

# HOSTING ACROSS CULTURES: FROM AWARENESS TO EMPATHY AND EFFECTIVE ACTION

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**LIUC**  
The Business University

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**International Staff Week: 4-Day Interactive Workshop**  
**“Hosting Across Cultures: From Awareness to Empathy and Effective Action”**

**Approach:** Experiential learning, reflection, embodied awareness, storytelling, group dialogue

**Core objectives:**

- Increase awareness of one’s own cultural habits and attitudes
- Improve communication between students and international staff
- Manage complex intercultural student situations more effectively
- Develop empathy and active listening

**Overall outcomes:**

Participants leave with practical tools and shared insights into how culture shapes communication, belonging, and partnerships — not merely that “differences exist,” but how to *notice, interpret, and navigate* them with empathy and effectiveness

 **Monday Session 1, 10.15 – 13.00 : Culture Begins with Me: Self-awareness and cultural lenses**

**Learning outcomes**

- Recognize that everyone has cultural habits, assumptions, and emotional signatures
- Become conscious of one’s “autopilot” behaviours and invisible values
- Appreciate the difference between intention and perception

**Activities**

- Icebreaker: “When I first realised I was different...” (paired storytelling)
- Visual mapping: *Cultural Iceberg* or *Lens metaphor* — not to categorise but to reveal hidden influences
- Reflection: “My Cultural Comfort Zone” — moments of ease vs. tension
- Input: *Culture as dynamic meaning-making*, not as nationality; links to predictive brain & bias awareness
- Journaling prompt: *How does my background shape how I host and support others?*

 **Monday Session 2, 14.00 - 16.00 : Listening Beyond Words: Communication as co-creation of meaning**

**Learning outcomes**

- Recognize how tone, silence, timing, and emotion shape understanding
- Practise deep listening and noticing one’s internal reactions
- Explore how context and relationship define “effective” communication

**Activities**

- Warm-up: “Guess the emotion” using non-verbal cues
- Triads: *Speaker–Listener–Observer* active-listening rotations
- Reflection: physiological signals when listening — heart rate, breath, posture
- Mini-input: the neuroscience of listening and mirror neurons
- Group dialogue: what helps me feel heard? what shuts me down?
- Application: redesigning a real email or message to increase clarity and empathy

 **Tuesday Session 3, 09.30 - 12.30 : Navigating Uncertainty and Complexity: Managing intercultural and emotional complexity**

**Learning outcomes**

- Identify how uncertainty, stress, or emotional triggers affect intercultural situations
- Practise curiosity and perspective-taking instead of quick judgment
- Use simple frameworks to analyse and de-escalate misunderstandings

**Activities**

- Simulation 1: “The Misunderstood Meeting” (ambiguous scenario)
- Reflection tool: D.I.V.E. (Describe, Interpret, Verify, Evaluate) — framed as curiosity steps, not analysis
- Mini-input: “The brain on threat and safety” — amygdala hijack, vagus nerve, parasympathetic reset
- Micro-practice: 1-minute breathing reset before responding

 **Tuesday Session 4, 14.00 – 16.00: Navigating Uncertainty and Complexity: Managing intercultural and emotional complexity cont’d**

**Learning outcomes**

- Use simple frameworks to analyse and de-escalate misunderstandings

**Activities**

- Simulation 2: shared group scenario/s
- Group synthesis: protocols for pausing and reframing in cross-cultural support situations

 **Thursday Session 5, 09.30 - 12.30 : Belonging, Empathy and Connection: Creating psychological safety and inclusion for international students**

**Learning outcomes**

- Understand empathy as both emotion and skill
- Recognize barriers to belonging in administrative procedures

**Activities**

- Empathy circle: share “a time I felt out of place” → listen for emotions, not facts
- Input: oxytocin, mirror neurons, and why belonging is a survival tool
- Mapping exercise: student journey from arrival to integration → emotional highs/lows


 **Thursday, Session 6 : Belonging, Empathy and Connection: Creating psychological safety and inclusion for international students cont'd**

**Learning outcomes**

- Co-create practices for inclusive hospitality

**Activities**

- Creative task: design a “Moments of Welcome” OR OTHER\* prototype or small ritual/s of inclusion
- Reflection: how empathy changes institutional tone and micro-behaviours

 **Friday session 7, 09.30 - 12.30 : From Insight to Action, Integrating learning into daily practice**

**Learning outcomes**

- Synthesise personal and collective insights
- Translate empathy and awareness into concrete actions
- Establish shared principles and accountability

**Activities**

- Opening reflection: “How has my lens changed?”
- Group work: co-create a “Cultural Communication Charter” or “Hospitality Manifesto”
- Action planning: personal & team commitments (Start / Stop / Continue)
- Peer coaching: refine one real-life student case using new tools
- Closing ritual: sharing commitments + symbolic “Bridge” exercise (to collect key insights)

 **Overall takeaways**

- Cultural lens worksheet
- Active listening checklist
- DIVE curiosity steps
- Empathy micro-practices
- Cultural communication charter template

 **Optional Elements**

- Pre-work: personal reflection (“When I have felt and feel most comfortable / challenged across cultures”)
- Evening reflection prompts: 10-minute journaling per day
- Follow-up (1 month later): virtual reflection café to share how new practices have evolved