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# AFFINITY GROUP HANDBOOK

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## About Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups are an essential element of the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (WFCP). The groups bring together members of WFCP to share and learn about topics which are especially relevant to professional, technical and vocational education and training.

Each Affinity Group is organised by a member association or college with support from one or two other associations or colleges.

## This Handbook

This handbook provides information and guidance to those who are leading an affinity group or thinking about establishing one. The handbook sets out the steps to establish and thereafter conduct an Affinity Group.

## Purpose of Affinity Groups

The Affinity Groups are designed to create a forum for the sharing of challenges and best practice from across the network of WFCP members. Each group can organise itself to suit the topic and its size but primarily the purpose is to:

- raise challenges relating to the Affinity Group topic
- facilitate experts to provide leading thinking on the topic
- share leading practices
- create opportunities for members of the Affinity Group to support to each other
- promote and publish key findings to help build the body of knowledge relating to the topic.

These will vary over time as an Affinity Group matures.

## About WFCP

The World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (WFCP) is a federation of associations and institutes and other organisations engaged in professional technical and vocational education and training.

Further details about WFCP are available on its web – [wfc.org](http://wfc.org).

## Establishing an Affinity Group

A new Affinity Group can be set-up as new areas of interest to WFCP members arises.

Generally, the Board of WFCP would be alert to emerging topics of interest and would suggest an Affinity Group be established and then seek volunteers to establish it.

Affinity Groups can be long-lived or operate for a time limited period. A time limited Affinity Group is for when the specific topic or challenge is expected to be addressed through a publication or online webinar.

While there is no limit to the topics which may give rise to an Affinity Group they generally fall into one of the following domains of interests to WFCP:

- areas of practice in industries or fields of education such as building and construction or information technology – designed to improve education and training practice
- areas of college and institution leadership and operations such as student support – designed to help colleges and institutes improve their effectiveness
- cross-cutting and emerging areas of practice such as digital learning – designed to keep colleges and institutes at the leading edge of practice
- global advocacy and leadership on policies to lift the importance of professional technical and vocational education and training and the role of WFCP.

## Setting up an Affinity Group

The WFCP will call for volunteers to establish an Affinity Group.

One organisation or college will be asked to sponsor the Affinity Group and volunteers would be sought from WFCP for other associations or colleges to support the sponsor.

The WFCP secretariat provides guidance.

### **1. Clarify purpose and scope**

Based on discussion from the WFCP Board the sponsor is encouraged to describe the purpose and scope of the Affinity Group. This helps WFCP members to decide to engage in the group but also helps the group guide its own operation.

An example of the description is in Box 1

Box 1

#### **Affinity Group in Teacher Professional Development**

Higher applied education is facing both opportunities and challenges of digitalization, AI and the uncertainty of globalization. The visions, capacities and competencies of teachers are crucial to the transformation of the sector. The Teacher Professional Development affinity group aims to build up a platform for teachers to communicate, exchange and learn from each other, through a series of facilitated activities, including but not limited to exchanges, webinars, joint research and papers, training workshops, industry experience, shadowing and site visits and lifelong learning. The group proposes two categories of Award of Excellence, for institutions that demonstrate excellence in teacher professional development, and for individual teachers who are excellent in innovative, creative and dedicated teaching and learning.

### **2. Commence with Webinars**

WFCP has found that conducting one or two webinars on the topic of the Affinity Group tends to identify the people who are interested in being engaged in the Affinity Group. The WFCP secretariat can provide advice about setting up the webinar and promoting it across the WFCP network.

### **3. Call for members**

Organisers of the webinar should organise for participants to put their name forward for membership of the Affinity Group. This creates the momentum to grow membership. Membership is open to both WFCP and non-WFCP members.

### **4. Establish leadership positions**

It is best to identify a person from within the sponsor organisation to be the Affinity Group Lead. Other WFCP members should be asked to volunteer as co-leads. This helps in creating a coalition to drive the agenda but also to share workload, especially when someone takes leave or has another priority tasks.

## **5. *Develop the agenda***

The sponsor lead and co-leads should develop an agenda or establish a program of work. Typically, Affinity Groups will go through standard group formation processes, such as:

- Clarifying the nature of the challenge and issues
- Developing processes to explore solutions
- Sharing solutions
- Further developing the agenda based on work to date.

## **6. *Aim for inclusion***

There are no set steps or formats for operating the Affinity Group. The Affinity Group model works though with strong vision and leadership and with an openness to involve everyone.

The expectation on the Lead and Co-leads is to adopt an open and collaborative approach with all members. This helps all members of the Affinity Group to feel part of the group and to feel they can contribute.

Affinity Groups are encouraged to connect with like organisations related to the topic of the group. This generates two-way benefits: the Affinity Group gets access to expertise and wider connections are formed.

## **7. *Communicate regularly and keep membership open***

One of the key elements of Affinity Groups is to share information, best practice and research. Affinity Groups are encouraged to share items on a regular basis. The WFCP Dispatch and the WFCP website are available channels.

We also appreciate this information sharing through other channels such as association publications and social media.

Most communication should also provide a link to the WFCP Dispatch subscription site as this is the best way for everyone to be kept up to date on WFCP and Affinity Group news.

## **8. *Focus on results and outputs***

To help keep the momentum of Affinity Groups it is always helpful to set a target. This could be release of a small publication or a webinar where results are shared. A small conference could also be held, if travel is feasible, or added to existing conferences that operate across the world.

There is large interests in advancing professional technical and vocational education and training across the globe so these outputs will be well received. They also help to build the impact of WFCP.

The WFCP Board is very happy to recognise the individual organisations and individuals who make major contribution to these works.

### Communication and engagement maintain momentum

As part of the approach to communicating about the Affinity Group the following steps should be followed.

1. Work with the WFCP secretariat to create a high-level information page on the WFCP web
2. Develop a webpage (as part of the Lead organisation web) for more current information that can be updated on a regular basis
3. Consider developing a collaboration site such as GoogleDocs where documents can be shared among members
4. Build and maintain the list of participants of the Affinity Group so it is easy to communicate directly
5. Host webinars and meetings on own platforms if feasible.

### Work toward the WFCP Congress

The work of Affinity Groups culminates at the WFCP Congress. The Congress is the opportunity to meet other members face-to-face and push through on key areas of work.

The Congress program also provides for Affinity Groups to meet and to share work to the wider Congress audience.

### Reporting to WFCP

The board of the WFCP is keen for the Affinity Groups to play a key role in building collaboration across members and to grow the policy and practice influence of WFCP.

While there is a high degree of autonomy in the operation of each Affinity Group the power of the model is sharing of information. It is also helpful for the board to keep track of each Affinity Group so it can assess coverage and effectiveness.

The WFCP Secretariat will produce a simple reporting template (similar to that shown at [Attachment A](#)) for Affinity Groups to report to the board.

### Records and privacy

Each Affinity Group is required to keep records and protect privacy in line with their local requirements.

### Create a simple workplan

WFCP recommends that each Affinity Group creates a simple workplan which outlines its purpose and objectives, the leads and co-leads and then the topics for investigation and timelines as well as expected outputs.

### **Financial Support**

The purpose of Affinity Groups is to bring together virtually the expertise and interests of WFCP members. The leaders and participants volunteer their time. There is not financial support available for staff time.

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## ITEMS FOR REGULAR REPORT TO WFCP

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[Insert reporting period]	
[Insert Affinity Group]	
Objectives	
Leads	
Number of Members	
Meetings held	
Achievements	
Future priorities [including suggestions for Congress]	
Suggestions to WFCP board	