

Categorisation / Affinity Mapping

Description

Categorization is a technique for sorting items according to similarity and avoiding the clustering of information. Patterns are revealed when teams sort ideas that are similar but not necessarily obvious. In this way insights and new ideas are drawn out of a cluster of information. Patterns among data is also a useful way of controlling complexity. Whether analyzing research data or considering creative ideas, you can use this method to organize items into logical groups. It is an easy way to bring order to chaos!

Level ★★☆☆☆

🕒 15-60 mins

👤 3-20 people

Materials & Prep

Dataset (post-its)

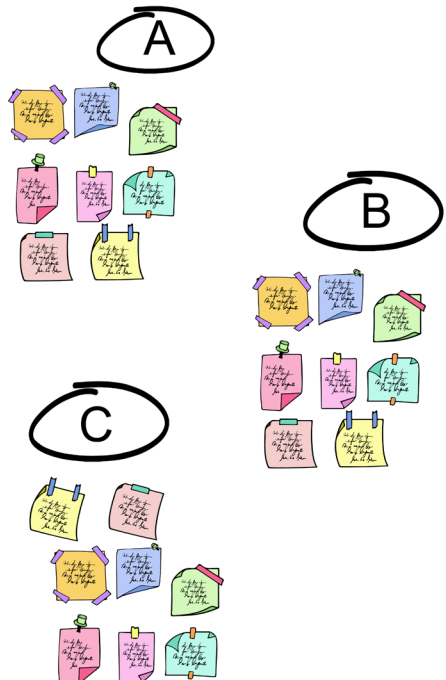
Tape

Wall space

Access Online Toolkit



explorations.cyprusinteractionlab.com



Categorisation / Affinity Mapping

Case Study

To identify possible areas for improvement, after individual brainstorming, the departmental committee used this method to sort through the ideas and identify major categories. These were 'students and curriculum', 'spaces and facilities', 'research' and 'contribution to society'. These categories included all the individual notes and comments by the academics and the team reached an agreement to the four pillars that the department needs to focus on next.

Process

Step 1. Gather a data set (research findings, ideas, etc). Record each item on a separate card or sticky note. Consider using colour to code different types of data. You might use materials previously created using one of the activities described in the Get Inspired activity set.

Step 2. Have one person describe, then place, an item. It is much easier if this role is assumed by the facilitator.

Step 3. Invite others to place similar items in proximity. Repeat the pattern until all items are included.

Step 4. Discuss and rearrange items as groupings emerge. Look for opportunities to create subgroupings.

Step 5. Label the clusters that finally take shape. Don't label the clusters too early. They may shift.