

**A Summary of Proposed Cross Cultural Competencies for
an Increasingly Agile Department of Defense**



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Cross-cultural competence (3C) is considered a life-long process in which individuals can learn how to maximize their inherent characteristics, as well as develop culture-general knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes to operate effectively in a culturally-diverse context. This report posits that such competencies are not discrete, but, instead, build on one another in a complementary and synchronous manner (See figure 1). Thus, in an effort to produce a parsimonious—yet comprehensive—conceptualization of a 3C framework, the findings from the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI)¹ report were compared to those of the emergent constructs in the Applied Research Associates, Inc. (ARA) report.² Based on a comparison of the final constructs provided in the reports, it became apparent that both frameworks substantially converged in their approaches. This finding thereby lends credence to a logical, theory-based, and practical sequence for a codified development of 3C training.

Core Competencies vs. Enablers

To ensure comprehensibility, the final constructs in the recommended framework were categorized in line with extant codification: *core competencies* and *enablers*.³ Thus, this report posits that core competencies include affective/attitudinal, behavioral, or cognitive characteristics that may fundamentally require declarative/procedural knowledge, as well as critical thinking skills. Core competencies, therefore, define the critical behaviors needed to successfully perform in a cross-cultural context. Similarly, it is proposed that *secondary competencies* include the fundamental knowledge, skills, and abilities that facilitate the development of the respective emergent core competency. Individuals may possess varying levels of competencies, depending on a number of factors (see training considerations below); however, these competencies are considered to be generally malleable.

This report also posits that *enablers*—though similarly comprised of affective, attitudinal, or behavioral tendencies—serve as motivational factors that further accelerate the development of the core competencies.³ Of particular note, the distinction between core competencies and enablers does not present a clear dichotomy. However, enablers are believed to be those characteristics—some of which stem from personality traits—that generally predispose individuals to act in a certain manner. Unlike the core competencies, these individual characteristics represent pre-existing differences that are usually enduring over time, and thus, can accelerate the development of complementary core competencies. Though the general belief may be that enablers are stable in nature,³ there is also some support that they may vary over one's life course. Their variable nature can be influenced by the *situational strength* (i.e., cues provided by environmental forces that dictate the appropriate course of action or desirability of potential behaviors). Situational strength reflects the various characteristics of situations that can restrict the expression of individual differences. Thus, in light of the interactive impact between individual differences (i.e., enablers) and situational characteristics, situational strength serves as a lens through which management of enablers can be better understood. Consequently, stable individual differences are believed to combine in complex ways with situational attributes to affect individual behavior.⁵ This line of reasoning therefore lends credence to the belief that individuals can be taught how to best *manage* enablers, in light of contemporary cross-cultural situational demands. Also, it is postulated that salient enablers exist, which complement or support the development of respective competencies (See figure 1). When job cues trigger expression of a core competency—and the individual also possesses the enabler triggered by this

competency—his/her job performance will be significantly enhanced, compared to an individual who does not possess the supporting enabler(s).⁶

Motivational and Training Considerations

Motivational considerations should be acknowledged and monitored throughout the training and progression for each of the core competencies. Specifically, an individual's motivation to learn will greatly influence the acquisition and mastery of each core competency and its secondary competencies. Intrinsic motivation (i.e., driven by interest or enjoyment) is more enduring and self-directed than extrinsic motivation (e.g., concrete rewards, praise, etc.) Thus, during all stages of competency development, it is necessary to consider the role of self-efficacy—the belief in one's own capacity to perform—as it is often considered to be a proxy for gauging one's intrinsic motivation. The cross-cutting nature of self-efficacy helps to accelerate the mastery of these primary and secondary competencies. For that reason, it is also important to gauge an individual's self-efficacy when reinforcing the development of such competencies to attain the desired changes in behaviors. Furthermore, it may prove useful to operationalize task-related self-efficacy by creating behavioral anchors that illustrate various levels of self-efficacy throughout different stages of training. Successful training often monitors trainees' self-efficacy in order to ensure that the training intervention will be effective.

The primary and secondary competencies are believed to be malleable in nature, and thus can be trained by employing various training mediums. Furthermore, the developmental progression of competencies are predicated on the frequency of the individual's task (i.e., seldom versus routine), his/her MOS/rate, functionality, rank, and assignment. The training medium should, therefore, be contingent on the contextual environment (e.g., sea duty vs. shore duty, combat vs. non-combat, deployed vs. non-deployed) and time constraints.

3C Model

Based on a comparison of these two reports, coupled with the practical considerations identified,⁷ the emergent core competencies were found to include:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Cultural learning
- Cultural perspective-taking
- Intercultural interaction
- Cultural reasoning

Additionally, the most salient and complementary enablers that serve to accelerate the development of the core competencies, when managed appropriately, include:

- Self-efficacy
- Patience
- Inquisitiveness
- Willingness to engage
- Openness to experience
- Inclusiveness
- Tolerance for cultural uncertainty

- Resilience
- Emotional stability
- Understanding and leveraging one's own and others' personality attributes

In sum, the individual's command of self-awareness, self-regulation, and cultural learning collectively serve as foundational competencies in the development of 3C. These fundamental competencies are largely knowledge-based and interactively contribute to the development of the more advanced/emergent competency of cultural perspective-taking. The continued development of these fundamental/baseline competencies help to enhance the progression of more intricate, skill-based competencies, such as intercultural interaction and cultural reasoning. Successful mastery is therefore evidenced in the accurate evaluation of culture-based situational contingencies and creating appropriate and effective responses to optimally function in various cross-cultural settings (See Table 1). Table 2 provides brief definitions for the conceptualization of the cross-cultural core competencies, secondary competencies, and supporting enablers proposed herein.

¹ Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (2011). *A proposed developmental sequence for cross-cultural competence training in the Department of Defense*. Melbourne, Florida: Reid, P., Steinke, J. C., Mokuolu, F., Trejo, B., Faulkner, D., Sudduth, M. M., & McDonald, D. P.

² Applied Research Associates, Inc. (2011). *Data collection and analysis for a cross-cultural competence model*. Fairburn, Ohio: Rasmussen, L., Sieck, W., Crandall, B., Simpskins, B., & Smith, J.

³ Johnston, J. H., Paris, C., McCoy, C. E., Severe, G., Hughes, S. C. (2010). *A framework for cross-cultural competence and learning recommendations*. Technical report. Defense Language Office.

⁴ Murphy, K. R. (1996). Individual differences and behavior in organizations: Much more than g. In K. R. Murphy (Ed.), *Individual differences and behavior in organizations* (pp. 3-30). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁵ Hatrup, K. and Jackson, S. E. (1996). Learning about individual differences by taking situations seriously. In K. R. Murphy (Ed.), *Individual differences and behavior in organizations* (pp. 507-547). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁶ Paris, C., Johnston, J., Hughes, S. McCoy-Fisher, C., Severe, C., Reid, P., and van Driel, M. (2011). Framework for cross-cultural competence and learning recommendations. Paper presented at the 8th Biennial EO, Diversity & Culture Research Symposium, Patrick AFB, FL: Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI).

⁷ Personal communication with Dr. Allison Greene-Sands, Associate Director of Culture, Defense Language and National Security Education Office, 2 March 2012.

⁸ McCrae, R. R. & John, O. P. (1992). An introduction to the Five-Factor Model and its applications. *Journal of Personality*, 60, 175-215.

CORE COMPETENCIES & SUPPORTING ENABLERS	SECONDARY CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES		
	BASELINE (101)	INTERMEDIATE (201)	ADVANCED (301)
CULTURAL REASONING Inclusiveness; Tolerance for cultural uncertainty; Self-efficacy			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applies cultural explanations of behaviors; sense-making * Demonstrates cognitive complexity * Suspends judgment
INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION Patience; Inquisitiveness; Willingness to Engage; Openness to Experience; Self-Efficacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Develops self-monitoring skills * Develops cognitive complexity * Develops nonverbal & verbal communication skills * Develops survival language skills * Understands the elements required for communication planning * Develops trust-building tactics * Develops negotiation skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applies self-monitoring skills * Demonstrates cognitive complexity * Demonstrates nonverbal & verbal communication skills * Develops language proficiency * Engages in communication planning * Demonstrates trust-building tactics * Demonstrates negotiation skills
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE-TAKING Tolerance for Cultural Uncertainty; Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Recognizes existence of other worldviews * Develops cultural scripts based on cross-cultural mental models * Suspends judgment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Refines cultural scripts based on cross-cultural mental models * Develops cultural explanations of behaviors * Suspends judgment * Engages in cognitive flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applies cultural scripts based on cross-cultural mental models * Applies cultural explanations of behaviors; sense-making * Suspends judgment * Engages in cognitive flexibility
CULTURAL LEARNING Inquisitiveness; Openness to Experience; Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Acquires cultural knowledge * Learns through observation * Learns the rules about survival language and expressing nonverbal behaviors; sociolinguistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Refines cultural knowledge * Learns through observation * Develops cognitive complexity * Develops the understanding of one's own and other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applies cultural knowledge * Learns through observation * Demonstrates cognitive complexity * Advances the understanding of one's own and other cultures
SELF-REGULATION Resilience; Emotional Stability; Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Recognizes the importance of self-monitoring * Engages in reflection & feedback processes * Perceives and understands emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Develops self-monitoring skills * Engages in reflection & feedback * Develops emotion regulation strategies * Understands attitudes toward cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applies self-monitoring skills * Engages in reflection & feedback * Applies emotion regulation strategies * Manages attitudes toward cultures
SELF-AWARENESS Leveraging personality attributes; Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Understands self in a cultural context * Understands the factors that shape one's worldview * Understands self in a cross-cultural context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Refines concept of self in a cultural context * Refines understanding of the factors that shape one's worldview * Refines concept of self in a cross-cultural context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Advances the understanding of one's own culture

Table 1. Overview of the developmental progression of secondary cross-cultural competencies

Baseline (101)	Intermediate (201)	Advanced (301)
		Apply cultural explanations of behaviors; sense-making
	Develops cognitive complexity	Demonstrates cognitive complexity
	Develops self-monitoring skills	Applies self-monitoring skills
	Develops nonverbal & verbal communication	Demonstrates nonverbal & verbal communication
Learns rules about survival language and expressing nonverbal behaviors; sociolinguistics	Develops survival language	Develops language proficiency
	Understands the elements required for communication planning	Engages in communication planning
		Develops trust building tactics
		Develops negotiation skills
Suspends judgment	Suspends judgment	Suspends judgment
Develops cultural scripts based on cross-cultural mental models	Refines cultural scripts based on cross-cultural mental models	Applies cultural scripts based on cross-cultural mental models
Recognizes existence of other worldviews	Develops cultural explanations of behaviors	Applies cultural explanations of behaviors
	Engages in cognitive flexibility	Engages in cognitive flexibility
Acquires cultural knowledge	Refines cultural knowledge	Applies cultural knowledge
Learns through observation	Learns through observation	Learns through observation
	Develops the understanding of one's own and other cultures	Advances the understanding of one's own and other cultures
Recognizes the importance of self-monitoring	Develops self-monitoring skills	Applies self-monitoring skills
Engages in reflection & feedback	Engages in reflection & feedback	Engages in reflection & feedback
Perceives and understands emotions	Develops emotion regulation strategies	Applies emotion regulation strategies
	Understands attitudes toward cultures	Manages attitudes toward cultures
Understands self in cultural context	Understands self in a cross-cultural context	Advances the understanding of one's own culture
Understands the factors that shape one's worldview		
Understands self in a cross-cultural context	Understands self in a cross-cultural context	

Table 2. Definition of terms (Adapted from DEOMI, 2011).

Definitions	
Attitudes Toward Cultures	Understands that positive or negative personal attitudes, values, and preferences can get in the way of establishing strategic intercultural relationships and uses this information to develop a deeper understanding of culture and relationships. ²
Building Trust	Develops reliance based on integrity, strength and ability in order to establish effective social exchange with key personnel who may exert high levels of influence.
Cognitive Complexity	The ability to comprehend and integrate fundamental and dynamic components operating in cultural interactions, as well as anticipate the consequences of one's actions in cultural settings.
Cognitive Flexibility	The ability to switch easily from one strategy to another, adjusting behaviors as the situation demands.
Communication Planning	Plans communication content and means of expression in advance of mission-critical interactions in order to most effectively establish authority, change others' opinions or behavior, and convince them to willingly follow own leadership or guidance.
Cultural Knowledge	The factual information about a culture's economic and legal systems; values, social interaction norms, religious beliefs, rules of languages, rules for expressing behaviors, etc. ¹
Cultural Learning	Demonstrates the capacity to acquire and retain culture-specific facts, norms, traditions, and other aspects of the culture of interest.
Cultural Perspective-Taking	A cognitive process that allows individuals to think about the world from another person's point of view. ²
Cultural Reasoning	Notices behaviors or events within other cultures that violate one's own expectations and manages surprises by analyzing their causes. ²
Cultural Sense-Making	The use of cognitive processes that allow individuals to improve their cultural understanding as well as effectively manage confusion/surprises. ²
Emotion Regulation	Regulates/controls one's own emotions and emotional expression to support mission performance. ⁵
Emotional Stability	A personality trait that reflects the extent to which a person displays a calm and secure disposition. A person who is very stable emotionally would remain calm in many situations and would feel secure. ⁸
Inclusiveness	The tendency to cognitively include and accept things (including people) based on commonalities rather than dividing things into groups or categories, thus, emphasizing commonalities and minimizing differences. ⁵
Inquisitiveness	The act of being receptive toward, and actively pursuing an understanding of ideas, values, norms, situations, and behaviors that are new and different. Demonstrates curiosity about different cultures, as well as an interest in world and international events. ⁵

Definitions (cont'd.)

Intercultural Interaction	The ability to employ information about people and surroundings to plan and adjust messages, means of communication, and self-presentation so as to achieve intended outcomes. ²
Language Proficiency	Displays knowledge of pertinent language, and possesses the capability to communicate using the language in oral and written forms.
Learning through Observation	Gathers and interprets information about people and surroundings to increase awareness about one's own treatment, and how to treat others. The individual is motivated to make sense of inconsistent information about social rules and norms, and continually updates own knowledge base as new situations are encountered. ⁵
Leveraging Personality Attributes	Exhibits the ability to employ personality characteristics to effectively interact with others, in order to achieve desired objectives in cross-cultural settings.
Mental Models & Schema Development	Exhibits an understanding of how personal background, values, and beliefs impact the development of the cultural template that individuals use as the primary basis for cross-cultural interactions.
Openness to Experience	A personality trait that reflects the extent to which a person displays a creative, flexible, curious, and adventurous disposition. ⁸
Negotiation Skills	Using both cognitive and behavioral skills to share information directly or indirectly, whether within one's own culture or another culture. Negotiation processes (e.g., deal-making and dispute resolution) are influenced by roles, teams, constituents, the communication form (e.g., email or face-to-face), and the use of third parties.
Nonverbal & Verbal Communication	Demonstrates the ability to effectively display accurate non-verbal gestures and engage in verbal statements during communications with people from different cultures.
Patience	Demonstrates the ability to tolerate arduous circumstances without getting angry or upset. Acts as a calming influence.
Reflection and Feedback	Reflects internally, as well as through external feedback, on one's own and other's actions. ²
Resilience	Mentally tolerates emotionally shocking, frustrating, or exhausting circumstances (due to repetition); is able to "bounce back" and persevere in spite of stressful challenges, that is, to retain task focus and enthusiasm, even when faced with repeated setbacks, failures and/or obstacles to success. Avoids adopting stress-induced perspectives and opinions that overly simplify culture; demonstrates tendency to experience positive emotional states and to respond calmly and steadfastly to stressful events. ³

Definitions (cont'd.)	
Self-Awareness	The awareness of one's self, including personality attributes, cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, and biases. Understands that one's own way of viewing the world is a result of his/her unique background, personal history, and culture, and recognizes that people with different backgrounds view the world differently. Continually seeks to understand how one views himself/herself and how his/her own culture, in general, is viewed by members of other countries. ²
Self-Efficacy	Believes in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action required to manage situational demands. ⁵
Self-Identification	Demonstrates the ability to maintain personal values independent of situational factors. ⁵
Self-Monitoring	The ability to see oneself as others see the individual and recognize subtle changes in one's personal affect, as well as adjust outward behaviors accordingly.
Survival Language	Language which consists of words and phrases encountered in daily situations.
Self-Regulation	Adjusts behavior to achieve desired goals by monitoring discrepancies and progress toward such goals. ¹
Suspending Judgment	Withholds personal or moral judgment when faced with novel experiences, knowledge, and points of view. Perceives information neutrally and withholds judgment until adequate information becomes available. ⁵
Tolerance for Cultural Uncertainty	Accepts, or does not feel threatened by, ambiguous situations and uncertainty. Manages uncertainty in new and complex situations where there is not necessarily a "right" way to interpret things. ⁵
Understands Self in a Cultural Context	Displays an understanding of the ways in which one's personal values influence one's perceptions and interactions in varied cultural contexts.
Willingness to Engage	Actively seeks out and explores unfamiliar cross-cultural interactions and positively regards them as a challenge. ⁵