Intercultural competence for professional mobility

Intercultural competence assessment

9 October 2006
Lisbon

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INCA – why the work began

- There has been a significant change in the cultural make-up of our staff with the expansion of the European Union and the arrival of people from a number of African countries. Inevitably this will have an impact on the way we manage and train our staff as well as the way we interface with customers.
  
  **Employer**

- There has, historically, been very little benchmarking of our services, and we feel that our clients would appreciate some form of international standards in our skillsets.
  
  **Provider of training**

- This would not only help ensure common standards across businesses and regions but also provide a target for companies to move towards – and the recognition and reward for companies who demonstrate best practice in this key area.
  
  **Employer**
Intercultural Competence Assessment

In the global economy, all sectors of UK industry and service provision are now required to operate in multicultural environments, whether in dealing with clients or within their own workforces. Multinational working is tending to mean the establishment of collaborative partnerships (as opposed to straightforward outsourcing) for the delivery of goods and services. UK employees are increasingly required to operate in a way which demonstrates sensitivity and competence in dealing with others from different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural competence enables you to interact both effectively and in a way that is acceptable to others when you are working in a group whose members have different cultural backgrounds. The group may consist of two or more people including yourself. "Cultural" may denote all manner of features, including the values and beliefs you have grown up with, your national, regional and local customs and, in particular, attitudes and practices that affect the way you work.

The INCA project, funded by Leonardo da Vinci II, has developed a framework, a suite of assessment tools, including INCA on-line, and a portfolio for the assessment of intercultural competence linked to language and subject knowledge competence.

The INCA Products were developed and tested first in the engineering sector, where the need for interculturally competent managers for the future is most acute. The project partners and contributors were experts in intercultural learning theory, diagnostic testing, "culture shock", etc from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and the UK.

Click here to find out more about the background to the project.
INCA – a definition of intercultural competence

- **Intercultural competence is the range of knowledge and skills an individual needs to interact with colleagues from other countries, cultures, language backgrounds and social identities**

  - the aims of Intercultural Competence are effectiveness and mutually accepted practices
  - we only deal with situations of cultural overlap where people with specific sets of values, beliefs and behaviours interact and thereby try to create an Interculture
  - a definition of Culture (whether corporate, national, gender/job-role related or other) is therefore: a specific set of values, beliefs and behaviours
  - Intercultural competencies are skills, knowledge and attitudes
  - Intercultural Competence comprises four main activities: to perceive - to interpret - to act - knowledge (to know).

Knowledge includes both knowledge about culture and knowledge about intercultural situations
# UK National Occupational Standards in Languages

**E1** You can understand and use a small number of words and phrases. You can deal with a limited number of familiar work tasks, e.g.:  
- introduce yourself, give your job title;  
- understand basic signs, e.g. entrance, exit;  
- note appointment details, e.g. time, place.

**Listening**  
E1 Listen to basic words and phrases in familiar work contexts  
E1.1 Extract information from basic statements  
E1.2 Follow basic conversations

**Speaking**  
E1 Speak using basic words and phrases in familiar work contexts  
E1.1 Provide basic personal and work-related information  
E1.2 Take part in basic conversations

**Reading**  
E1 Read basic texts on familiar work topics  
E1.1 Extract information from basic signs, instructions and notes

**Writing**  
E1 Write basic texts on familiar work topics  
E1.1 Complete forms and write brief notes

**E2** You can understand and use a limited range of simple words and sentences. You know simplest forms of the past, present and future tenses. You can deal with familiar work tasks, e.g.:  
- follow/give simple directions, instructions;  
- provide product names, prices, delivery dates;  
- use/respond to common telephone phrases.

**Listening**  
E2 Listen to simple language in familiar work contexts  
E2.1 Extract information from simple statements or descriptions  
E2.2 Follow simple, predictable conversations

**Speaking**  
E2 Speak using simple language in familiar work contexts  
E2.1 Give simple, prepared statements or descriptions  
E2.2 Take part in simple, predictable conversations

**Reading**  
E2 Read simple texts on familiar work topics  
E2.1 Extract information from signs, notices and simple correspondence

**Writing**  
E2 Write simple texts on familiar work topics  
E2.1 Complete forms and create simple correspondence

**E3** You can understand and use routine vocabulary and standardized sentence structures and can recognize some less familiar elements. You can deal with everyday work tasks, e.g.:  
- manage travel, accommodation;  
- understand routine product specifications;  
- write standard letters, e.g. offers.

**Listening**  
E3 Listen to routine language in everyday work contexts  
E3.1 Extract information from routine statements, descriptions or explanations  
E3.2 Understand routine conversations

**Speaking**  
E3 Speak using routine language in everyday work contexts  
E3.1 Give routine, descriptive statements and explanations  
E3.2 Take part in routine conversations

**Reading**  
E3 Read routine texts on everyday work topics  
E3.1 Extract information from routine notices, reports and correspondence

**Writing**  
E3 Write routine texts on everyday work topics  
E3.1 Create routine records, reports and correspondence

**E4** You can understand and express information, ideas and opinions about a variety of subjects. You can deal with a range of work tasks, e.g.:  
- maintain working relationships;  
- undertake straightforward negotiations;  
- provide short reports, proposals.

**Listening**  
E4 Listen to varied language in a range of work contexts  
E4.1 Understand varied accounts, reports and instructions  
E4.2 Understand varied discussions

**Speaking**  
E4 Speak using varied language in a range of work contexts  
E4.1 Give varied accounts, reports and instructions  
E4.2 Take part in varied discussions

**Reading**  
E4 Read varied texts on a range of work topics  
E4.1 Read varied articles, reports and correspondence

**Writing**  
E4 Write varied texts on a range of work topics  
E4.1 Write summaries, reports and correspondence

**E5** You can understand and use complex language and express yourself fluently. You can deal confidently with most work situations, e.g.:  
- initiate and maintain working relationships;  
- undertake complex negotiations;  
- provide complex reports, proposals.

**Listening**  
E5 Listen to complex language in a wide range of work contexts  
E5.1 Understand complex presentations or talks  
E5.2 Understand complex discussions

**Speaking**  
E5 Speak using complex language in a wide range of work contexts  
E5.1 Deliver complex, prepared talks  
E5.2 Take part in complex discussions and meetings

**Reading**  
E5 Read complex texts on a wide range of work topics  
E5.1 Read complex reports, proposals and correspondence

**Writing**  
E5 Write complex texts on a wide range of work topics  
E5.1 Write complex reports, proposals and correspondence

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NB: The term ‘work’ is meant to include social activities which are relevant to work, e.g. travel, entertaining clients, etc.
INCA – intercultural competence includes ...

1. Tolerance for ambiguity
2. Behavioural flexibility
3. Communicative awareness
4. Knowledge discovery
5. Respect for Otherness
6. Empathy
The INCA Framework (extract)

## INCA Framework (assessor version)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>1 ‘Basic’</th>
<th>2 ‘Intermediate’</th>
<th>3 ‘Full’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General profile</td>
<td>The candidate at this level is on the ladder of progression. They will be disposed to deal positively with the situation. Their responses to it will be piecemeal and improvised rather than principled, even though mostly successful in avoiding short term difficulties. These will be based on fragmentary information.</td>
<td>The candidate at this level has begun to induce simple principles to apply to the situation, rather than improvise reactively in response to isolated features of it. There will be evidence of a basic strategy and some coherent knowledge for dealing with situations.</td>
<td>The candidate at this level will combine a strategic and principled approach to a situation to take the role of a mediator seeking to bring about the most favourable outcome. Knowledge of their own culture and that of others, including work parameters, will be both coherent and sophisticated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Tolerance of ambiguity</td>
<td>1T Deals with ambiguity on a one-off basis, responding to items as they arise. May be overwhelmed by ambiguous situations which imply high involvement.</td>
<td>2T Has begun to acquire a repertoire of approaches to cope with ambiguities in low-involvement situations. Begins to accept ambiguity as a challenge.</td>
<td>3T Is constantly aware of the possibility of ambiguity. When it occurs, he/she tolerates and manages it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Behavioural flexibility</td>
<td>1B Adopts a reactive/defensive approach to situations. Learns from isolated experiences in a rather unsystematic way.</td>
<td>2B Previous experience of required behaviour begins to influence behaviour in everyday parallel situations. Sometimes takes the initiative in adopting/conforming to other cultures’ behaviour patterns.</td>
<td>3B Is ready and able to adopt appropriate behaviour in job-specific situations from a broad and well-understood repertoire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Communicative awareness</td>
<td>1C Attempts to relate problems of intercultural interaction to different communicative conventions, but lacks the necessary knowledge for identifying differences, tends to hold on to his own conventions and expects adaptation from others; is aware of difficulties in interaction with non-native-speakers, but has not yet evolved principles to guide the choice of (metacommunication, clarification or simplification) strategies.</td>
<td>2C Begins to relate problems of intercultural interaction to conflicting communicative conventions and attempts to clarify his own or to adapt to the conventions of others. Uses a limited repertoire of strategies (metacommunication, clarification, simplification) to solve and prevent problems when interacting with a non-native-speaker.</td>
<td>3C Is able to relate problems of intercultural interaction to conflicting communicative conventions and is aware of their effects on the communication process; is able to identify and ready to adapt to different communicative conventions, or to negotiate new discourse rules in order to prevent or clarify misunderstandings; uses a variety of strategies (metacommunication, clarification, simplification) to prevent, to solve, and to mediate problems when interacting with a non-native-speaker.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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INCA assessment tools

Assesses: Assessor:
Exercise: Intercultural Encounters incl. role play Date: Page 1

Instructions: Intercultural encounters

SCENARIO 1: FINDING INFORMATION

You have been selected to take part in an international work project with an associate European company. You will spend 3-4 months in a country which you have not visited before. Before you go, you need some of the language of the local people so that you can communicate effectively. The following questions will help you to judge how quickly you might come to understand your new environment, its culture and its people.

Please answer the following questions:

1. What kind of information do you think you would need before departure?

2. How would you obtain that information?

3. During the placement what would you do to find out information in the workplace?

4. During your spare time, if you wanted to find out more about the country, what would you do?

5. Any other comments.

Assessment sheet: Intercultural encounters including role play explaining a procedure

Assesses: Assessor: Date:
Scenario: Finding Information Competence tested: Knowledge Discovery
(Activity per question as structured below Comments have to be included in Questions 1-4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 1-2</th>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>Question 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KD basic</td>
<td>KD basic</td>
<td>KD basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get/know the verbal version</td>
<td>I think I can get/know the verbal version</td>
<td>I think I can get/know the verbal version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to refer to my notes</td>
<td>I need to refer to my notes</td>
<td>I need to refer to my notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communication with local people</td>
<td>3. Communication with local people</td>
<td>4. Communication with local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communication with colleagues</td>
<td>4. Communication with colleagues</td>
<td>5. Communication with colleagues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment tools

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INCA records of assessment
A ‘How to...’ guide for employers
Research with employers in London

Managing in a Global City
A Report on the Skills Required to Manage a Multicultural Workforce in a Multicultural Environment in Central London
Executive Summary

November 2006
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CiLT The National Centre for Languages
A training programme for managers and supervisors

Intercultural Skills
For Working in a Global City

Name: ____________________________
Organisation: _____________________
Start Date: _______________________

CiLT  The National Centre for Languages
Towards UK National Occupational Standards in intercultural skills
Linking back to INCA

1. Tolerance for ambiguity
2. Behavioural flexibility
3. Communicative awareness
4. Knowledge discovery
5. Respect for Otherness
6. Empathy
Looking forward to NOS

Unit titles

1. Acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices
2. Deal constructively with ambiguous situations
3. Respect different cultures and cultural practices
4. Adapt behaviour to different requirements and situations
5. Develop effective communication through understanding of the impact of different language skills and conventions
6. Relate and respond in appropriate ways to the feelings, preferences and ways of thinking of others
Applications for NOS in Intercultural Skills

- Recruitment, selection & professional development
- Training needs analysis, training provision and review
- Review of training materials and programmes for fitness for purpose
- Quality assurance benchmarking for employers and providers
- Awareness-raising
- Design of curriculum content, assessment and qualifications
Intercultural competence for professional mobility

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