CfEM

Whole College Approach

Self-Assessment Task 3: Examining the Issues

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Developing a Whole College Approach (WCA) involves consideration of some key concepts. These are summarised in the CHIME table later in this document and form a framework for further investigation of the issues that a college may need to address in their WCA.

A WCA should be seen as a long-term approach to organisational change. It is therefore important to ensure the problems are fully understood before attempting to find solutions. Large FE colleges are also complex organisations and issues are often interconnected, which means actions to address one problem can have a positive or negative impact on others and sometimes lead to unintended consequences. By taking time to examine the issues thoroughly, colleges can be more confident that they have correctly identified the underlying problems, understood the connected issues, and anticipated any possible unintended consequences.

The task is built on key principles for problem solving and change management in large organisations that have been identified from relevant literature. Key principles have been adapted from these contexts and applied to FE, taking account of recent research on maths in FE.

Aims

The main aims of this task are to:

- develop a mutual understanding of the problem or area for improvement identified by the college, including any related issues
- undertake a detailed analysis of the problem or area that requires improvement, including any connected issues
- recognise the affordances and limitations of the college's systems and culture that may affect the planning and implementation of an intervention to address the problem.

As a result of the task, WCA teams should be able to:

- identify the key elements, connections, contextual and climatic factors related to the problem, and additional issues that need to be considered
- begin to develop plans for an intervention that addresses all the necessary interconnected elements.

Task

Self-Assessment Task 3 (SAT3) involves a collaborative task and extended discussion around the five key concepts for WCA that are summarised in the CHIME table. These concepts are used as a framework for further examination of the problems, affordances, and constraints that have emerged from previous discussions.

College teams will first revisit key elements about the college context and current situation that have emerged from SAT1 and SAT2 and then use the CHIME framework to bring these together into a summary, with consideration of two categories:

- Structures and processes
- People and culture

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They will use the summary and discussion to identify key features of their college that need consideration as they move towards the development of an action plan for WCA.

Resources

- A blank copy of Table 1 in a shared space that everyone can access (e.g., Google doc)
- Copies of the CHIME table and Example 1 (electronic or paper)

Discussion guide (for the meeting chair)

One person should be appointed to guide the team through the task and prompt discussions where appropriate.

1. Ask the group to briefly discuss the issues concerning the college mathematics provision that they feel have emerged from their previous discussions of SAT1 (context) and SAT2 (starting position). This discussion should highlight features of the college that they need to address and some of the affordances and constraints.

   The team may find that some features that have surfaced from SAT1 and SAT2 are particularly relevant to the problem or area for improvement that they first identified, but it is likely that other problems will emerge too that may prove more important. The team needs to be aware that the problem they first identified may not be the one they ultimately decide is the priority. In discussions, they should avoid a narrow focus at this stage since some points might not seem very relevant at first but could later turn out to be critical to the change process.

2. Ask the team to work collaboratively and try to add the features they have identified to the CHIME table (Table 1) in the appropriate column. In general, items identified from SAT1 are likely to focus on **structures and processes**, whereas those from SAT2 are more likely to be about **people and culture**. They may find it useful to first look at Example 1, which is based on a fictional college, before starting to populate Table 1 for their own college.

3. The team should then move on to add any other features of their college to Table 1 that they think are important to the development of a WCA. Some team members may find it difficult to decide where to put certain features, but exactly where they place them is relatively unimportant at this stage. Offer reassurance about this and encourage them to add ideas, even if they are unsure where they fit best.

4. Encourage the team to discuss the suggestions made and collaborate about where they fit best on the table. Allow time for suggestions to be discussed and different perspectives to be shared.

5. Discuss the implications for planning and implementing a whole college intervention in mathematics. Ask the team what priorities they feel are emerging and what affordances and constraints they can identify that are relevant to the problem they are trying to address.

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Next steps

As you move on to Self-Assessment Task 4, you will further explore the priorities that have emerged from this discussion by investigating related processes that are currently in place within the college. This will allow the team to redefine the problem to be addressed and identify key priorities, affordances, constraints, and possible unintended consequences to inform the development of a WCA action plan.

CHIME Framework

Contextual	Context matters. A WCA to mathematics must consider the particular features of the college in addition to external factors (national and local) that frame the implementation of mathematics policy and practice in FE.
Holistic	Colleges are complex systems of people and processes, with the whole being *more than the sum of the parts.* Understanding the big picture, and connections between the parts and the whole, is key to a WCA.
Interconnected	There are many connections in the college system. Causes and effects are not always simple, and change can be unpredictable. WCA interventions can fail if the interactions between processes and people are not well understood.
Multidimensional	WCA problems have multiple dimensions, and these are perceived and understood from different points of view. Valuing such diversity can aid understanding and the planning of improvements in mathematics.
Evaluative	Understanding and improving a WCA for mathematics requires effective data generation and information exchange. It is important to develop a culture of self-assessment, critical inquiry, evidence-building, and collective analysis.

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Example 1: Example of a CHIME table for a fictional college

Area for improvement: student attendance at mathematics sessions

	Structures and processes	People and culture
Contextual	Number of sites and geographical arrangement Location of vocational courses and demand for maths on each site	Low aspirations of students in some areas Some lack motivation to study maths Highly motivated and responsive maths teacher workforce
Holistic	The organisation of maths staff timetables is done centrally There is a college-wide electronic system for tracking attendance that everyone can access	The general culture of college staff is to be compliant if systems are understood
Interconnected	Student attendance and timetabling of sessions are connected	Good collaboration between construction and maths staff but weak in sport
Multidimensional	Contributory factors may be timetabling, session length, monitoring systems, inter-site travel (staff), and the location of classrooms used for maths	Some vocational tutors see attendance in maths as their responsibility and act accordingly. Others feel it should be left to maths staff. Maths staff see it as the responsibility of vocational tutors but some take action themselves anyway.
Evaluative	Good data on attendance rates available Little data on the percentage of absences that are followed up	Good evidence from students about their preferences for maths sessions Little evidence to explain why prompt action to deal with student absence is not apparent in some areas

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Table 1: For completion by colleges

	Structures and processes	People and culture
Contextual		
Holistic		
Interconnected		
Multidimensional		
Evaluative		

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