
HRM304 · SESSION 1 OF 11

What is Culture?

Why Cross-Cultural HRM?

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About me

*Dr **Lukas** Wallrich*

- BA Philosophy, Politics & Economics (Oxford)
- MA Educational Psychology (UCL)
- PhD Social Psychology (Goldsmiths)
- Lecturer in Organisational Psychology (Birkbeck)
- 4+ years of management consulting at McKinsey
- Quantitative / mixed-methods researcher
- Focus: intergroup relations, team diversity–performance link, evidence quality / Open Science



Today, in three parts

Chunk 1 设定框架

Setting the frame. What is culture, and why does it matter for HR?

Chunk 2 教教我

You teach me. What is working culture in Chengu like? How does that inform CC-HRM?

Chunk 3 模块预览

The module ahead. What we cover, how you're assessed, where you think the challenges will be.

CHUNK 1 OF 3 · ~45 MIN

Setting the frame

*What is **culture**, and why does it shape how people are managed?*

Culture

文化

The shared, often invisible, patterns of values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape how a group of people sees the world and behaves in it.

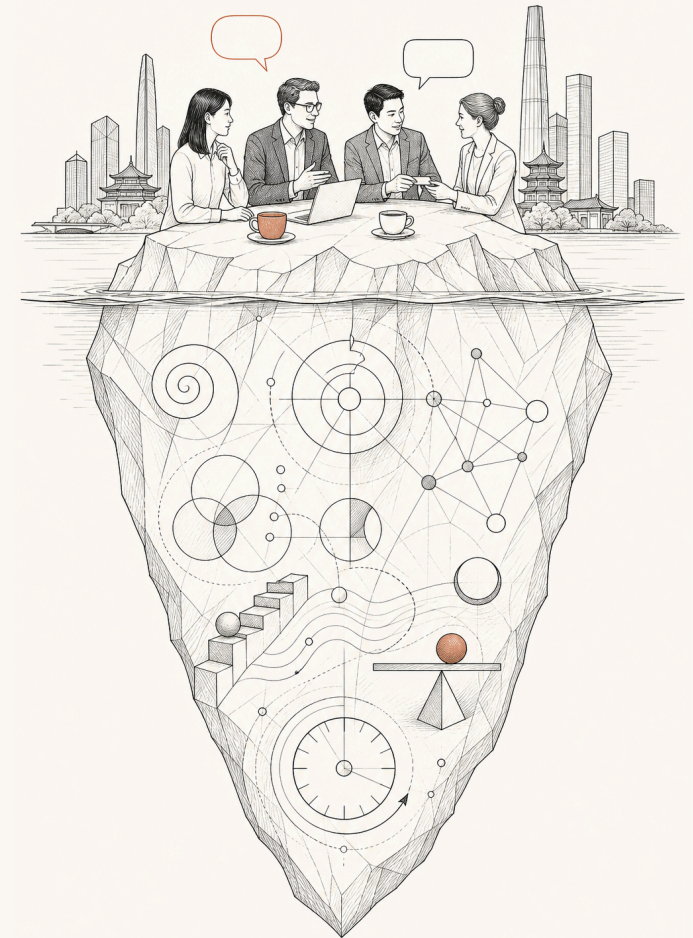
Culture is **learned**, not inherited, and it operates at many levels: national, regional, organisational, generational.

The cultural iceberg

Above the waterline: clothes, food, language, gestures.

Below: values, hierarchy, assumptions about time, trust, and the self.

HR usually fails on what sits **below**.



Culture is not just national

National 国家

The usual default. Useful, but hides huge internal variation.

Regional 地区

Chengdu, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Urumqi. Different rhythms, dialects, expectations inside one country.

Organisational 组织

A German tech and manufacturing firm can be further apart than a Chinese and a German firm in the same industry.

Generational 代际

Your expectations of work are not your parents'. Culture moves faster than frameworks track.

Why HR cannot ignore this

Hiring

How are achievements (and references) presented?

Appraising

Is direct feedback respectful or rude?

Rewarding

Is a fair bonus individual or shared?

Retaining

What did people expect when they joined?

CHUNK 2 OF 3 · ~45 MIN

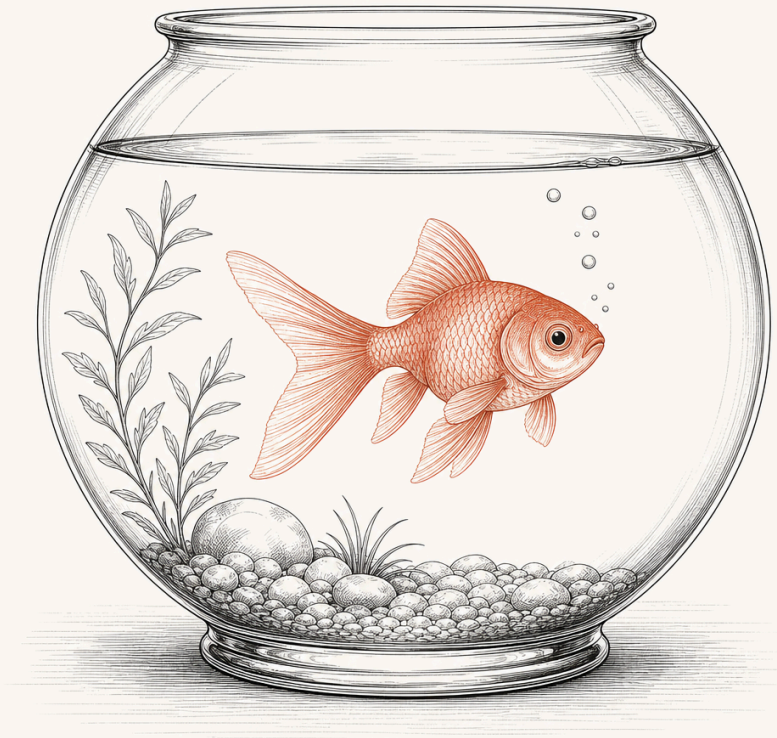
You teach me

Your understanding of local working culture, and why that matters.

Fish notice water last

当局者迷

Understanding our own culture can be harder than understanding others' — but it is required for successful cross-cultural (HR) management.



SCENARIO

I am a UK HR manager about to start work in Chengdu. What do I need to understand about how work relationships, hierarchy, communication, and loyalty actually function here?

WHAT TO DO

- 1 Pick three things the UK manager must understand. Give each a concrete example.
- 2 Write on the large sheet in English. Short bullets only.
- 3 Choose a spokesperson for a 1-minute share-back.

REPORT-BACK

反馈

1-2 min per group

THE QUESTION

What did your group decide the UK manager must understand?

HOW WE'LL DO IT

- 1 Spokesperson: headlines only, 1-2 minutes.
- 2 I'll write recurring ideas on the board as you go.
- 3 Other groups: build on what's already there.

Three concepts I've been told about

Guanxi

关系

~ relationships

Mianzi

面子

~ face

Renqing

人情

~ obligation

CHUNK 3 OF 3 · ~45 MIN

The module ahead

What we cover, how you're assessed, where you think the hard problems will sit.

What we'll cover

Foundations 基础

- 02** Cultural frameworks & their limits
文化框架及其局限
- 03** Communication & feedback
沟通与反馈
- 04** Leadership & negotiation
领导力与谈判

Practice 实践

- 05** Expatriate management & staffing
外派管理与国际配置
- 06** Global talent, remote work, M&A
全球人才、远程办公、跨境并购
- 07** Performance management & rewards
绩效管理与薪酬

Context 背景

- 08** Labour relations, ethics, institutions
劳资关系、伦理与制度
- 10** AI & technology in CCHRM
人工智能与技术应用

How you'll be assessed

25%

Group presentation

A real multinational case. 10 min + 3 min Q&A. 1-page summary in advance. Teams allocated next session.

25%

Individual reflections

300–500 words after each session. Submit your best three at the end. One must cover the presentation.

50%

Written exam

2 hours, open-note (one A4 sheet, both sides).
20 MCQs + 3 scenario responses.

Detailed briefs and reflection prompts go online after today.

Slides & briefs go online here

swufe-cchrn.pages.dev

Type it in, or scan the QR. Every deck, PDF and reflection brief will be posted here within a day of the session.

课程材料（讲义·PDF·反思指南）会在课后上线。



Using AI in this module

Use it to learn

Translate, summarise, test your understanding, draft outlines. Kimi, DeepSeek, Doubao are all fine as study partners.

Be ready to defend it

Presentation Q&A probes your understanding. The exam is handwritten and in person.

Cannot replace your thinking

Reflections must reference our actual classroom. AI was not there. Generic AI answers score poorly.

We'll come back to this

Session 10 is on AI in HR: bias, homogenisation, data protection. You'll need to evaluate AI tools critically.

WHERE DOES CCHRM GET HARDEST?

Pick 2–3 module topics you'd expect to be challenging. For each, write one specific question you'd want the session to help you answer.

WHAT TO DO

- 1 Pick 2–3 topics from weeks 02–10.
- 2 For each, write a specific question.
- 3 Be ready to share one in 30 seconds.

FOR EXAMPLE *How do you give critical feedback in a hierarchical workplace? (03) · When does a gift become a bribe? (08) · (How) should AI screen CVs across countries? (10)*

Pick 2–3 topics · write a specific question
for each

15:00

15
MIN

10
MIN

02 Cultural
frameworks

03 Communication &
feedback

04 Leadership &
negotiation

05 Expatriate
management



06 Global talent &
remote

07 Performance &
rewards

08 Labour, ethics,
institutions

10 AI & technology

NEXT SESSION

Cultural frameworks, and their limits

*If culture matters, can we **measure** it? Hofstede, GLOBE, tightness–looseness. And why one set of scores for 1.4 billion people is a problem.*