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## I. Introduction

The objective of evaluation is generally twofold. Firstly, the evaluator seeks to assess the degree to which the interventions of a project have attained the stated targets or objectives. Since the evaluation team is generally independent or at least removed in some sense, from those making the intervention then the judgement of the evaluator carries a strong quality assurance measure. Secondly, and in most cases more importantly, the evaluation team must hope to shed light on the reasons why certain interventions have had, or have failed to have, the desired effect. In this way the evaluation is part of a continuous, or even radical improvement process of the intervention specifically, but also in identifying the critical elements of context in which the intervention succeeded (or not). This, in turn, helps others addressing similar issues to select and modify interventions according to appropriateness of context rather than, say, the most overtly successful project operating in a dissimilar context.

The Skill2e project is primarily aimed at enhancing the experience of students on overseas placement. However, the success of the project is also contingent upon improving or at least satisfying, the needs for the associated Universities and Enterprises. Thus, unusually, success is tripartite and benefits may be a series of trade-offs as well as opportunities for all parties to benefit equally. The causal relationship between project interventions and their multiple effects on all three parties is thus at the heart of the evaluation objectives.

This overt attempt to explain causal mechanisms in context is thus one of the key purposes of the evaluation of the skill2e project, but this desire complicates the evaluation strategy. There is little scope for the straightforward scientific or experimental method, in which the outcomes of an intervention on one group are contrasted with outcomes of a similar group not subjected to the interventions and any differences thus attributed to the intervention. What is more, the variety inherent in the interventions for each group of students, enterprises and universities suggest that the construction of meaningful control groups would be problematic at best. Finally, the relatively small numbers of students and enterprises in the early stages of the programme to be evaluated would, most likely, lead to type 1 errors where correct insights would be rejected.

## II. Theoretical Background

The case for a more qualitative focus is best made using Patton's respected guide (Patton, 1987):

Argument	Skill2e
The programme emphasise individual outcomes	Work packs 1,2,3 and 4 are focused at individual students undergoing an overseas placement. Other stakeholders, such as enterprises and seen in relation to these individuals.
The internal dynamics of the programme are intrinsic to the evaluation	Work packs 1,2, 3 and 4 derive the interventions from academic sources and key processes are defined accordingly. It is required that the outcomes of the project facilitate reflection and refinement of the underlying academic principles and their implementation.
The evaluation requires detailed analysis of individual cases	Work packs 3 and 4 in particular are expected to generate particularly successful and disappointing outcomes. The range of enterprises also suggests a case based, rather than generalist approach. It is necessary to identify critical incidences and factors in both cases
There is a focus on diversity	Diversity is rampant throughout the project. Many different nationalities of student (nationality being far from a homogeneous category itself) from a diversity of Universities will travel to different countries to undertake a variety of work placements and different enterprises. All of these

	elements generate the need for a range of qualitative evaluation techniques to accommodate diversity among all three stakeholders.
There a need to evaluate details of individual interventions	It is possible- even likely –that few students will experience all parts of the skill2e interventions in the same way. The IDI diagnostic test will initially segment students according to their level of preparation, which will generate different experiences for both IDI training and the pre departure training in work pack 2. The cultural mentor support in work packs 3 and 4 have more than one mode of delivery, and work pack 4 may be the most diverse intervention of all. Evaluation techniques must thus be able to follow details of individual interventions in context.
The is an emphasis on programme improvements	Work packs 1 through to 5 have the intention of anticipating and testing programme improvements
There is a need to evaluate quality of inputs rather than quantity	It is not enough to note that activities have taken place or not, the programme needs to learn of the impact of cultural mentors, pre departure training and so on. Similarly, the inter cultural reflection can only be assessed qualitatively – the length and number of postings etc. will not satisfy as proxy for what has been learned by the student.

<p>The programme may affect clients in unanticipated ways</p>	<p>An overseas placement may create a range of experiences for students, and the various interventions may have unintended consequences, both beneficial or not. Consequently evaluation instruments cannot be too focused on expected outcomes and insensitive to others.</p>
<p>There is a lack of proven quantitative performance indicators</p>	<p>Work pack 1 uses the IDI training model that has a respectable history of performance based upon its indicators. There is a dearth of such history for work packs 2 though to 4</p>
<p>The programme is exploratory and needs to develop its underlying theories</p>	<p>The work packs are based upon underlying theory and best practice in so far as this is possible, but as yet no stronger theory of programme delivery has emerged. It is thus necessary to gain richer descriptive data than would be necessary if it were only necessary to check adherence to a well established successful process.</p>

Table 1: The Case for a Diverse Qualitative Evaluation Strategy

Thus the evaluation strategy will be broadly qualitative and diversified. Such an approach lends itself to realistic evaluation techniques defined, most simply, as being, "What works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects and how" (Pawson and Tilley, 2004). The approach is common in many areas of public policy, and is found increasing in the evaluation of education and training initiatives (refs).

Consequently the evaluation strategy for each work pack to be adopted consists of the following stages:

A clear description of purpose and objectives from each work pack	As defined by each work pack
A process mode of interventions by which these objectives will be delivered	Value chain – see below
A programme theory model mapping each intervention to its objectives	Intervention objective model – see below
Where possible, a performance indicator that may be used to assess the take-up and effectiveness of each intervention	Istanbul workshop
A range of evaluation techniques that demonstrate the degree of effectiveness of the interventions in achieving the performance outcomes.	See below

Table 2: Process Framework of Evaluation Strategy

### ***Objectives and Interventions***

The Skill2e project consists of five interventions (or series of interventions) each demarked by a work pack. Although each work pack has distinctive purposes and objectives, these are invariably commensurate with the overall aims of the Skill2e project and overlap considerably in purpose if not intervention techniques. In order to ascertain the points at which the interventions achieve favourable or unfavourable outcomes it is necessary to evaluate each intervention (or interventions assignment to each work pack) individually. The alternative would be to evaluate final outcomes for all stakeholders and critical interventions, which would be acceptable for long

established programmes where objectives and interventions were well understood and critical points could be identified. However the exploratory status of the programme suggests that such an approach would bypass many opportunities for learning how interventions work (or do not) and build in deadweight and redundancy invisibly.

### ***Process Model of Interventions***

The discrete approach to the evaluation requires considerable thought be given to the linkages between the work packs. In many this is appropriate since the work packs themselves are sequential. The stages of each intervention are given by the following sequence – although clearly not all stages will have equal prominence in each intervention.

Stage	
Recruitment	Depiction of the linkages between each stage in the programme, the relationship between prior experiences and the level or type of intervention for all pertinent stakeholders
Induction	Prior activities and preparations for all stakeholders, first steps of the intervention. These do not directly confirm project benefits, but facilitate subsequent interventions
Intervention	The main activities that are intended to achieve the beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders
Conclusions	Final activities that bring the sequence of activities to a close, including accreditation, feedback and path to the following intervention
Post Intervention	Follow up activities, publication of achievements

Table 3 Process Stages of an Intervention (Work pack)

In order that the programme should be transparent for derived and replicated programmes, it is necessary to indicate the resources and arrangements of resources that support these

interventions. Such a representation has further benefits in that the management of the programme can be improved continuously by review of costs and benefits, although these considerations are not an overt part of this, or other realistic evaluations.

The resources and management can be broadly grouped as:

Resource	
Infrastructure	Broad classification of equipment and facilities necessary, and the prevailing managerial, cultural and budgetary restrictions on their use.
Information Technology	Narrow classification of technology relating to communication and storage of data
Human Resources	Quality and quantity of staff required to deliver the programme. Would include managerial and cultural limitations on the availability of staff.
Sourcing	Procurement and outsourcing initiatives, including limitations of usage.
Knowledge management	The data that is required at each stage of each intervention, and its accessibility to users.

Table 4 Resources and Management of Process Delivery

Taken together, the interventions, resources and management are modelled into a simple matrix that has its origins in the widely used value chain model (Porter 1990) Although originally adapted from an operations model to a strategic model of competitive businesses, it has been shown to have a wider variety of applications.

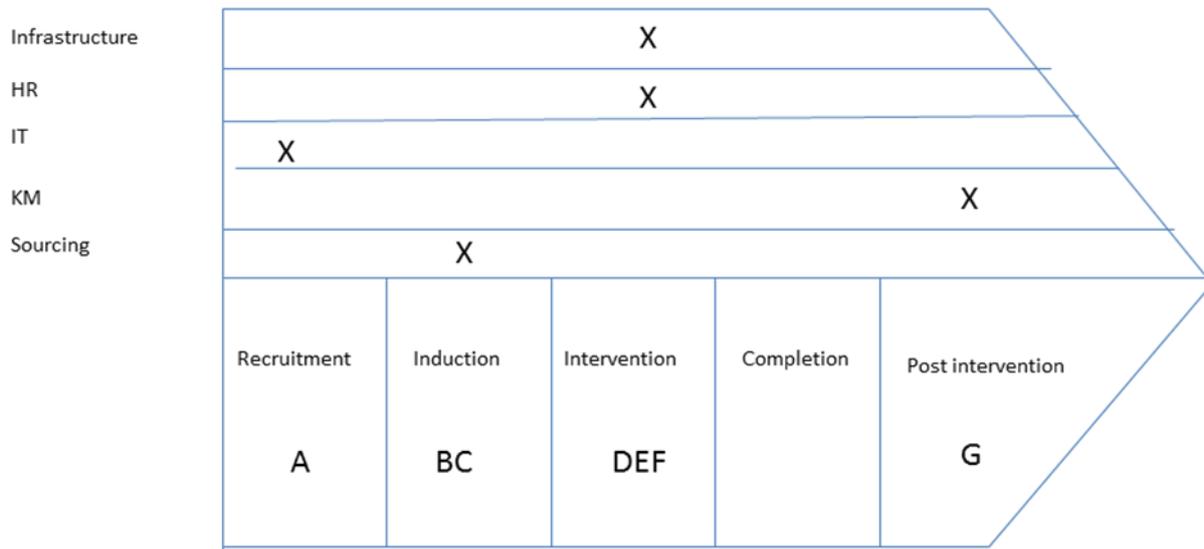


Figure 1 Intervention Process Model

In Figure 1 interventions A through to G are identified and critical resources interventions located with X.

### Programme Theory Model

The processes and interventions identified will be used to identify the relationship between activities and outcomes. These claims are summarised in the following interventions outcomes matrix below:

	Output 1	Output 2	Output 3	Output4
Intervention D	Z		Z	
Intervention E				
Intervention F		Z		
Intervention G		Z		Z

Table 5 Intervention Output Matrix

Cells identified by Z indicate a narrative - drawing upon theory and practice – that justifies the belief that interventions D and E together will lead to outputs 1 through to 4. Wherever possible, this is accompanied by a testable, even falsifiable claim made by those designing and implementing the intervention, although in an exploratory project the claims may be stated less

stringently. Note that interventions A through to C are not directly tested since they are preparatory interventions; however it is often the case that inappropriate entrants or poor preparations can cause apparent programme failures – particularly where the programme has been rushed or replicated without prior realistic evaluation.

### III. Methodology

#### *a. Evaluation Techniques*

For each output, an evaluation instrument can be selected, designed and adapted to test both the claims of the designer and the underlying narrative. There are a wide range of such instruments and this is not the place to reproduce an extensive catalogue of possible strategies. Broadly speaking however, such instruments can be classified under four types:

Instrument	
Naturally occurring	Includes all secondary data generated in the execution of the project. This may include registration documents, appraisals, performance reviews and so on. Often the data is rather more limited that required – perhaps consisting of quantitative indicators or factual statements but even so it is sometimes possible to use such techniques as content analysis in some circumstances. The cheapest source of evaluation information, but over reliance may generate unsuitable proxies and misleading conclusions.
Empirical Instruments	Where the intervention lends itself to quantifiable entities and performance indicators, such as scores in an objective test, numbers completing a programmes and so on. A most important range

	<p>of techniques, such as time series, variance analysis and correlation are available. However, there is always a temptation to focus on what can be measured in this way, rather than the ostensible purpose of the intervention, and numbers in exploratory projects are often too small to generate firm conclusions.</p>
<p>Narrative Instruments</p>	<p>Usually based around semi structured and unstructured interviews with clients and stakeholders, either in a group or individually, although such techniques as diaries and blogs are possible and perhaps rather underused in evaluation at present. Post experience questionnaires are often structured in a way that can collect such data although results are sometimes disappointing. It is frequently necessary to keep the number of examinations rather small due to expense. It is easily possible, and not uncommon, to generate a great deal of rich qualitative data that cannot be analysed within the timeframes and parameters of the evaluation.</p>
<p>Qualiquantological Instruments</p>	<p>A rare group of techniques that tries to achieve qualitative type answers using quantitative techniques, such as Q Sorting, which is very useful for estimating diversity and typologies within a client group.</p>

Table 6 Range of Evaluation Instruments

**b. Evaluation of Interventions**

The key benefit of a realistic evaluation is the improvements in knowledge of and contextual sensitivity to the effects of the interventions. The underlying narrative is of vital importance whether or not the interventions have had the intended effect.

The range of interpretations is always problematic to classify but Table 7 locates some key concepts and terminology.

	Intervention Successfully Applied as Designed	Intervention Partially Applied or Not Applied as Designed
Outcomes Achieved	Additionality: The intervention has created benefits that would not have been achieved otherwise	Deadweight: The narratives indicate that these outcomes would have been achieved with the intervention
Outcomes Not Achieved	Redundancy: The narratives indicate that the interventions did not relate directly to the issues faced by the stakeholders.	Process Failures:

Table 7 Broad Classification of Realistic Outcomes

In addition, the evaluation should also review the efficiency of what was delivered, making use of the resources and management issues highlighted by Figure 1 as benefits may be trivial in terms of the costs involved, and further, the interventions may have simply displaced an underlying problem to another domain where it is no longer visible to the evaluation.

**Dev 01**

This intervention uses the respected IDI test to measure the initial intercultural competence of students, and a second test measures gain after the placement. Hence IDI is both intervention and

evaluation instrument. Since there is already an extensive literature on the efficacy of such instruments, as discussed directly in DEV 01, this evaluation seeks to measure the outcomes.

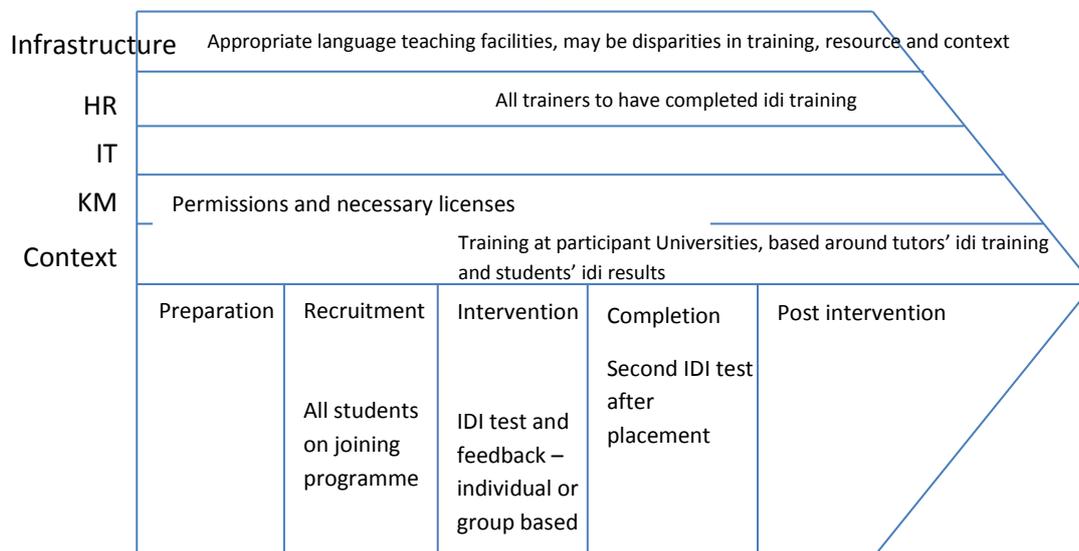


Figure 2 IDI Process

### Process Evaluation

The feedback appended to DEV01 demonstrates that in all Centres academics found the IDI training to be professionally developed and supported. What is more the IDI materials inspired many of the activities and discussions used in the pre departure training. In this sense the process supported the learning outcomes effectively.

The processes for delivering the two IDI tests to students were more problematical. 82 students completed a test before departure, (which is less than 100 per cent). Of these, only 16 completed a second IDI.

These outputs might be seen as disappointing and have been investigated. The difficulty lies in the institutional arrangements surrounding the administration of the test. The pre departure arrangements assumed that the students would be gathered in one place with a period for reflection beforehand. Although this was the normal case, there were (and always will be) a considerable number of students that elect for a placement at the last moment, who attend briefings and indeed the test itself sporadically or may be otherwise engaged when the test is

administered. This is unlikely to change in future, and institutions need to consider the latitude available for more flexibility.

Similarly, the administrative assumptions for the second IDI test expected that the student group would return to the HEI and be available for the test. However, with placements of different length and with students taken from different faculties, it was rare that the placement students came together again for any purpose. Consequently, staff were actively involved in chasing students to complete a test sometime after the placement had finished. In this they were only intermittently successful. Again, this is unlikely to change in the future, and subsequent runs should consider whether or not it could be possible for students to take the test while still on placement.

### ***Impact Evaluation***

84 students took a pre departure IDI test. The results are given below:

	<b>PO</b>	<b>DO</b>	<b>Gap</b>
median	117.63	85.82	30.84
upper	24.69	103.86	39.42
lower	113.9	74.48	23.19

Table 8 IDI Scores

These results are not striking in themselves, except that perhaps the gap between perceived and actual intercultural competence is wider than would be usually expected (the norm being some 20 points, which would appear in the lower quartile in this distribution. Observations taken from the reflective diaries support the degree of naivety shown by students here – many express surprise at basic cultural patterns that they encounter; even if the students themselves do not always appreciate that these surprises are cultural in nature.

The results of a second IDI test are rather more striking.

Student	Change	notes
1	+8.6	
2	+26	Had mentor
3	+.6	
4	+9	
5	+.8	
6	+2	
7	-3	
8	-4.5	
9	-7.6	
10	6.6	Had mentor
11	5.9	Had mentor
12	13.6	
13	-5.4	
14	26.7	Had mentor
15	-3.8	
16	-7.8	

Table 9 Second IDI Scores

Six achieved lower scores with the second test; two achieved spectacular gains while the remainder attained modest improvements. Most of these scores probably lie within the normal test, retest range. There are no directly comparable results to assist in making a judgement on the overall effect of the placement on IDI scores. However, the large gains seen (above 20) are consistent with a significant gain found on programmes with a much longer, and stronger, series of interventions.

Students themselves report a mixed response to the benefits of the IDI test. In this evaluation, students were asked to discuss the impact of both IDI and pre departure training together, and this is discussed below in DEV02. Fears, such as dismay or disturbance caused by the results

proved groundless. Where students expressed an opinion they found little to disagree with the diagnoses they were given.

### **Dev 02**

Pre departure training has the overall goal of increasing the cultural sensitivity of students before departure. It will achieve this by training programme planned and delivered by participating Universities based upon exemplar material developed by skill2e.

The training is based around Deardoff and follows an idi test to ascertain the students' initial position. The training then seeks to raise cultural sensitivity to a higher stage, so that experiences and events can be interpreted by the student in a cultural rather than individual or arbitrary fashion. Hence the testable outcomes of the intervention are threefold:

- To produce exemplar training templates that allow participating Universities to provide context specific training to departing students
- To demonstrate that such training helps students to acclimatise to their host country
- To demonstrate that students have learned to become more reflective on considering their experiences

It is worth noting that none of the objectives above require or imply that students should repeat the idi test pre departure. This emphasises the position that the training is not intended as an intervention to boost idi scores, although it is held that the skill2e programme is most likely to have this effect. That said, there is no obvious exit point for directly evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention in achieving these objectives.

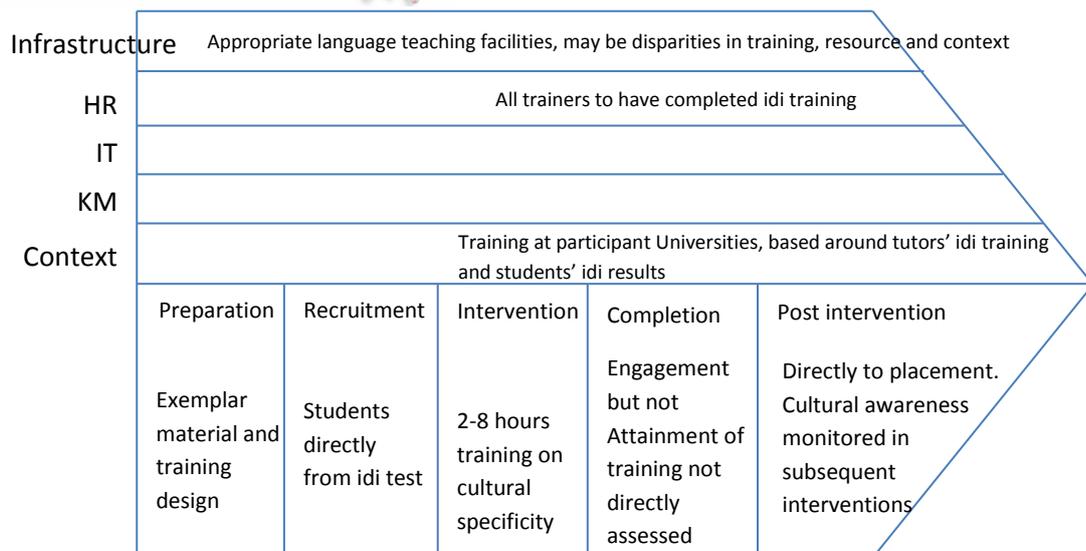


Figure 3 Pre Departure Training Process

The exemplar templates will be used in a wide variety of contexts. Students will begin at different levels of cultural sensitivity and depart for different business and cultural cultures. Moreover, the participating Universities will deliver their programmes locally under different conditions, for example one University plans to provide the training over eight hours, while another has adopted an intensive approach. Although it is clearly beneficial to allow this contextual specificity, such a process carries a burden in that the sharing of good practice or even understanding what works and why, becomes a circumspect judgement.

For objective one, this evaluation will therefore focus on the operational elements of turning exemplar material into a training programme at the participating Universities after such training has been delivered. This will consist of a straightforward structured questionnaire on the benefits of the material and practical difficulties encountered. This offers the opportunity for developing further materials and validating the overall approach even it is learned that further work needs to be done.

Objectives two and three will be evaluated using two research approaches. Firstly students will be required to keep a reflective log, some of which will be public, and produce a structured report. It will be possible to ascertain the degree of cultural sensitivity and reflection from the content of these reports as they naturally occur, requiring an evaluation pro forma to be used ad hoc.

Secondly, a post experience instrument based upon Q Sorting methodology will capture many elements of the student experience, and the impact of the pre departure training will be thus identified in a variety of contexts.

The polar outcome set for the project is shown in Table below:

	Training materials do not lead to reflection and cultural competence	Training materials lead to reflection and cultural competence
Exemplar material not helpful to trainers	Both exemplars and training materials need further development	Redundancy – current team have sufficient skills and experience without exemplars Idi training itself provides sufficient grounding
Exemplar material is helpful to trainers	Stronger guidance needed, Pre departure training has limited impact	Successful intervention, trainers can learn together

Table 10 Polar Outcomes for DEV 02

### **Process Evaluation**

Take up of the intervention was less than 100 per cent. While in SSU and Acadia the same number of students took IDI and pre departure training, these may not be the same students in all cases, whereas at FHS and Timisoara there were variations.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>No. of students who did</b>	<b>No. of students who</b>
	1st IDI Test	attended pre-departure training
Fachhochschule Salzburg	45	86
Universidad de Alicante	14	14
ARCADA	19	19
Southampton		
Solent University	15	15

Mugla University		
Universitatea		
Politehnica din Timisoara	3	12

Table 11 Take Up of Pre Departure Training

The underlying reasons for these variations concern the sporadic nature of the intervention, and the degree to which students could be assembled. At SSU and Uda this was very straightforward, but due to the exceptional nature of the cohort rather than any replicable administrative arrangements. Thought should be given to a more flexible mode of delivery whereby the main components of the message could be transmitted even if physical presence is not possible; however desirable.

Feedback on exemplary materials was obtained after the Helsinki progress control meeting and uniformly positive. Feedback from students undertaking the pre departure training is appended in DEV 02 and, again, is generally positive. Fears that the pace of the programme might be too quick (or too slow) are not sustained by feedback from any source – the few comments received on the topic probably pertain to individual preferences rather than any structural problem.

Study of the student’s feedback on the sessions suggests that the materials, programme and training were generally well received by students, with one exceptional cohort. In terms of meeting overall expectations, students rated the pre departure training as 8 on a 10 point scale. Few students rated the materials covered as less than satisfactory and trainers themselves were rated as having done a good job. Student feedback suggested that the exercises were generally more helpful than the theoretical content, and there was a suggestion that students would have liked greater specificity in terms of their host country.

The exceptional group generally rated the pre departure training as poor and would not recommend it to others going on placement. The key complaint was lack of specificity – students wanted briefing on the host culture and the day to day problems involved – such as how to find accommodation in a foreign city. There were also indications that the content had been covered in

other parts of the student's studies. That said, around one third of the students rated the pre departure training positively, with scores consistent with the high evaluation for other cohorts. Taken together, it is possible that the poor feedback was generated by incorrect student assumptions over the course content and, for a significant number, the repetition of content already covered in more detail elsewhere.

In summary, take up was less than 100 per cent in some institutions and the nature of the placement process suggests that only marginal improvements are likely under present systems. That said, the materials developed and their applications suit the ethos and tempo of the programme.

### ***Impact Evaluation***

The close proximity of IDI and pre departure training, both temporally and contextually, lead to combined evaluation instruments.

Few students acknowledged that they had not thought about inter cultural competence before the interventions – and such students tended to be found in the lower quartile of DO results on the IDI. Most students answered that these interventions had not greatly changed their view about their host culture before placement.

Few students argued they felt better equipped to deal with intercultural issues after the interventions. However, a small group (see Q Sort below) present an extremely positive contrast, suggesting that these activities have the ability to inspire some students. What is more, students most enthusiastic about cultural competences after the placement retrospectively identify these two interventions as important.

In short, this intervention occupies the south east and south west poles of Table 10. It can be argued that these interventions are important to students who are, or who can be made enthusiastic, about cultural competences, and are therefore valuable and well performed –

process issues notwithstanding. On the other hand, students that do not appreciate the importance of these issues are not turned around by the interventions – in fact rather the opposite in some cases.

**DEV 03 Cultural Mentor**

The purposes of this intervention are to facilitate the curriculum for training for cultural mentors and model implementation. The process intervention is shown in Figure 4 below

Process Intervention for Enterprise Training and Mentorship (mentor)

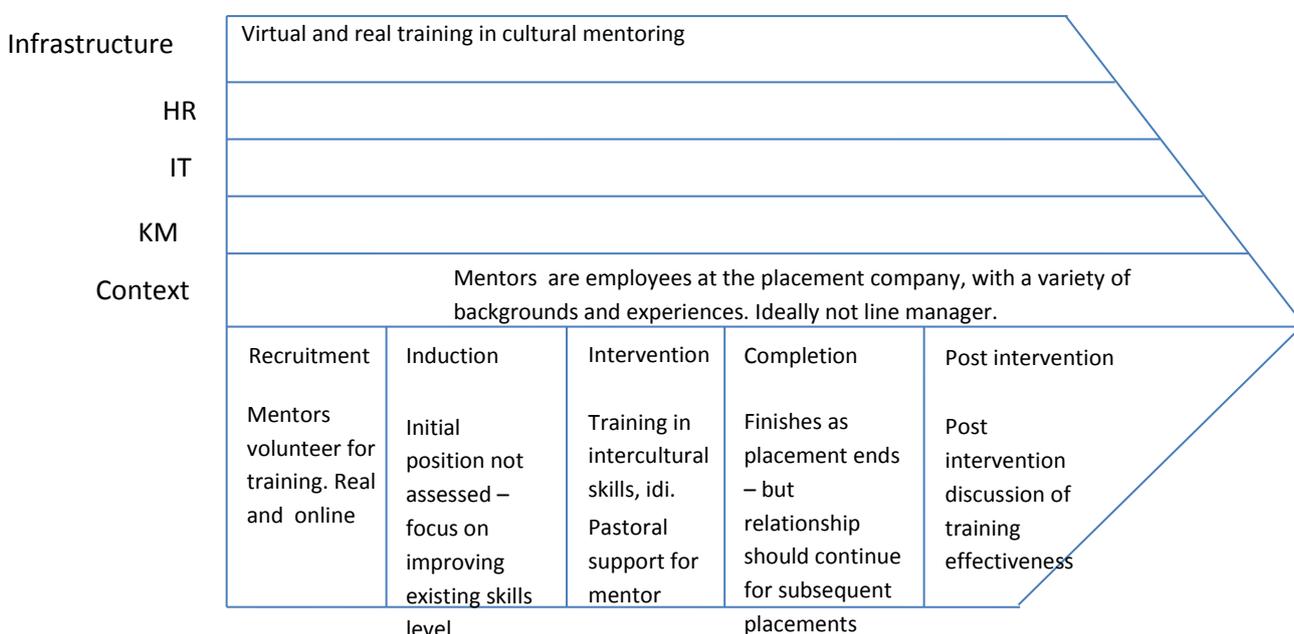


Figure 4 Process for DEV 03

It is clear that these interventions are chiefly targeted at the enterprises and mentors directly, and the students therefore indirectly.

The facilitation for enterprises – and the strongly associated handbook in DEV 05 -produce polar outcome sets similar to DEV 02

Clearly a straightforward Likert style questionnaire can be used to assess what parts of the facilitation process were successful, and what parts were not.

	Placement does not commence well and run smoothly	Placement runs well
Facilitation not helpful to Enterprises	Both materials and mode of delivery need further development	Redundancy – enterprises already have requisite competences
Facilitation helpful to enterprises	Stronger guidance needed, Gaps and inadequacies in material	Successful intervention, enterprises can learn together

Table 12: Polar Outcomes for DEV 03

### ***Process and Impact Evaluation***

The discussion of the training of mentors is well documented in DEV 03. It is clear that the training elements have been thorough and extensive. However good the practice, it is unfortunately the case that few mentors were recruited. What is more, it was not possible to deploy all those that had been trained, for example ETA2U, MOSDER and an associate partner of FHS in Salzburg offered placements with mentors but had no applications. Location may have much to do with the decision, students appeared reluctant to apply to Romania for example, and for non-paid placements particularly in IT related posts. Attempts to offer an auxiliary remote mentor process, at SSU for example, were not widely welcomed by students. Consequently, only five students had cultural mentors during the duration of the project. With such small numbers it is difficult to make a confident evaluation. What scant data exists through the Q Sort evaluation and diaries suggests that the arrangements on placement proceeded smoothly in that student’s contacts with mentors were timely and helpful.

The data available suggests that this remains, potentially, an extremely powerful intervention. The interviews undertaken with mentors and mentees, reported in DEV 03 indicate that both parties gained much from the exchange and the intervention worked in the way intended. Five of the mentees took a second IDI test and two of these achieved spectacular improvements in their

scores, while the third was impressive. The smooth running of the placement is attributed to the mentor in several cases. Moreover, the Q Sort identifies one group that attributes much of their gain to a mentor that they identified for themselves (see below). In short, what evidence there is suggests an intervention at the positive end of the spectrum. However, the process difficulties involved suggest that much needs to be done to share this benefit more widely. It may be that the future for this intervention lies less with extensive training of designated mentors and rather more with briefing students on how to find and “manage” their own mentors.

It is not possible to identify polar outcomes with any confidence given the small number of beneficiaries. However, taking the limited data at face value suggests that it has the capacity to occupy the preferred quadrant.

#### ***Dev04***

The purpose of this intervention is to facilitate a reflective process that sensitises a student to the culture of the placement in to enable effective engagement or cultural competence rather than frustrations that fix a student at a lower stage of Deardoff’s model.

There are two elements to the intervention. Firstly each student will have access to a cultural mentor located at the work place. Ideally this will not be the student’s line manager but circumstances may not afford the ideal. Cultural mentors are given appropriate tools. Secondly the student will be expected to complete a reflective journal, ordinarily in their native language, choosing from ma variety of online entries. There is a target of 90 per cent access and posting every two weeks.

The process intervention is shown in Figure 5.

Process Intervention for WP04 - Students  
Communication Scenario for Intercultural Reflection

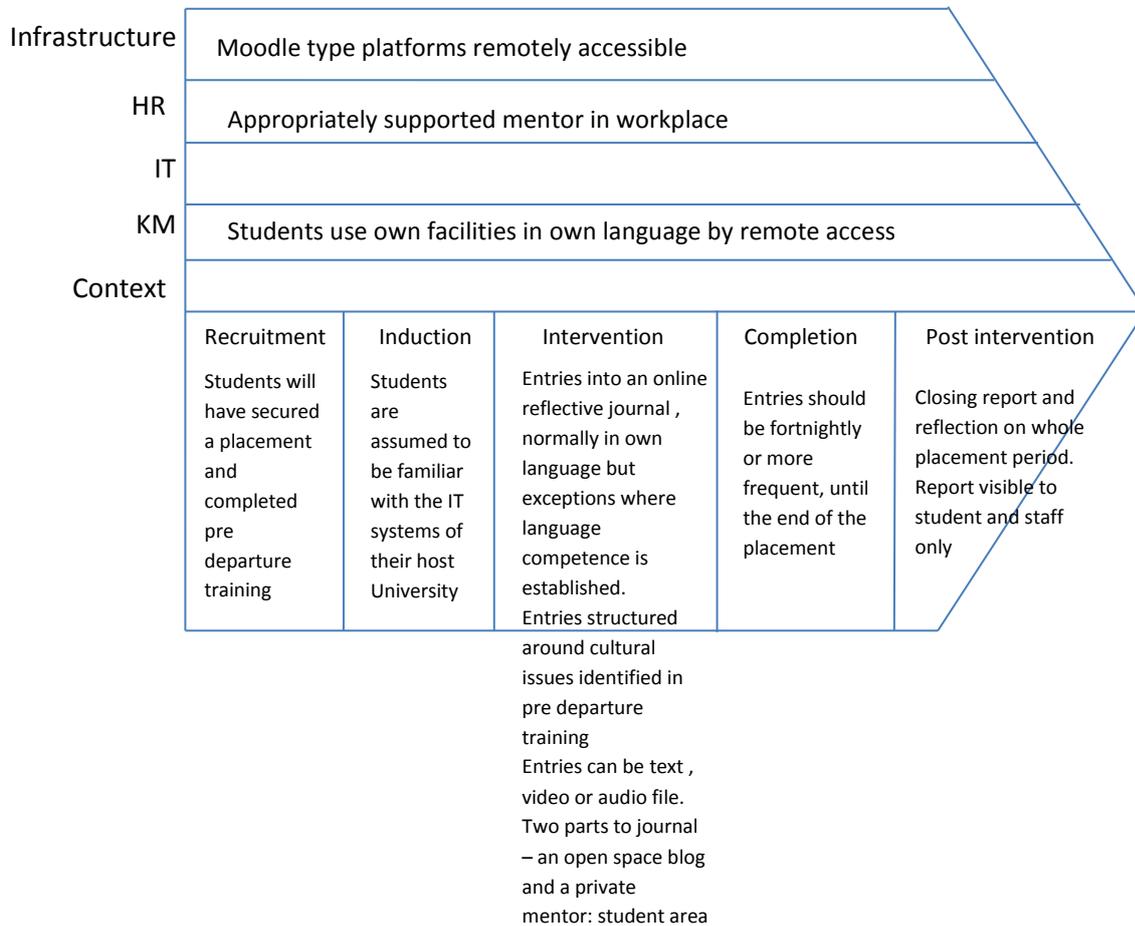


Figure 5 process intervention for DEV04.

The intervention has the explicit aims of:

- Improving verbal competence to articulate conditions of cultural assimilation, particularly stressful elements
- Identification of emotional and displacement issues
- Identification of clear skills gain in cultural adjustment

The polar outcome set for the intervention is shown in Table 13.

	Low levels of intercultural competence	Improving levels of intercultural competence
Weak levels of engagement	Interventions too weak to improve cultural competence Poor arrangements Not seen as priority on placement	Experience more important than interventions
Strong mentor engagement but weak reflection	Mentor relationship too directive Student not engaged with the issue	Difficult to assess – strong mentorship may leave less to reflect on
Weak mentor engagement but strong reflection	Local issues with relationship Particularly difficult issues	Effective intervention, student can learn
Strong levels of engagement	Process rather than purpose engagement	Effective intervention, Mentor and mentee can learn together

Table 13 Polar Outcomes for DEV 04

### ***Evaluation Instruments***

The key outcomes of the intervention should be evident in the public parts of the reflective log and the closing report. A qualitative estimate of the degrees of reflection and appropriate language would be relatively straightforward and could be collated through a simple pro forma completed for all, or a sample, of students on placement by the placement coordinator at each University. The procedural difficulties arise from the variety of languages and IT platforms in use, which may obscure an overview of all parts of the programme. Rather than, it may be that greater insights can be gleaned from either an online focus group or individual interviews with students identified by the University placement office as at the poles of achievement here.

The importance of this intervention in the wider process of gaining cultural competence can be estimated from the relevant questions in the Q sort instrument.

### ***Process and Impact Evaluation***

The interfection process requires both a stable, intuitive interface and willingness to reflect in a written medium. Both these were problematic on the programme.

The platform was hosted upon the VICARDIS platform. Although powerful in its own right, the interface appeared complicated to students and required the attention of the administrator. Few students persevered with it. Centres made alternative arrangements, such as email at SSU and Moodle at other Universities. Students also made their own arrangements – Spanish students created Facebook groups to maintain contact with other. In short, it would seem that simple solutions – email or Facebook Group, have advantages over more formal platforms.

These platform issues could not have encouraged students to be reflective online, but there were further issues. The reflective diary was to be in English, and some students resisted this, or simply did not have the necessary language skills to be reflective. Clearly on smaller, national projects this would not be the case. Moreover, in some cultures it is normal to reflect through dialogue rather than the written word – a preference particularly noted by those involved with Spanish students. This does not mean that such students will not be reflective in diaries but rather emphasise the role of mentoring in this part of the process.

In terms of impact, since much of benefit of the reflective log was to be obtained through discussion with a cultural mentor, it follows that the potential of this intervention was not fully explored by the programme. That said, student feedback suggests that although many students achieved some benefit from keeping the diaries, and found mentors, colleagues and academics to discuss issues with. However, the suggestion that the diary was more trouble than it was worth was accepted in the Q Sort test generally, and particularly by those with little direct interest in

cultural competences (as might be predicted). Those more motivated tended to rate it indifferently.

That said, a number of diaries have been examined and interpreted by a small team set up for the purpose. Once a sample of reflective diaries had been received from students that had completed the programme, three researchers met for three days to develop a protocol that would enable interpreters to infer both the stage of the student and their learning strategies. During the preparation of the schedule, several cases were analysed, jointly and independently, to ensure similarity of process. It is worth noting that the three researchers were of different nationalities – causing a further level of complication and intercultural reflection.

To illustrate the marker sought, and to evaluate this part of the programme, with participants in Denial, we would note that a student would simply not be able to grasp differences in cultural behaviours because they are neither aware of culture nor that it produces any differences. In other words, the participant would be oblivious to the cultural change in location. For example, one student working in a menagerie increasingly withdrew from the host culture and bonded with some of the animals.

The next stage is Defense, where students can either become very defensive regarding their own culture, elevating its qualities and deciding that all others are inferior or this reaction can be reversed and the student can perceive other cultures to be superior to their own and turn to being overly critical. In these entries, the incomprehension would be quite apparent as in the case of one student who comments on the superficiality of politeness in England, saying that when people need help the natives just walked by and she, a foreigner, had to help a man who had fallen. She called this “false politeness”.

The next step is Minimisation, which is the level where most of the participants of the SKILL2E project were developmentally before going on placement. At this stage, students strive to find the commonalities between cultures and tend to gloss over the differences. Here, phrases like: people are the same; this is just like in Spain, etc. The student’s behaviour seeks to minimise occasions where the host culture is radically different, by withdrawing when possible. For example, a Finnish

student found her work colleagues confusing and so sought peers that shared her existing predispositions.

In Acceptance, students begin to question the differences and feel a sense of confusion as they are not sure how to adapt this behaviour into their own cultural framework. At this stage, it is normal for students to ask questions like: Why do people here do these activities (such as personal grooming) so openly where in Spain this would be done more privately? And “How do I feel about doing these activities in public”? Similarly, a student in Spain began attending bullfights reluctantly, without much enjoyment initially, and reflected on the Spanish explanations for what she was predisposed to judge a cruel spectacle.

In the next step, Adaptation, students try to blend/adapt cultural frameworks and they try to see the world from other points of view albeit at times with some confusion and hesitation. It could be possible to see comments that reflect the student’s interest in incorporating actions or reflecting beliefs from the new culture into their own behaviour.

In the last step, Integration, the student would be able to understand, negotiate meaning and behaviours in intercultural situations appropriately for themselves and the recipient. At this stage, it would be possible for the student to interact confidently in cultural encounters.

In addition, the team were also interested in the degree of reflection at all stages, and used Argyris four stage learning model as discussed in DEV 02.

At typical denial stage student is shown in Table 14

## Denial

Student1 Austrian Engineer in Germany

	Denial	Defense	Minimisation	Acceptance	Adaptation and Integration
Stage 1					
Stage 2		Found the big city boring, too perfect, impersonal and cold, little or no culture, everything is over-priced and limited recreational facilities available			
Stage 3	Focuses on improving technical skills and non-technical ways of communicating with customers  Flexible working hours suits him				

	<p>perfectly</p> <p>Worries about being part of the team was immediately dismissed as he was easily integrated</p> <p>Appreciates open communication</p> <p>Focuses on meeting performance expectations</p>				
Stage 4	<p>The student met his own personal goals and found the placement very successful and would work for the same firm again. No cultural differences were noticed except for the “anonymity” in the big city.</p>				

Table 14 Denial Stage Student

This student does not demonstrate any reflections at a higher stage - all entries occur in the defence /denial part of the continuum, and most concern technical aspects of the work. The student does not articulate any reflections of differences in culture. On the one hand, one could infer that the cultural differences between Austria and Germany are small, and therefore do not prompt the double loop problem solving routines. However, such an answer ignores the student’s attribution of cultural issues to “the city” rather than himself. The result is the withdrawal of the student from his host environment into the safer work place routines based around technology and team goals. There are no cultural reflections as such, consequently there is little to identify in stage four – other than new reasons for cultural disengagement.

The analysis for a student at a greater level of analysis is shown in Table 15.

**Minimisation**

Spanish Teacher in Italy

	Denial	Defense	Minimisation	Acceptance	Adaptation and Integration
Stage 1			Assumes that the language and the customs are similar enough.	Has an episode on the bus that showed how courtesy towards the elderly is important in Rome.	
Stage 2			Realizes that the food, for example selections of bread and cheese, are	He proceeds to incorporate this courteous act in his daily	

			much bigger in Italy.	routine as upon reflection decides that it's "a good thing".	
Stage 3			Observes that double kissing on greeting someone needs to follow a different order otherwise he would end up kissing people on the lips accidentally! He makes the appropriate change.		
Stage 4			Muses on the fashion of men waxing their eyebrows and spends some time deliberating whether or not to do it himself. He also notes the degree of formality in dressing and makes some changes to "blend in".		

Table 15 Minimisation Stage Student

All the student's entries are in acceptance and adaptation. This student makes a great effort to fit in – not just at work but in day to day interactions – on the bus for example. His reflections are not deep – he questions very little – but is open to experience and thinks about changes to his behaviour, politeness, clothes and even eyebrow waxing appears on his list of possibilities.

Although quite reflective and open, his changing mental models at stage 4 are geared towards making himself invisible, at a superficial level, at least. He does not report that his foreign clothes and so on cause him problems at work, although given that that he is a teacher, this may be the case.

The small evaluation team was struck by the relationship between degree of reflection) and cultural competence. Students with low degrees of reflection tended to keep factual, non-reflective accounts of activities, frequently dwelling upon work based processes (particularly when these were challenging or done rather well). Higher levels of competence tended to contain more thoughtful, self-aware entries. There was no observable tendency to move from one category to another, in the main, but this may be due to the short duration of the placement rather than absence of a cultural mentor. This result is consistent with the relatively small increases and decreases in IDI scores discussed above. That said, it was clear to the evaluation team that a cultural mentor, of any origin, would have been invaluable. For example, one student was mystified that speed in processing customers could be interpreted as rudeness, and rather attributed the stately pace of her colleagues to laziness.

In summary, this evidence suggests that the potential for reflective diaries is large – particularly for those not engaged by the idea of cultural competence. To achieve its potential, the diaries must be part of a concurrent reflective process. Where the student can provide this himself or herself, the diary shows a clarification of thought and identification of cultural issues. This outcome is consistent with the most favoured cells in Table 13 and, at least, validates the intention. Where the student is not reflective, a tendency quite striking in students at the denial / defence stages, a mentor is required. Although a cultural mentor as defined and trained according to the methods derived in this project is clearly ideal, much could still be achieved through such processes as Socratic dialogue to facilitate the reflective elements of the process. These outcomes are consistent with cells pertaining to weak mentorship in Table 12.

### **DEV05**

The enterprise handbook is conceived to be harnessed as an instructional tool providing procedural orientations and practical guidelines for employers offering international student placements.

Briefly put, it structured around three interconnected layers:

- the first layer outlines a step-by-step procedure for managing international placements describing action points to follow from the initial contact and selection of an international placement (culture-bound welcoming and introductions, company presentation, newly-joined team presentation, etc.) to ensuring accommodation, cultural mentoring, post-placement follow up activities, etc.;
- the second layer sets out drafting standards and principles for well-written, practical forms such as Placement Offers, International Job Offers, Internship Topic Descriptions, Monitoring Sheets, Post-Placement Reporting Sheets that companies need to be able produce in order to attract the best international students, supervise their performance or recruit employees from overseas;
- the third layer provides clarifications and recommendations for all aspects related to international placements and to maintaining post-placement contact with foreign interns; additionally, it describes further applications of the handbook such as managing expatriates and staff interacting with international customers or peers.

Process Intervention for WPO5 Enterprise Handbook

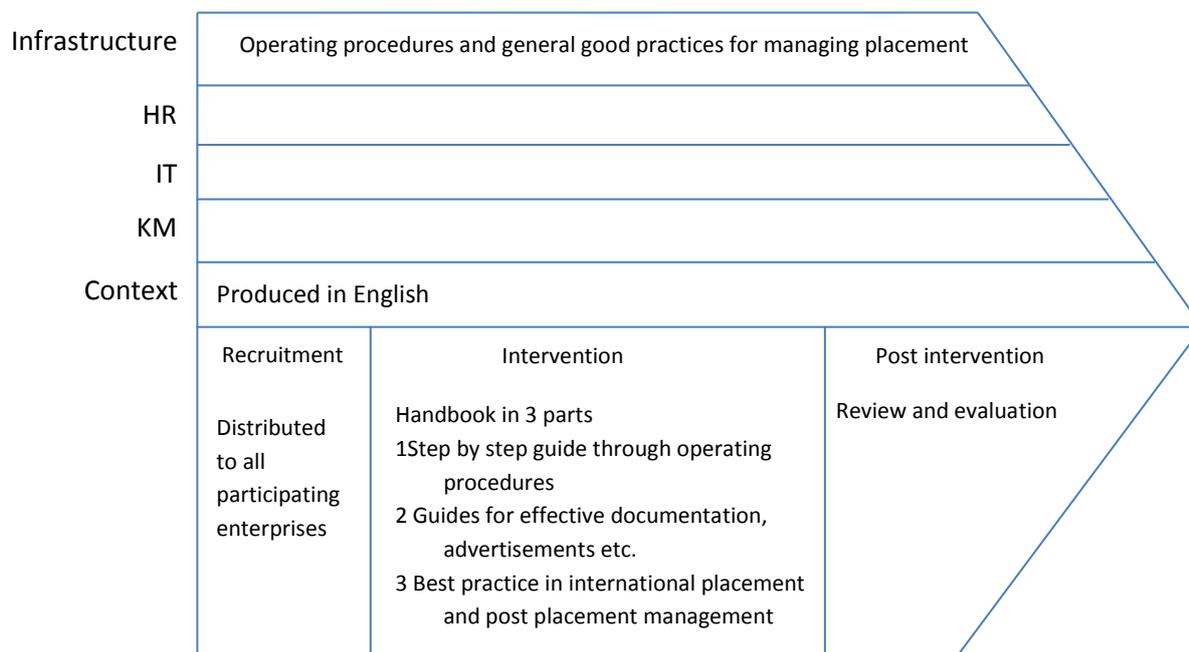


Figure 6 Outcomes for Enterprise Handbook

**Evaluation of Enterprise Handbook**

This intervention is overtly intermediate in that it seeks to assist students achieve greater cultural awareness indirectly by actions upon the enterprises directly. This evaluation process can improve our understanding of the intervention by assessing both its utility in assisting the smooth and effective management of the placement and the impact this has on the student experience – as outlined in Table 16 below:

	Placement unsuitable or poorly managed	Placement suitable and smoothly running
Handbook not helpful an enterprise	Content or presentation ineffective in management of placement	Redundancy – enterprise already has adequate experience
Handbook helpful to enterprise	Missing or incorrect content or stronger intervention needed	Handbook achieves its objectives, enterprise learns to improve

Table 16 Polar Outcome Positions for the Enterprise Handbook

The usefulness of the enterprise handbook can be assessed through the research instrument used to assess the cultural mentoring process since it will be delivered in large part through the same agencies. The smooth organisation of the placement will not be directly picked up from the instruments based upon the students' reflection on the placement, but particularly common or interesting issues might be inferred from some of the entries. The Q sorting instrument used to assess the student placement experience will include statements concerning the key stages of placement, which will identify the degree to which the issue is of concern to the students within the bundle of experiences that constitute the placement.

### ***Evaluation***

Although expected to be one of the more straightforward elements of the programme, the production and use of the handbook was complex. Early drafts revealed strong intercultural preferences between partners and enterprises. Some cultures preferred well specified, detailed instructions while others found these somewhat burdensome and intrusive. Throughout the programme the document was continually revised to find a compromise between these two poles. At this stage, the material is undergoing further revision and feedback will be sought from enterprises when complete. It may be that the handbook distributed to enterprises will be supported by more detailed text.

### ***Evaluation Instruments***

#### **Student Experience Instrument**

In many ways the overall evaluation of the student experience of SKILL2E could be assessed by traditional Likert style questionnaires. This evaluation rejects this approach for two key reasons. Firstly, Skill2e consists of a number of interventions (DEV01-05) with the intention of taking a cohort of students through an intercultural journey through several stages. To put it another way, the success of the project would be revealed by a narrative of change rather than the supposedly formal responses captured by Likert style questions. Secondly, since cohort numbers may be small,

Students will have secured a placement and completed pre departure training

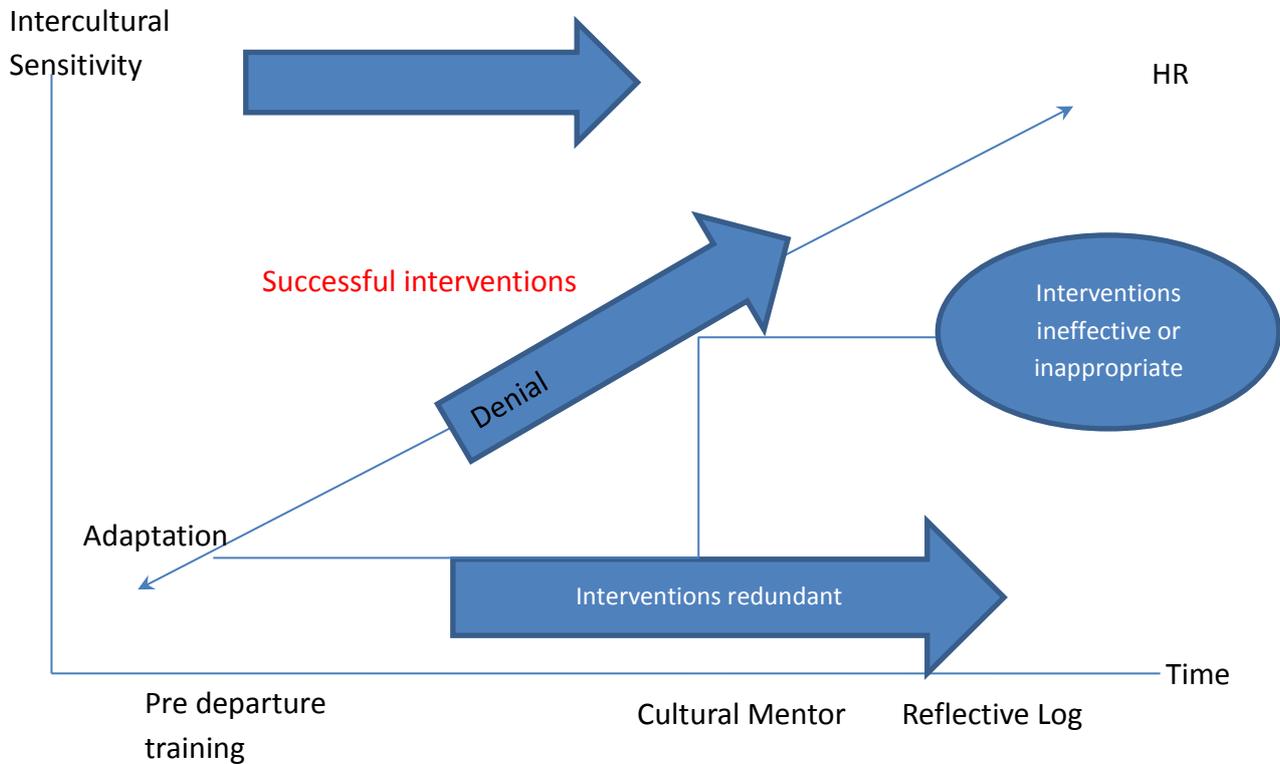


Figure 7 Expected Trajectory of Placement Students

and the diversity of experiences very wide, it may be that the promise of statistical inference is not met by the Likert approach. Consequently this evaluation opts for the use Q Methodology.

In this case, the students will be required to arrange statements about their experiences into a forced distribution – indicating strong agreement or disagreement. This forcing tends to amplify similarities and differences when contrasted with Likert scales. When responses are compared statistically it is possible to identify common clusters or types of experience. It is the resulting typology of student experience groups that allow interventions to be refined in the wider context

The evaluation team speculate groups of similar students may be clustered around the trajectory of the Intercultural Development Continuum and illustrate the relationship between the interventions and the outcomes in terms of common types. This would enable faster improvement

and development of interventions than attempting to take averages or benchmarks from Likert style instruments, although this would be possible.

The hierarchy of statements held commonly within each group would give clear indications of what was working, and from whom. This would enable the Skill2e to hypothesise interventions more carefully targeted at deficiencies, and to promote best practice.

The statements taken for the Q sorting exercise are listed in Table 17 below. The current 33 statements are taken from the process intervention charts in DEV 06 and descriptions of interventions in DEV 01 through to DEV04. The number of statements is acceptable although fewer than normal in a Q Sort (that is, it is possible to add further statements without risking the research instrument).

No	Statement	WP	Explanation
1	I put a great deal of my own time into learning about my placement culture before I left	All	Helps place an initial condition
2	I found the cultural elements of the placement more rewarding than the work elements	All	Explores perceived value
3	I think that the programme has enhanced my respect and interest in the culture I experienced on placement	All	Deadorff Objective
4	The programme has helped me improve my inter cultural awareness and sensitivity	All	Deadorff Objective
5	The programme has helped me improve my communication skills when working with people from a different cultural background	All	Deadorff Objective

6	The programme has helped me to empathise with colleagues from different cultures	All	Deadorff Objective
7	Before I did the idi and pre departure training, the idea of cultural competence and sensitivity had not really occurred to me	DEV 01,02	Helps to place an initial condition
8	The idi and pre departure training made me think about the culture I was going to for my placement in a different way	DEV 01,02	Helps to place an initial condition
9	When I completed my idi and pre departure training I thought that I was better prepared to understand my placement culture	DEV 01,02	This pair allow the training programme effectiveness to be assessed ex post and ex ante
10	When my placement was completed I realised that my idi and pre departure training had made a significant difference to my skill in adapting to my placement culture	DEV 01,02	This pair allow the training programme effectiveness to be assessed ex post and ex ante
11	I think that others learned more from the idi and pre departure training than I did	DEV 01,02	Helps place a respondent within their peer group
12	I found the results of my initial idi test to be unsettling	DEV 01.02	Explores impact of idi – prompted by trainer observations
13	The pace of the pre departure training programme should be quicker	DEV 02	Explores a variation in programme delivery

14	Following the pre departure training I was not expecting to need much help from my cultural mentor	DEV 02,03	Explores continuity of interventions
15	The cultural mentor helped me to adjust to the culture of the firm	DEV 03	Direct exploration of intervention outcome
16	Regular meetings with the cultural mentor helped me to adjust	DEV 03	Direct exploration of intervention outcome
17	I was able to meet with my cultural mentor whenever it was necessary for me	DEV 03	Direct exploration of intervention outcome and process
19	The cultural mentor and I established a good working relationship	DEV 03	Direct exploration of intervention outcome and process
20	I found that I was too busy at work to think much about the cultural issues	DEV 03,04	Explores management and perceived value issues
21	The cultural mentor helped me identify or understand issues when there were misunderstanding over values	DEV 03	Direct exploration of intervention outcome
22	The cultural mentor helped me identify or understand issues of politeness and working behaviour on placement	DEV 03	Direct exploration of intervention outcome
23	The first meetings with the cultural mentor were helpful	DEV 03	Explores the temporal impact of the intervention
24	I found that I needed the cultural mentor less as the placement developed	DEV 03	Explores the temporal impact of the intervention
25	I found that I learned more about the culture from work colleagues and acquaintances than the cultural mentor	DEV 03	Explores cultural assimilation as a network relationship as well as mentor mentee relationship

26	I found it helpful to keep a reflective log of my cultural adjustment	DEV 04	Explores impact of intervention directly
27	I have learned to better describe my feeling about cultural assimilation through using the reflective log	DEV 04	Explores impact of intervention directly
28	Reflecting on culture in a log took I time that I could have spent more productively	DEV 04	Explores value added
29	The reflective log has helped me understand when a problem is due to culture and when it is not	DEV 04	Explores impact of intervention directly
30	I found the reflective log more helpful as the placement progressed	DEV04	Temporises value of intervention
31	The private areas of my reflective log are quite different from the public parts	DEV 04	Explores the veracity of the log
32	Keeping a reflective log has helped me learn to empathise with cultures I may have to work with in future	DEV 04	Explores impact of intervention directly
33	The programme has helped me see and tackle recurring incidents with a wider cultural perspective	Dev 04, 02	Tries to capture single double loop learning ideals

Table 17 Q Sort Statements

The statements are sorted by students online – there are several academic suppliers that will both host the exercise and complete the statistical analysis to identify the typology. Students will also provide background material about themselves although the exercise is usually anonymous or at least the data does not identify individual students.

### ***Enterprise Evaluation Instrument***

The effectiveness of the initial arrangements (Dev03) and the handbook (Dev05) can be achieved by a straightforward Likert style questionnaire instrument to be completed by the cultural mentor on behalf of the enterprise.

C2C

### ***University Placement***

The effectiveness of the arrangements for pre departure training (Dev 01,02) can be carried out by a straightforward Likert style questionnaire to be completed by the placement officer

C2C

### ***Cultural Reflection Instrument***

This is perhaps the most complicated intervention to evaluate. A pro forma instrument will be used to identify two groups, one reflective and the other not, from the public parts of the online reflection and final report. Either an online focus group or individual interviews will be used to gain greater insights into the working of the process.

### ***Evaluation of the Student Experience***

### ***Methodology***

Q methodology is a technique for exploring viewpoints on a topic. It gathers the opinions of many individuals on an issue and subjects these responses to factor analysis. This statistical technique correlates the data and allows statistically distinct shared perspectives to be identified. In Q participants are given a number of statements and are usually asked to sort these on the basis of how much they agree or disagree with each statement.

### ***Participants***

Following their skill2e work placements students were asked to complete the Q-Sort evaluation online. 24 responses were received. This is within the bounds necessary for Q Sort to work reliably.

### **Q sorting**

Participants were first required to sort the statements into three groups, indicating their agreement with each of the statements (Agreed; Disagree; Neutral). Then they were asked to sort the statements from strongly agree (+5), to strongly disagree (-5), in a quasi-normal distribution, meaning that fewer statements are placed at the extremes of the continuum. Following the sorting, participants were asked to comment on those statements about which they had the strongest views. The Q sort procedure was conducted online using FlashQ (Hackert and Braehler, 2007)

### **IV. Analysis**

Factor analysis is used to summarise the unique viewpoints of each individual into a smaller number of perspectives (factors), which represent common or shared viewpoints.

Analysis of the data was performed using PQMethod (Schmolck and Atkinson, 2002), the software widely recommended and used by other Q practitioners. Once the scores against each statement were entered, on a participant by participant basis, correlations were calculated between sorts. Factors were then extracted from this correlation matrix; an analysis that helps rationalise the various value choices made by participants based upon them placing statements against similar scores.

Centroid factor analysis (CFA) was used to identify the factors (shared viewpoints). Although the factor analysis is a purely statistical technique the researcher must make a judgement regarding the best 'solution' in terms of the number of factors to interpret. Webler, Danielson and Tuler (2009) identify four criteria that should be used in determining the factors: simplicity, clarity, distinctness and stability.

A four factor solution was chosen because this loaded at least three participants onto each factor (viewpoint), accounting for 46% of the variance with 18 of the 24 participants loading onto these four factors. Varimax rotation was used, rather than hand rotation, as this is a purely mathematical rotation of the factors that maximises the differences between them, rather than something based upon a theoretical or judgemental consideration.

Following factor analysis the shared viewpoints are presented as narratives based on the statements with which each group expressed the strongest opinions and on those statements which distinguish the factors most clearly.

## V. Results and Interpretation

The results of the factor analysis are shown in Table 18.

Participant	ID	Factor			
		1	2	3	4
1	skill15	0.2630	-0.0868	-0.1118	<b>0.7496</b>
2	skill17	-0.0939	0.3014	<b>0.3820</b>	0.0950
3	skill20	<b>0.5590</b>	-0.0734	0.3492	0.3598
4	skill21	0.1664	-0.0993	0.1433	<b>0.8463</b>
5	skill22	-0.1248	-0.1626	0.0668	<b>0.4416</b>
6	skill23	0.1634	<b>0.4008</b>	0.1056	-0.0563
7	skill31	<b>0.6360</b>	0.3745	0.1663	0.0080
8	skill33	-0.0237	0.3652	-0.1836	<b>0.4604</b>
9	skill34	0.1250	-0.2650	0.3215	<b>0.6514</b>
10	skill35	0.4610	0.3104	0.0518	-0.5006
11	skill36	<b>0.6264</b>	0.2823	-0.0311	-0.2911
12	skill37	-0.1402	0.0003	0.4169	<b>0.4803</b>
13	skill40	0.0859	0.4128	<b>0.7966</b>	0.0852
14	skill41	0.3934	0.3499	0.2453	0.3769
15	skill42	0.1324	0.0439	<b>0.5028</b>	-0.0516
16	skill44	-0.1260	0.1372	0.0339	<b>0.5010</b>
17	skill45	0.0263	<b>0.6897</b>	-0.0630	-0.1106
18	skill47	0.0466	-0.1206	<b>0.7917</b>	0.2808

<b>19</b>	skill48	0.0874	0.3786	0.3740	0.1658
<b>20</b>	skill50	0.0485	0.3220	0.0983	-0.0197
<b>21</b>	skill51	0.3887	0.1382	0.3210	0.3132
<b>22</b>	skill58	0.3106	-0.0711	-0.1275	0.0049
<b>23</b>	skill59	0.0247	<b>0.6996</b>	-0.0161	-0.1230
<b>24</b>	skill60	0.3177	0.0821	<b>-0.5631</b>	0.1440
<b>% Variance</b>					
<b>Explained</b>		9	10	12	14

Table 18. Factor analysis scores for the four extracted factors against each of the sorts competed. Bold type indicates sorts that load onto the respective factor (defining sorts).

### ***Consensus***

The analysis identified four shared viewpoints which were statistically distinct from each other. Nevertheless, there were two statements that none of the groups differed on statistically. These statements did not elicit any strength of opinion from any of the perspectives:

The cultural mentor (or colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) helped me to adjust to the culture of my placement organisation. (S8; +1, +2, 0, +1). The private reflections in my reflective log were quite different from the public reflections. (S17; +2, -1, -1, -1).

### ***Interpretation of Factors***

The interpretation of each factor is based on the statements with which participants loading onto this factor most agree (+5 & +4), most disagree (-5 & -4) and those statements that distinguish the factor from the other factors (these distinguishing statements and are indicated by (D)).

### ***Group 1 The Pilgrims***

Group 1 were aware of cultural differences before the programme, indeed learning about new cultures seems to have been a major motivation. The group do not particularly acknowledge

interventions, and find that work does not displace their cultural activities nor did misunderstandings tarnish the placement experience.

The group acknowledges that the placement has improved their cultural competences and increased their appetite for working abroad in future. They are clear that skill2e interventions, in retrospect, were valuable.

There is inevitably a degree of redundancy in some of the interventions here. This group, regardless of their starting point, had the awareness and desire to succeed in gaining intercultural competence.

3 participants load onto this group, which explains 9% of the variance.

AGREE: After completing the placement, I think that my cultural competence in my placement country is now stronger. (S23; +5) (D). I am more excited about working abroad and internationally now than I was at the beginning of the training and placement. (S27; +5) (D). I found the cultural elements of the placement more rewarding than the work elements. (S15; +4) (D). After completing the placement I think I am more competent to quickly adapt to any new cultures abroad. (S24; +4) (D)

DISAGREE: Cultural competence did not matter to me at the start of the placement. (S13; -5). I found that cultural misunderstandings spoiled the placement for me. (S28; -5). Before I did the IDI and pre departure training, the ideas of cultural competence and sensitivity had not really occurred to me. (S1; -4). I found that I was too busy at work to think much about the cultural issues and cultural competence. (S14; -4)

### ***Group 2 The Converts***

This group acknowledges the importance of skill2e interventions in preparing for and enhancing the experience of the placement. Cultural mentors, or a colleague, are acknowledged as important. This group put considerable efforts into their own preparation and IDI and predeparture training seen as significant, both pre departure and upon subsequent reflection. The group did not find that work displaced reflection on cultural issues

Such implicit criticism of skill2e interventions as the short length of pre departure training and unsettling idi tests are rejected.

AGREE: Regular meetings with the cultural mentor (or interactions with colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) helped me to adjust quickly to the country of my placement. (S9; +5) (D). The cultural mentor (or colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) helped me identify or understand issues when there were misunderstandings over values. (S18; +5) (9). I was able to meet with my cultural mentor (or some other colleague if you did not have a formal mentor), whenever I needed help. (S10; +4). The first meetings with the cultural mentor (or work colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) were helpful. (S20; +4).

DISAGREE: The IDI and pre departure training changed the way I thought about the culture I was going to for my placement. (S2; -5). When my placement was completed I realised that my IDI and pre departure training had made a significant difference to my skill in adapting to my placement culture. (S4; -4). I found that cultural misunderstandings spoiled the placement for me. (S28; -4). I think that more pre departure training would have helped me. (S29; -5) (D).

### **Group 3 The Mentees**

This group are fulsome in their appreciation of the role of cultural mentors – or colleagues – in developing cultural competences, both in content and arrangements. The group are clear that they obtained little benefit from IDI and pre departure training and were clear that more would not help. The group do not think that their placement was spoiled by cultural misunderstandings.

3 participants load onto Group 2 which explains 10% of the variance.

AGREE: I was able to meet with my cultural mentor (or some other colleague if you did not have a formal mentor), whenever I needed help. (S10; +5). When I completed my IDI and pre departure training I thought that I was better prepared to understand my placement culture. (S3; +5) (D).

When my placement was completed I realised that my IDI and pre departure training had made a

significant difference to my skill in adapting to my placement culture. (S4; +4). I put a great deal of my own time into learning about my placement culture before I left. (S5; +4) (D)

DISAGREE: The pace of the pre departure training programme should be quicker. (S7; -5) (D). I found that I was too busy at work to think much about the cultural issues and cultural competence. (S14; -5). I found the results of my initial IDI test to be unsettling. (S16; -4) (D). I think that other students learned more from the IDI and pre departure training than I did. (S6; -4)

5 participants load onto Factor 3 which explains 12% of the variance.

#### **Group 4 The Disinterested**

The group were not interested in cultural competence at the start of the project, but claim that their inter cultural skills are now stronger. However, all of the skill2e interventions are rejected as unhelpful in this respect.

The group state frequently that cultural differences are relatively small or that there were no cultural misunderstandings in the countries they visited. In some cases this assumption may be justified:

Student	Home	Placement
15	-	-
21	Germany	UK
22	Finland	UK
33	Finland	Switzerland
34	Finland	Sweden
37	Finland	Finland
44	Austria	Germany

Table 19 Placement of Disinterested Group

The group, by accident or design, appear to have reduced the possibility of cultural displacement by taking placements where such shocks might be thought minimal. All members of the group have initial IDI DO scores below the median, and all but one in the lower quartile. The one

exception, student 33, also has a gap in the lower quartile, while all other members of Group are counted in the upper quartile.

Reviewing the reflective diary of several participants, they exhibit cultural displacement. For example, student 22 expresses continual surprise at the slow work pace, excessive politeness and refusal to use English of staff at her workplace.

In short, it is possible to view this group as entry level in terms of international cultural adjustment. They frequently take strategies were such problems may be minimal, and do not acknowledge such issues as being inter cultural when they do arise. Such strategies as politeness, humour and hard work are offered in compensation. Skill2e interventions were not successful in raising sensitivity of these issues in advance of the placement or through its duration. Consequently it is little surprise that where a second was taken, scores had generally risen little and, in one case, had actually fallen. However, much encouragement can be taken from the result that students are generally more excited about working overseas than they were at the start (see question 27 below)

7 participants load onto Group 4 which explains % of the variance.

AGREE: Cultural competence did not matter to me at the start of the placement. (S13; +5) (D). I found the reflective log to be more effort than it was worth. (S26; +5). The pace of the pre departure training programme should be quicker. (S7; +4) (D). After completing the placement, I think that my cultural competence in my placement country is now stronger. (S23; +4).

DISAGREE: I found that cultural misunderstandings spoiled the placement for me. (S28; -5). I think that more pre departure training would have helped me. (S29; -5). When my placement was completed I realised that my IDI and pre departure training had made a significant difference to my skill in adapting to my placement culture. (S4; -4). The first meetings with the cultural mentor (or work colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) were helpful. (S20; -4) (D).

### Concluding Remarks

SKILL2E was conceived as a series of interventions that would lead to a gain in intercultural competence for students on an overseas work placement. Although the interventions themselves were designed meticulously, the delivery was far from universal across the interventions and centers. In part, this was due to the heterogeneity of students, colleges and enterprises committed to the project. The pattern of delivery is shown in Table 20 below. Other issues have been discussed above and in more detail in the relevant Work Pack. It is important to note that many of the difficulties observed were caused, in part, by the need to offer a common programme and schedule, and subsequent projects and deliveries will be able to overcome these issues, to a considerable degree, by flexible, local contingencies.

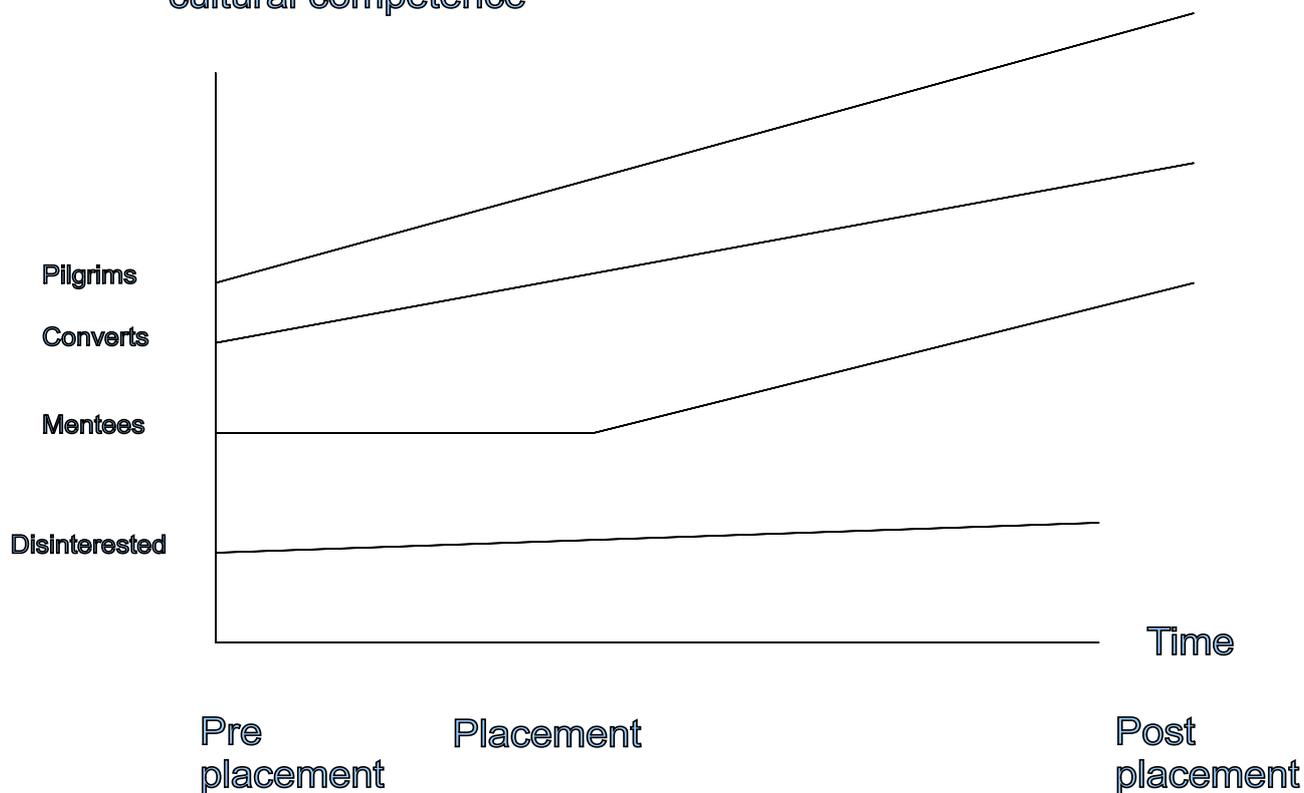
Clearly the uneven delivery makes evaluation more than a little problematical.

Institution	No. of students who did 1st IDI Test	No. of students who attended pre-departure training	No. of students who had cultural mentoring during placement	No. of students who did 2nd IDI	No. of students who have completed the SKILL2E interventions
Fachhochschule Salzburg	45	27	0	3	0
Universidad de Alicante	15	15	0	5	0
ARCADA	19	19	none	none	none
Southampton Solent University	15	15	none	5	none
Mugla University	11	13	2	2	2
Universitatea Politehnica din Timisoara	3	12	3	3	3

Table 20 Interventions by Centre

Students undertake an overseas placement for a variety of reasons. This programme focuses on only one of key benefits, that of cultural competence. However there is no reason to suppose that

### Sensitivity to inter cultural competence



students are so focused – indeed it would be surprising if it were given the intensity of the experience in many cases. The evaluation shows that that students do not believe that cultural

Figure 7 Sensitivity to Cultural Competence.

misunderstanding spoiled the placement experience (see question 28 below) and, in general, their enthusiasm for overseas work is not diminished (see question 27 below).

The evaluation suggests that three different groups of students have gained a greater sensitivity to intercultural competence and, given the short duration of the placement, this is perhaps all that could be reasonably expected in the main. A fourth group began with little interest, and, at best, made some marginal improvements.

The data supports an interpretation regarding the trajectory of sensitivity, given in the Figure below.

Figure 6 indicated the expected trajectory of students following the SKILL2E work placement. Figure 7 above represents the interpretations of the evaluation team at the close of the project. The evidence can be interpreted to suggest that the training interventions were generally appreciated by the Pilgrim group, that is, those with a predisposition to engage with the development of intercultural competences. In particular the retrospective acknowledgement of the value interventions is encouraging. The greatest impact of the interventions is probably upon the converts group who, having little predisposition towards intercultural competences nonetheless engaged with it and acknowledge the importance of the interventions. The mentees group did not seem to be influenced by the early stages of the project, but through cultural mentors or the discovery of mentees while on placement, the key messages were picked up along the way. The disinterested, at early stages of intercultural competence, were insensitive to intercultural competences and thus did not learn much. That said, the indications are that they would be willing to travel for work again and, with more adventurous placements, may come to see its value in time. In this instance, the SKILL2E programme would seem a small. But important confidence building step towards cultural competence.

In summary, the interventions working together or in combination can be shown to have the benefits that were expected through the literature review and framework building during the development stage of the SKILL2E programme. Further work needs be done on integrating the results of the two IDI tests with the qualitative evaluation of the placement experience through interfection. Similarly, there are opportunities to consider a more flexible, interactive delivery of the pre departure training. Further, given the importance of mentoring, it is necessary to reconsider how these benefits can be delivered when a formally appointed and trained cultural mentor is not available.

## VI. APPENDIX A

Factor Q-Sort values for all statements

STATEMENT	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
1. Before I did the IDI and pre departure training, the ideas of cultural competence and sensitivity had not really occurred to me.	-4	-3	-2	2
2. The IDI and pre departure training changed the way I thought about the culture I was going to for my placement.	0	0	-5	-3
3. When I completed my IDI and pre departure training I thought that I was better prepared to understand my placement culture.	0	5	1	-1
4. When my placement was completed I realised that my IDI and pre departure training had made a significant difference to my skill in adapting to my placement culture.	3	4	-4	-4
5. I put a great deal of my own time into learning about my placement culture before I left.	-2	4	-1	-3
6. I think that other students learned more from the IDI and pre departure training than I did.	-3	-4	-1	2
7. The pace of the pre departure training programme should be	-2	-5	-2	4

quicker.

8. The cultural mentor (or colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) helped me to adjust to the culture of my placement organisation.	1	2	0	1
9. Regular meetings with the cultural mentor (or interactions with colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) helped me to adjust quickly to the country of my placement.	-1	1	5	-3
10. I was able to meet with my cultural mentor (or some other colleague if you did not have a formal mentor), whenever I needed help.	1	5	4	1
11. The cultural mentor, (or a colleague if you did not have a designated mentor) and I established a good working relationship that helped me become more culturally competent.	0	2	3	0
12. I found that as the placement developed I needed less help from my cultural mentor or colleagues in developing my cultural competence.	-2	0	2	2
13. Cultural competence did not matter to me at the start of the placement.	-5	1	-3	5
14. I found that I was too busy at work to think much about the cultural issues and cultural competence.	-4	-5	2	3
15. I found the cultural elements of the placement more rewarding than the work elements.	4	-2	-3	1

16. I found the results of my initial IDI test to be unsettling.	-1	-4	0	-2
17. The private reflections in my reflective log were quite different from the public reflections.	2	-1	-1	-1
18. The cultural mentor (or colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) helped me identify or understand issues when there were misunderstandings over values.	0	-3	5	0
19. The cultural mentor (or colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) helped me identify or understand issues of politeness and general work behaviour on placement.	3	3	3	0
20. The first meetings with the cultural mentor (or work colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor) were helpful.	3	0	4	-4
21. Following the pre departure training I did not expect to need much help from my cultural mentor (or colleagues if you did not have a designated mentor).	2	0	0	3
22. On most days there were events and incidents that made me reflect on my cultural competence.	2	-2	1	-2
23. After completing the placement, I think that my cultural competence in my placement country is now stronger.	5	-1	2	4
24. After completing the placement I think I am more competent to quickly adapt to any new cultures abroad.	4	1	1	0

25. The reflective log helped me to think about issues and experiences that would have been forgotten otherwise.	-1	3	-2	-2
26. I found the reflective log to be more effort than it was worth.	1	-1	3	5
27. I am more excited about working abroad and internationally now than I was at the beginning of the training and placement.	5	2	0	3
28. I found that cultural misunderstandings spoiled the placement for me.	-5	-2	-4	-5
29. I think that more pre departure training would have helped me.	-3	-3	-5	-5
30. I found it helpful to stay in touch with other students that completed the IDI and pre departure training with me (using Facebook, for example).	-3	3	-3	-1

#### IV. Bibliography

Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (2004). Realistic Evaluation. In: S. Matthieson (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Evaluation*. Newbury Park: Sage.