1. **What is the difference between cultural intelligence and cultural competence?**

There are more than 300 models of cultural competence with dozens of corresponding inventories. Most of these models are not based on a coherent theoretical model, and as a result, many of them mix together attitudes, personality traits (stable), values, experience, and capabilities (learned skills).

Cultural intelligence, or CQ, is the capability to function effectively in culturally diverse situations. It is based on Sternberg & Detterman’s multiple loci theory of intelligence. CQ focuses specifically on learned skills that are critical for functioning effectively in culturally diverse environments. Skills, unlike values and personality, can be developed and improved through education, training, and experience.

2. **I haven't lived overseas and I work domestically, so what is the relevance of CQ for me?**

Very few people interact only with those who are culturally homogeneous. Cultural diversity exists in most organizations and in many supplier and customer relationships. Thus, CQ is relevant to almost everyone. It can be used to understand and deal with differences in national culture, ethnicity, gender, generation, organizational culture, professional culture, geographic region, and so forth.

3. **Is CQ relevant to global diversity or domestic diversity?**

Both. Cultural intelligence research and its practical application occur in cross-border, international contexts (e.g., preparing expats for overseas assignments, study abroad programs, helping global teams, etc.), and in domestic contexts (e.g., multicultural teams, diversity and inclusion programs, unconscious bias training, etc.). CQ also can be used to provide insights into how individuals will function across other types of cultures such as those based on generational differences, organizational cultures, functional differences, and so forth.

Many organizations use CQ as a model for addressing both international and domestic interactions, as well as working across a broad range of cultural differences.

4. **What is the difference between CQ and EQ?**

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to detect and regulate the emotions of yourself and others. It’s a critical capability needed to work effectively with others. However, emotional intelligence is culturally conditioned. For example, the nonverbal behaviors that indicate someone is upset vary across cultures. A smile means different things in different cultures. Cultural intelligence picks up where emotional intelligence leaves off and allows you to have the social sensibilities and practical skills to work and relate effectively with people from novel cultures.
5. Is CQ based on Howard Gardiner’s work on multiple intelligences?

Although Howard Gardiner’s work offers many valuable insights for the different ways individuals develop and learn, cultural intelligence is based on Sternberg and Detterman’s multiple loci theory of intelligence. This perspective emphasizes the different loci of intelligence needed to succeed in our 21st century environment (e.g., mental and behavioral capabilities).

6. Do people from some places have higher CQ than others?

No. There are no meaningful differences in CQ scores based on country or part of the world. Instead, there are people who have low, moderate, and high scores throughout the world. Although people sometimes expect that those who live in highly diverse cities or places where multiple languages are spoken will automatically have higher CQ than those living in more homogeneous areas, this is not accurate. Furthermore, being part of an underrepresented group doesn’t automatically give someone higher CQ. Living in a culturally diverse setting as a minority generally provides more opportunities for intercultural interaction and adaptation but does not necessarily lead to higher CQ capabilities. Therefore, even though hands-on experiences are one of the best ways to improve cultural intelligence, it’s not automatic. It depends on how people approach these opportunities, the extent to which they genuinely engage with people from different backgrounds, and how they react to and reflect on those experiences.

7. Why do you call it CQ instead of CI or CIQ?

In keeping with the academic research on other forms of intelligence (e.g., IQ, EQ, SQ, etc.), we use the acronym CQ to show that cultural intelligence is another form of research-based intelligence.

The Cultural Intelligence Center owns the copyright to the academically validated Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) and Expanded Cultural Intelligence Scale (E-CQS), and so we refer to our work as CQ.

8. Why do the four capabilities go in this order: Drive, Knowledge, Strategy, and Action?

One way to develop cultural intelligence is to focus first on the motivation to engage with different cultures (CQ Drive). Then it makes sense to gain an understanding of core cultural differences (CQ Knowledge). Next, you can use your knowledge of how cultures are similar and different to consciously plan for multicultural interactions (CQ Strategy). The final step is to make sure that your behavior is flexibly appropriate for different cultural settings (CQ Action). This is not the only way to develop CQ, but it provides one way of thinking about how you can enhance your CQ.

ABOUT THE CQ ASSESSMENT

9. How reliable and valid are the results of the CQ assessment?

More than 100 peer-reviewed articles demonstrate that the CQ assessment is a reliable and useful way to predict effectiveness in culturally diverse settings.
SCALE VALIDATION
The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) has been validated in many different culturally diverse samples, including executives, expats, professionals, employees in multicultural teams, and students. Dozens of academic studies demonstrate that the CQS predicts a wide variety of outcomes, including cultural decision-making, intercultural negotiation effectiveness, idea sharing with culturally diverse others, global potential, effective leadership in culturally diverse settings, and adjustment to culturally diverse contexts.

SELF-ASSESSMENT VS. MULTI-RATER ASSESSMENT
Research demonstrates the reliability and validity of both the self- and observer-rater versions of the scale (i.e., the 360° assessment) as well as an expanded version of the scale with sub-dimensions for each of the four capabilities (E-CQS).

The most effective way to assess cultural intelligence is with the CQ Multi-Rater Assessment (360°), which enables you to compare your self-ratings with your observer-ratings. The self-assessment, however, is also a valid way of measuring CQ. Research demonstrates the predictive validity of the self-report scale, even after controlling for demographic characteristics, personality traits, prior cultural experience, and social desirability. Thus, it’s not as easy to “game” the assessment as one might think.

In addition, our large database shows convergence in self- and observer-ratings in most groups—such that the scores are practically equivalent. In fact, it is not unusual to see self-rated scores that are slightly lower than observer-rated scores. Additionally, self-rated scores are often more nuanced than observer-rated scores because most people have more detailed knowledge of their own capabilities than observers do. In sum, both approaches to the assessment are valuable and reliable.

10. Why does the assessment ask questions about my background, and how is that relevant to my scores?
The questions you answered on your background (e.g., age, number of languages spoken, places you have lived, etc.) do not influence your CQ scores. Instead, this is background information we use to describe the characteristics of each group who completes the assessment.

11. I’ve taken the assessment before; why have my scores decreased?
It is possible that exposure to a new culture or a novel experience has increased your understanding of what you don’t know about culture, or how difficult it is to exhibit culturally appropriate flexibility. In addition, the CQ questions begin with the phrase, “compared to your peers,” so it is possible that your situation or point of reference has changed since you took the assessment previously (e.g., you’re in a new job and have new peers, or you’ve had other new experiences that have changed your perspective on your CQ capabilities).

Cultural intelligence is not static and can change depending upon your circumstances.

12. What if I disagree with the results of my CQ assessment?
While the assessment is a valid way to quantify your cultural competence and predict your intercultural effectiveness, there are subjective factors that can influence your results, such as your state of mind, level of fatigue when you completed the questionnaire, or a recent vivid experience. But beware of dismissing the results too quickly. Instead, use the feedback as an opportunity for reflection and discussion with others, as well as a chance to further develop your intercultural capabilities.
13. What are the worldwide norms and why do they matter?

The worldwide norms show the distribution of scores for all the individuals throughout the world who have taken the CQ assessment. To date, the norms include more than 75,000 individuals, from over 98 countries, and from every major industry and region of the world.

A **low score** means you rated yourself in the bottom 25 percent of worldwide norms. You perceive yourself as having a lot of opportunity to grow this CQ capability.

A **moderate score** means you rated yourself in the middle 50 percent of worldwide norms. You perceive yourself as equivalent to the norm on this CQ capability.

A **high score** means you rated yourself in the top 25 percent of worldwide norms. You perceive this CQ capability as one of your strengths.

The worldwide norms provide a way for you to put your feedback in perspective. It's more important to pay attention to your scores relative to worldwide norms (low, moderate, or high) than to focus on the absolute scores (the numerical value). We encourage participants to think of how they can use the feedback to become even more effective in intercultural interactions and settings.

When people interact with you cross-culturally, judgments are made about your CQ capabilities compared to other people they know—not compared to an arbitrary number. Therefore, viewing your ratings relative to worldwide norms (low, moderate, or high) is the most insightful way to think about the feedback.

In most groups, there is usually a range of scores—with some participants having scores that are low, others moderate, and others high. The objective is to set goals and work to enhance all four of your CQ capabilities so that you can improve your cultural effectiveness. The primary purpose of the feedback is to help you reflect on your CQ strengths, as well as your CQ capabilities that need the most improvement, and decide what action steps you will take based on the feedback.

14. Why are the worldwide norms different for the different CQ capabilities?

The norms reflect the distribution of how everyone who has taken the assessment rated themselves on each CQ capability. Most people rate themselves higher on some CQ capabilities and lower on others. For example, individuals consistently rate their CQ Drive higher than their CQ Knowledge. As a result, the cutoff (i.e., the absolute numerical score) for the “high” range of CQ Drive is higher than the absolute cutoff for the “high” range of CQ Knowledge. This is another reason why it is more important to focus on where you score is relative to the worldwide norms rather than your absolute scores.

15. Aren’t the norms skewed toward people already interested in cross-cultural work?

Most people take the CQ assessment as part of a required course or program. Therefore, the worldwide norms include people with a wide range of interests and are not based on those who already believe in the value of CQ.
16. How accurate are my observer-ratings?

As noted in FAQ #9, there is extensive research behind the reliability and validity of both the self and observer versions of the CQ assessment. You can be confident that your observer-ratings accurately reflect others’ perceptions of your intercultural capabilities. Their perception may not be accurate, but it’s important to know how you are perceived.

17. How do you account for the variability in how certain personality types or cultures rate others?

The self- and observer-rated scales were validated using many culturally diverse samples. As a result, the research accounted for variability in how people rate themselves and others. Therefore, the observer-ratings are an accurate indication of how others perceive your capabilities, regardless of their personality or cultural background.

18. What if my observers don’t have high CQ themselves?

The CQ of your observers has little to do with their judgments of your CQ. Their ratings are a valid indication of how they perceive your intercultural capabilities.

19. Would my observer-ratings change if I selected different observers?

That’s possible. Different people have different perspectives and see you in different situations. So you need to reflect on whom you selected as observers, the types of situations where they have observed you, and how well they know you. Then consider the importance you place on their perceptions of your CQ.

20. Does it matter if I have a “significant gap” between my self- and observer-ratings?

A significant gap is definitely something to consider. It suggests you and your observers have different perspectives on your CQ capabilities. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on why the scores differ. It is also important to pay attention to the CQ capabilities where you and your observers agree, because congruence suggests greater understanding and awareness from both perspectives.

21. Which is better, to have high self-ratings or high observer-ratings?

It depends. If you rated yourself significantly higher than your observers, it may suggest that you have an inflated view of your capabilities. Or, it could mean that you don’t do a good job of demonstrating your capabilities to these observers. For example, you may be highly motivated to learn about different cultures (high CQ Drive), but you may not show this in ways that are apparent to others.

If you rated yourself significantly lower than your observers, it may suggest that you are not fully using a capability others see in you. The most important point is to spend time thinking about why you and your observers might have different perceptions and to work on ways to close the gap.
22. Where do the cultural values in the assessment come from?

The assessment includes items that assess your personal preferences on individual cultural value orientations. The items were compiled by the Cultural Intelligence Center and informed by the extensive research published by Hofstede, Trompenaars, Edward Hall, the GLOBE leadership study, Schwartz, and others.

23. What are the 10 cultural clusters?

The cultural clusters are the 10 largest cultural groupings in the world, based on the work of Ronen and Shenkar, and later built upon by the GLOBE leadership study. Not every national or ethnic culture fits into these 10 clusters, but they are the largest cultural groupings globally and serve as a starting point for understanding the dominant cultural values found in these clusters. The countries listed are not the clusters themselves. Instead, they are examples of places where a large number of people have this cluster of cultural values.

24. Why did I score so high in collectivism?

There are many different dimensions to how individualism and collectivism can be conceptualized and measured. Some apply primarily to personal and family or in-group relationships, and others are more relevant to organizational contexts. The questions we developed focus on your preference for working in groups versus on your own. In addition, the current emphasis on teamwork in many schools and work settings results in relatively high scores for many on this collectivism scale.

Finally, your ratings may be partially influenced by the reference point you had in your mind (e.g., comparing your preference for working autonomously to that of other colleagues with whom you work).

25. Do individual cultural values change over time?

For the most part, cultural value orientations are stable over time. They represent your beliefs and preferences based on early childhood socialization. It is not “better” to be on the left or right side of the continuum. The position on the range has no evaluative meaning. Thus, there is no need to try to change your cultural values. Instead, you should be aware of your own preferences, and learn how to recognize similarities and differences in your cultural values compared to others. Most importantly, you need to develop ways to interact effectively with people who have different cultural value preferences.

26. How do gender, age, personality, or functional background influence cultural values?

National culture and early socialization are the primary sources of your cultural value orientations. This means that there is usually no relationship between demographic characteristics or functional background and cultural values. Instead, your cultural values may influence your career choices and personal interests.