

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cross-cultural competence, or 3C, is the ability to quickly and accurately comprehend a culturally-complex environment, and then appropriately and effectively act to achieve the desired effect. It's the capability to accomplish a mission despite regional, linguistic or cultural differences. Airmen develop 3C over time, through both deliberate instruction and experience. The importance of 3C was recognized by the Air Force Chief of Staff in his 2009 *Culture, Region and Language Flight Plan*, which makes 3C development a goal for all Airmen.

3C is a critical warfighter skill. It helps Airmen provide global vigilance, reach and power. Language, region and culture are the inputs that make up 3C. Each is a distinct area of learning, but interrelated. Independently, none is sufficient to generate 3C.

Cultural processes and ideals have both general principles, such as categories of behavior and beliefs, and specific manifestations, when they are shaped by particular linguistic or regional aspects. The universal principles are referred to as "culture-general" and the particular manifestations are referred to as "culture-specific." All Airmen receive culture-general force development, while culture-specific instruction is provided primarily for deploying Airmen and LRC professional/enabled groups.

The Air Force Culture and Language Center helps all Airmen (officer, enlisted and civilian) develop 3C across the entire continuum of learning (education, training and experience), at every learning level (rank). Educational efforts are guided by Air University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Training efforts are integrated into the Air Force's Expeditionary Skills Training (EST) program. Operational experience provides a solid foundation for 3C development.

Some Air Force jobs require extensive language, region and culture capabilities. Depending on their Air Force Specialty Code and force development programs, these Airmen are considered either LRC Professionals or LRC Enabled.

3C consists of four inter-related components:

1. Knowledge of key concepts and principles
2. Skills need to work effectively across cultures, including communicating, relating and negotiating
3. Positive attitudes toward cross-cultural learning and engagement
4. Approaches to transfer/apply general learning in novel specific contexts

The four components of 3C are measurable within the education and training environments. Knowledge tests measure the degree to which culture-general concepts are learned during instruction. Skills are evaluated through simulations and situational judgment tests. Changes in attitude are discerned by using specialized surveys

For more information, see culture.af.mil, e-mail afclc.outreach@us.af.mil or call 334-953-7729.