

INCA

ASSESSEE MANUAL



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT (INCA)

Produced with support from



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1) Introduction

The INCA assessee manual provides information on the intercultural assessment procedure developed by the INCA project (Intercultural Competence Assessment). It describes the project itself, explains how intercultural competences are defined and presents the different types of exercises.

1.1) *Project Background*

INCA (Intercultural Competence Assessment) is a transnational interdisciplinary project funded by the European Union within the Leonardo da Vinci framework. Co-ordinated by CILT (London, U.K.) the project was realised by 14 project partners from industry and research organisations from all over Europe.

INCA developed a framework of intercultural competence, an assessment procedure for intercultural competence using a partly computerised series of instruments and a portfolio-style record of intercultural competence (the Portfolio of Intercultural Competence consisting of a Passport of Intercultural Competence, a Biography of Intercultural Competence and a Dossier of evidence of Intercultural Competence).

1.2) *Target Audience*

INCA's assessment process was developed for young employees in the engineering industry. It was defined that intercultural competence is needed by young engineers and professionals offered postings abroad, or those working in multicultural or multilingual teams in their own country.

Therefore INCA'S target audience comprises

- Employees, apprentices and trainees – to support individual mobility in a global workforce
- (Engineering) Training programme planners – to enhance the quality of training provided
- Engineering sector employers – to improve competitiveness
- Employers – who want to know how effectively their personnel can work with people from another country or culture

2) 'Intercultural Competence' according to the INCA project

2.1) *Intercultural competence – what does it mean?*

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, and 'cultural' may denote all manner of features, including the values and beliefs you have grown up with, your national customs and in particular, attitudes and practices that affect the way you work.

2.2) Intercultural competence – what does it consist of?

It has been observed how people in groups of mixed cultural background recognise and deal with the differences that emerge as the group works together. From such observations, it has been possible to identify a number of 'dimensions' of competence that people bring to bear on the situation. If you are fully interculturally competent, you demonstrate the following characteristics:

Tolerance of ambiguity (TA)

You find the unexpected and unfamiliar an enjoyable challenge and want to help resolve possible problems in ways that appeal to as many other group members as possible.

Behavioural flexibility (BF)

You adapt the way you work with others to avoid unnecessary conflicts of procedure and expectation. You will tend to adopt other people's customs and courtesies where this is likely to be appreciated, accept less familiar working procedures where this will raise the level of goodwill, and so on.

Communicative awareness (CA)

You are alert to the many ways in which misunderstanding might arise through differences in speech, gestures and body language. You may, where this helps, be prepared to adopt less familiar conventions. To be effective, you will always be ready to seek clarification and may need on occasion to ask other members of the group to agree on how they will use certain expressions or specialised terms.

Knowledge discovery (KD)

You are willing both to do research in advance and to learn from intercultural encounters. You will take the trouble to find out about the likely values, customs and practices of those you are going to work with and will note carefully as you interact with them, any additional points that might influence the way you choose to work with them.

Respect for otherness (RO)

You are ready to regard other people's values, customs and practices as worthwhile in their own right and not merely as different from the norm. While you may not share these values, customs and practices, you feel strongly that others are entitled to apply them and should not lose respect on account of them. You may sometimes need to adopt a firm but diplomatic stance over points of principle on which you disagree.

Empathy (E)

You are able to understand other people's thoughts and feelings and see and feel a situation through their eyes. While this competence often draws on knowledge of how you would expect others to feel, it goes beyond awareness of facts. It often shows itself in a concern not to hurt others' feelings or infringe their system of values.

The descriptions above relate to full competence in each of the six dimensions. In reality, knowledge and experience vary considerably between people and any one person progresses in intercultural competence as he acquires new knowledge and experience.

In the following assessment framework, the six characteristics of Intercultural Competence are simplified by linking them with three strands of competence:

- **Openness**
- **Knowledge**
- **Adaptability**

Openness includes *respect for otherness* and *tolerance of ambiguity*.

> To be open means to be open to the other and to situations in which something is done differently. You can tolerate your partner as being different and doing things differently.

Knowledge includes *knowledge discovery* as well as *empathy*.

> You not only want to know the 'hard facts' about a situation or about a certain culture, but you also want to know, or you know something about, the feelings of the other person. You also know how your interlocutor feels.

Adaptability includes *behavioural flexibility* and *communicative awareness*.

> You are able to adapt your behaviour AND your style of communication.

2.3) What levels of intercultural competence are described in the framework?

The intercultural competence framework has been designed to describe three levels of performance

Level 1 – Basic

You are already willing to interact successfully with people of other cultures. You tend to pick things up and learn from them as you go along, but you haven't yet the experience to work out any system of dealing with intercultural situations in general. You respond to events, rather than planning for them. At this stage you are reasonably tolerant of other values, customs and practices although you may find them odd or surprising and approve or disapprove.

Level 2 – Intermediate

As a result of experience and/or training, you are beginning to view more coherently some of the aspects of intercultural encounters you used to deal with in a 'one-off' way. You have a mental 'map' or 'checklists' of the sort of situations you are likely to need to deal with and are developing your skills to cope with them. This means that you are more prepared for the need to respond and adapt to the demands of unfamiliar situations. You are quicker to see patterns in the various experiences you have and you are beginning to draw conclusions without having to seek advice. You find it easier to respond in a neutral way to difference, rather than approving or disapproving.

Level 3 – Full

Many of the competences you developed consciously at level 2 have become intuitive. You are constantly ready for situations and encounters in which you will exercise your knowledge, judgement and skills and have a large repertoire of strategies for dealing with differences in values, customs and practices among members of the intercultural group. You not only accept that people can see things from widely varying perspectives and are

entitled to do so, but are able to put yourself in their place and avoid behaviour you sense would be hurtful or offensive. At this level of operation you are able to intercede when difficulties arise and tactfully support other members of the group in understanding each other. You are confident enough of your position to take a polite stand over issues despite your respect for the viewpoint of others.

3) INCA Framework (assessee version)

On the following page you will find the 'Framework of Intercultural Competence' which describes three levels of performance – basic, intermediate and full – for each of the three strands of intercultural competence – openness, knowledge and adaptability. The abbreviations (TA, BF, CA, KD, RO, E) at the end of the descriptions show you to which dimension the respective description is related.

Level ⇔ Dimension ↗	Level 1 Basic	Level 2 Intermediate	Level 3 Full
Overview of competence	I am already willing to interact successfully with people of other cultures. I tend to pick things up and learn from them as I go along, but I haven't yet the experience to work out any system of dealing with intercultural situations in general. I respond to events, rather than planning for them. At this stage I am reasonably tolerant of other values, customs and practices although I may find them odd or surprising and approve or disapprove.	As a result of experience and/or training, I am beginning to view more coherently some of the aspects of intercultural encounters I used to deal with in a 'one-off' way. I have a mental 'map' or 'checklists' of the sort of situations I am likely to need to deal with and am developing my skills to cope with them. This means that I am more prepared for the need to respond and adapt to the demands of unfamiliar situations. I am quicker to see patterns in the various experiences I have and I am beginning to draw conclusions without having to seek advice. I find it easier to respond in a neutral way to difference, rather than approving or disapproving.	Many of the competences I developed consciously at level 2 have become intuitive. I am constantly ready for situations and encounters in which I will exercise my knowledge, judgement and skills and have a large repertoire of strategies for dealing with differences in values, customs and practices among members of the intercultural group. I not only accept that people can see things from widely varying perspectives and are entitled to do so, but am able to put myself in their place and avoid behaviour I sense would be hurtful or offensive. At this level of operation I am able to intercede when difficulties arise and tactfully support other members of the group in understanding each other. I am confident enough of my position to take a polite stand over issues despite my respect for the viewpoint of others.
Openness	<p>O1.1 When uncertainty arises from cultural difference, I adopt a tolerant attitude as long as the issue is not a sensitive one for me TA</p> <p>O1.2 Sometimes I may jump to conclusions about different behaviour that I later realise were not entirely correct RO</p>	<p>O2.1 I now see the uncertainties that can arise from intercultural encounters as an interesting challenge, provided that the issues involved are not sensitive for me TA</p> <p>O2.2 I react neutrally to cultural differences, rather than hastily categorising them as good or bad RO</p>	<p>O3.1 I am aware of ways of coping with ambiguous situations even when these give rise to inner moral conflicts that are serious for me TA</p> <p>O3.2 I fully respect the right of those from other cultures to have different values from my own and can see how these values make sense as part of a way of thinking RO</p>
Knowledge	<p>K1.1 I have some general knowledge about the cultures of those I work with. This knowledge consists of facts that are not always connected and I don't yet have an overall picture of the relevant cultures KD</p> <p>K1.2 I learn from intercultural experiences and add to my previous knowledge KD</p> <p>K1.3 Although I often find culturally different behaviour curious, I try to make allowances for it E</p>	<p>K2.1 I take the trouble to find out about the cultures I am likely to be working with, paying attention not only to isolated facts, but to values, customs and practices common in those cultures KD</p> <p>K2.2 When I experience new values, customs and practices I use the knowledge to develop into an overall system of principles KD</p> <p>K2.3 I have developed a mental checklist of how others may perceive, feel and respond differently, to a range of routine circumstances. This supports my concern to put others at ease and avoid upsetting them E</p>	<p>K3.1 I have a deep understanding of cultures I encounter frequently. When involved in new intercultural situations I strive to acquire the best possible available knowledge and understanding both through prior research and by seeking regular clarification within the group KD</p> <p>K3.2 I have acquired a system of principles that can be applied reliably to almost any intercultural encounter KD</p> <p>K3.3 I often imagine myself in the place of those from different cultures when trying to understand all aspects of a work problem. This supports my spontaneous concern that others in the group should receive fair treatment and consideration E</p>
Adaptability	<p>A1.1 I learn bit by bit the best ways of behaving, but have not yet arrived at underlying principles and do not have a plan for reacting to events. When a situation becomes confusing, I tend to take a passive role BF</p> <p>A1.2 take events as they come, doing what seems right at the time BF</p> <p>A1.3 When people communicate in ways I do not understand I try in an unsystematic way to take part, but hope that they will eventually adapt to the way I communicate BF/CA</p> <p>A1.4 I know that others may communicate in ways I am not familiar with CA</p>	<p>A2.1 My behaviour is now influenced by principles that guide me and I often plan for eventualities, including ambiguous situations BF/CA</p> <p>A2.2 I adapt my behaviour in new situations, taking account of lessons learnt in previous intercultural situations. I sometimes adopt the behaviour patterns of others, rather than waiting for them to adopt mine BF</p> <p>A2.3 I seek to achieve good communication both by making my own conventions clearer and by adopting those of others. When there is, or might be, a problem with communication, I quite often find ways around it, e.g. using gesture, re-explaining, simplifying etc. BF/CA</p> <p>A2.4 I am aware of a number of useful strategies for dealing with common communication problems. CA</p>	<p>A3.1 When ambiguous situations arise, I can usually clarify or otherwise deal with them to the benefit of the group BF/CA</p> <p>A3.2 I make use of my knowledge and understanding to inform tactfully, support and encourage others in an intercultural group. I consistently adopt behaviour that minimises the risk of offending or hurting others' feelings BF</p> <p>A3.3 I use my communication strategies to prevent, solve and mediate problems arising from differences in language or other communication conventions BF/CA</p> <p>A3.4 I have a good overall understanding of the kinds of communicative difficulties that can arise in an intercultural context and of a wide range of strategies for resolving them CA</p>

4) The Portfolio of Intercultural Competence

The Portfolio of Intercultural Competence is used for the documentation of your intercultural competences. It enables you to keep records of, and reflect on, experiences that have contributed to your progress (intercultural biography) and to store in an organised way, any pieces of evidence that support the levels of competence recorded in this passport.

It consists of a

- **Passport of Intercultural Competence**
- **Biography of Intercultural Competence**
- **Dossier of evidence of Intercultural Competence.**

Into the **Passport of Intercultural Competence** all results of external assessments are entered, as for example the results of the INCA assessment, but also results of internal assessments, training and self-assessments.

The **Biography of Intercultural Competence** enables you to keep a personal record of previous and ongoing intercultural experiences.

And in the **Dossier of evidence of Intercultural Competence** you may keep any evidence you have of your progress and current competences to date. This evidence can be referred to in support of assessment results recorded in your passport, or to illustrate experiences recorded in your biography of intercultural competence.

The Portfolio of Intercultural Competence is learner-owned and does not need any accreditation. This means it is up to you to start it and to keep it up to date. If you so wish, you can show this portfolio, like a c.v., to any person (e.g. a prospective employer) who has an interest in your being able to work effectively in an intercultural situation.

5) The tests

5.1) Types of tests

The INCA assessment comprises three different types of tests:

- **Questionnaires:** There are two questionnaires which can be filled out either on-line or as pencil and paper questionnaires. These questionnaires help your assessors to gain information on your professional background and your experience in intercultural situations and allow you to reflect on your intercultural experiences. Similar questions are also incorporated in your Portfolio of Intercultural Competence in the section 'Biography of Intercultural Competence'. This allows you repeatedly to come back to these questions and keep them up to date.
- **Scenarios:** There are several text-based scenarios and one video-based scenario. You either read a text about an intercultural situation or see a video

showing such a situation and have to answer questions – multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended questions. All scenarios can be completed as on-line tests or using pencil and paper. Each question tends to focus on one competence but may also cover other aspects of intercultural competence. The assessors will evaluate your written answers.

- **Role playing:** You have to play a certain role and communicate and interact with role play partners (either assessors or actors) according to your instructions. An assessor will observe the role play, take notes and evaluate your behaviour after the role playing. In the two role plays, several elements of intercultural competence will be tested.

5.2) *List of tests*

It is possible that your assessor may ask you to do some of the tests on-line, using the INCA On-line website (<http://www.incaproject.org/incaonline/>), at home or during your work. Your assessor will give you your username and password. On the website itself you will find detailed instructions which help you to do the exercises.

The following list gives you a short description of the individual tests plus the minimum time required per test.

- **Biographical information – 15 minutes** (on-line or pencil and paper)
The Biographical information questionnaire contains questions regarding your age and nationality, vocational training and work experience, language proficiency, working and other experiences abroad. It gives you the possibility to reflect on your intercultural experiences, and the assessor is provided with some information on your professional background and previous intercultural experiences.
- **Intercultural profile – 20 minutes** (on-line or pencil and paper)
This questionnaire is a multiple-choice questionnaire. You will find 21 statements about intercultural situations – encounters in your own country with people of different cultural backgrounds, situations in which you meet people of other cultures in their own country (e.g. when you are on holiday abroad) and statements related to work situations with colleagues from other cultures (in your own country or abroad). You have to choose for each question whether or not you agree with the statements. Like the Biographical information, this questionnaire also aims to make you reflect your previous intercultural experiences and to give the assessor further information on your background.
- Scenario 1: **Intercultural encounters – 45 minutes** (on-line or pencil and paper, comprising several text-based scenarios)
- Scenario 2: **A business trip to China – 30 minutes** (on-line or pencil and paper, video-based scenario)
- Role play 1: **Explaining a procedure – 15 minutes** (role play involving one assessee and one role play partner)

- Role play 2: **Construction – 80 minutes** (role play involving several assessees and several role play partners, e.g. four assessees playing the role play with four assessors or actors)

5.3) Example of tests

The following questions are taken from two tests – take a look at them to get an idea of what to expect!

5.3.1) Questions taken from the Intercultural profile

Question 1

‘In restaurants I often eat dishes with ingredients that I don’t know.’

To what extent does this statement apply to you?

- not applicable
- maybe
- fully applicable

Question 15

‘When the behaviour of people from other cultures alienates me, I avoid making contact with them.’

To what extent does this statement apply to you?

- not applicable
- maybe
- fully applicable

Question 17

‘I always follow the rules of my own culture when I am not sure of how to behave properly when dealing with people from other cultures.’

To what extent does this statement apply to you?

- not applicable
- maybe
- fully applicable

5.3.2) Question from Scenario 2 – Intercultural encounters (INCA On-line)

To invite or not?

A young person from country x comes to work at your firm for 6 months. You are aware that he is rather isolated and you consider the idea of inviting him to join you

and your friends.

The problem is that your group of friends have known each other for a long time and a stranger would find it difficult to fit in.

Question 1

Write down in a few lines what you think you would do in this situation (and why).

6) The Assessment Procedure

Your intercultural competence can be either assessed at your workplace or using the set of tests developed by INCA which we presented in chapter five.

When using the tests, the written answers of the on-line and/or pencil and paper tests, as well as the observations made during role playing, serve as a basis for the evaluation of your level of intercultural competence, according to the definitions presented in chapters 2.2 and 2.3. When assessing you at the workplace the assessors will use their observations as a basis for the evaluation of your intercultural competences.

The different tests focus on different dimensions of intercultural competence. The evaluation process is standardised via the use of assessment sheets which exist for all exercises. These assessment sheets comprise examples of answers for the respective competences and the three levels, plus space for the assessor's comments. The assessor fills in all answers or observations per assessee per exercise, evaluates them according to the three levels and gets final results per competence per assessee. Each assessee is observed by different assessors in different exercises. In the final 'assessors' conference' the assessors present their observations and results per assessee and agree on the final results for each assessee.

6.1) Example of an assessment sheet

The following assessment sheet is taken from the intercultural encounter 'Reacting to Unexpected Behaviour'. It contains statements for the three levels of intercultural competence and focuses on respect for otherness, but may also show other intercultural dimensions as overlaps occur.

The assessee first reads the scenario and then gives written answers to some questions. The scenarios can be presented as pencil and paper tests or as on-line tests. The assessor will take the answers and enter them into the assessment sheet, relating them to the given statements below or adding any new answers in the respective level of intercultural competence. He then comes to a result per scenario per assessee. In the final assessors' conference after the assessment, all assessors meet and discuss their results (each assessee should be assessed by different assessors) and reach an agreement on the final scores per competence per assessee. The results are summarised and are entered into your Portfolio of Intercultural Competence.

Assessment sheet: Intercultural Encounter 'Reacting to Unexpected Behaviour'

Assessee: Assessor: Date:

<p>Respect for Otherness</p> <p>Basic Competence</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assumptions about the rights of young people to weekend leisure ▪ Suggestion that another member of the family should visit ▪ Assumption that colleague was not telling the truth ▪ Try to forget about it ▪ <i>Other responses:</i> 	
<p>Respect for Otherness</p> <p>Intermediate Competence</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indicate willingness to remain open to other invitations ▪ Answers which acknowledge the importance of family values generally ▪ <i>Other responses:</i> 	
<p>Respect for Otherness</p> <p>Full Competence</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answers which show the ability to reflect on family values in different societies ▪ Ability to compare and contrast, respect difference ▪ Understanding that a negative/suspicious reaction was a natural stage in adaptation to a foreign culture. ▪ Discuss the question of family values with colleague ▪ Offer to travel with colleague to visit grandparent ▪ <i>Other responses:</i> 	
<p>Total score:</p> <p>RO</p> <p>1-----2-----3</p>	

7) Technical specifications for INCA On-line

Some of the INCA tests can be made either as pencil and paper tests or as web-based tests on the INCA On-line website <http://www.incaproject.org/incaonline/>. If your assessor has chosen to use the website also, you should make sure that your computer meets the following requirements:

Browser

The platform runs only with Internet Explorer version 5.5 or higher.

Browser settings

Cookies and Javascript must be enabled.

Screen resolution

To get best viewing results, we recommend a screen resolution of 1024x768.

Multimedia

To use the multimedia features, you need to have a soundcard and RealOne Player installed on your system. The basic version of RealOne Player is free and can be downloaded from the platform (click 'Technical Requirements' on the blue navigation bar at the top of the page, a separate window opens, at the bottom of the page you will find the link to RealOne Player).

The tests themselves do not differ from the pencil and paper version. The on-line version gives you the possibility to do some of the tests at home or at your workplace. On the website you will find guidelines which explain step by step how to fill in the tests (click 'Guidelines' on the blue navigation bar at the top of the page and a separate window with all relevant information opens).

8) Glossary of Terms

Terms	Definition
Assessee	A person who is assessed for their intercultural competence
Assessment Centre	A process of assessment where trained assessors assess the intercultural competence of assessees in a concentrated form over a short period
Assessment sheet	A written or electronically completed record of the results of the assessment tasks
Assessment task	An exercise (such as a role play, scenario or questionnaire etc) to be completed by the assessee
Assessor	A person who assesses the performance of the assessee
Assessor guidelines	The guidance document for the assessors on the INCA theoretical model, definitions, tasks, observation process, assessment procedures, feedback process.
Blended assessment	Combination of a variety of assessment modes e.g. pencil and paper tasks, on-line tasks, role plays, scenarios etc
Continuous assessment	Assessment which takes place over a period of time and is linked to an iterative process of feedback and further learning
Decentring	The capacity to take a perspective other than your own customary viewpoint
Dossier	A collection of evidence that an assessee keeps and updates in support of his claim to intercultural competence.
External assessment	Assessment conducted by an assessor who is external to the organisation with which the assessee is associated.
Framework	A chart setting out the elements and levels of intercultural competence in the form of descriptive statements
INCA	Intercultural competence assessment (the brand name for the project and its products)
Intercultural Biography	A record of an assessee's background and experiences relevant to intercultural competence
Internal Assessment	Assessment conducted by an assessor within the organisation to which an assessee belongs (e.g. in the workplace).
Intercultural Competence	The range of knowledge and skills an individual needs to interact with colleagues from other countries, cultures, language backgrounds and social identities
Lead assessor	The assessor who is appointed to co-ordinate the activity of all assessors in a given assessment process
On-line assessment	Assessment tasks accessed via a computer or computer network
Passport	An assessee's record of results of external, continuous or on-line assessment.
Portfolio	An assessee's record of development in intercultural competence
Role play	An assessment task in which the assessee is required to

	play a role in an intercultural situation
Scenario	A written description of a sequence of intercultural events about which an assessee is asked questions
Witness Statement	A written account by an individual who has witnessed at first hand, the behaviours of an assessee in an intercultural situation
Six intercultural competences	
Tolerance of ambiguity (TA)	Tolerance for ambiguity is understood as the ability to accept ambiguity and lack of clarity and to be able to deal with it constructively.
Behavioural flexibility (BF)	Behavioural flexibility is the ability to adapt one's own behaviour to different requirements and situations
Communicative awareness (CA)	The ability in intercultural communication to establish relationships between linguistic expressions and cultural contents, to identify and consciously work with various communicative conventions of foreign partners and to modify correspondingly one's own linguistic forms of expression.
Knowledge discovery (KD)	The ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to act using that knowledge, those attitudes and those skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction
Respect for Otherness (RO)	Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own
Empathy (E)	The ability to intuitively understand what other people think and how they feel in concrete situations. Empathic persons are able to deal appropriately with the feelings, wishes and ways of thinking of other persons
Three overarching strands of intercultural competence	
Openness	Respect for other cultures and tolerance of ambiguity
Knowledge	Knowledge discovery and empathy
Adaptability	Behavioural flexibility and communicative awareness

Good luck for your assessment,

the INCA team!