily as part of a group?

People in collectivist cultures seek the good of the group over the good of themselves, not because they are indifferent to their own welfare, but because they feel the surest way to guarantee personal survival is to make sure the group thrives and prospers. Harmony and the interdependence of group members are stressed and valued. Group members are relatively close psychologically and emotionally, but distant toward non-group members.
People in **individualist** cultures on the other hand identify primarily with self, with the needs of the individual being satisfied before those of the group. Looking after and taking care of oneself, being self-sufficient, guarantees the well-being of the group. Independence and self-reliance are greatly stressed and valued. In general, people tend to distance themselves psychologically and emotionally from each other. One may choose to join groups, but group membership is not essential to one’s identity or success.

2. **Universalism versus particularism**

Research has shown that individualism, which implies self-sufficiency and self-interest, is most prevalent in Western cultures, while many other societies put an emphasis on collectivism, being concerned first for the welfare of the group before oneself. Clearly there are many consequences in a society depending upon whether you tend towards the individual or collective model. Among the most obvious relates to how being a member of a culture affects your reactions to issues of loyalty and ideas about responsibility. Your beliefs (and those of the host culture) can have ethical, legal, and moral implications regarding your behavior and what might be expected of you. The continuum that measures this kind of cultural choice in terms of social and personal obligations is often termed "Universalism versus Particularism."

The universalist approach is roughly: “What is good and right can be defined and always applies.” In particularist cultures far greater attention is given to the obligations of relationships and unique circumstances. For example, instead of assuming that the one good way must always be followed (ie that the law and ethics applies to all equally), the particularist reasoning is that family and friendship has special obligations and hence may come first. In particularist cultures less attention is given to abstract societal codes (that is generalized notions of right and wrong) when people struggle with how to balance obligations to family, friends, and colleagues on the one hand, and obligations to the wider society on the other. In cases where these obligations conflict, different cultures are often on different sides. For example if you are a strong particularist you would probably agree with the statement, "Situational ethics is the norm" and disagree with the statement, "You don’t compromise on principles."

No culture is exclusively universalist or particularist, but cultures do tend to be more one than the other, and while the attitudes of individuals in a given culture will vary, the focus here is on the culture as a whole.

3. **Neutral or emotional**

Should the nature of our interactions be objective and detached, or is expressing emotion acceptable? In Australia, North America and North-west Europe business relationships are typically instrumental and all about achieving objectives. The brain checks emotions because these are believed to confuse the issues. But further south and in many other cultures, business is considered to be a human affair and expressing a range of emotions is deemed appropriate. Loud laughter, banging your fist on the table or leaving a conference room in anger during a negotiation is all part of business. These characteristics spill over into the ways that people discuss issues in a society. I was at a
conference in Russia in 1998 in which we had a number of plenary sessions to discuss the major issues within the conference academic field. Both these cultural dimensions were in evidence in the plenary discussions. This made for lively debate and some discussion of appropriate behaviours to be used. It was notable that participants from recognized “neutral” cultures found it difficult to deal with the emotions being displayed by those from more “emotional” cultures. I enjoyed the diversity.

4. Specific versus diffuse

When the whole person is involved in a business relationship, there is a real and personal contact, instead of the specific relationship prescribed by a contract. In many countries a diffuse relationship is not only preferred, but necessary before business can proceed.

In the case of one American company trying to win a contract with a South American customer, disregard for the importance of the relationship lost the deal. The American company made a polished, well thought-out presentation that it thought clearly demonstrated its superior product and lower price. Its Swedish competitor took a week to get to know the customer. For five days the Swedes spoke about everything except the product. On the last day the product was introduced. Though somewhat less attractive and slightly higher priced, the diffuse involvement of the Swedish company got the order. The Swedish company had learned that to do business in particular countries involves more than overwhelming the customer with technical details and fancy slides. In some cultures taking time for personal contact and relationships before making requests is important. Being direct about what is wanted can be seen as rude within these cultures.

5. Achievement versus ascription

Achievement means that you are judged on what you have recently accomplished and on your record. Ascription means that status is attributed to you, by birth, kinship, gender or age, but also by your connections (who you know) and your educational record (a graduate of a particular University or a Technical college).

In an achievement culture, the first question is likely to be “What did you study?” while in a more ascriptive culture the question will more likely be “Where did you study?” Only if it was a lousy university or one they do not recognise will ascriptive people ask what you studied; and that will be to enable you to save face. In ascriptive cultures there is also curiosity about your family and friends as people want to identify much about your status in order to know with what deference you should be treated.

C. Attitudes to time

Another way in which cultures differ significantly is in their attitude towards “time” and their ideas about its importance in human interactions. In certain cultures like the Australian, American, Swedish and Dutch, time is perceived as passing in a straight line, a sequence of disparate events. Other cultures think of time more as moving in a circle,
the past and present together with future possibilities. This makes considerable differences to the way that people organize their time and activities.

For some cultures, including our own, time takes on major importance in work and social arrangements. Being on time is important and there are social sanctions imposed on those who are considered late. In other cultures relationships take precedence over time and things get done to suit the relationships rather than the time. These views are defined as either monochromic or polychronic.

1. Monochronic versus Polychronic Attitudes to time

Monochronic world views would lead to the following beliefs and behaviours:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monochronic World Views with associated beliefs and behaviours</th>
<th>Polychronic World Views with associated beliefs and behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things are scheduled to be done at particular times, one thing at a time. What is important is that activity is done efficiently.</td>
<td>Everything has its own time. Time is not easily scheduled; needs of people may interfere with keeping to a set time. What is important is that activity gets done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is a commodity to be spent or saved. One’s time is one’s own.</td>
<td>Time is a process; it belongs to others and to nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is fast. One can make change and see immediate results.</td>
<td>Change is slow. Things are rooted in the past, slow to change, and stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{The focus is on the task, getting the job done}: monochronic time thinks less about people, more about goals.</td>
<td>\textit{The focus is on the person, establishing a relationship}: people count more; in polychronic time schedules are always flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Time is money} – it is not to be wasted</td>
<td>\textit{To be late is to be late}: late matters less because time matters less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Schedules are sacred} – they must be kept unless the circumstances are exceptional</td>
<td>\textit{Plans are always changing}: polychronic types can change plans more easily because they are less in the grip of schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Interruptions are bad}: because they upset the schedule</td>
<td>\textit{Interruptions are life} engaging with people and meeting their needs are much more important than keeping to a schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{To be late is rude} so keep and eye on the time to ensure that prior meetings don’t conflict with future arrangements.</td>
<td>\textit{Being made to wait is normal} - nurturing relationships are more important so what if they take more time than thought. The next activity can wait and people will understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Plans are fixed, once agreed upon}: changes in plans upset monochromic people who live by their plans</td>
<td>\textit{Deadlines are an approximation}: being on time (adhering to deadline) is not as crucial in polychronic world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{People stand in line}: being waited on one at a time is monochromic behavior and first there should be served first</td>
<td>\textit{Little attention is paid to who came first} – eventually all will be attended to. The order does not matter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Past and Future Orientations

In some societies what somebody has achieved in the past is not that important. It is more important to know what plan they have developed for the future. In other societies you can make more of an impression with your past accomplishments than those of today. With respect to this aspect of time, the American Dream is the French Nightmare. Americans generally start from zero and what matters is their present performance and their plan to “make it” in the future. This is *nouveau riche* for the French, who prefer the *ancien pauvre*; they have an enormous sense of the past and relatively less focus on the present and future than Americans.
Culture Learning Summary

Now that you have more information on culture and some understanding of the ways that cultures differ it is time to summarise discussion of the kinds of skills do you need. How you can become an effective Intercultural learner?

Seven Steps on Developing Cross-Cultural Adaptation Skills

1. Learn the language by using it. Language is your key to involvement in your new culture. Even if you can’t speak perfectly, your attempts to communicate will be appreciated. Remember, understanding others and making yourself understood in a new language requires more rephrasing, repeating, and rechecking than usual.

2. Be aware. Don’t assume that you know everything about what is happening around you. Listen and observe carefully, paying special attention to nonverbal cues, which give insight into the process of cross-cultural communication.

3. Suspend judgement. A natural tendency to immediately attach a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ label to all you observe or experience can be a major stumbling block to understanding and participating in a new culture. Observe and describe, but try not to stereotype.

4. Try to empathize. To empathize means to put yourself in the other person’s place and to look at the situation from her or his perspective. This is especially important where there are cultural differences.

5. Recognize that anxiety is natural. Communication and adjustment across cultures is not easy. Be open, take risks and laugh at your mistakes!

6. Be honest. If you are confused about something or if misunderstandings arise, it is usually best to admit your confusion rather than pretend that everything is all right.

7. Become involved. Show your willingness to learn about the people and culture by participating in the activities at your academic institution and the community around you. It is very true that the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it!

Adapted from a handout used at Manhattanville College, Manhattanville, N.Y.
Some Values that Majority Culture Australians Live by

This list is not definitive and is given here as a stimulus for discussion and reflection. You – as an Australian – may feel that you do not hold these values, or are in opposition to them. Australia is a culturally diverse nation and your individuality may mean that you recognize some of the values but not others.

1) Personal Control over the Environment

People can/should control nature, their own environment and destiny; future is not left to fate.
Result: Energetic, goal-oriented society.

2) Change/Mobility

Change is seen as positive, good, meaning progress, improvement and growth.
Result: Transient society, geographically, economically and socially.

3) Time and Its Control

Time is valuable – achievement of goals depends on productive use of time.
Result: Efficiency and progress often at expense of interpersonal relationships.

4) Equality/Egalitarianism

People have equal opportunities; people are important as individuals, for who they are, not from which family they come.
Result: Little deference shown or status acknowledged.

5) Individualism, Independence and Privacy

People are seen as separate individuals (not group members) with individual needs.
People need time to be alone and to be themselves.
Result: Australians seen as self-centered and sometimes isolated and lonely.

6) Self-Help

Many Australians take pride in own accomplishments, not in name.
Result: Respect is given for achievements not accident of birth.
7) **Competition and Free Enterprise**

Many Australians believe competition brings out best in people and free enterprise produces most progress and success.
Result: Less emphasis on cooperation than competition.

8) **Future Orientation/Optimism**

Many Australians believe that, regardless of past or present, the future will be better, happier.
Result: Less value on past; constant looking ahead to tomorrow.

9) **Action and Work Orientation**

Many Australians believe that work is morally right; that it is immoral to waste time.
Result: More emphasis on “doing” rather than “being;” pragmatic, no-nonsense attitude toward life.

10) **Informality**

Many Australians believe that formality is “un-Australian” and a show of arrogance and superiority.
Result: Casual, egalitarian attitude between people and in their relationships.

11) **Directness, Openness, Honesty**

One can only trust people who “look you in the eye,” and “tell it like it is.” Truth is function of reality not circumstance.
Result: People tend to tell the “truth” and not worry about saving the other person’s “face” or “honor”.

12) **Practicality/Efficiency**

Practicality is usually most important consideration when decisions are to be made.
Result: Less emphasis on the subjective, aesthetic, emotional or on consensual decisions.

13) **Materialism/Acquisitiveness**

Material goods are seen as the just rewards of hard-work.
Result: Australians are seen as caring more for things than people or relationships.
Different Ways of Teaching and Learning

You will also find many cultural differences at your new university.

Below are some of the things you are familiar with as an Australian university student. You may find that things are very different in your host country university.

Typical Australian Expectations of an Undergraduate University Student:

It is (generally) expected that you will……………

• Make independent decisions about courses of study, research projects etc.

• Participate in classroom/tutorial discussions (ask questions, share information with each other)

• Demonstrate knowledge through a variety of tests and assignments

• Be prepared to be evaluated continuously

• Read widely and critically

• Write essays and reports

• Develop your own ideas and use evidence from the literature to support them

• Do written examinations

• Request help for academic problems but assume ultimate responsibility for their resolution

• Use scientific method as an approach to learning
Going on Exchange

Reflection and Self-Assessment on Your Intercultural Experience

Now you have learned more about culture, cultural adjustment and cultural differences you might like to make an assessment of your readiness for exchange. It should give you something to think about and might challenge you to do more preparation for exchange.

Instructions

This is to be done on your own and is private. You won’t be directly asked to share the information although it may be referred to. You may find it useful as a way of focusing your thoughts about the experience you are to undergo on Exchange. You might also like to revisit this when you are mid way through your exchange program.

Awareness of the Exchange Experience.

The main aim of the exchange program is for you to become immersed in another culture and, through your study program and interaction with the local cultures, to develop knowledge understanding and skills.

How aware am I of…..? How much do I think about…..?

Use the key below to rate yourself on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 = a lot</th>
<th>3 = medium</th>
<th>2 = not much</th>
<th>1 = nil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My cultural identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>My ethnic identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>My National identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Values in Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Values in other countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross cultural communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stereotyping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural competence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Expectations of myself when on Exchange.

*How would I rate my expectations of myself in the following areas?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratings</th>
<th>5 = very high</th>
<th>4 = medium</th>
<th>3 = not sure</th>
<th>2 = low</th>
<th>1 = wait and see</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Making local friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understanding/using the language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to eat the food</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Finding my way around</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning the culture</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participating in the local university life</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adapting to a new way of life</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coping with being away from home</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Staying healthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Having an incredibly interesting and exciting time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Do I think that my expectations of myself are realistic? ...too high?...too low?*

**Attitudes**

Research indicates people who go to live/work/study in another culture shows that their initial attitude to the experience is often the key to their learning while they are away.

**You might like to think what your attitude is to the following:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 = generally positive</th>
<th>2 = not sure</th>
<th>1 = generally negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Living in a non-English speaking country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Learning to adapt to another way of life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Living in an unfamiliar environment where I don’t know the rules</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Changes in myself as a result of this experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Questioning my assumptions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Intercultural Competence**

Learning to adapt to and live successfully in a new culture is an experience that may require the development of new knowledge and skills, or being able to use existing skills in new ways. The skills and knowledge listed below are necessary for the development of intercultural competence. How would you rate yourself now? You could re-rate yourself after you have completed half of your exchange period.
Can I do this?.... How well can I do this?....

4 = I already have the skill and can use it effectively
3 = I have this skill but will need more practice to develop it
2 = I don’t yet have this skill
1 = This ability does not seem useful to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal dimension</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• An open mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adaptability to new situations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation/interpretation skills</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Awareness of my own stereotypes</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Willingness to challenge and move beyond stereotypes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Willingness to listen, observe and learn</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of my own cultural identity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross Cultural</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Recognize commonalities from the beginning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognise difference but in a tentative way</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Read cross cultural cues</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognise, question, clarify own values and assumptions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constantly revise and update view of new cultures</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show sensitivity and responsiveness to new cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tolerate, manage and work with ambiguity and paradox</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negotiate when rules are unclear</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage stress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show sensitivity and responsiveness to new cultures</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Can I do this?…. How well can I do this?….**

4 = I already have the skill and can use it effectively  
3 = I have this skill but will need more practice to develop it  
2 = I don’t yet have this skill  
1 = This ability does not seem useful to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“People Skills”</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Spend time interacting with locals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Seek advice of locals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work with cultural diversity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop relationships with “cultural mentors”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interact in a non-judgmental way</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Language skills</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess my own communication style</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understanding of intercultural communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adapt my communication style so that I can communicate successfully across cultures</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Active listening skills</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**How did you go?**

Feeling more prepared for the experience of exchange and ready to explore ways of increasing your preparedness? I hope your journey into exchange provides a balance of excitement, joy, challenge and learning.
Outcomes of the Exchange Experience

Re-entry or re-integration into your life in Australia can be seen as a problem or as part of the learning process. Research on Study Abroad students shows that the more integration students undergo in their new culture the more they can potentially grow and learn. Try to live according to host culture norms (as far as is acceptable to you). The more time you spend with local people, the more likely you are to interpret and learn the culture (if you spend a lot of time with foreign students similar to yourself, then you will learn less).

The major outcome of your exchange experience will be the development of Intercultural Competence, that is, the skills, knowledge and understanding to live and work successfully across cultures.

Re-entry, re-integration into Australian culture
When you re-enter Australia after your exchange experience, you will find that you see things very differently and that there are changes in yourself.

As a returning expatriate, you may question:

- Cultural certainty;
- Acceptance of basic assumptions;
- Personal frames of reference;
- Accustomed roles and status;
- Knowledge of social reinforcement;
- Accustomed habits and activities;
- Routines.

Keep in regular contact with people back home both- friends, family and UTS. It is your responsibility to advise UTS of any changes to your address/phone/email arrangements when abroad, to respond to emails from Exchange or Faculty staff promptly. Feel free to contact the Exchange staff for advice/assistance whenever required, but also be aware that you are the one on the ground, and a bit of lateral thinking and politeness might get you quicker or better results with some issues.

Learn Lots, Have Fun, Good Luck … … et Au Revoir! We will see you at the Welcome Home debrief at the end of your exchange.
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