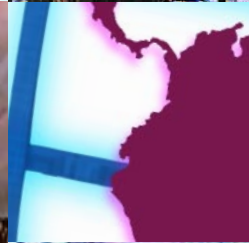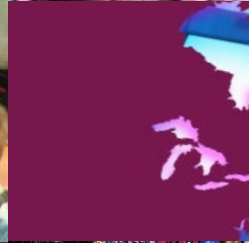# A PROFILE OF THE INTERCULTURALLY EFFECTIVE PERSON

THOMAS VULPE, DANIEL KEALEY, DAVID PROTHEROE AND DOUG MACDONALD

CENTRE FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING
CANADIAN FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

Canada

This Profile is an important and practical tool which many organizations and companies will be able to use and apply… not only for staff being posted to another culture but also nationally as we in most countries deal with an increasingly multicultural and diverse workforce.

Ewa Eriksson
International Recruitment
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Geneva, Switzerland

This document demonstrates excellent research and thinking… a useful tool for use in recruitment and selection, performance evaluation, and training and development of overseas personnel.

Pri Notowidigdo
Managing Partner
Executive Recruitment
AMROP International
Jakarta, Indonesia

The profile of competencies is interesting from many points of view… it avoids the negative effect of a biased and partial vision of the intercultural… at the same time, it integrates the general and specific knowledge on cultures, taking into consideration both the similarities and the differences.

Jacques Proulx
Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Sherbrooke
Sherbrooke, Canada

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SERVICE INSTITUTE**

**INSTITUT CANADIEN
DU SERVICE EXTÉRIEUR**

OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN THE INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS SERIES

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS – MAKING NORTH-SOUTH COOPERATION MORE EFFECTIVE

Daniel J. Kealey & David R. Protheroe
Centre for Intercultural Learning, Canadian Foreign Service Institute, 1995, bilingual, 119 pp. English.

This study clarifies why so few development assistance personnel are successful by examining the *individual, organizational and contextual* factors at play in success or failure. This book also discusses how the field of technical cooperation is evolving and how new forms of collaboration are emerging in fields such as diplomacy, peacekeeping and business. Providing tools to assist outgoing collaborators in understanding their challenging new environment and presenting a description of the characteristics of the model collaborator, *Cross-Cultural Collaboration* is required reading for both development workers and their managers.

CROSS-CULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS – A STUDY OF CANADIAN TECHNICAL ADVISORS OVERSEAS

Daniel J. Kealey, Ph.D.
Centre for Intercultural Learning, Canadian Foreign Service Institute, 2001, bilingual, 70 pp. English.

Does previous overseas experience guarantee success? Is culture shock something to be avoided? Can you select for intercultural effectiveness? Can you train for intercultural skills? A seminal work in the intercultural field, *Cross-Cultural Effectiveness* challenges commonly held beliefs about what it takes to live and work successfully in a new culture. The study defines the interpersonal skills and pre-departure attitudes that are predictive of overseas success and links these to the practical issues of selection and training. *Cross-Cultural Effectiveness*, first published in 1990 and updated and revised for this 2001 edition, is a must read for anyone involved in the international and intercultural fields.

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FOREWORD

In 1995, I was asked to advise on a multi-lateral project to assess the impact of pre-departure intercultural effectiveness training on development advisors' performance in the field. In large part, the goal of the research was to answer the age-old question in the training field: "Does our training make a difference in people's performance?" This is a laudable goal, but when asked for my advice as to whether the Centre for Intercultural Learning should support the study, I responded: "Not yet."

A clear, concise statement of the performance we expect of an interculturally effective person did not exist.

The reason was simple: a clear, concise statement of the performance we expect of an interculturally effective person did not exist. Intrinsically, we believe that learning makes a difference. Just ask a drowning man how valuable swimming lessons might have been. However, the impact of training is not often so obvious. This is particularly true in the field of intercultural effectiveness. How do you know if a person is or is not drowning in a new culture?

Given the many thousands of people who had been trained in intercultural effectiveness, my notion was perhaps heretical. Was I asserting that for the past three decades, we, in the intercultural field, really have not known what we are doing? Well, yes and no. The research into the profile of the Interculturally Effective Person (IEP) has shown that there is a common understanding among theoreticians and practitioners of what defines intercultural effectiveness, and yet, little exists in terms of a defining statement. What is it that you do or do not do, say or not say, that would indicate to an observer that you are, in fact, interculturally effective?

In the profile of the Interculturally Effective Person, our Major and Core Competencies may appear similar to what is currently available from other sources. The step forward we are making is in describing the actual behaviours that one would exhibit to be deemed interculturally effective. The real challenge has been to move beyond "adaptation", "coping", "respecting", "accepting", and "integrating" to *actual behaviours* you can see or hear.

To borrow from Robert Mager, we have attempted to "de-fuzzify" our descriptions of performance. Anything less would have meant we had simply re-shuffled a comprehensive collection of immeasurable performances. The Centre for

Intercultural Learning has made an assertion that the behavioural indicators set forth in this profile would enable an evaluator to determine the relative effectiveness of a person in an intercultural environment. There remains the actual use and application of these indicators in the field, which will undoubtedly result in additions, deletions and a general refinement of the profile. In 10 years' time, the profile will likely be much different from the version that follows. For now, the profile is a foundation upon which to build.

Thomas Vulpe, Director
Centre for Intercultural Learning
Canadian Foreign Service Institute

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

A profile of the interculturally effective person

What is an interculturally effective person?

By our definition, it is someone who is able to "live contentedly and work successfully in another culture." This profile will outline the broad competencies – the skills, knowledge and attitudes – and the more specific behavioural traits possessed by an interculturally effective person (IEP).

The result of a project initiated in May 1998 by the Canadian Foreign Service Institute's Centre for Intercultural Learning, our profile goes beyond the more common general description of intercultural competency traits. It provides a comprehensive and behaviour-based outline of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and other characteristics required or desirable for living and working in another culture.

This profile can be used as a guide for designing pre-departure training programs, for improving selection procedures for international personnel, and for evaluating their performance on assignment. It can also be used for composing job descriptions, in project planning, and as a self-development guide.

What is an interculturally effective person? By our definition, it is someone who is able to "live contentedly and work successfully in another culture."

INTRODUCTION

Someone who is interculturally effective has three main attributes:

■   an ability to communicate with people of another culture in a way that earns their respect and trust, thereby encouraging a cooperative and productive workplace that is conducive to the achievement of professional or assignment goals;

■   the capacity to adapt his/her professional skills (both technical and managerial) to fit local conditions and constraints; and

■   the capacity to adjust personally so that s/he is content and generally at ease in the host culture.

The first two elements apply to any intercultural situation, including multicultural relations in Canada, but the third is unique to the international situation – a principal focus of the current document.

This IEP profile has been made as universal as possible to serve the needs of a variety of organizations and individuals working abroad, such as business, diplomatic and government personnel, international development workers, foreign students and the military, including peacekeepers. The demands of intercultural situations can vary considerably and to arrive at a truly behaviour-based and universally applicable profile has been a challenge. Most existing research on intercultural competency has relied on survey-type questionnaires and self-assessments of success at adapting and working effectively overseas. Very little has involved actual behavioural observation of people in the field.

Key components of the profile

A major goal of the Centre for Intercultural Learning in initiating this project was to develop a comprehensive inventory of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes possessed by a person who is interculturally effective. The aim was to make this inventory user-friendly – in a format that could be applied easily to performance appraisal, selection and training.

A careful and painstaking process was undertaken to ensure that the inventory was a complete as possible. This included a "think tank" meeting of a dozen experienced individuals, a literature review of previous attempts to define the qualities possessed by interculturally effective people, and consultations with a dozen experts in this field from North and South, Western and non-Western countries, and from several organizational fields. The result is inevitably idealistic in that any real-life individual possessing all these qualities would be super-human!

While wanting the inventory to be comprehensive, we also wanted to avoid an overwhelming mass of detail. For this reason, a three-level classification has been used. Depending on need, users can focus on:

- general-level major competencies;
- more focused core competencies; or
- quite detailed behavioural indicators.

These three main levels of competencies (including personal attributes, knowledge, attitudes, skills and experience) form an interrelated hierarchy of essential qualities, related qualities, and more directly observable behaviours.

Major Competencies

Nine essential qualities possessed by an interculturally effective person are listed. Identifying such a small number should help in providing focus and coherence in formulating pre-departure training programs, personnel selection criteria, and areas for personnel evaluation. On the other hand, these major competencies are quite abstract and could benefit from further detail. This is the role of the next classification:

Core Competencies

The 30 core competencies constitute a comprehensive list of the specific core qualities that an effective inter-cultural worker should possess (the relative priority of each core compe-tency varies, depending upon the professional group). These core competencies should make it easier to focus training, selection, and eval-uation efforts on the most important aspects of intercultural effectiveness, but they too need to be more detailed to provide precise guidance to train-ers, selectors, and evaluators. A third classification was therefore created:

Behavioural indicators may be of the greatest practical use in designing the content of training programs or selecting and evaluating individuals.

Behavioural Indicators

These are the observable, concrete actions displayed by interculturally effective individuals. They indicate that a person possesses the desired major and core competencies (given that these, inasmuch as they are atti-tudes, motivations, and feelings in many cases, are not always directly observable). Therefore the behavioural indicators may be of the greatest practical use in designing the content of training programs or selecting and evaluating individuals. For example, they might form the basis for defining specific learning objectives in training programs (i.e., participants should exhibit such behaviours if they are to be effective overseas). It is perhaps in these behavioural indicators that this profile makes its most original contribution – by going beyond what is merely desirable to behaviourally-defined, and therefore more usable, guidance for designing training content and selection/evaluation criteria.

Reviewing the existing literature on intercultural effectiveness

The academic and other literature on intercultural effectiveness was reviewed to compare the results of the Centre for Intercultural Learning's "think tank" meetings with findings of published empirical research over the past 40 years. There were two main conclusions:

a) It was clear that no-one had previously attempted to develop a detailed and comprehensive listing of behaviour-based indicators

of intercultural effectiveness. Research on intercultural competence had tended to focus on identifying some important personality traits and more general individual characteristics associated with intercultural effectiveness, but neither comprehensively nor with the precision hopefully attained at the the Centre for Intercultural Learning "think tank" meetings and follow-up process in developing behavioural indicators.

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b) Some of the recent research on intercultural competence (i.e. during the past decade) indicates more interest in studying the contextual and organizational factors than in identifying traits associated with intercultural competence. There has always been debate among experts and managers of international projects (particularly in the field of development) as to the relative importance of the individual versus the environment and organizational factors in determining the success of assignments. In the early years, individual traits were emphasized. More recently the focus has shifted to situational factors, partly as a result of the limited success researchers have had in trying to predict intercultural outcomes based on assessment of individual traits.

This intercultural effectiveness profile is a beginning, a work in progress, that will benefit from future improvement.

We do not attempt to resolve this debate here, but we believe that the success of international projects depends on all three of the following key factors:

- the organizational aspect (i.e. how well the international assignment is defined, organized, supplied and managed);
- the environment (i.e. how congenial the economic, social and political environment is to achieving the goals of the assignment); and
- the personal qualities and intercultural skills of the individuals involved.

While all three of these components are important, the aim of this intercultural effectiveness profile has been to focus on the third element – the personal qualities of individuals. Focusing on this component can lead to better selection, training, and performance evaluation.

In sum, although the skills of the individuals do not guarantee success, without these skills overall success of international and intercultural projects or assignments will rarely, if ever, be achieved. They are a necessary condition of success.

Caveats and issues

Much care has been taken to make this intercultural effectiveness profile as universal as possible – that is, relevant to a variety of individuals, occupational sectors (development, business, military etc.), and travel directions (North to South, South to North etc.). An effort has also been made to reduce any biases in the language used on gender grounds. It is unlikely that we have succeeded totally in these goals, but we believe the profile can be adapted by users to their particular fields. The following caveats and issues for consideration should be noted before examining the profile content:

a) This profile is an example of a particular methodology in the social sciences, in which an ideal model is drawn up for explanatory purposes. While the profile gives a comprehensive picture of the qualities that an ideal interculturally effective person would possess, we recognize that no living human will exhibit all these qualities and perhaps not even close to all of them.

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b)   Furthermore, not all competency areas will be needed by all international or domestic multicultural workers. A person on a short-term assignment, for instance, will likely require a narrower range of desirable skills than someone on a longer placement. Also, the cultural distance or gap between one's home country and the host culture will affect the range of competencies needed. Perhaps most importantly, some of the competencies or particular behavioural descriptions given in the profile will vary in priority according to the occupational sector being discussed. For example, the corporate culture of a multinational organization within which the visitors and local colleagues work may be as important an influence on their behaviour as the national cultures from which they come. Profile-users will have to use their judgement in adapting it to their fields or situations. However, even where substantial adaptations are necessary, we believe this profile can be a valuable tool for selection.

c)   The language used in this profile is probably most suited for use in personnel performance appraisal. The behavioural indicators tend to be stated in terms of observable behaviours that can be assessed. The specific phrasing of the competencies and associated behaviours might need to be modified in using the profile as inspiration for selection or training.

d)   The description of competencies and behavioural indicators in the profile tend to reflect an "average" or most typical situation for international workers. It is usually possible to find some real-world exceptions. For example, indicators such as "avoiding returning home" or "building harmonious relations between foreigners and local colleagues" might require significant adaptation or even removal in some situations (for example, the more dangerous work of peacekeepers or international relief workers). Similarly, having an "attitude of modesty and respect" is probably more necessary for Northerners working in the South than in the reverse scenario (some Southerners working in Northern countries have been known to have almost too much respect and/or modesty, bordering on timidity). Again judgment will be required by profile-users in such special cases.

e)   It should be noted that the successful adaptation of an accompanying spouse and other family members is known to be a critical factor in an individual's success in another culture. Although this profile applies most directly and fully to the individual undertaking an international assignment, it is also relevant to a non-working spouse.

f)   With some adaptation, this profile could be useful in defining the intercultural competencies required of workers in many domestic fields where multiculturalism is a major factor in the work environment (diverse workforces, police, educational organizations).

All of the above caveats and issues serve to emphasize that this intercultural effectiveness profile is a beginning, a work in progress, that will benefit from future improvement. We trust that it remains, nonetheless, a unique tool with several immediate uses in the areas of personnel selection, training and appraisal, and we hope that it may also inspire additional products and instruments in other related areas, such as domestic multiculturalism and defining interculturally effective institutions as well as individuals.

A summary of the interculturally effective person (IEP)

For ease of reference, a quick summary of the intercultural effectiveness profile without the detailed behavioural indicators has been provided on the following five pages.

The comprehensive profile begins on page 21 and lists major competencies, core competencies, and behavioural indicators.

In reviewing the profile, readers will note the frequent and interchangeable use of terms such as "can" or "is able to." Their meaning should be taken to be "if called upon to do so, this person will express, behave, or otherwise engage in an observable behaviour of the following sort." We are employing this terminology in the interests of using a more natural form of English. In comparing two behavioural indicators, "is able to describe local management practices" and "describes local management practices," the latter would be theoretically and grammatically more behavioural than the former, yet suggests that the person spontaneously describes local management practices without being prompted to do so – which, of course, no normal person would do!

1 Adaptation skills

Major Competency

Interculturally Effective Persons (IEPs) have the ability to cope personally, professionally, and in their family context with the conditions and challenges of living and working in another culture.

Core Competencies

1.1 IEPs are able to cope with the stress of culture shock and the ongoing challenges of living in another culture.

1.2 Beyond coping, IEPs actually enjoy an enriching experience in the host culture.

1.3 Without abandoning their ideals, IEPs behave in some ways differently in the host culture than at home in order to enhance acceptance in the new culture.

2 An attitude of modesty and respect

Major Competency

IEPs demonstrate modesty about their own culture's answers to problems and a respect for the ways of the local culture, are humble about their knowledge of the local context, and are therefore willing to learn much and consult with locals before coming to conclusions on issues.

Core Competencies

2.1 IEPs show in their attitudes and behaviour a respect for the local culture.

2.2 IEPs demonstrate humility by not soliciting acknowledgement or drawing attention to themselves.

2.3 Despite the importance of an attitude of modesty and respect, IEPs nonetheless have the self-confidence to take initiatives and promote change where called for by the assignment.

3 An understanding of the concept of culture

Major Competency

IEPs have an understanding of the concept of culture and the pervasive influence it will have on their life and work abroad.

Core Competencies

3.1 IEPs have a conceptual understanding of how culture affects all people and societies.

3.2 IEPs understand the influence of their own cultural conditioning and how some values of their own culture may cause problems in the host culture.

Interculturally effective persons can empathize with, not just understand intellectually, how the locals see the world.

INTRODUCTION

4 Knowledge of the host country and culture

Major Competency

IEPs possess knowledge of the host country and culture and try constantly to expand that knowledge.

Core Competencies

4.1 IEPs demonstrate a desire to learn about the host culture.

4.2 IEPs possess knowledge of the history, geography, social mores, customs, and socio-economic conditions etc. of the host country relevant to the assignment.

4.3 IEPs possess knowledge of the local organization in which they work, the political processes of the country and organization, and local management practices.

5 Relationship-building

Major Competency

IEPs possess good relationship-building skills, both social/personal and professional.

Core Competencies

5.1 Socializing skills: IEPs socialize harmoniously and productively with host nationals and co-workers.

5.2 Cross-cultural management skills: IEPs help to get people of diverse cultures to work together in a task-functional way.

6 Self-knowledge

Major Competency

Knowledge of one's own background, motivations, strengths and weaknesses.

Core Competencies

6.1 IEPs have an understanding of their own culture and how it has shaped how they think, feel, and react to people and events.

6.2 IEPs know their own personal strengths and weaknesses in regard to overseas living and working.

6.3 IEPs recognize and are able to manage their own reactions to ambiguity.

6.4 IEPs have an understanding of their personal management or work style.

7 Intercultural communication

Major Competency

IEPs are effective intercultural communicators.

Core Competencies

7.1 IEPs are able to convey their thoughts, opinions, and expectations in a way that is understandable yet culturally sensitive.

7.2 IEPs are not afraid to participate in the local culture and language: they do not fear making mistakes.

7.3 IEPs can establish shared meanings with local people, so that foreigners and local people understand what is said in the same way.

7.4 IEPs possess sufficient local language capacity to show that they are interested in the people with whom they work and interact.

7.5 IEPs can empathize with, not just understand intellectually, how the locals see the world.

8 Organizational skills

Major Competency

IEPs strive to improve the quality of organizational structures, processes, and staff morale, and promote a positive atmosphere in the workplace.

Core Competencies

8.1 Finding an intercultural balance: IEPs find a workable balance between the need to adapt behaviour to local norms ("when in Rome...") and the need to maintain their own cultural identity and values (avoiding "going native")

8.2 Networking skills: IEPs develop personal and professional networks of local, national and international stakeholders.

8.3 IEPs build consensus between locals and foreigners by reconciling the perspectives of the various cultures so that all parties feel they are contributing usefully to the endeavour.

8.4 IEPs maintain a focus on the task to be achieved while managing cultural and organizational resistance.

8.5 IEPs possess a degree of political astuteness that allows them to assess realistically the balance of competing forces in an organization and its environment.

8.6 IEPs are professionally resourceful and able to function with a different level of resources and supports than they are accustomed to in the home country.

9 Personal and professional commitment

Major Competency

IEPs have a high level of personal and professional commitment to the assignment and the life experience in another culture.

Core Competencies

9.1 IEPs give evidence of wanting to contribute to the local community and not solely to the welfare of their organization or self.

9.2 IEPs have a clear and realistic awareness of their own motivations and expectations regarding the assignment and personal life abroad.

Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person (IEP)

1
Adaptation skills

Major Competency

Interculturally Effective Persons (IEPs) have the ability to cope personally, professionally, and in the family context, with the conditions and challenges of living and working in another culture.

Core Competency

1.1 **IEPs are able to cope with the stress of culture shock and the ongoing challenges of living in another culture.**

Behavioural Indicators

1.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ have organized well the material logistics of setting up a new life in the host culture (e.g. housing, taxes, education of children, health precautions, security precautions etc.)

■ maintain a positive attitude that contributes to staying motivated professionally and living happily. They:
   •   do not complain about living and working conditions in a manner or frequency that is considered unconstructive or disruptive
   •   remain calm, patient, and in control of emotions when confronted by obstacles to the achievement of the assignment's goals or a satisfactory lifestyle
   •   avoid negative evaluations of local colleagues and organizational structures in the absence of investigation or proposing feasible solutions
   •   display a sense of humour (but without sarcasm) about the frustrations of living in another culture

ADAPTATION SKILLS

- are self-reliant, not depending on the supports and resources they had at home to deal with personal problems and frustrations
- can enjoy being alone at times without feeling lonely or depressed

■ react to situations that are unfamiliar and stressful in a manner that does not undermine their capacity to function in their work or personal life. They:
- can articulate the key concept of culture shock and its typical symptoms
- can identify the typical stages of adaptation and some methods for coping with culture shock
- deal with stress in a positive manner, for example by talking over problems with foreign and local colleagues or by making a conscious effort to participate in the local culture
- can describe the reactions people have to change and stress (for example through inappropriate ways, such as isolation, alcohol intake, becoming irritable or aggressive etc., and appropriate ways such as family outings, exercise etc.)
- do not deal with stress in a dysfunctional manner (e.g. by giving up and returning home or isolating themselves from local contact)
- recognize that their reaction to a new culture will change from day to day, but that most people do in time learn to tolerate, then accept and ultimately participate in the local culture
- can pinpoint the positive and negative sides of their own style for coping with change and stress
- can respond to stressful situations in a manner that is consistent with local customs (e.g. avoiding alcohol in some countries)
- can position themselves within the stages of adaptation to another culture as described by academics and others

- • assess and manage security or health risks in a realistic and practical way
- • exhibit techniques of self-care (such as taking relaxation and personal time) in making transitions in life

■ participate in a personal support system, in which they receive (and reciprocate) emotional and other support from family, friends, and colleagues. They:
- • can describe the impact of the transition on their spouse and children
- • share feelings and reactions with spouse, family, and friends
- • seek out the advice and emotional support of well-adjusted expatriates or local colleagues
- • recognize problems other family members are having and communicate with them to help resolve them
- • stay in touch with family and friends back home

Core Competency

1.2 **Beyond coping, IEPs actually enjoy an enriching experience in the host culture.**

Behavioural Indicators

1.2 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ express satisfaction with living and working in a new culture, by:
- • voicing their appreciation of different cultures
- • articulating enjoyment at living in the new culture and how much they have learned from it
- • looking on the brighter side of things in the face of inevitable frustrations, rather than engaging in negativity and criticisms of others and self
- • making an effort to study and learn about the host country by attending seminars, reading books etc.
- • eating in local restaurants, cooking local food, and shopping in local markets etc.
- • reading local newspapers, watching local television etc.

ADAPTATION SKILLS

■ demonstrate a spirit of adventure in terms
of exploring the new environment, by:

- learning about the host country through participation in local events
and traditions and not simply through reading, studying etc.
- learning some local language and trying daily to use it at work
and socially
- visiting different parts of the country, with the result that they can
explain some of the diversity within the culture
- developing friendships with local people in diverse walks of life,
so that they are sometimes invited to family events by host nationals
(and they then reciprocate)
- finding new leisure activities in the host culture that replace
personally important pastimes that were enjoyed at home

Core Competency

1.3   **Without abandoning their ideals, IEPs behave in some ways differently in the host culture than at home in order to enhance acceptance in the new culture.**

Behavioural Indicators

1.3   **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■   recognize that strict adherence to personal ideals (e.g. regarding what constitutes corruption, relations between the sexes etc.) may cause problems in a new culture

■   can understand, and perhaps in some circumstances make accommodations with, local behaviour that conflicts with personal ideals. They:
- •   can explain the history and rationale behind local practices which conflict with their own values
- •   avoid the assumption that host nationals as individuals possess similar defects to the local system itself

■   behave in a manner consistent with local cultural norms regarding behaviour and appearances (e.g. dress). They:
- •   can describe the essential do's and don'ts
- •   can explain that the universal tendency to "mirror image" or assume that others are like us can create misunderstandings
- •   temper their emotions (for example, regarding discomfort at standing at a different proximity to others than one would at home), in order to avoid appearing distant or overly familiar with local people
- •   refrain from dress (or states of undress), language, and other outward behaviour that is likely to offend locals

2
An attitude of modesty and respect

Major Competency

IEPs demonstrate modesty about their own culture's answers to problems and a respect for the ways of the local culture; they are humble about their knowledge of the local context, and are willing to learn from and consult with locals before coming to conclusions on issues.

Core Competency

2.1 **IEPs show a respect for the local culture in their attitudes and behaviour.**

Behavioural Indicators

2.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ demonstrate by word and deed that they appreciate and indeed seek out and acknowledge the contributions that local culture brings to the work issues at hand. They:
  - can give examples of the enrichment their own culture has received from the host culture or culture-region
  - can acknowledge the distinct skills of their local colleagues
  - avoid uncomplimentary remarks about aspects of the local culture
  - ask local colleagues how they understand work issues and how they would handle them in their culture
  - do not disparage the fundamental beliefs and customs of the host culture

AN ATTITUDE OF MODESTY AND RESPECT

Core Competency

2.2   **IEPs demonstrate humility by not soliciting acknowledgment or drawing attention to themselves.**

Behavioural Indicators

2.2   **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■   do not give the impression of feeling self-important and superior (even if power and respect does accompany their position in the host culture). They:
  • laugh at themselves when they make a miscue
  • accept criticism from others
  • take direction from local personnel as required in order to achieve assignment goals
  • are willing periodically to question their own way of doing things
  • acknowledge their intervention as one stage in a process, and not necessarily as more important than previous or future interventions

■   do not let pride or fear of appearing unknowledgeable prevent them from seeking support from local friends and colleagues. They:
  • ask for help from locals
  • make use of a local "culture interpreter" or coach to assist in understanding local colleagues and how their behaviour is perceived by locals

AN ATTITUDE OF MODESTY AND RESPECT

Core Competency

2.3 **Despite the importance of modesty and respect, IEPs nonetheless have the self-confidence to take initiatives and promote change where called for by the assignment.**

Behavioural Indicators

2.3 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ despite having respect for the local culture, do not excuse lack of responsibility on the part of local colleagues for furthering assignment goals. They:
- engage local colleagues in a re-examination of their professional behaviour with a view to improving skills and attitudes
- identify incentives to motivate local colleagues to carry out assignment objectives
- are willing to question the policies and procedures of the local organization (after having first gained the trust and respect of local colleagues)

3
Understanding the concept of culture

Major Competency

IEPs have an understanding of the concept of culture and the pervasive influence it will have on their life and work abroad.

Core Competency

3.1 **IEPs have a conceptual understanding of how culture affects all people and societies**.

Behavioural Indicators

3.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ know that values, appropriate behaviours, and appearances (attire etc.) vary from culture to culture and that every culture is valid in its own right

■ can articulate the concept of culture, what it is, and its pervasive influence, by being able to:
  - describe some of the main factors in comparing cultures (e.g. authority systems, social stratification, attitudes to work and time)
  - point to examples of the influence of culture in such areas as the nature of social and economic institutions, management processes, concepts of power, relationships, leadership, and attitudes to technology and change etc.
  - describe the two parts of culture: the visible, e.g. clothing, and the invisible, e.g. values (this being sometimes called the "iceberg" model)
  - give examples of the changing and non-static nature of culture (e.g. the historical evolution of values in their own culture) indicating that they understand that all cultures do evolve
  - cite examples of the interrelationships, both conflictual and cooperative, that have existed or do exist between cultures

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

■ know that all cultures have their own internal logic, by being able to:
- • explain the historical underpinnings of some local values and customs
- • give examples of things in the host culture that may be logical in that context but perhaps would not be so at home (e.g. a tendency to avoid risks or to place higher priority on social or family goals than on work objectives)

Core Competency

3.2 **IEPs understand how their own cultural conditioning has influenced them and how some values of their own culture may cause problems in the host culture.**

Behavioural Indicators

3.2 **Interculturally Effective Persons can:**

■ articulate how they are a product of their own culture, by:
- • giving examples of how their own culture has influenced their perceptions and behaviour (e.g. being a task-oriented person)
- • identifying the tendency of people to value their own culture above others (ethnocentrism)
- • describing how they overcome the tendency to ethnocentrism

■ describe how some values of their own culture could cause interpersonal problems on the job in some countries (e.g. the Western tendency to immediately "get down to business", or the Oriental tendency to establish relationships first)

■ describe how their own personal values might have to be tempered when abroad (e.g. a strong feminist may have to be careful about expressing her beliefs in some societies)

4
Knowledge of the host country and culture

Major Competency

IEPs possess knowledge of the host country and culture, and try constantly to expand that knowledge.

Core Competency

4.1 **IEPs demonstrate a desire to learn about the host culture.**

Behavioural Indicators

4.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ can identify what they need to know about the host country in order to enhance personal satisfaction and professional effectiveness (e.g. an economist needs to know geography, history, natural resources etc.)

■ exhibit curiosity about and invest time in learning more about the host culture, both experientially and through research, by:
- reading extensively
- socializing with host nationals
- exploring different regions of the country
- eating local food etc.
- participating in local practices and traditions (e.g. religious services) and then by reflection deepen their understanding of the local culture

■ demonstrate techniques for learning more about a culture, such as:
- identifying who to ask (i.e. reliable cultural informants)
- accessing and weighing a diversity of sources (written, people, networks etc.) and points of view before drawing conclusions
- taking care to ask questions that are relevant to learning about the host culture

Core Competency

4.2 **IEPs possess knowledge of the history, geography, social mores, customs, and socio-economic conditions etc. of the host country relevant to the assignment.**

Behavioural Indicators

4.2 **Interculturally Effective Persons can:**

■ describe the core values of the local culture, with respect to gender, class, authority, religion etc.

■ describe how the history, mores, and socio-economic conditions of the country might affect the achievement of the assignment, by
- being able to point to specific local values, traditions, or mores that might make their own familiar management techniques less effective (e.g. a promotion system based on relationships versus one based on merit)

KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOST COUNTRY AND CULTURE

■ score at least 8 out of 10 on a factual quiz about the host country, with questions such as:
  • who is the head of government
  • what are the main political forces
  • who are the national heroes, such as politicians, writers, athletes
  • what are the main religions and beliefs, and how do they influence behaviour
  • what are the main industries and exports
  • what are the main ethnic groups and languages and the state of relations between them
  • what are key events in the country's history

■ give examples of the diversity of the host culture, for example:
  • sub-cultures within the country
  • ethnic and religious sub-cultures
  • social classes
  • regional interests

■ empathize with the host culture (i.e. have a feel for things), by:
  • being able to identify local artists, authors, and musicians and explain how they emerge from and, in turn, express the local culture
  • demonstrating that they are capable of seeing the world as the locals see it as a result of their history, religion, and social system (e.g. by describing the locals' logic/rationale for doing something)

KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOST COUNTRY AND CULTURE

Core Competency

4.3 **IEPs possess knowledge of the local organization in which they work, the political processes of the country and organization, and local management practices.**

Behavioural Indicators

4.3 **Interculturally Effective Persons can describe:**

■ local management practices such as the typical authority structure, incentives and sanctions used, as well as policy making and implementation. They are able to:
- compare and contrast the management processes of the home and host countries
- describe how decisions are usually made in the local workplace
- describe how formal and informal systems of power and influence work in the host organization

■ the socio-economic factors operating in the environment of the host organization (e.g. the climatic and world trade background for an agricultural organization), as indicated by being able to:
- discern the motivations and agendas of all key managers in the organization
- identify the key alliances and conflicts among managers that affect the dynamic of the organization

5
Relationship-building

Major Competency

IEPs possess well-developed relationship-building skills, both social/personal and professional.

Core Competency

5.1 **Socializing skills: The IEPs socialize harmoniously and productively with host nationals and co-workers.**

Behavioural Indicators

5.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ socialize with host nationals individually and at the community level, by:
- attending cultural or community events (sports, dance, music, church, festivals etc.)
- avoiding the temptation to fall into an "expatriate ghetto" which isolates foreigners from the local population

■ show a capacity to initiate conversations in cross-cultural situations, by:
- speaking and understanding increasing amounts of the local language, ranging from the ability to greet, to survival language, to limited social exchange, to fluency

■ win the confidence and trust of local people, by being:
- recognized as a person who fits in well in the local workplace and community
- described by local colleagues as being genuinely interested in their work and lives
- referred to by local people in a warm and friendly manner
- easily approached by locals for advice and support
- helped by local colleagues to establish relationships in the community

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

■ understand the differences and similarities between the rules of socializing in their home country and in the host country, by:
  - being able to identify some protocol and codes in the host country that are different from or similar to the situation at home (e.g. proximity, contact between men and women etc.)
  - being able to explain the implications of professional socializing in the host culture, such as the local meanings that friendship or contact between the sexes and cultures may have
  - being able to describe the implications of their social and professional status in socializing with host nationals
  - being able to explain how personal and professional relationships are intertwined in the host culture
  - being identified by local colleagues as committing few social faux pas, and working to correct them when they are committed
  - asking local friends and colleagues to point out social faux pas so that these can be corrected

■ are cognizant of any negative images of foreigners in the local culture and try to avoid behaving according to these stereotypes, by:
  - being able to give some examples of past relations between the host country and their own country that could affect relations with local people

■ are sensitive to how an expatriate born in the host country and now a citizen of another country may be viewed by local staff

Core Competency

5.2 **Cross-cultural management skills: IEPs help people of diverse cultures work together in a task-functional way.**

Behavioural Indicators

5.2 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ work to develop an approach and climate conducive to task-achievement, by:
- facilitating communication
- encouraging a team spirit
- working to bring about agreement and/or shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in the workplace
- identifying and acknowledging the skills that all colleagues can bring to the task
- working to resolve interpersonal conflicts
- managing relationships with host nationals with international experience in a particularly sensitive way (because the nationals may be viewed suspiciously in their own country)
- avoiding the temptation, because of cultural similarity, to align themselves more with foreigners than with local colleagues
- having empathy for, and being able to work with, people who have different working styles and motivations because of local allegiances
- being regarded as building trust between the members of multinational working groups

■ possess leadership or team-work skills, by:
- being able to articulate the motivations and internal drives of colleagues, superiors, and subordinates (i.e. knowing what they want and need to be satisfied in their personal and professional lives) and to harness these motivations to bring about task-effectiveness
- gaining respect from locals for the way they behave and treat people
- being able to utilize the respect and power accorded to their position or title in order to enhance achievement of the task

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

- behaving in ways that do not undermine the respect accorded to their position or title
- finding a balance between a process orientation (paying attention to how things are done) and a task orientation (getting the job done) that is appropriate to the host culture
- exercising culturally acceptable negotiating skills
- behaving and living in a style that does not alienate other members of the team (e.g. avoiding extreme ostentation or social non-conformity)

Interculturally Effective Persons have insight into the sources of their cultural conditioning.

6
Knowledge of self

Major Competency

Knowledge of personal background, motivations, and strengths and weaknesses.

Core Competency

6.1 **IEPs have an understanding of their own culture and how it has shaped how they think, feel and react to people and events.**

Behavioural Indicators

6.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons have:**

■ a knowledge of "self", in terms of core values, beliefs, and the support systems needed to live contentedly in the new culture, that helps to "anchor" a person living in another culture. They are able to describe:
  - their behaviour in terms of their own cultural logic (values, appearances etc.)
  - how their own filters of communication (perceptions, stereotypes, prejudices etc.) affect relations and communications with local colleagues and acquaintances

■ insight into the sources of their cultural conditioning, but are also able to challenge that programming or at least be more accepting of someone else's programming, by being able to:
  - articulate the negative attributions and stereotypes that are prevalent in their own society concerning the host country, culture, or region, and avoiding using these
  - act outside their own cultural values without feeling they have compromised their core sense of "self"
  - balance their need for safety and comfort while opening themselves to doing things differently in a new culture

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

Core Competency

6.2 **IEPs know their own personal strengths and weaknesses as relevant to overseas living and working.**

Behavioural Indicators

6.2 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ can identify what gives them personal and professional satisfaction and dissatisfaction and why, as indicated by being able to:
- • list the key activities they need to relax and enjoy life
- • list the key conditions they would need to function effectively on the job (e.g. equipment, a pleasant social atmosphere, freedom to experiment etc.)

■ have learned to deal with their own emotional reactions to discomforting behaviours in other cultures, including physical manifestations (e.g. unease at standing at a different proximity than what one is used to), by:
- • making an effort to "try on" the discomfiting behaviours (such as standing at a different proximity) in order to gain acceptance in the host country and reduce one's unease
- • recognizing personal biases and the impact they could have on the ability to be effective in another culture

Core Competency

6.3 **IEPs recognize and are able to manage their own reactions to ambiguity.**

Behavioural Indicators

6.3   **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ know that they are a source of ambiguity to others in an intercultural situation (i.e. that locals may find them hard to understand), as indicated by being able to:
   • give examples of situations of ambiguity in intercultural settings and their possible consequences (e.g. where one's conception of appropriate social contact causes unease in host nationals about how to respond)

■ work to manage situations of ambiguity by being able to identify:
   • their threshold of tolerance for ambiguity, that is, their own emotional tendencies when confronted by uncertainty or discomfort (e.g. becoming irritable, cynical, taking alcohol, withdrawing etc.)
   • some possible strategies to deal with these tendencies (such as talking it out, taking time out to reflect before reacting etc.)
   • the questions to ask that would create clarity and who to seek for help and advice

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

Core Competency

6.4 **IEPs have an understanding of their own personal management or work style.**

Behavioural Indicators

6.4   **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ can articulate their styles and the work implications in the following areas:
- personality type (according to some well-known theories and personality tests)
- communication style (such as authoritarian vs. democratic)
- learning (or information-gathering) style
- leadership style (such as authoritarian vs. consensus-building, charismatic vs. bureaucratic)
- supervisory style (such as directive vs. delegatory, controlling vs. empowering)

■ have strategies to increase the probability of compatibility with co-workers despite different natural management styles, for example by:
- experimenting with the predominant management style of the host country in order to assess whether a shift in that direction would enhance work objectives
- exploring with local colleagues what management styles would be comfortable for all concerned and still conducive to enhancing work objectives

7
Intercultural communication

Major Competency

IEPs are effective intercultural communicators.

Core Competency

7.1 **IEPs are able to convey their thoughts, opinions, and expectations in a way that is understandable yet culturally sensitive.**

Behavioural Indicators

7.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons can:**

■ articulate the elements of a model of interpersonal communication, including verbal and non-verbal aspects of interpersonal and especially intercultural communication, by:
   • employing a diversity of means of communication

■ state the main differences and similarities between the typical communication styles of their own culture and the host culture, for example in:
   • non-verbal cues, signals, and gestures (e.g. handshakes, facial movements, eye contact)
   • verbal communication styles (e.g. directness vs. indirectness, tone of voice)

■ assess and sensitively resolve differing expectations of how foreigners and host nationals perceive their roles, by:
   • being tactful and diplomatic in using language, mannerisms, and actions that do not offend local sensibilities

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Core Competency

7.2 **IEPs are not afraid to participate in the local culture and language (they do not fear making mistakes).**

Behavioural Indicators

7.2   **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ demonstrate a willingness to engage in meaningful communication with host nationals without having an undue fear of making mistakes, as indicated by:
  • being able to cite examples of social or linguistic mistakes they have made and how they have learned from them
  • when social mistakes are made, asking locals what they have done wrong, and being able to laugh about it with locals

■ are able to participate in local community activities without fully understanding the purpose, meaning, or their expected role as viewed by host nationals

Core Competency

7.3 **IEPs are able to establish shared meanings with local people so that foreigners and local people understand what is said in the same way.**

Behavioural Indicators

7.3 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ attempt to enhance communication by avoiding any stereotypical presumptions about how local people would understand what is being said

■ can identify both the values that foreign workers and local colleagues share and those they don't share

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

■ have effective listening and observational skills, as evidenced
by being able to:
- restate what others have said individually or in a group
- observe the more subtle aspects of the host culture and organization

■ possess strategies for resolving an intercultural impasse and
miscommunication, by:
- realizing that how one says something is as important as what one says
- checking whether local colleagues have understood the point
- checking that they have understood the points made by local colleagues
- striving to enhance the clarity of communications (e.g. reformulation)

Core Competency

7.4 **IEPs possess sufficient local language capacity to show that they
are interested in the people with whom they work and interact.**

Behavioural Indicators

7.4 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ develop a growing language capacity over the course of the sojourn, by:
- using local greetings
- making increasing use of opportunities to use the local language
- continually improving linguistic capacity so as to be
able to function in the local language in more and
more situations
- showing a growing ability to use local
metaphors appropriately

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Core Competency

7.5 **IEPs have an ability to empathize with, not just understand intellectually, how the locals see the world.**

Behavioural Indicators

7.5 **Interculturally Effective Persons can:**

■ accurately describe local people's rationales for doing and proposing things (not necessarily agreeing with them, just understanding and respecting their views)

■ articulate how expatriates in general, as well as those from one's own country, are perceived by locals

■ experiment with, but do not necessarily permanently adopt, local mannerisms and means of communication

■ theoretically and sympathetically "try on" the local worldview so that they can appreciate its logic although not necessarily agreeing with it (e.g. can entertain thoughts such as "if I were in this person's shoes, I would think or do this")

8
Organizational skills

Major Competency

IEPs strive to improve the quality of organizational structures, processes, and staff morale, and promote a positive atmosphere in the workplace.

Core Competency

8.1 **IEPs find a workable balance between the need to adapt their behaviour to local norms ("when in Rome...") and the need to maintain their own cultural identity and values (avoiding "going native").**

Behavioural Indicators

8.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons are:**

■ able to adopt behaviours that are crucial to achieving results in the host organization or culture, (e.g. an Asian manager in the West may have to adopt a more direct style in order to be understood and followed), as evidenced by:
  • being able to identify how to change behaviour in different situations

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Core Competency

8.2   **Networking skills: IEPs develop personal and professional networks of local, national, and international stakeholders.**

Behavioural Indicators

8.2   **Interculturally Effective Persons are able to:**

■   identify key stakeholders involved in and affected by the assignment

■   analyze the needs, motivations, and level of involvement of stakeholders, by:
  •   making an effort to meet or communicate with stakeholders
  •   gathering information about the interests and views of stakeholders
  •   recognizing power relationships in the assignment context, for example the formal and informal social and economic relations between stakeholders, and how influence is obtained and decisions made
  •   determining when and how to use power and influence and with which stakeholders to share power, without unnecessarily upsetting the local power structure
  •   mobilizing people and resources in the organization and its environment to enhance assignment goals

Interculturally Effective Persons
are patient in their approach to
bringing about reconciliation,
as well as in pushing
for organizational change.

Core Competency

8.3 **IEPs have the ability to create organizational practices that reconcile the various cultural perspectives present.**

Behavioural Indicators

8.3 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ promote the establishment of an organization that has processes, systems and values in harmony with the values of its member cultures, by being able to:
- explain how local colleagues conceive and define organizational practices (e.g. how they define what would constitute appropriate process and outcome)
- verify acceptance of organizational practices through culturally appropriate feedback mechanisms
- explain the value of considering local ideas and methods (e.g. exploring changes to plans and methods based on local suggestions)

■ encourage discussion of problems and solutions between locals and foreigners, without violating local practices in these areas, by:
- sharing and exchanging information and knowledge with colleagues
- asking local colleagues how they can contribute and how expatriates can contribute
- defining in mutual terms the concepts, processes and intended outcomes of the endeavor
- being able to identify compromises and new solutions with local colleagues

■ are patient in their approach to bringing about reconciliation, as well as in pushing for organizational change, by:
- allowing the organization and its personnel to learn by making mistakes
- letting colleagues receive credit for work initiated by the IEP, as culturally appropriate
- helping colleagues assume leadership and responsibility, as necessary and culturally appropriate

■   are approached by local colleagues voluntarily to seek advice and exchange ideas on how to pursue work objectives

■   give advice and direction to local colleagues in a way that does not offend local cultural sensitivities and authority structures

Core Competency

8.4 **IEPs maintain a focus on the task to be achieved while managing cultural and organizational resistance.**

Behavioural Indicators

8.4 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■   have a vision of where the assignment should be going in the future

■   persevere in advancing the larger purposes of the assignment (e.g. sustainable development, transfer of knowledge and skills, diplomacy, peacekeeping, business operations), by:
   •   being able to state why they are there, and how local colleagues perceive their presence
   •   encouraging agreement on goals, objectives, management procedures, and dispute resolution
   •   promoting clarity of expectations among all colleagues
   •   meeting the assignment goals even when local traditions would make it easy to back away from change

■   while maintaining cultural sensitivity and interpersonal tact, do not abdicate their management responsibilities. They:
   •   do not adopt local conceptions and practices merely to avoid being seen as ethnocentric
   •   are able to communicate to others their expectations regarding the assignment's goals and process
   •   are able to be critical and demanding when appropriate (after having carefully assessed the influencing factors)
   •   have methods of confronting situations of inaction or inappropriate action

- • are clear with all concerned on the mutual benefits and risks in the endeavor
- • use culturally appropriate methods of feedback, reward, and sanctions when managing local staff (and indeed expatriate staff)
- • can maintain harmonious relations even when disagreeing with colleagues
- • contribute innovative ideas for achieving the assignment's goals

■ weigh carefully the various considerations raised by co-workers and stakeholders and avoid impulsive decisions about how to achieve the assignment's goals

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Core Competency

8.5 **IEPs possess a degree of political astuteness such that they are able to assess realistically the balance of competing forces in an organization and its environment.**

Behavioural Indicators

8.5 **Interculturally Effective Persons are:**

■ keen observers of sometimes subtle changes in power relations between people and institutions, as evidenced by:
- demonstrating a willingness to observe and make inquiries in order to understand the organizational culture and social system and its environment
- being able to identify the informal system of rewards and sanctions in the host organization
- maintaining affable relations with people whom they may not really like or think highly of, but who are necessary to the furtherance of assignment goals
- being prepared at times to compromise some of their less essential principles or preferences in order to achieve the assignment's overarching goals
- being able to resolve interpersonal conflicts in a way that is acceptable to local colleagues (as well as expatriates)

Core Competency

8.6 **IEPs are professionally resourceful in that they can function with a different level of resources and supports than they are accustomed to in the home country.**

Behavioural Indicators

8.6 **Interculturally Effective Persons:**

■ adapt the original plan of operation to fit the realities of available technologies and resources in the field

■ are innovative in finding ways to achieve the same result with less (or more) sophisticated technologies (e.g. they can find a way to repair imported machinery using locally available materials)

9
Personal and professional commitment

Major Competency

IEPs have a high level of personal and professional commitment to the assignment and the life experience in the host country.

Core Competency

9.1 **IEPs give evidence of wanting to contribute to the local community and not solely to the welfare of their organization or self.**

Behavioural Indicators

9.1 **Interculturally Effective Persons are:**

■ acknowledged by local colleagues as having motivations that go beyond personal career advancement and monetary gain. They:
- • are described by local colleagues as having some genuine caring for the host country and its people
- • are described by colleagues as being committed to improving the overall effectiveness of the organization
- • encourage colleagues and subordinates to undertake training and assignments that help fulfill their potential as employees

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT

Core Competency

9.2 **IEPs have a clear and realistic awareness of their own motivations and expectations regarding the assignment and personal life abroad.**

Behavioural Indicators

9.2 **Interculturally effective persons are able to:**

- list clearly and prioritize personal and professional expectations of the assignment and life in the host country

- describe any gaps that exist between personal and professional needs and expectations and realities on the ground (e.g. the original expectations may face logistical difficulties)

- reassess and revise expectations in the face of unforeseen realities

- describe expectations upon repatriation (i.e. what will the assignment lead to)

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