



## Online Unit - 'Developing Intercultural awareness among HEI staff'

**Authors:** Kristin Brogan, Tom Farrelly, Louise Nagle

**Reviewers:** Terry Maguire, Bernie Brereton, Emma Dwyer

### Introduction

Welcome to a micro-credential on 'Developing Intercultural awareness among HEI staff'. The purpose of the course is to enhance the multicultural experiences of both staff, teachers and students within higher education in Ireland. Higher education has evolved into a multicultural phenomenon with HEIs re-orientating to an outward facing trajectory which embraces new cultures along with the opportunities and learning this brings. Many HEIs are actively pursuing an International strategy which involves completing applications for the funding of transnational projects and recruiting international students.

In particular, an increase in cultural awareness can encourage educational communities to appreciate the richness of diverse culture, to challenge prejudice and discrimination as well as promote equality. This awareness can also change the perceptions of interactions among those of different cultures and enrich the educational experiences of all involved. This course has been developed with these factors in mind and aims to equip HEI staff with skills and competencies necessary to appreciate the benefits and challenges of embracing interculturalism. The essence of this process is to become good communicators.

### Structure of course/preparation required

This micro-credential has been designed to be taken in three parts:

1. an online unit (approximately 14 hours of participant time required)
2. a face-to-face workshop (approximately 5 hours of participant time required)
3. application of learning in the workplace through a portfolio (approximately 5 hours of participant time required)

There is an accompanying workbook with this unit which is available at <http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/professionaldevelopment>. The workbook is part of the online unit outlined above.

Please download this document and print.

During this unit, you will be asked to complete Exercises A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I & J in your workbook. Please note that Exercise H (the autobiography exercise) is hosted on an external web-site and you will be required to print off the sections you complete.

All completed exercises as part of this online unit form an integral part of the face-to-face workshop. Please bring a copy of your completed workbook which follows a portfolio approach (as well as exercise H) to the face-to-face workshop at a later date.

This unit will cover five sections as follows:

1. Definition of culture
2. Other cultures and stereotypes
3. Cultural Dimensions
4. Ethnocentrism
5. Intercultural sensitivity

There are additional resources available for you, should you wish to read additional material



on the topics above and they are available at the end of the unit.

## Section One - Definition of Culture

### 1.1 Introduction to culture

Please read the Global Pad Core Concepts on 'What is Culture?'. In particular pay attention to the various layers and depth within the concept of culture, how it affects behaviour, how culture is both an individual and social construct as well as the implications of this and also how culture is learned.

Available at:

[https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global\\_pad\\_-\\_what\\_is\\_culture.pdf](https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad/openhouse/interculturalskills/global_pad_-_what_is_culture.pdf)

**Exercise A: Please write 300 words on your definition of culture (attach in workbook).**

#### 1.2.1 The iceberg introduction

Culture is often compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a visible section above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the waterline, so too can culture be described as having some aspects that are visible (observable elements of culture which we are conscious about) and others that can only be suspected, imagined, or intuited (elements of culture that we are less conscious about). Also, like an iceberg, the visible elements only represent a small part of culture and it is only from delving deeper and understanding the elements below the surface that a richer understanding of culture can be formed.

Please note: The "iceberg model" is not perfect; some cultural elements can be evident **both** above and below the waterline. For example, in the case of religion, rituals and symbols may be visible while beliefs may be invisible. Someone may be wearing a religious symbol which is observable if we are familiar with this visible religious symbol. However, eating only specific foods can be placed as an example below the waterline; we can observe this behaviour, but without other cultural clues we may not be aware that this is linked to a person's belief.

To gain an understanding of the "iceberg model" of culture (Edward T Hall), firstly visit the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woP0v-2nJCU>

Also have a look at: <https://culturalkinetics.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/culture-an-iceberg-analogy/>

1.2.2 Please also visit the link below for examples of visible and invisible elements of culture:

<http://opengecko.com/interculturalism/visualising-the-iceberg-model-of-culture/>

and have a look at: <https://culturalkinetics.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/culture-an-iceberg-analogy/>

**Exercise B: Please visit your workbook to complete the iceberg exercise.**

**Total Time suggested: 4 hours**

## Section Two - Other cultures and stereotypes

Stereotyping involves categorising people into groups (based on their nationality or ethnicity



for example) and making judgements about their societal norms, status and culture. In many cases, the impressions formed of people within these stereotypes are not based on facts but rather on oversimplified beliefs. To gain an understanding of this concept and how it fits into cultural awareness, please watch the videos below.

2.1 This light humoured video gives an insight into common behaviour experienced by those subjected to stereotyping:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWynJkN5HbQ> **(2.5 minutes)**

2.2 To access a different perspective, see the actors' real comments from 'What kind of Asian are you': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0Qelq6xt1U> **(1.46 minutes)**

2.3 A resource to demonstrate how quickly we form stereotypes, which is also an advertisement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84OT0NLlqfM> **(2.47 minutes)**

2.4 Putting your ethical stance to the test: What would you do in terms of defending the rights of a Hijab-wearing Muslima:?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX0a6Zf2GHU&feature=youtu.be> **(10 minutes)**

**Exercise C: In the relevant section of your Workbook, please write**

**a. 300 words on your reflection on stereotypes and racism from watching the videos. How does this fit into cultural awareness? How is this relevant to you at work and when working in multicultural teams?**

**b. 200 words on our assumptions that are influenced by our stereotypes.**

**Total time suggested: 2 hours**

### **Section Three - Cultural Dimensions**

3.1. Cultural dimensions or cultural value dimensions can be used to compare and contrast different cultures. There is a wide range of values and we do not automatically share our set of values with other people. The cultural dimensions illustrate cultural **preferences** or the dominant **tendencies** in a specific group of people. They should be seen as tools for better communication skills across cultures and appropriate behaviour in intercultural encounters. Cultural value dimensions are the specific means by which societies solve universal problems such as providing food or finding shelter. We all face similar challenges but the solutions might vary. Hofstede (1980) is a Dutch anthropologist and was one of the first researchers to conduct surveys about cultural dimensions.

Please note: We have to emphasise that cultural value dimensions are only a tool; putting other people into strict categories would defeat the purpose of the exercises and end up being an act of stereotyping. We have to keep in mind that these are just dominant tendencies in people's behaviour; their preferences are not a matter of black and white, but can be plenty of shades of grey too.

There are many attributes within culture and to increase awareness of these, please visit the links below:

3.1.2 The 'Elements of Culture' resource identifies visible attributes of culture at:

[http://changingminds.org/explanations/culture/elements\\_of\\_culture.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/culture/elements_of_culture.htm) **(8 minutes)**



### 3.1.3 Creating a positive culture

Explore the four steps involved in creating a positive culture which includes developing a sense of history, creating a sense of oneness, promoting a sense of membership as well as increasing contact and exchange:

[http://changingminds.org/explanations/culture/positive\\_culture.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/culture/positive_culture.htm) (8 minutes)

3.1.4 To gain an understanding of Social Norms, with examples and implications please visit:  
[http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/social\\_norms.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/social_norms.htm) (8 minutes)

**Exercise D: Read the material at the links above and write up a reflective piece based on your learning in the relevant section of your workbook (500 words).**

3.2.1 Watch an interview with Geert Hofstede on his perspectives on cultural dimensions:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdh40kgyYOY>

3.2.2 Hofstede's resource on the "dimensions of culture" and Edward T. Hall's Time Orientations is at: [http://www.ctp.bilkent.edu.tr/~aydogmus/Hofstede\\_Hall.pdf](http://www.ctp.bilkent.edu.tr/~aydogmus/Hofstede_Hall.pdf)

3.2.3 An explanation on the Power Distance (the degree to which power differentials within society and organisations are accepted.):  
<http://home.sandiego.edu/~dimon/CulturalFrameworks.pdf>

3.2.4 A further resource on High Context and Low Context Communication Styles demonstrating the effects this has on how people perceive information:  
<http://sophos-mailhub-1.ittralee.ie:32224/?MTcxMTU2MDYxNjVINDI0MjE9NThCRDgxQjFfMjA2MDFfNDU1XzEmJiAwMTQ0NWM0ZDQ0NDIwND0xMTMzJiZ1cmw9aHR0cCUzQSUyRiUyRnd3dyUyRWZhY3RsaW5lJTJFY29tJTJGZnNEb3dubG9hZCUyRmNvbW11bmljYXRpb24rc3R5bGVzK2Fjcm9zcytjdWx0dXJlcyUyRXBkZiUzRmZvcnVtaWQIM0QzMjYIMjZ2JTNEMSUyNmIkJTNEjE2ODA4>

3.2.5 Please have a look at "Training Exercise 9 – Hofstede's dimensions.

<http://www.culturewise.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Cultural-awareness-training-exercise-pack.pdf>

**Exercise E: Write up a 250 word reflective piece based on your learning when completing the exercises in the relevant section of your workbook.**

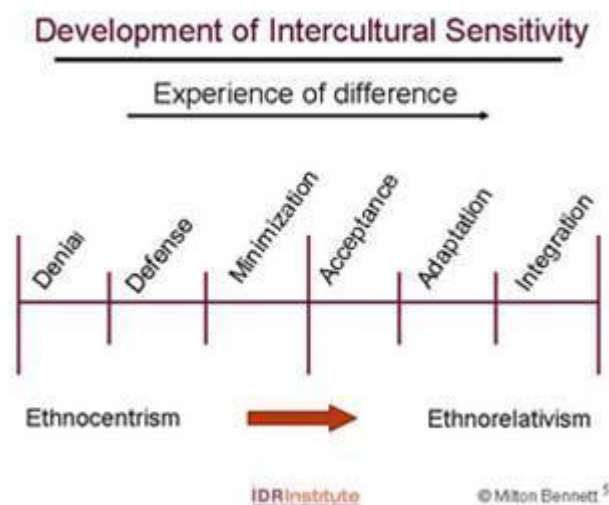
**Total time suggested: 2 hours**

## Section Four - Ethnocentrism and Ethnorelativism

4.1 An overview of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vKRFH2Wm6Y> (9 mins 51 secs)

The following article provides a critical view of the concepts of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism:

[https://staffmail.staff.ittralee.ie/service/home/~/?auth=co&loc=en\\_GB&id=126577&part=2](https://staffmail.staff.ittralee.ie/service/home/~/?auth=co&loc=en_GB&id=126577&part=2)



## 4.2 The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

(<http://www.idrinstitute.org/page.asp?menu1=15> )

### Summary by Milton J. Bennett, Ph.D. (Revised 2014)

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was created by Dr. Milton Bennett (1986, 1993, 2004, 2013) as a framework to explain how people experience and engage cultural difference. The DMIS is grounded theory; it is based on observations he made in both academic and corporate settings about how people become more competent intercultural communicators. Using concepts from constructivist psychology and communication theory, he organised these observations into positions along a continuum of increasing sensitivity to cultural difference.

The underlying assumption of the model is that as one's perceptual organisation of cultural difference becomes more complex, one's experience of culture becomes more sophisticated and the potential for exercising competence in intercultural relations increases. By recognising how cultural difference is being experienced, predictions about the effectiveness of intercultural communication can be made and educational interventions can be tailored to facilitate development along the continuum.

The DMIS continuum extends from *ethnocentrism*, the experience of one's own culture as "central to reality," to *ethnorelativism*, the experience of one's own and other cultures as "relative to context." Developmental movement is one-way, permanent, and applicable to anything defined as cultural difference, although there may be "retreats" from some positions. More or less familiarity with particular cultures does not change one's level of sensitivity, although it affects the breadth of competence one can enact.

Positions along the continuum define the general ways in which perception of cultural difference is being organised into experience. The particular configuration of perceptual strategies used by each individual and group is their *predominant experience of difference*: **one position is predominant**, although perceptual strategies may span several positions. In other words, each individual or group has a uniquely complex experience of cultural difference that is nevertheless characterised by one of the following developmental positions.



**Denial** of cultural difference indicates an experience in which cultural difference is not perceived at all, or it is perceived only in very broad categories such as "foreigner" or "minority." The constructs available for perceiving one's own culture are far more complex than those available for other cultures. Individuals experience psychological and/or physical isolation from cultural difference.

People are disinterested or perhaps even hostilely dismissive of intercultural communication.

**Defense** against cultural difference indicates an experience in which cultural difference is perceived in stereotyped and polarised ways. Cultures are organised into "us and them," where typically the "us" is superior and the "them" is inferior. People at Defense are threatened by cultural difference, so they tend to be highly critical of other cultures and apt to blame cultural difference for general ills of society. In **Reversal**, one's own culture is heavily criticised, while other cultures are perceived in relatively non-critical, romanticised ways. The intercultural worldview is still polarised, but the poles are reversed.

**Minimization** of cultural difference indicates an experience in which elements of one's own cultural worldview are perceived as universal. People assume that their own physical or psychological experiences are shared by people in all cultures, and/or that certain basic values and beliefs transcend cultural boundaries. The stressing of cross-cultural similarity reduces Defense, so people here are much more tolerant of superficial cultural diversity. However, Minimization obscures deep cultural differences, including the masking of dominant culture privilege by a false assumption of equal opportunity.

**Acceptance** of cultural difference indicates an experience in which one's own culture is experienced as just one of a number of equally complex worldviews. Acceptance does not mean agreement - cultural difference may be judged negatively - but the judgment is not ethnocentric. People at Acceptance are curious about and respectful towards cultural difference, but their knowledge of other cultures does not yet allow them to easily adapt their behaviour to different cultural contexts.

**Adaptation** to cultural difference indicates the experience of generating appropriate alternative behaviour in a different cultural context. Adaptation involves intercultural empathy, or experiencing the world to some extent "as if" one were participating in the different culture. This imaginative participation generates "feelings of appropriateness" that guide the generation of authentic behaviour in the alternative culture. People at adaptation can enact their intercultural sensitivity as intercultural communication competence.

**Integration** of cultural difference indicates an experience of self that is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. People with a predominant Integration position often are dealing with issues related to their own "cultural liminality," or in-betweeness. This liminality can be used to construct cultural bridges and to conduct sophisticated cross-cultural mediation.

## References

- Bennett, M. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10, no.2: 179-95.
- Bennett, M. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Bennett, M. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J. Wurzel (Ed.), *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education* (2nd ed., pp. 62-77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource
- Bennett, M. (2013). *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: Paradigms,*





*principles, & practices*. Boston: Intercultural Press.

A complete bibliography on DMIS and its applications can be downloaded from [www.idrinstitute.org](http://www.idrinstitute.org)

#### Exercise F:

- a. Write a short paragraph on how Ethnocentrism can influence your behaviour and why it might be important to understand the behaviour of your students/colleagues? (150 words)
- b. Why could it be desirable to move from an ethnocentric (monocultural mindset) to an ethnorelative (intercultural mindset) perspective? (150 words)

**Exercise G:** Please match the statements in your workbook with the various stages of the DMIS model. During the workshop possible solutions will be discussed by the facilitator.

**Total time suggested: 4 Hours**

### Section Five - Intercultural Sensitivity

In this section, students will be equipped with skills needed to work effectively with international students and multicultural teams.

5.1 Please visit the following link and complete the “Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters” below. This Autobiography has been designed to help you analyse a specific intercultural encounter which you have experienced. You do this by answering a sequence of questions about various aspects of that encounter. An intercultural encounter can be an experience you had with someone from another country, but it can also be an experience with someone from another cultural background in your country. It might be, for example, someone you met from another region, someone who speaks a different language, someone from a different religion or from a different ethnic group.

**Exercise H:** Please focus on ONE event or experience which you have had, download the ‘Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters’ document, complete and print pages 1-20 at the link below and include printed pages in the relevant area of your workbook:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/Source/AIE\\_en/AIE\\_autobiography\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/Source/AIE_en/AIE_autobiography_en.pdf)  
(Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE). Council of Europe, 2009.)

#### 5.2 Skills for Managing Intercultural Encounters - breaking barriers and building bridges

Appropriate skills for ICC could be, for example: please have a look at the ICOPROMO model: <http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/icopromo/results/Lucru/Files/ICOPROMOModel.pdf> and the ICOPROMO summary of skills: [http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/icopromo/results/Lucru/Files/B3\\_Icopromo\\_E\\_internet.pdf](http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/icopromo/results/Lucru/Files/B3_Icopromo_E_internet.pdf)

- Controlling emotional involvement
- Training of perception



- Mindfulness
- Empathy
- Perspective change
- Widening behavioural routines
- Awareness of self and others
- Communication across cultures
- Acquisition of cultural knowledge
- Sense-making
- Relationship building
- Assuming social responsibility

The overall goal could be becoming a good communicator and behaving appropriately when dealing with people from various cultural backgrounds. In relation to current affairs the importance to feel empathy for someone who has other values and be aware that one can comprehend a lot by understanding that the conflict could be explained by a clash of values. However, this requires a certain level of sensitivity.

**Exercise I: What skills are relevant for you at work? What skills would you like to discuss during the workshop? Please write a reflective piece of 100 words.**

### 5.3 What is Intercultural communication and Intercultural awareness?

Please have a look at the following website:

<http://www.careeraddict.com/improve-your-intercultural-communication-skills>

Example of possible ICC definition: "An intercultural approach is the development of strategy, policy and practice that promotes interaction, understanding, respect and integration between different cultures and ethnic groups on the basis that diversity is a strength that can enrich society, without glossing over the issues such as racism."

**Exercise J: Write a brief summary (100 words) what Intercultural Communication means to you and your specific situation at work?**

**Total Time allocated: 2 hour**

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes	
By the end of this session, each participant will be able to:	
<b>L01</b>	Define the concept of culture and how the cultural model of the Iceberg relates to it. What implications has this, for example, to the workplace?
<b>L02</b>	Identify how stereotypes can influence our behaviour.
<b>L03</b>	Evaluate how useful the application of "cultural dimensions" is to your relationship with students and colleagues.
<b>L04</b>	Identify how ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism can influence our behaviour.
<b>L05</b>	Reflect on the exercises and evaluate one's own cultural sensitivity at work and effectiveness of your communication skills.