

# FIRST YEAR CORE COURSE LEADERS' COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TOOLKIT

## FIRST YEAR COURSE LEADERS TOOLKIT ITEM

*International and  
intercultural teaching  
strategies*

### THE USQ CoPs PROJECT

Faculty of Arts CoP  
and  
Faculty of Business CoP

<http://www.usq.edu.au/cops>

### **International and intercultural teaching strategies: cross-cultural, international teaching in first year**

**Teacher:** Jill Lawrence

**Course:** ENG2002 - Technology and society

#### **Rationale**

This lecture is designed to introduce students to cross-cultural perspectives as they relate to the discipline and profession of engineering and surveying. The lecture treats culture as a concept that is broader than nationalities, and includes 'cultures' such as student and 'engineering' culture – this helps students connect the concept of culture with what they already know.

#### **Activity**

The lecture is designed to specifically provide students with the following:

- working in cross disciplinary and cross-cultural teams,
- developing networks, and
- working with the community and emotional intelligence.

It includes practical strategies to contribute to students' professional practice toolkit. The lecture is supported by group activities designed to 'tease out' students' own cultural norms and preferences.

#### **Sample text**

Powerpoint slides [over page].

Slide 1

Module 8: Cultural Impacts on Engineering & Surveying Practice

Jill Lawrence  
(while waiting please read  
handout: *Smells like Team Spirit*)

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Slide 2

Module Overview

Lecture 1 (2 May)	Lecture 2 (14 May)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Case study (Andrew Fox: Ergon Energy)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Definitions of culture</li><li>◆ Cultural diversity</li><li>◆ Linguistic diversity</li><li>◆ Workplace literacies</li></ul>

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Slide 3

- ◆ What are your impressions of:
  - ◆ Arts students and lecturers?
  - ◆ Business lecturers and students?
- ◆ Positive? Negative? Neutral?



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Slide 4

Technical problems?

- ◆ Beaconsfield mine:
  - a technical engineering problem but were engineers the only people involved in the rescue?
  - Andrew Fox's lecture:
    - ◆ Were the problems technical ones?
  - At war?

<http://www.smb.com.au/multimedia/andrewfox/andrewfox.html>

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Slide 5

Professionally you may be communicating with:

◆ <b>Arts graduates?</b>	◆ <b>Business graduates?</b>
◆ Bureaucrats	◆ Managers
◆ Journalists	◆ Lawyers
◆ Public Relations reps.	◆ Economists
◆ Media representatives	◆ Unionists
◆ Consultants	◆ Accountants
◆ Politicians	◆ Human resources
◆ Gov. reps	◆ Financiers
◆ Your employees	◆ IT specialists
◆ Your employers	◆ Your employees
◆ Psychologists	◆ Your employers

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Slide 6

Is technical knowledge enough?

Patrick Lawnham, 2002, 'Smells like Team Spirit' in *The Australian Higher Education Supplement*

- ◆ The University of Technology, Sydney, (UTS) conducted a survey of engineering graduates from several universities (UTS, QUT, Griffith Uni, and the Unis of NSW, QLD, Sydney, Tasmania and Wollongong)
- ◆ The graduates involved were those who had been identified by their employers as being the most successful in the workplace
- ◆ The aim was to identify the most important attributes displayed by these high performing graduates in their professional careers

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Slide 7

The most highly rated attributes were:

- ✓ The ability to work in cross disciplinary teams
- ✓ Emotional intelligence:
  - Listening to feedback/facing and learning from errors
  - Thinking and generic skills
  - Developing and having one's own networks
  - Working with the community



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Slide 8

Technical knowledge?

- ◆ The engineering graduates rated technical knowledge as 29<sup>th</sup> of 38 success factors
- ◆ "Technical knowledge was rated as necessary but not sufficient for successful professional practice".



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Slide 9

The engineering graduates said:

"IT'S NOT WHAT YOU KNOW, IT'S HOW WELL YOU WORK WITH YOUR FELLOW PROFESSIONALS".

"THE EMOTIONAL SIDE IS REALLY IMPORTANT IN ENGINEERING, YOU'RE INTERACTING WITH WITH SO MANY CLIENTS AT A TIME, THERE'S A NEED TO WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES".

"PROBLEMS AT UNI HAVE A SINGULAR RESULT - RIGHT OR WRONG. THE WORKPLACE OFTEN HAS MULTIPLE SUGGESTIONS FOR PROBLEMS, NONE OF WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY THE BEST, PERSONAL OPINION COMES INTO PLAY".

"YOU CAN BE REALLY GOOD TECHNICALLY BUT IF YOU CAN'T COMMUNICATE WHAT YOU'VE COME UP WITH TO SOMEONE WITH A NON-ENGINEERING BACKGROUND, THEN YOU REALLY HAVEN'T ACHIEVED ANYTHING".

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Slide 10

So how can Module 8 help?

- ◆ It identifies the skills involved in:
  - working in cross disciplinary and cross-cultural teams,
  - developing networks,
  - working with the community and emotional intelligence
- ◆ It includes practical strategies to help build these 'success' factors into your professional practice toolkit

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Slide 11

The First Step:

- ◆ Involves understanding:
  - Yourself
  - Your cultural beliefs
  - The impact of your culture on your professional practice
- ◆ Write down your understanding of 'culture'?



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Slide 12

Some definitions of culture ?

- ◆ Culture as artefacts:
  - 'the boomerang is an example of aboriginal culture'
- ◆ Culture as visible displays:
  - 'tattoos and piercing are examples of youth culture'
- ◆ Culture as ethnic/racial identity
  - 'There are 60 cultures at USQ'
- ◆ Culture as elite
  - 'the opera is an example of culture at its finest'
- ◆ Culture as exotic
  - 'The island culture was primitive'
- ◆ Culture as explicit rather than implicit
  - as in the arts, history, institutions

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Slide 13

What are the assumptions underlying these definitions?

They associate culture with:

- ◆ Material objects
  - dress, dance, diet and drama
- ◆ Visible displays
  - ceremonies and festivals
- ◆ The concrete and tangible
  - language and dialect



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Slide 14

They divide people into those who have culture and people who don't

'Other groups have culture, not me'.



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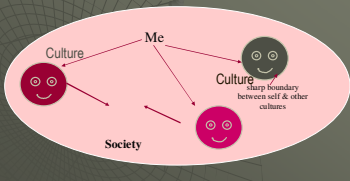
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Slide 15

They assume that culture is independent from me



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Slide 16

### A wider and more helpful definition of culture

- ◆ Culture is the set of values, beliefs, norms, activities, possessions, rules and codes, assumptions about life that socially define groups of people, giving them a commonality
- ◆ Example: while eating is biological, the kinds of food we eat and the ways in which we prepare and eat them are all examples of cultural activities



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Slide 17

### Assumptions underlying this view of culture

- ◆ All human beings have and make culture
- ◆ Culture is the speech and behaviour of everyday life
- ◆ Human activity and culture are interrelated = cultural practices
- ◆ Culture is embodied in groups and subgroups - each has its own 'view of the world' / 'world-view' / 'way of knowing'
- ◆ Influences:
  - What we value
  - Our attitudes towards certain things
  - Our beliefs



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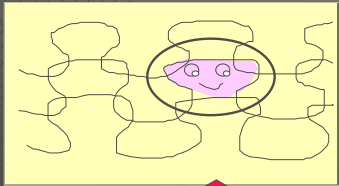
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Slide 18

### Culture and myself are interconnected



Culture is intrinsically connected with me and my actions

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Slide 19

◆ Each of us is a member of multiple sub-cultural groups:

- Student culture
- Engineering culture
- Surveying culture
- Department culture – Electrical, civil etc
- ENG2002 culture
- Family group
- Employment group
- Sporting group
- Social group
- Church group
- Friendship group
- Gender group



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Slide 20

*"Do you think I talk too much? I mean people say I talk too much, but I don't think I do. I may talk alot, but tons of people talk a lot more than I do."*



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Slide 21

Cultural Diversity in this Lecture?

- ◆ Stand up
- ◆ If you are not from Australia
- ◆ + one representative who is:
  - Female / male
  - Rural / urban
  - Married / unmarried
  - Younger / older
  - School leaver / mature age student
  - Working / nonworking
- ◆ What does this diversity mean for your professional practice?



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Slide 22

Each cultural group communicates using specific verbal and nonverbal behaviours

- ♦ Greeting people
- ♦ Eye contact
- ♦ Personal space
- ♦ The way we use silence
- ♦ The ways we dress
- ♦ The way we use time
- ♦ The way we take turns in conversations
- ♦ The way we speak
- ♦ What we value
  - the environment
  - economic rationalism
- ♦ Our body language
- ♦ Our gestures
- ♦ The way we eat
- ♦ Our 'naming' practices



♦ Video "The Human Animal"

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Slide 23

We also *interpret* these diverse cultural practices and behaviours from the basis of *our own* cultural understanding

- ♦ Speaking in a quiet voice is a sign of respect in some cultures but a sign of timidity in others
- ♦ Using a direct approach to express disagreement is considered 'normal' in some cultures but a sign of disrespect (and loss of 'face') in others
- ♦ Saying 'thank you' to family members is a sign of courtesy in some cultures but rude in others
- ♦ A closer personal space is a sign of aggression in some cultures but as 'normal' in others




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Slide 24

Though we may look alike, we are different.  
We may say the same thing differently...



... or think differently of the same thing!



- Good to see!  
...with garlic, parsley and butter
- Regulate good!  
...stry, and loud at night
- A praise!  
...do I really have to see it?

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Slide 25

Cultural awareness includes the acknowledgment that:

- ◆ We interpret other's cultural practices from the basis of our own cultural understanding
- ◆ It acts as a filter each time we communicate
- ◆ Each time we communicate with another culture we may also be judging, stereotyping or evaluating their culture and ways of behaving through this cultural filter
- ◆ Just as other cultures may judge, stereotype or evaluate our culture / ways of behaving through their own cultural filter

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Slide 26

So how do we deal with diversity?

- ◆ One choice is to equate diversity or difference with deficit - we can:
- ◆ Assume ours is the mainstream culture and write over any differences with our language and culture
- ◆ Think that there is just one single 'right' way - my/our way -and that this way is normal/ natural
- ◆ Assume that if others can't demonstrate these ways then they are to blame
  - That they are deficit or lacking
  - Consider different ways to be inferior, 'the other'

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Slide 27

Cultural differences can therefore lead to communication barriers

- ◆ The concept of the mainstream or the 'dominant' culture' (Japanese Story/Anna & the King)
- ◆ Cause misunderstandings and conflict



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Slide 28

### Another Choice

- Is the acceptance of difference
- Accepting that our culture is just one of many – not better or worse but different
- That each cultural group communicates using specific verbal and nonverbal behaviours
- That it is important to develop an awareness of different cultural viewpoints
- And acknowledge the value and contributions of these other cultures and viewpoints



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Slide 29

### Linguistic Diversity

- Each cultural group communicates in its own way
- With its own languages or discourses
- Discourse wider meaning than language:
  - all forms of talking and writing,
  - both verbal & nonverbal
- University discourses
  - Uni, faculty, department, discipline, academic, research, computer, statistics, maths, data analysis, referencing, academic literacy & numeracy, assessment, critical analysis



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Slide 30

### New languages in the workplace

- Increasing multiplicity of media and communication channels - web, info super highways, virtual shopping, interactive multimedia desktop publishing
- These are increasingly multi-modal - combining written modes with visual, audio, digital & spatial patterns of meaning
- In mass media, multimedia, electronic hypermedia and information technologies
- New technologies – iconographic, text & screen based modes of interacting (eg automated machinery)
- Changes in organisational operation (e-mail, video conferencing, technical and systems thinking)



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Slide 31



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Slide 32

- ♦ "The phonograph...is not of any commercial value". *Thomas Edison, 1880*
- ♦ "Flight by machines heavier than air is unpractical and insignificant, if not utterly impossible". *Simon Newcomb, astronomer, 1902*
- ♦ "It is an idle dream to imagine that...automobiles will take the place of railways in the long distance movement of .....passengers". *American Road Congress, 1913*
- ♦ "Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?" *Harry Warner, Warner Brothers Pictures, 1927*
- ♦ "I think there is a world market for about 5 computers". *Thomas Watson, Chairman IBM, 1943*
- ♦ "There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home." *Ken Olsen, President of Digital Equipment Corporation, 1977*

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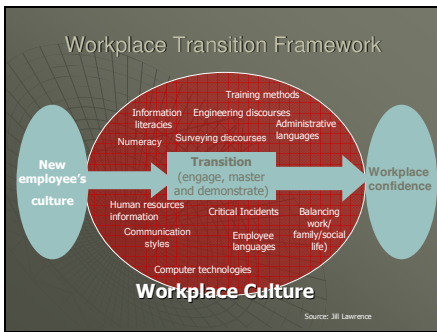
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Slide 33



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Slide 34

### Transcultural engineering

- ◆ Develop the skills of becoming familiar with the culture/language of the cultural group you are communicating with
- ◆ Fine-tune/adjust these skills of to communicate with the variety of different cultures you will be communicating with:
  - ◆ At uni
  - ◆ In the workplace



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Slide 35

### Means knowing



- ◆ There are multiple cultures and subgroups in the world, each with their own languages/literacies
- ◆ You need to work with these individuals and groups if you are to be effective in the new and changing world of work
- ◆ Involves:
  - Your ability to move into a new culture and to work out the literacies needed to operate in that particular culture
  - Your ability to understand how these work
  - Sometimes your need to seek knowledge about these literacies outside of yourself

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Slide 36

- ◆ Through strategies such as:
  - teamwork,
  - consultation and
  - collaboration
  - with the fields of management, law, industrial relations, public relations, finance, media, etc etc
- ◆ Using a toolkit of effective:
  - Observation and reflection
  - Communication
    - ◆ Seeking help & information
    - ◆ Participating in groups/teams
    - ◆ Making social contact
  - Critical Awareness
  - Self-awareness
  - Community awareness
  - Seeking & giving feedback



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Slide 37

**A. Observation & reflection**

Listening and watching – for example to the specific verbal and non-verbal practices, behaviours and beliefs of the particular culture or cultural group being engaged



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Slide 38

**B. Communication**

- ◆ Seeking help and information
- ◆ Participating in a group or team
- ◆ Making social contact and conversation



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Slide 39

**Seeking help & information & feedback**

- ◆ Important especially in transition
- ◆ Why not?
  - Belief systems/a sign of weakness/lack of confidence/not "culturally" valued/not have the right / not important enough to ask/ equate help as 'remedial'/ 'seen as sucking up' / 'not cool'
- ◆ Is finely tuned to the culture being accessed and engaged:
  - Verbally - word choice, ask directly or indirectly
  - Appropriate to include reasons or not
  - Nonverbally - use of eye contact, personal space, tone of voice, pace, volume, pitch, body language



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Slide 40

**Participating in a Group or Team (no 1. success factor )**

- enhances your cultural literacy
- prioritised as key competency in job selection
- generates feelings of confidence
- contributes to critical thinking and learning
- facilitates questioning and engagement
- takes advantages of strengths and helps overcome weaknesses develops evaluation and reflection
- contributes to feelings of 'belonging' and connection
- most work conducted in teams



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Slide 41

**Making Social Contact and Conversation**



- Finely tuned to the particular culture being engaged (eg taboo topics, specific cultural and social rules)
- Facilitates :
  - work groups, mentors, friends, networks, a 'significant other', employment, promotion, collaborations
- Benefits:
  - Facilitates social interaction
  - Develops more resources/sources of help
  - Helps solve problems/conflict in workplace
  - Find and develop networks
  - Critical in relation to career, work and promotion

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Slide 42

**Critical awareness (success factors 2 & 3)**

- Involves the ability to observe, monitor and reflect on cultural behaviours and practices and to learn from your observations
- Involves the ability to seek out, listen to and accept feedback (success factor no. 2)
- Involves the ability to give constructive and positive feedback
  - facilitates teamwork
  - improves interpersonal relationships
  - leads to greater productivity
  - prevents communication barriers



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## Slide 43

### Seeking & providing constructive (negative) feedback

- ◆ Why? (success factor 2 – facing and learning from errors)
- ◆ Vital for:
  - remaining calm under pressure (no 4)
  - organising work and managing your time (no 6)
  - minimising conflict
  - overcoming communication problems
  - reducing potential barriers
  - preventing stress
  - developing flexibility
  - setting and adjusting priorities (no 5)
  - being assertive



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## Slide 44

- ◆ A sometimes difficult & 'risky' skill
- ◆ Essential that it is socially and culturally appropriate to the particular culture being communicated with
- ◆ Prepare:
  - what you want to say,
  - when,
  - where and
  - how ( specifically, both verbally and nonverbally)
- ◆ Start with something positive or place yourself in their situation / shoes
- ◆ Give reasons / explanations
- ◆ Provide an alternative / give a specific, concrete course of action



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## Slide 45

### So Now, You Know?

- ◆ About culture & you?
- ◆ The impact of cultural & linguistic diversity on your workplace practices?
- ◆ The importance of developing a meta literacy approach in the workplace?
- ◆ The importance of developing your own toolkit of skills
  - Teamwork
  - Observation
  - Communication
  - Providing & seeking feedback
  - Reflection



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Slide 46

What strategies will you use in your professional practice?



Good luck and best wishes!

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