

Designing Assessment for Clustered Units of Competency

Clustering is the method of combining competencies into groups that offer significant value for learning, evaluation, or workplace requirements.

Advantages of Clustering Units for Assessment

- Reflects workplace tasks: clustering allows for a holistic assessment of a student's overall competence in their work environment.
- Authentic evidence: students perform tasks that are interconnected.
- Co-requisite requirements: clustering can satisfy requirements as mandated or suggested in training packages.
- Saves time: clustering, tasks or activities common to several units of competency can be addressed collectively, thereby reducing redundancy.

Potential Drawbacks of Clustering

- Incorrect unit selection or excessive clustering: choosing units for clustering requires careful deliberation.
- Restricting exit points: student dropout points within a program should be carefully considered.
- Convenience over real workplace practice: clustering should not be solely designed for RTO's convenience.
- Recognition within the cluster: recognising already-held units of competency may be challenging within a cluster.
- Assessing units from different AQF levels: the requirements for each unit could greatly differ.
- Monitoring student progress: assessments may overlap multiple units, which can be complex to track.

Clustering Approaches

1. Task Analysis

This approach begins with the job role or tasks performed in the workplace, then maps back to the components of relevant units. Trainers and assessors must comprehend the industry and typical workplace practices to identify clustering opportunities and design appropriate assessment tools.

Steps in Task Analysis

1. Identify the workplace activity to be assessed.
2. Break down the overall task into smaller steps.
3. Examine which units of competency can be used in the assessment.
4. Develop task descriptions and checklists for each assessment tool.
5. Map against the units of competency.
6. Develop related documentation such as assessor guides.
7. Identify gaps left for assessment in other tasks.

2. Unit Analysis

This method begins with the Units of Competency and identifies areas of common 'cross-over'.

Steps in Unit Analysis

1. Examine the units of competency.
2. Map out what areas are common across the units.
3. Design a task for assessment that covers common areas of the units.
4. Develop task instructions and checklists for each assessment tool.
5. Map against the units of competency.
6. Develop related documentation such as assessor guides.
7. Identify gaps left for assessment in other tasks.

Making Judgements

When making assessments in clusters, evidence must be evaluated against the Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence, just as in individual assessments. Holistic judgement is not applied to 'clustered' assessments such as projects. Judgements must be made for each Unit of Competency within the 'clustered' assessment, considering the dimensions of competency, employability skills, foundation skills, and the transferability of knowledge and skills in the workplace.

Quality Assurance Processes

Design, development, trialing, testing, making improvements, validation, moderation, and continuous improvement form part of a robust quality assurance process.

- Validation is a quality review process that confirms the consistency of valid assessment judgements.
- Moderation is a quality control process that ensures uniform decision-making standards are applied to all assessment results.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- Consider evidence on workplace tasks that are holistic.
- Use questioning to guide clustering.
- Have a detailed knowledge of the units of competency.
- Have well developed vocational competency and currency.
- Recognise overlap during discussions/examining evidence.
- Develop RPL tools that recognise overlap between units.

Note: This VET Fact Sheet provides general information and should not be considered as legal advice.