

3.1

Cultural influences

National cultures are formed and influenced by a wide range of factors.

The lists below contain some of these factors, grouped into three main categories: structural, social and physical.

STRUCTURAL

- Geography
- Communications
- Climate
- Population density and spread
- Centralisation of power
- Role of religion
- Political system
- Role of authority

SOCIAL

- Balance between family and work
- Class distinctions
- Dress
- Punctuality
- Emotional displays
- Ideas of physical beauty
- Taboos
- Humour
- Respect for age
- Gender
- Politeness to the outsider

PHYSICAL

- Physical contact
- Physical gestures
- Physical distance
- Speech: volume, speed
- Handshakes and greetings
- Body language

- 1 Look through the lists and make any improvements you think necessary: add items which are missing, and take away any which you consider to be unimportant.
- 2 Try to decide which of these factors are important in shaping:
 - your own national or regional culture
 - another culture which you know well.