

# Researching Organisational Culture

A Self-help Tool

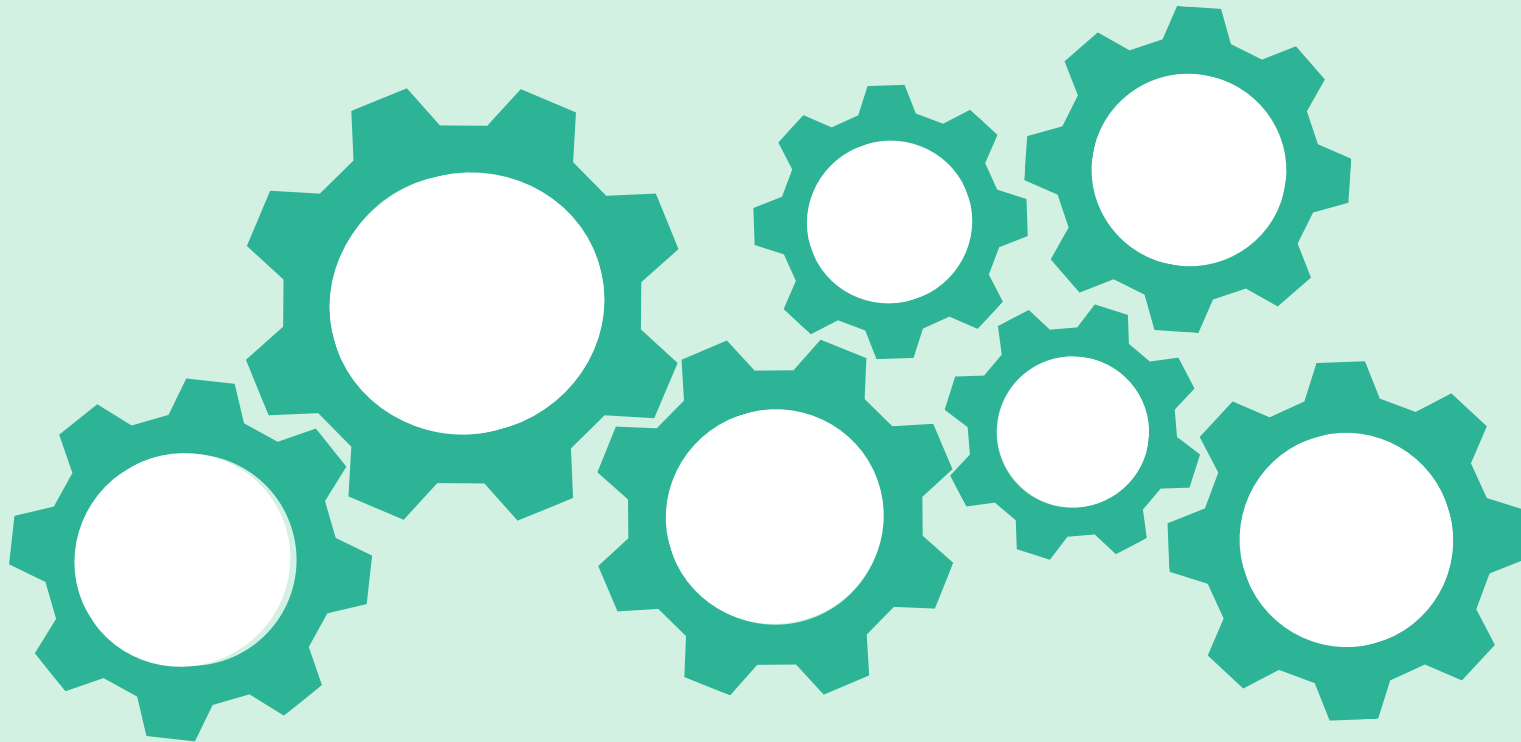
## Introduction

Who is the right employer for me? This can be a really valuable question to ask yourself when considering which jobs to apply for, or when thinking about your future career options. That's because the experience of undertaking a particular job role can be significantly different depending on which organisation you choose to work for.

One of the biggest influences on this different experience is what we call organisational culture, which describes the particular characteristics of a company, such as its values, mission and objectives, as well as the day-to-day environment within the company. Even individual departments within an organisation can have their own culture.

A clear example of this is the difference between a company that is particularly driven by targets and bonuses, compared to a company that focuses a lot more on work-life balance. But, in reality, there are often many aspects that contribute to an organisation's culture.

When researching a potential employer, it is important to consider how their values and mission match with your own personal values and purpose. People tend to be most content in their employment when the actions and attitude of their organisation match their own priorities (Qualtrics, 2022; LinkedIn, 2023). Therefore, it's just as important to identify not only what an organisation says about itself, but also the extent to which this is identifiable in their actions.



## **This tool is designed to...**

- Provide you with an introduction to organisational culture.
- Give you a tool to use when researching the organisational culture of a company/ organisation.
- Help you consider whether a particular organisation could be a good fit for you.

## **Consider using this tool if you...**

- Are thinking about which organisation/company you want to work for.
- Are preparing for a job interview or writing an application (this will help you tailor your answers).
- Are trying to decide between multiple job opportunities.

# How to use this tool:

**1**

## Identify the organisation you want to research

For example, you might choose to research an organisation because you are thinking about whether you might like to work for them at some point in the future, or maybe because you are considering an opportunity with them now.

**2**

## Research the answers to the questions within the 'The Iceberg - Organisational Culture' Tool on the following page

You may find the following information sources useful:

- The organisation's website (e.g. 'About us', 'Aims and mission', 'News', 'Events', etc.)
- [www.directoryoftheprofessions.co.uk](http://www.directoryoftheprofessions.co.uk) (To search for relevant profession bodies/organisations.)
- News websites
- Social media (What is the organisation's profile? What do the public or employees say about the organisation?)
- LinkedIn (What do employees say about the organisation?)
- Review websites (e.g. [www.glassdoor.co.uk](http://www.glassdoor.co.uk); [www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk))
- Your personal networks (e.g. family, friends, lecturers, etc.)

# The Iceberg - Organisational Culture



How does the organisation act?

What does the organisation say?

What is the real  
experience of employees?

- How is the organisation perceived by the public? (e.g. reviews, social media)
- Has the organisation been in the news or on social media? If so, for what reasons?

Answer:

---

- What's the organisation's stated mission, values and objectives?
- How is the organisation portrayed in its own publicity?
- **Do these aspects match with how the organisation acts? Or are their actions at odds with their values?**

Answer:

---

- What do employees say about the organisation?
- What is their experience of working for the organisation?
- **Do employees have the same values as those stated by the organisation?**

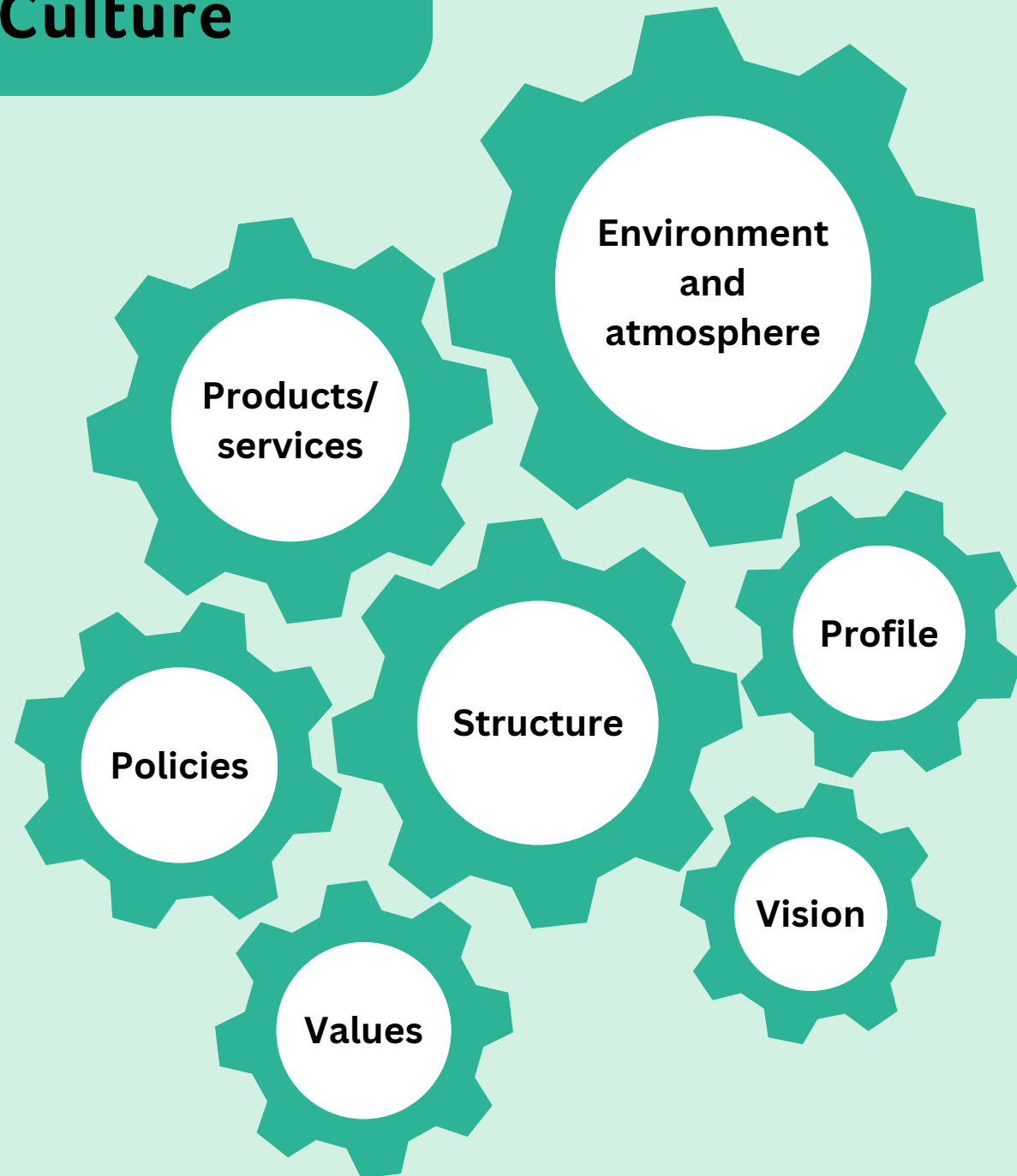
Answer:

# Comparing Priorities and Culture

**3**

**Compare the organisational culture of this organisation to your own priorities**

Use the table below to identify your priorities for your future job or career. How closely do they match with what you have found out about the organisation you have been researching?



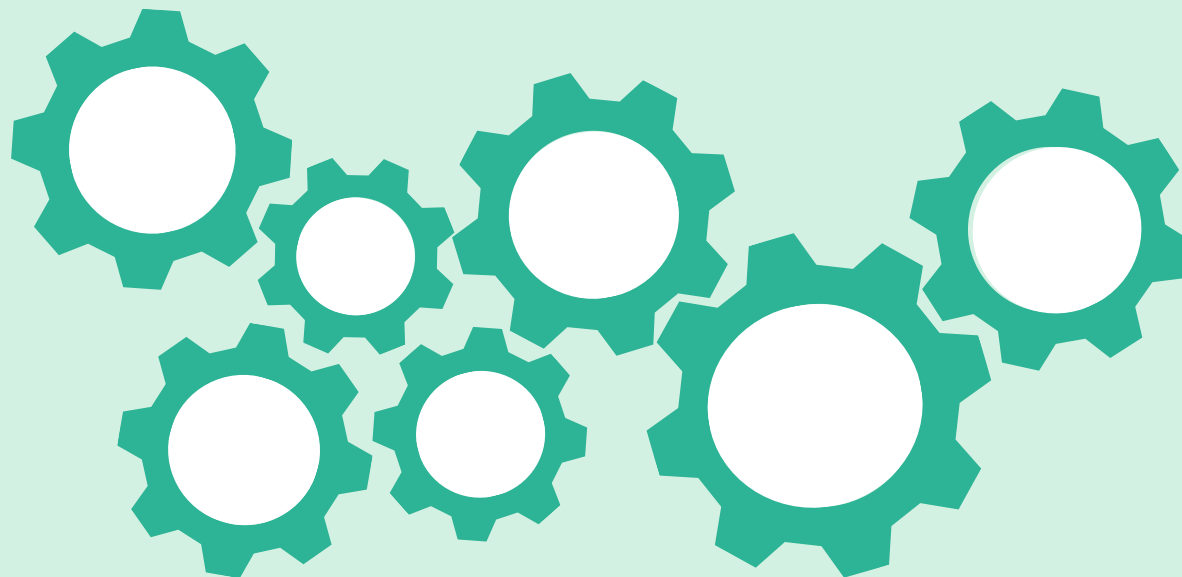
Question	Answer
What is my ideal employer (e.g. location, size, sector, etc.)?	
What are the <u>values</u> most important to me?	
What are my <u>strengths and skills</u> ? What makes me unique to other applicants?	
What <u>environment/atmosphere</u> am I looking for in an employer? (e.g. community, task-driven, flexible, hierarchy, etc.)	
<b>In what ways does the organisation researched in Step 2 match/ not match with my attributes and priorities?</b>	

## Pause, Reflect, Act.

- What is the organisational culture of your chosen company/organisation?
- How closely does this organisation match with your own priorities?
- Do you think they could be a good employer for you?

**NB: Because everyone is different, no one solution on its own is necessarily a magic bullet, so please look at our other Self-help Tools as well, and use the ones that work for you. Some other relevant self-help guides include:**

- Unique Me – identifying the values, interests and characteristics that form your authentic self.
- The BIG Questions – thinking about what life and work mean to you.
- Find the Fit – how well do your career ideas fit with what you want from a job?

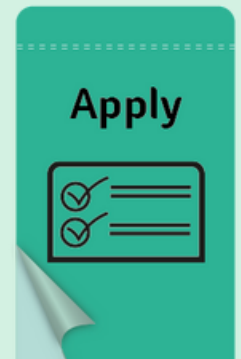




# References and Resources

- LinkedIn. (2023). Why 8 in 10 U.S. workers want employers' values to match theirs. [hud.ac/rvp](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-8-10-u-s-workers-want-employers-values-match-theirs-linkedin)
- Qualtrics. (2022). Employees who feel aligned with company values are more likely to stay. [hud.ac/rvq](https://www.qualtrics.com/articles/work/employee-engagement/)
- Schein, E. (1992). Organizational Culture and Leadership. 2nd edition, San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

If this exercise has been uncomfortable to complete, or has simply raised issues you wish to consider further, you are welcome to talk through your feelings with a member of the [Careers and Employability Service](#) in a confidential setting by booking a careers appointment via the CES website, or by using the [Wellbeing Services](#).



If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use this Organisational Culture tool with your students, we would love to hear from you and share good practice. We would ask that you retain reference to its author as a matter of courtesy, and acknowledge the other sources we have used. Thank you.