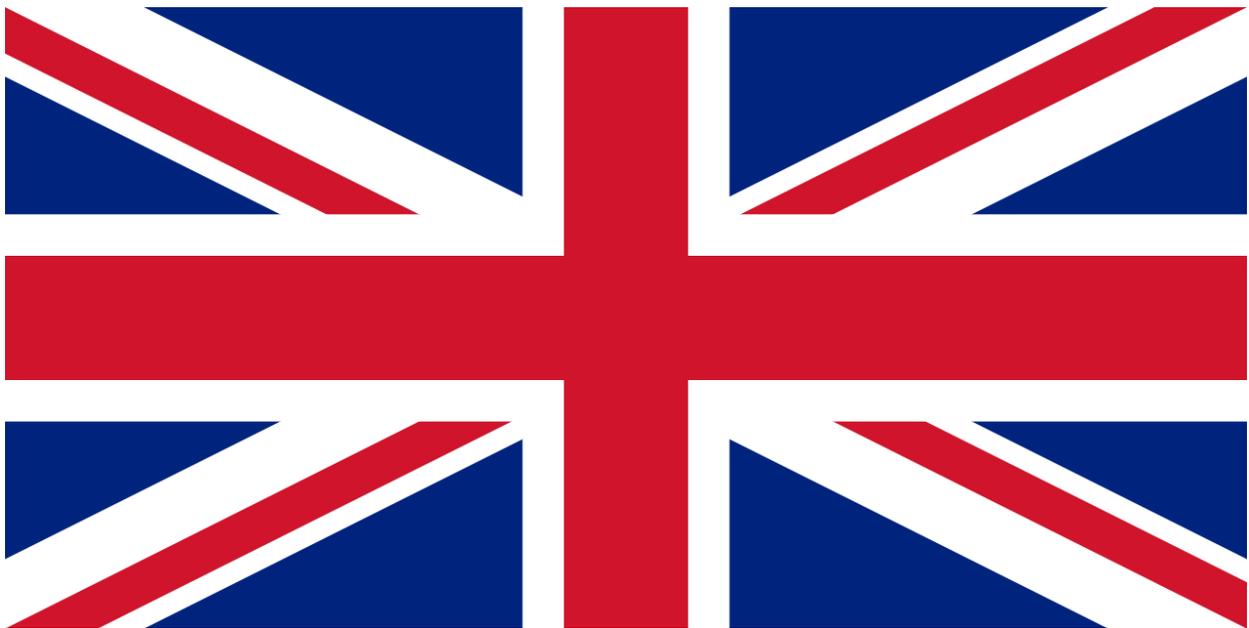


# INDO-EUROPEAN INTERCULTURAL DYNAMICS

## SEMESTER IV

### GROUP ASSIGNMENT

COUNTRY: UNITED KINGDOM



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# INTRODUCTION

United Kingdom is a group of countries located off the northwestern coast of mainland Europe. It comprises the whole of the island of Great Britain—which contains England, Wales, and Scotland—as well as the northern portion of the island of Ireland. The name Britain is sometimes used to refer to the United Kingdom as a whole. The capital is London, which is among the world's leading commercial, financial, and cultural centers. Other major cities include Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester in England, Belfast and Londonderry in Northern Ireland, Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, and Swansea and Cardiff in Wales.

It is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system, in which the ultimate legislative power is held by the centralized Parliament of the United Kingdom. The monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, serves as head of state, but her function in the legislative process is merely ceremonial. Next to the central government of the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, have their own devolved national administrations. The three national administrations all consist of an executive body and a legislative institution with different levels of authority. Power is delegated to the devolved administrations by the central parliament and can theoretically be withdrawn or limited at any time.

Since 1945, the United Kingdom has been subject to substantial immigration from areas that were formally tied to the British Empire. In 2010, the total number of immigrants in the UK came to seven million people. With the current situation in Syria, this number is expected to increase. The degree of ethnic diversity heavily varies across different areas of the United Kingdom and is especially high in metropolitan areas.

England is famous for its educational institutes. It has some of the most famous universities of the world like Oxford, Cambridge and London universities. England is also famous for some of the world's greatest pop stars - the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, David Bowie, Queen, Phil Collins, the Spice Girls and Oasis. England is famous for William Shakespeare. Hamlet, Othello, and Romeo and Juliet were written by him.

The overall climate in England is mild with temperatures not much lower than 0°C in winter and not much higher than 32°C in summer. July and August are normally the warmest month in England. Around the coasts, February is normally the coldest month, but inland there is little to choose between January and February as the coldest month. Probably the best months to travel in England are May, June, September and October. These months generally have the most pleasant temperatures and less rain. July and August are the warmest months, but they are also the wettest. The sunniest parts of the Britain are along the south coast of England. Rain is fairly well distributed throughout the year, with late winter/spring (February to March) the driest period and autumn/winter (October to January) the wettest.

# NATIONAL HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

British culture has its roots in the rich history of its 4 countries – Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

There is a custom which is followed that if a national holiday falls on a weekend then the following Monday is given as a substitute holiday.

There are 8 National holidays in England and Wales:

- New Year's Day: 1 January
- Good Friday: Friday before Easter
- Easter Monday: Monday after Easter
- Early May: May (6 May 2019)
- Spring Bank Holiday: May (27 May 2019)
- Summer Bank Holiday: August (26 August 2019)
- Christmas Day: 25 December
- Boxing Day: 26 December

There are certain Feast days in the United Kingdom which are specific to some countries like **St. Andrew's Day** is celebrated in Scotland and **St. Patrick's Day** is celebrated in Ireland. These are also National holidays in the respective countries. **Orangeman's Day** (Anniversary of the Battle of Boyne) is also celebrated as a National holiday in Northern Ireland to celebrate the revolution and victory of Protestant king William of Orange who defeated Catholic king James II at the Battle of the Boyne, which began the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland.

**Christmas:** Christmas is a big festival in the UK and the way the British celebrate it is quite unique and has its own charm. During Christmas all the streets are decorated and Christmas jingles are played everywhere. There are light shows on the major streets of London where huge masses gather to enjoy.

There are some really surprising things during the Christmas period. There is free travel on all Transport for London networks from 11:45pm to 4:30am on Christmas and New year's eve. Some pubs give free drinks and food to people who are alone on Christmas Eve.

**Boxing Day:** It is the day after Christmas. This tradition had originally started in United Kingdom itself and now has spread across many countries. On this day many supermarkets keep their goods at extremely low prices. People go and buy huge quantities of things which they would not generally. This tradition started off when masters used to give their workers a day off from work and give them presents in Christmas boxes.

**Guy Fawkes Night (Bonfire Night):** On the very night that the Gunpowder Plot was stopped November 5<sup>th</sup> 1605, bonfires were set alight to celebrate the safety of the King. Since then 5<sup>th</sup> November

is known as Bonfire Night. The event is celebrated with fireworks and burning dummies of Guy Fawkes on a bonfire.

**Remembrance Day (Armistice Day):** Armistice Day is a memorial day observed since the end of the First World War to remember the members of their armed forces who have perished in the line of duty.

**Winter Wonderland:** This is a huge annual Christmas event held in Hyde Park, London during the Christmas holidays. It spans for about a month. This is very similar to the concept of Mela which takes place in India. It is one of the biggest, and most attended events in the world, featuring over 100 rides, several festive markets like the Bavarian Village, numerous live shows, including a circus, ice show, and live music. This event started in 2007 and has gained great momentum ever since.

### **Royal celebrations:**

Queen's birthday celebration – the Queen officially celebrates her birthday on a Saturday in June with the Trooping the Colour Parade although her birthday falls in April.

**Opening of the Parliament:** In England, the parliamentary year officially begins in May until the Queen announces it. Although the Opening of Parliament is a simple government occasion, it is marked by an elaborate ritual in true British monarchy fashion. The Queen travels to the Palace of Westminster. From there she delivers a speech to both Houses of Parliament. Only after the Queen's speech ends can the new 'year' commence.

There is an odd part in the ceremony when a House of Lords, "Usher of the Black Rod" intentionally slams the door of the House of Commons chamber in his face to show that the Commons is independent from the monarchy.

**Swan Upping:** The mute swan has been a symbol of the British monarchy since 12<sup>th</sup> century. Back then, this type of swan was considered a delicacy. If people who were not part of the monarchy wanted to own one of them, they would have to pay massive amounts of to have a mark put on its beak.

Today, mute swans aren't used for royal meals instead the ceremony encourages conservation of the species. A team of "Swan Uppers" rows along the Thames River dressed in red, every July and counts all of the mute swans they see. They also make sure that they are in good health.

**Waterloo Celebration:** Every year the victory at the Battle of Waterloo is celebrated by having the Duke of Wellington pay rent. On June 18 of every year, the Duke of Wellington commemorates the Waterloo victory by "paying rent" for the house but not in money. It's a symbolic transaction, during which the Duke gives the Queen a silk-embroidered French flag. The flag is draped over a bust of the first Duke of Wellington in the Guard Chamber at Windsor Castle.

## UNIQUE PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS

The unique practices and customs of a country are not only interesting to know about, but also go a long way in helping outsiders understand the best way to adjust to another culture. They will be in a better position to react and adapt to anything that is thrown at them and would avoid any misunderstandings or stir up controversy.

Although the UK comprises of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland which have their own respective intricacies regarding the rights and wrongs, the accepted and unaccepted, for the sake of this study we focus our attentions on England which would be considered synonymous to the UK. There is some overlap between etiquettes and customs, and both would be highlighted in their respective categories.

**The Sunday Roast** is a tradition commonly seen throughout the country. As the name suggests, it is typically served on a Sunday consisting of roasted meat, roast potato, and accompaniments such as Yorkshire pudding, stuffing, vegetables and gravy. Though seemingly an insignificant fact, the Sunday roast is a great way of the family to spend time together on their day off, talk about the issues bothering them, and all in all bond as a means of relaxing after the strenuous week. Britain being predominantly Christian, The Sunday Roast usually happens after the family goes to church. This long-standing tradition has enhanced closeness between families.

One well known fact about the British is that they love their tea. Whether it's a crisis, someone having a bad day, or simply someone feeling under the weather (they do have a keen interest in weather too, but we'll get to that later) tea is the one stop solution. So, if there is ever a time that an angry, sad, annoyed, dejected Britisher comes to you, you can never go wrong with a cup of tea.

Though this may be part of etiquette, the ability to queue up nicely is a very important custom for the British. Failing to do so would be frowned upon and though someone may not outrightly point it out, they will be sure to make their feelings felt by either sighing or making faces. The concept of queuing in an orderly manner is alien for the Indian culture and hence should be kept in mind if anyone from here plans to visit the UK.

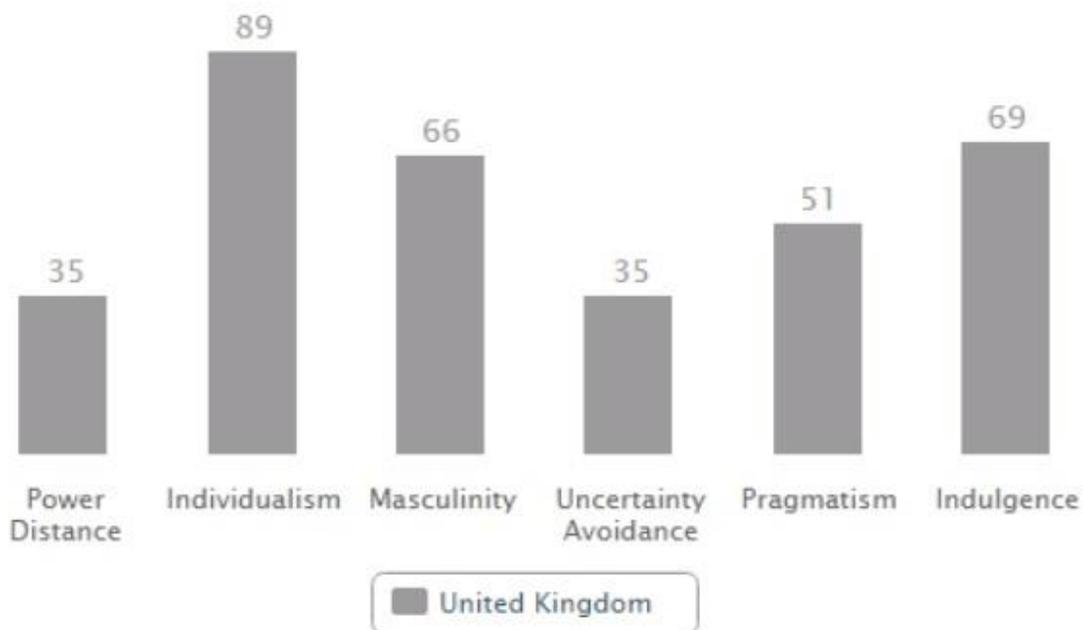
Another deeply rooted custom amongst Britishers is saying sorry even when they don't really mean it. The general context in which sorry is used is usually when you feel bad for someone or when you have done something wrong and wish to apologize for it. But for the British, 'sorry' is part of their everyday language and is seen as a polite form of communication. This deviates from the literal meaning of the word. For example, when you wish to ask a stranger what time it is, you would start with, "Sorry to bother you, but can you please tell me what time it is?"

And last but not the least is the average Britisher's keen interest in the weather and traffic. Not much elaboration is needed for this point but when you find yourself in an awkward situation where you don't know what to say, bringing these topics up would get them going.

## THE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory initially had four dimensions along which cultural values of a society could be analyzed, when it was proposed in at the end of the 1970s. These were individualism-collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; power distance (strength of social hierarchy) and masculinity-femininity (task-orientation versus person-orientation). Long-term orientation was added as the fifth dimension in 1991 and indulgence versus self-restraint was added as the sixth dimension in 2010. Hofstede's model is used to distinguish one culture from another by scoring each culture for particular cultural dimensions.

### 6-D Model, United Kingdom



The UK has a low score for **power-distance**, a measure of the extent to which less powerful members of society expect and accept that unequal distribution of power. This suggests that people in the UK generally believe inequality should be minimized. In the workplace it usually translates into flat team structures where hierarchy is generally for convenience only. People will be on first name terms with managers, expect easy access to them, and to be consulted. Meetings are likely to be participative, and even junior members will usually have a say in decisions.

The UK scores highly for **individualism**, which reflects the degree to which a person's self-image is defined in terms of 'I' or 'we'. As an individualistic country, people in the UK expect to take care of themselves and their immediate family and to be less invested in society or their community. People

from such societies tend to value privacy, think for themselves, and pursue personal fulfilment. The route to happiness is through personal fulfillment.

Britain is a **masculine** society, highly success oriented and driven. A key point of confusion for the foreigner lies in the apparent contradiction between the British culture of modesty and understatement which is at odds with the underlying success driven value system in the culture. Critical to understanding the British is being able to “read between the lines” What is said is not always what is meant. In comparison to feminine cultures such as the Scandinavian countries, people in the UK live in order to work and have a clear performance ambition.

The UK shows low interest in **uncertainty avoidance**, meaning that people from this society are comfortable with uncertainty and can tolerate a lack of information about what the future will hold. As a low UAI country the British are comfortable in ambiguous situations – the term ‘muddling through’ is a very British way of expressing this. There are generally not too many rules in British society, but those that are there are adhered to (the most famous of which is the British love of queuing which has also to do with the values of fair play). In work terms this results in planning that is not detail oriented.

The UK scores only neutrally for its **time orientation**. The British society reconciles present challenges whilst still retaining links to the past.

The British culture is classified as **indulgent**. The UK is shown to have weak impulse control and a tendency to try to realize their desires. They place a higher degree of importance on leisure time, act as they please and spend money as they wish.

# **SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT: ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL**

The most important thing that one should know before visiting any new country is the social etiquette and the protocol that should be followed. Although the United Kingdom does not have strict etiquette rules, it would not be endearing to the hosts if a few common rules are not followed.

As has already been mentioned before, the United Kingdom consists of Great Britain, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is safe to call a person from any of the above nationalities as “British” if one is unsure whether the person is English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish. While the four countries share many customs, each has its own culture and traditions.

## **Greeting**

The British may seem reserved and cold at first, but that is just a stereotype. In reality, the British are very amiable and helpful to foreigners. A firm handshake and a smile with direct eye contact is the common form of greeting. A limp handshake might give the impression that you are indifferent while prolonged eye contact might make people feel ill at ease. A simple “Pleased to meet you” is the best way to complete an introduction. Until specifically invited to use first names, use last names with the appropriate titles. While most of the European countries use social kissing as a form of greeting, it is usually reserved for close friends and family members in the United Kingdom.

## **Gift Giving**

It is customary to take a small gift for the host if invited to their home. This is usually a bottle of wine, flowers or chocolates. Some flowers may be sent in advance of a dinner party as a form of RSVP but it is equally acceptable to take them on the day. Gifts are usually opened on receipt.

In a formal or business setting, it is unusual for gifts to be exchanged.

## **Visiting a home**

In stark contrast to many other European cultures, the British enjoy entertaining people in their homes. While the British value punctuality, one may arrive ten to fifteen minutes later than the specified time. It is not a compulsion to remove shoes before entering someone’s home but it is recommended that you ask upon entry whether shoes can be worn or not.

## **Dining and Food**

Remain standing until invited to sit down. Most hosts would show you to a specific seat. Table manners in the United Kingdom are generally continental; the fork is held in the left hand and the knife is held in the right hand while eating. It is polite to wait until everyone at the table has been served before you start eating. It is not advisable to rest your elbows on the table while eating. Cutlery should be rested on either sides of the plate in between mouthfuls and together in the centre when you are finished. In the United Kingdom, people eat very quietly. It would be conspicuous if you make a lot of noise while eating. Chewing with the mouth closed and refraining from talking while chewing are some of the understood protocols. If invited to a meal

at a restaurant, the person inviting usually pays. It is imperative to arrive on time. Do not argue about the check; simply reciprocate the gesture at a later time.

### **Queuing**

Wherever there is a mass of people, the British form an orderly queue. British etiquette dictates that when you arrive, you join the back of the queue so that each person receives service in the order that they arrived. While this may be strange to people from cultures that do not believe in queuing, pushing in or breaking the queue is considered rude and unfair. If in two minds, ask “Is this the back of the queue?” While most of the British will not openly argue if you break the queue, they subtly condemn it through facial gestures or by complaining about it to the person behind.



### **Discussing money**

Unlike most countries, discussing how much you earn or how much something costs, has traditionally been a strictly taboo subject according to British etiquette. British people find it embarrassing to discuss money matters and it can be considered rude. Tangentially speaking, British people are not open to discussing personal matters with everyone. Leading questions about personal life and related matters are not welcome and should be avoided.

### **Dress code**

When it comes to clothing, there are no limits and restrictions on how to dress. Just make sure that you respect the general rules when in formal situations. Moreover, in larger cities like London, people tend to dress more formally. Men and women wear tweeds and wools for casual occasions. Slacks, sweaters and jackets are appropriate for both men and women. When attending a holiday dinner or a concert or theatre performance, it is best to dress formally.

## **CO-CULTURE AND REGIONAL DIFFERENCES**

From all outward appearances, the cultures of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom might look similar with only minor differences in accent but there are subtle differences between each country that makes its own culture unique. Social differences are evident in how people from these countries perceive their identities. The Scottish, Irish and Welsh tend to be more aware of a dual identity (both Welsh and British for example). The English, on the other hand, are not aware of any such dichotomy, as “British” is often (mistakenly) assumed to be synonymous with “English”. The Scottish, Irish and Welsh may find England’s predominance condescending and may resent the English for it. The British can easily discern which country a person is from by their accent alone and may also be able to pinpoint a person’s upbringing based on their speech. This easy identification of people’s backgrounds can cause the British to pigeonhole and stereotype each other quickly, which often hinders social mobility. As an example, ‘posh’ pronunciations often indicate that a person is from a wealthy family a cockney accent and other regional accents are associated with the working class.

Significant cultural differences in the UK can often be found between those who live in the major cities and those who live in the countryside. More recently, the younger generation is also distinguishing itself as being very individualistic and strident in manners. British sociologists argue a 'me' culture is being perpetuated amongst young people and draw unfavourable comparisons to the previous generations who became more community-focused due to the effects of the world wars.

English humour often tends to be self-deprecating and drips sarcasm. Welsh humour on the other hand is more often considered daft and too dry. The English are uncomfortable in dealing with leading questions about personal life while the Welsh are more open in discussing family matters.

Other regional differences may be seen in clothing and fashion. However, since about 84% of the population of United Kingdom lives in England, there are not many differences in culture between England and the other three countries.

## SAYINGS, MAXIMS AND FOLKLORES

The British sense of humor is filled with irony and sarcastic quips. The joke is delivered in an emotionless manner, and often self-deprecation is used in the jokes. Humor may be used to bury emotions in a way that seems insensitive to other cultures. Jokes are told about everything and almost no subject is considered taboo, though often a lack of subtlety when discussing controversial issues is considered insensitive.

Most of the everyday sayings used by the British people are sarcastic in nature. While a native British person would be able to recognize the intended message, foreigners may take the saying too literally and not get the message. The saying “that’s brave of you...” real meaning is that you are crazy or that you are unbelievably stupid, but if someone was to take this statement at face value, he would think that he was being complimented.

Another example of this would be when you give a suggestion and someone replies “I’ll bear that in mind...”. The intended meaning is that this idea is not even worth discussing, while taken at face value, it may mean that the idea is good and worth discussion.

To keep up with the façade of modesty and politeness, the British people make use of sarcasm and irony when criticizing someone.



One of Britain’s most famous folklore, the legend of ‘King Arthur’ is also representative of British cultural values. King Arthur embodies moral integrity, is loyal to his friends, abides by the law, and defends the weak from the tyranny of those in power. He shows that doing the morally right thing is valuable, even if it may bring about temporary defeat. In the end, virtues and values prevail. That’s why ‘The Legend of King Arthur’ has persisted through the centuries, and he is considered a moral bastion in the United Kingdom.

# **BODY LANGUAGE AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Body Language is a subset of Non-Verbal Communication. As the name suggests Non-Verbal Communication refers to all forms of communication other than the use of words. An Austrian writer Peter F. Drucker rightly said – “The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn’t being said.” Non Verbal Communication includes facial expressions, tone of voice, movement, appearance, eye contact, gestures and posture.



Gestures are a big part of non-verbal communication. In most high context cultures understanding gestures is crucial to survive in that culture otherwise one may run the risk of offending someone. Implicit communication is characteristic of a high context culture.

Britain is a lower context culture which uses more of direct communication rather than implicit communication but nevertheless there are a couple of intricacies one must keep in mind when visiting this country. The gesture shown above means ‘Okay’ all across Europe and Asia but when shown in a Latin American country like Brazil has a sexual connotation. Hence it is important to understand the meaning of gestures in different contexts.

Some commonly used hand gestures in the UK are the V sign, thumbs up and thumbs down and the finger snap. The V sign is generally used to symbolize victory or triumph. Thumbs up and thumbs down is used to indicate approval and disapproval or rejection respectively. The finger snap is used by a person who has just remembered something.

The British aren’t very expressive in their facial expressions so it’s best not to take that as an indicator as to how they are feeling. It could be puzzling to figure out whether they have been offended by something you said or not. They also really value their personal space, so it is best to stand about an arm’s length away from someone while speaking to them to avoid putting them off.

Eye contact is another crucial aspect to keep in mind while communicating with the British. It is best to make direct eye contact which breaks away every now and then which would otherwise be interpreted as staring which would make the British uncomfortable. Also, while addressing a group maintaining equal eye contact with everyone is appreciated as it would make everyone feel equally part of the discussion.

The British are patient people so behaving in a way that tries to hurry them up is likely to backfire. It is best to remain calm and composed while dealing with them to achieve the best result

# **BUSINESS PROTOCOL, MEETINGS AND NEGOTIATION PRACTICES**

## **British Business Protocol**

British business culture is based on courtesy, politeness, discipline and punctuality. They have a hierarchical setup with low power distance. It is a low context culture in which personal relationships are secondary to work matters. Most British and business people look for long-term relationships with people they do business with and will be cautious if one appears to be going after a quick deal.

Primary contact is preferred through formal email. An email detailing the objectives for meeting would be expected.

Punctuality and time management are extremely important in the UK. It is important to arrive on time or early. Being late requires prior intimation or rescheduling with a suitable date if the interests of the meeting are compromised. People are expected to calculate travel time with grace time for unforeseen events. Being late reflects very poorly on one's interests and abilities.

Handshakes are a common way to greet each other in a business environment. Formal Titles are used to address each other unless specified otherwise. Gifts are immediately unwrapped. Suitable gifts depend on cost as well the gender of the person involved. In case of gifting flowers, roses (romantic) and white lilies(funeral) are inappropriate.

Every employee of the company is seen to represent the company in his/her turnout. Therefore, formal attire is usually worn with suitable accessories.

## **Meetings and Negotiation Practices**

It is common place to start meetings with some small talk to break the ice. However, it should not intrude into the private lives of the people. While the British tend to be rather formal, especially during the initial stages of negotiation, humour is used profusely to lighten the setting. It is important to back up your arguments with facts and figures and emphasize win-win scenarios. The British are likely to be secretive about their final offer. The British can be cautious and unlikely to commit to anything immediately, so you should not expect final decisions to be made during first meetings. However, one can dictate the timeframe through proposals. It is better to give the impression that everything is well managed and under control. If the British are interested in learning more about the offer they will most likely accept or suggest a follow-up meeting.

During negotiations, it is better not to sound overly rehearsed, as most British tend to be skeptical. Being polite is extremely important. They will most likely use indirect speech to represent their stand on the deal. Business entertaining is quite common in the UK and meals can take place in restaurants.

# INDIAN ORGANISATIONS/ HOST ORGANISATIONS IN INDIA

The British have a high commission in India as the chief diplomatic entity in India. It consists of various departments which are:

**British council:** British council is the department which handles relations in education and interchange of knowledge.

**British Trade Offices:** The Trade offices are located at Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, and Pune and handle trade activities.

**British Nationals Services:** Urgent assistance, apply or renewal of passport for British citizens in India.

**Business Information Centres:** For Business related activities.

**Consular Department:** This provides consular assistance and protection for British citizens. It also issues passports. The Commission also has a consular office at Goa.

**Defense Department:** This department is responsible for all aspects of the defense relationship between the United Kingdom and India.

**Department for International Development (DFID):** It is responsible for implementing the United Kingdom's development assistance programme. Its priority is to work with the Government of India towards the elimination of poverty in India.

**FCO Programme Funding Department:** The programme fund was established in 2003 to support the United Kingdom's international goals.

**Management Department:** This is responsible for all personnel and financial resources and provides support to all frontline departments.

**Political Department:** The Political Department is responsible for political relations between the governments of the United Kingdom and India.

**Press and Communications Department:** This is responsible for presenting and promoting the British Government policy in India.

**Trade and Investment Section:** The Trade and Investment Section is the trade and investment promotion vehicle of the U.K. government which also responsible for trade policy and economic relations.

**Visa Department:** This department is responsible for providing visa and entry clearance services for travelling to the United Kingdom.

## **CONCLUSION**

The report covers all cultural aspects of United Kingdom in such a way that when any foreigner reads it, they would have a great understanding of the culture in the UK and would be of great help to someone who is either visiting UK for the first time or to anyone curious about the cultural paradigms in the UK.

United Kingdom being a large country, with four different nations as its constituents, makes it difficult to dichotomize between each country regarding all the aspects of cultural communication.

The report describes most of the features considering the United Kingdom as a whole. Moreover, majority of the population of the United Kingdom lives in England. As a consequence, there are a lot of overlapping cultural practices for all the countries, which have been mentioned in a general sense.