What is intercultural competence ?
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'Intercultural competence' has figured very prominently in the debate about 'global citizenship' as a graduate attribute for many years. A great deal of research has been undertaken in the field which has led to many different definitions and understandings. Given that the GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES Project supports colleagues in their efforts to prepare their students for global citizenship, we would like to propose a definition that can inform our debate about internationalising the curriculum at GCU.

Culture can be defined as "the sum of a way of life, including expected behaviour, beliefs, values, language and living practices shared by members of a society. It consists of both explicit and implicit rules through which experience is interpreted". [1] Geert Hofstede, the most famous researcher in the field, refers to culture as a "programming of the mind"[2].

"**Intercultural competence** is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions." [3]

Constituent elements of intercultural competence
(Adapted from Deardorff, 2006)

Knowledge
Cultural self awareness; culture specific knowledge; socio-linguistic awareness; grasp of global issues and trends

Skills
listening, observing, evaluating using patience and perseverance; viewing the world from others' perspectives

Attitudes
Respect (valuing other cultures); **openess** (withholding judgement); **curiosity** (viewing difference as a learning opportunity); **discovery** (tolerance for ambiguity)
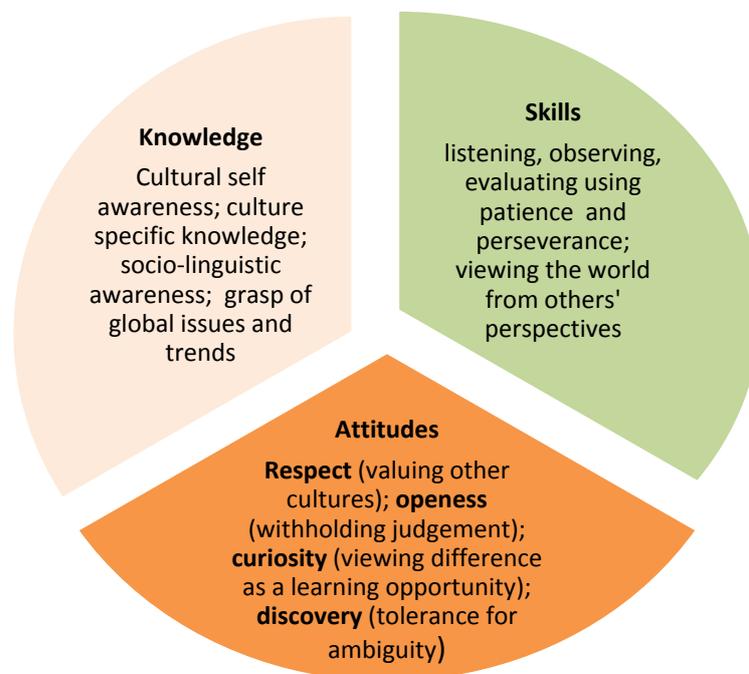
A note of caution
Research shows that intercultural competence cannot be acquired in a short space of time or in one module. It is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but **a lifelong process** which needs to be addressed explicitly in learning and teaching and staff development. Critical reflection becomes a "powerful tool" [4] on the journey towards achieving it.

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[1] Herbig, P. (1998) *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Marketing*, New York: The Haworth Press
[2] Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values,* London: Sage
[3] Deardorff, D. K. (2006) , The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States, *Journal of Studies in International Education* 10:241-266
[4] ibid

Constituent elements of intercultural competence
(Adapted from Deardorff, 2006)

Knowledge

➢ **Cultural self- awareness:** articulating how one's own culture has shaped one's identity and world view

➢ **Culture specific knowledge**: analysing and explaining basic information about other cultures (history, values, politics, economics, communication styles, values, beliefs and practices)

➢ **Sociolinguistic awareness**: acquiring basic local language skills, articulating differences in verbal/ non-verbal communication and adjusting one's speech to accommodate nationals from other cultures

➢ **Grasp of global issues and trends:** explaining the meaning and implications of globalization and relating local issues to global forces

Skills

➢ **Listening, observing, evaluating :** using patience and perseverance to identify and minimize ethnocentrism, seek out cultural clues and meaning

➢ **Analysing, interpreting and relating**: seeking out linkages, causality and relationships using comparative techniques of analysis

➢ **Critical thinking**: viewing and interpreting the world from other cultures' point of view and identifying one's own

Attitudes

➢ **Respect:** seeking out other cultures' attributes; value cultural diversity; thinking comparatively and without prejudice about cultural differences

➢ **Openness:** suspending criticism of other cultures; investing in collecting 'evidence' of cultural difference; being disposed to be proven wrong;

➢ **Curiosity:** seeking out intercultural interactions, viewing difference as a learning opportunity, being aware of one's own ignorance

➢ **Discovery**: tolerating ambiguity and viewing it as a positive experience; willingness to move beyond one's comfort zone

Outcomes

The above knowledge, skills and attitudes lead to **internal outcomes** which refer to an individual who learns to be flexible, adaptable, empathetic and adopts an ethno-relative perspective.

These qualities are reflected in **external outcomes** which refer to the observable behaviour and communication styles of the individual. They are the visible evidence that the individual is, or is learning to be, interculturally competent.