

Whole College Approach

Common Issues

Many colleges face similar problems in developing a Whole College Approach (WCA). However, the solutions to these problems will vary widely because colleges have different layouts, numbers of sites, and structural arrangements. A solution needs to be developed that works within the contextual constraints and is also appropriate for the starting point of the organisation, the climate, and the culture.

In the WCA guide, a process to explore these considerations and constraints is described. Colleges are **strongly recommended** to work through this WCA process and develop an understanding of their own organisation, explore the problems, and design a set of actions **appropriate for their situation**. Findings from the WCA pilot indicate that time spent by a core cross-college team on self-assessment of the college situation and on exploration of the problem is essential to the development of successful interventions. Colleges are therefore strongly advised not to adopt any of the actions listed below without reading the WCA guide, following the process described, and carrying out a careful analysis of how these ideas may or may not work in their own college situation.

The table shows examples of actions that colleges have taken in the development of a WCA and the problem areas that these actions might help to improve. Colleges might use similar actions as they develop a WCA, but the examples are offered simply as possible options to discuss rather than recommendations. It is very important that these examples are carefully considered alongside the context, the climate, and the culture of the local college. In particular, colleges should discuss:

- whether the action would be appropriate within their context and constraints
- how the action might be adapted to work in the local college situation
- what the impact would be on other areas of the college and possible unintended consequences.

A college should plan a manageable set of actions linked to some clear aims and objectives and avoid trying to address every problem at the same time. In the table, possible actions are mapped to common problem areas that have surfaced in the CfEM WCA project. **The coloured cells show the primary area that the action might be intended to address**, and the additional marks indicate other common problem areas that may benefit. We would expect a college to prioritise one or two problem areas that emerge from their analysis and design a set of actions focussed primarily on improvement in these areas. It is also advisable to work with one or two vocational areas and evaluate the impact before extending the activity more widely across the college.

Possible actions	Common problem areas					
	Relationships between maths teachers and students	Communication between maths and vocational teachers	Curriculum links between maths and vocational areas	Developing maths in vocational areas	Student attendance and engagement with maths	Timetabling of maths sessions and enrolment
Both vocational and maths staff are present at enrolment to meet and place students on maths courses.	✓	✓			✓	✓
'Meet the maths teacher' activities are planned with vocational areas and included in the vocational induction.	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Maths teachers provide vocationally relevant introductory activities in a public space (e.g., a college atrium) during the induction period.	✓		✓		✓	
Maths teachers shadow vocational teachers and attend some vocational sessions during induction just as an extra teacher, without leading maths activities.	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Maths teachers provide 'meet the teacher' videos to introduce themselves to students.	✓				✓	
Link tutors from the maths teams are put in place to communicate with vocational areas but with a clearly defined focus (e.g., curriculum links, student behaviour).		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Each vocational area appoints a maths lead to liaise with the maths team link teacher about specific aspects of the organisation or teaching of maths.		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Designated link teachers from the maths team attend vocational meetings or vice versa.		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Maths and vocational teachers arrange informal observations of each other's lessons at points during the year to identify opportunities for curriculum connections.		✓	✓	✓		
Vocational and maths teachers exchange schemes of work and discuss opportunities for curriculum links.		✓	✓			
An online space is created specifically for dialogue about what is being currently taught in maths and what maths is currently being used in vocational sessions.		✓	✓	✓		
A 'buddying' arrangement is put in place between a maths and vocational teacher to discuss the maths in vocational learning and how it relates to GCSE/FS maths.		✓	✓	✓		
Groups of maths and vocational teachers meet and work together to identify what maths is used in vocational programmes and when.		✓	✓	✓		
Maths and vocational teachers discuss the language and teaching approaches they use for maths to connect these better for students.		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Maths is highlighted in vocational schemes of work and lessons.			✓	✓		

Possible actions	Common problem areas					
	Relationships between maths teachers and students	Communication between maths and vocational teachers	Curriculum links between maths and vocational areas	Developing maths in vocational areas	Student attendance and engagement with maths	Timetabling of maths sessions and enrolment
There is collaborative planning of schemes of work so that any relevant maths is taught (or revised) at an appropriate point to support its use in the vocational programme, or vice versa.		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Maths and vocational teachers co-design assignments, induction activities, or projects that incorporate maths for teaching by vocational staff.		✓	✓	✓		
Maths teachers provide workshops for vocational teachers to help them develop confidence in teaching the maths that is covered in their programmes.		✓		✓		
Vocational teachers are encouraged to upskill and develop confidence by taking a maths course (accredited or not) or attending a support workshop run by maths staff.		✓		✓		
Vocational teachers are provided with bespoke CPD to develop maths skills and pedagogy relevant to their area, run by maths staff.		✓		✓		
Vocational areas offer competitions or challenges that include maths and are designed in collaboration with maths teachers.		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Systems for attendance monitoring and follow-up include clear expectations of the roles and responsibilities of different users.					✓	
A user group of maths and vocational staff is formed to inform the review and development of monitoring systems.		✓			✓	
Classrooms used for maths are located close to vocational staff.					✓	
Vocational staff sometimes visit maths classrooms in person to check attendance.		✓			✓	
Enrolment and early 'settling' of maths classes are planned for the college year.					✓	✓
Maths sessions are 'sandwiched' between vocational sessions where possible.					✓	✓
Students have more than one encounter with maths a week (e.g., two sessions per week, support workshops, homework clubs).					✓	✓
Maths classes include a limited range of vocational areas, so vocational connections can be used, and attendance monitoring involves fewer people.		✓	✓		✓	✓