

Different norms

by Mike Hogan

Task 1: Cultural norms

Reflect on your own team or departmental norms.

1. Your working style

Think about your team culture in the five areas listed below (A–E). Which options best describe your own situation?

A. Decision-making

Decisions are made by team consensus.

Decisions are made by the team leader/manager.

B. Autonomy

We have a lot of autonomy.

We don't have a lot of autonomy.

C. Time

It's important that people are on time and that deadlines are met.

Deadlines are flexible, and it's OK if meetings start and finish late.

D. Structure and workflows

Our work is structured and routines are important.

We take an agile and innovative approach to our work.

E. Performance

The results of our work are more important than the number of hours we work.

It's more important to work the right number of hours and at fixed times.

2. Your own experience

Finally, reflect on your own experience of dealing with different working cultures. For example, have you ever worked with a colleague from a different department who was used to different norms? What happened? How did you overcome your differences?

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Task 2: Overcoming differences

Work with your partner. First, decide who will take on the role of student A, who will need to be proactive and ask for a meeting to discuss your different styles of working.

Student A

- Think of two differences in ways of working that you've experienced with a colleague from another team or department, such as ones listed above. Write an email to your partner. Mention the differences and set up a meeting to talk about them.

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Student A and Student B

- Have the meeting. Use the ideas, tips and phrases from the article to talk about your differences and co-create a new way of working together.

Student B

- Send a follow-up email summarizing your agreement and looking positively to your future collaboration.

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