

Guidance for Action Research Leads 2021- 2023



CENTRES FOR EXCELLENCE IN MATHS

Audience: Senior managers overseeing CfEM projects, centre leads & potential nominees for the role of action research leads

1.0 Introduction

This document provides important information for senior managers, centre leads and those interested in continuing or becoming an action research (AR) lead. It relates to the remainder of the government-funded Centre for Excellence in Mathematics programme; Summer 2021 through to end-March 2023. However, note that, as in previous years, DfE requires budgeting (i.e., action planning) in sections (Aug-Mar 2021/2022, Apr-Jul 2022, Aug-Mar 2022/2023).

We present below a national vision for improving teaching, learning and assessment practices and results in FE maths using action research. In summary, this vision is for:

- the widespread adoption of action research for continuous professional development and
- the sharing and implementing of lessons learned from action research.

The document outlines the nature of action research and what is required from centres. Centre leads and action research leads have the opportunity to shape activities depending upon local priorities, whilst funding is available, in order to achieve their own version of this vision.

In the CfEM programme, numerous FE maths teachers have amassed skills and experiences in leading and conducting action research. This can now be drawn upon to help spread, design and embed practicable approaches and support action research by FE maths teachers who are looking to improve their own teaching and assessment and learners' learning and results.

2.0 Vision, Principles and Aims

The aims of CfEM action research from September 2021 onwards are:

2.1 Action Research widely used for CPD

For each CfEM to develop a sustainable model for supporting FE maths teachers and associated colleagues from across partner networks to conduct action research to solve problems, improve their practice and learner attainment. For some CfEMs this may mean working significantly beyond the end of the CfEM funding (March 2023) to reach a critical mass of FE maths teachers, and associated staff, conducting action research on a regular basis. The underlying principle here is that maths departments, if not whole Colleges, see action research as an effective and practicable approach to continuous professional development.

2.2 Share and make use of findings

For each CfEM to identify robust findings, share these with others in the FE maths sector and help support the implementation of lessons learned from action research so they impact on maths level 2 attainment/progress.

In addition, CfEM action research has to fit the wider aims of the CfEM programme, namely:

- a. improving the teaching, learning and assessment of maths by generating evidence of 'what works' in mastery, motivation & engagement, technology and contextualisation
- b. sustainability of the impact of CfEM after the end of funding in March 2023
- c. incorporation of a whole college approach (WCA) and
- d. clarity of focus throughout on raising maths Level 2 attainment of 16-19 year olds in England.

There is no one right model for reaching these aims due to differences between colleges, networks, learners, etc. Staffing, for example, may vary between CfEMs. But what is important to ETF is to build sustainability and engage increasing numbers of teachers, which may mean devising a strategic 2-5 year plan for gradually and systematically spreading skills, knowledge and experience of undertaking and supporting others to undertake action research - plus sharing evidence of what works, for whom, in which contexts - alongside implementing lessons learned from other CfEMs.

3.0 Overview/Key Features

There will be an average of two AR leads per CfEM. AR leads can be nominated from either the centre or a network partner. We expect each AR lead to:

- attend a Train the Trainer professional development programme starting June 2021 - July 2022 (approx. 4 days)
- work closely with their AR peer-mentor
- contribute regularly to Slack (an online community for AR leads)
- assist in the recruitment of AR teachers to an action research group. NB: where there are two (or more) AR leads in one CfEM, **each** AR lead must recruit at least four teachers from across at least two settings to be involved in an annual cycle of collaborative action research.
- organise, deliver and lead a professional development (six) modular programme for their action research teachers
- organise funding/remission of action research teachers (internally & with network partners)
- access specialist support as required. N.B This must be purchased from the CfEM budget.
- operate as an action research champion for their Centre and network
- disseminate findings from their action research cycles
- make links and engage with stakeholders beyond the action research group and, if relevant, the Whole College Approach research.

3.1 Time Commitment

Each AR lead is expected to spend a minimum of one day per week (more in many cases) on their action research activities, with remission from normal teaching and other duties. Each AR teacher is also expected to receive appropriate remission from teaching and other duties in accordance with the requirements of their action research activities. With greater emphasis on collaboration between colleges, AR Leads (and CfEM Leads) are expected to spend a greater proportion of their time than in previous years on facilitating partner engagement, network development and communities of practice.

4.0 The Role and Experience of Action Research Leads

Action research leads will undertake a 'train the trainer' programme to extend their knowledge and skills of designing and leading high quality action research professional development, mentoring and leading change in maths teaching and learning practices. The product of the train the trainer programme will be a CPD programme for action research groups. AR leads will deliver their CPD programme, including action research methods training and collaborative working opportunities to co-design cycles of action research. AR leads will have access to the six online modules delivered by ETF/touchconsulting Ltd/University of Nottingham this year.

Further, AR leads will help small groups of maths teachers - known as action research groups (ARGs) - to identify problems of particular relevance to themselves that can be investigated and mentor these teachers through a series of action research cycles. Action research leads will be supported by ETF, and consideration is currently being given to each AR lead being supported by a peer-mentor.

AR leads could be teachers who have done CfEM action research for one or two years and are ready to draw on their own experience to train and mentor others. Alternatively, a CfEM could have a single AR lead (who may also be the CfEM lead) and take an executive and less hands-on role in research, focusing their attention on network relationships and building capacity, with or without external project management support paid for from CfEM budgets. Yet another example might be one AR lead who has done the role before and one or two who are new to it this year (possibly rotating over time with those who had already had a turn at leading). Again, these are just examples.

Action research leads are discouraged from taking on the role of trials lead as well, although we appreciate a case could be made for this in some instances. **Note *trial teachers cannot take part in action research/be part of action research groups.***

In line with the increased emphasis on networks and collaboration across the whole of the CfEM programme, AR leads will spend significant time and energy involving and supporting network partners in action research projects. This can range from partner induction/engagement; to active collaboration on research; to leading on communities of practice.

We are therefore looking for nominees for the AR lead role who have:

- some experience of undertaking action research
- either experience of or/and willingness to design and lead professional development for peers
- a commitment to working collaboratively with colleagues within and outside of your own College.

5.0 Indicative Timetable

This phase of action research runs from Summer 2021 through to March 2023 - the remainder of the funded CfEM programme. The following timetable (updated 08.06.21) highlights AR lead activity and commitment.

Dates	Activity
Spring Term 2021 08 March 2021 29 March 2021, 17:00 30 April 2021	AR leads recruitment and budgeting in action plans Nominations open for 42 AR leads Nomination window closes Nominees notified of outcomes
Summer Term 2021	
1st June - 30 September 2021	Action Research teacher recruitment led by the AR leads (min. 4 and max. 12 people per AR group including the AR Lead) with greater emphasis on networking as required.) Mentor recruitment and induction
7 June 2021	Submission of CfEM action plan (at this stage you are not expected to provide a detailed outline of your AR project/s)
Wed 16 June 2021 OR Wed 25 August	AR Method Workshop - for Leads who have not previously participated in CfEM AR training. Please note that this workshop will be repeated on 25 August 2021. You need to attend ONE workshop only.
Wed 23 June 2021	Session 1: Getting to Grips with CfEM Action Research (T-t-T) Cohort 1: 9:30 - 12:30 Cohort 2: 1:30 - 4:30
Wed 30 June 2021	Session 2: Designing CPD & cycles of collaborative action research (T-t-T) Cohort 1: 9:30 - 12:30 Cohort 2: 1:30 - 4:30
Autumn Term 2021	
By 22 Oct 2021	Module 1: Action Research - An Overview & Module 2: Project Management - customised delivery by AR leads
Wed 3 November 2021	Session 3: Moving on: reviewing & planning (T-t-T) Cohort 1: 9:30 - 12:30 Cohort 2: 1:30 - 4:30
By 30 November 2021	Module 3: Literature Review - customised delivery by AR leads
By 31 December 2021	Module 4: Data collection - customised delivery by AR leads
Spring Term 2021	

By 28 February 2022	Module 5: Data Analysis - customised delivery by AR leads
Wed 9 March 2022	Session 4: So what, Now what? (T-t-T) Cohort 1: 9:30 - 12:30 Cohort 2: 1:30 - 4:30
By 29 April 2022	Module 6: Reporting & Dissemination - customised delivery by AR leads
Summer Term 2022	
June/July 2022	CfEMLive 2022
Autumn Term 2022 – Spring Term 2023	
September - March 2023	AR leads to start new AR projects with refreshed ARG membership.
Summer Term 2023	
April - July 2023 (beyond the end of the funded programme)	CfEMs to continue action research cycles and disseminate findings.

6.0 Finances

CfEM centres will be expected to allocate between £20,000 to £70,000 per action research project. Within this wide range, the precise amount will depend upon each project focus and size/scope. Where AR leads are from a network partner, the funding will still be routed through the CfEM Centre. It is the responsibility of the CfEM partner to ensure network partners receive funding.

7.0 Submission Process

Having read the guidance, [please submit your nominations via this form](#)¹. The deadline is **Monday 29 March 2021, 17:00**.

Please contact your RML in the first instance, or Cath Gladding, National Research Adviser, ETF at cath.gladding@etfoundation.co.uk if you would like to discuss further.

ETF may invite you to discuss your high level plans and find out more about nominees to help ensure suitability for the role. ETF will notify you of their agreement of nominees for the role of AR lead by Friday 30 April 2021.

¹ https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=KBNK4msCQ0aXXGfaO6TJ_tOpdt-YH05Hh8xSG0KJqS5UMVBSUEg3SkFEQkJMVfJMUcxTTIYNzJEUi4u