

Clustered Qualifications: An Explanation

Clustered qualifications defined

A cluster of qualifications is not defined in the AQF. Two related terms, nested qualifications and integrated qualifications, are defined in the AQF as follows:

Nested qualifications are qualifications that include articulated arrangements from a lower level qualification into a higher level qualification to enable multiple entry and exit points.

Integrated qualifications are purposely designed qualifications that enable explicit articulation pathways and encompass more than one AQF level and/or qualification type and/or education and training sector.

Other clustered arrangements are used by providers and are variously named. They are not defined in the AQF.

Clustered qualifications explained

All AQF qualification types are discrete.

Clustered qualifications are not qualification types but a grouping of two or more AQF qualification types at either the same or different AQF level. Each qualification type in the cluster must meet the *AQF Qualification Type Specifications* for the qualification type.

Nested and integrated qualifications are examples of clustered qualifications that are intended to enable students to progress from lower to higher level qualifications in the same discipline in a structured way to facilitate accessible pathways. Clustered qualifications should be designed to provide students with the option of direct entry to higher level qualifications if they have demonstrated the relevant entry requirements.

Nested qualifications may not be available in all education and training sectors.

Graduates are entitled to receive testamurs and records of results for each qualification attained from the cluster and to retain them once they have been issued unless the issuing organisation has a policy regarding the surrender of certification documentation (*AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy* section 2.1.3).

Clustered qualifications applied

It is the responsibility of organisations developing and/or accrediting qualifications to exercise professional judgment to ensure that design of programs of learning leading to qualifications enables students to achieve the learning outcomes for both the qualification type and the discipline. Decisions about design of qualifications must take into account students' likelihood of successfully achieving qualification outcomes and also must ensure that integrity of qualification outcomes is maintained. Those developing and/or accrediting qualifications should be able to provide a pedagogical rationale to justify a decision to cluster qualifications.

If a cluster of qualifications consists of two or more qualifications at the same AQF level, some rationalisation of the volume of learning may be justifiable.

For a cluster comprising qualifications at different AQF levels, any reduction in the volume of learning for any of the qualifications in the arrangement must ensure that the specifications for each qualification type are met and the learning outcomes can be achieved.

See also

[AQF explanation on volume of learning](#)

[AQF explanation on Bachelor Honours Degree](#)

[AQF explanation on discipline](#)

[AQF explanation on articulation](#)