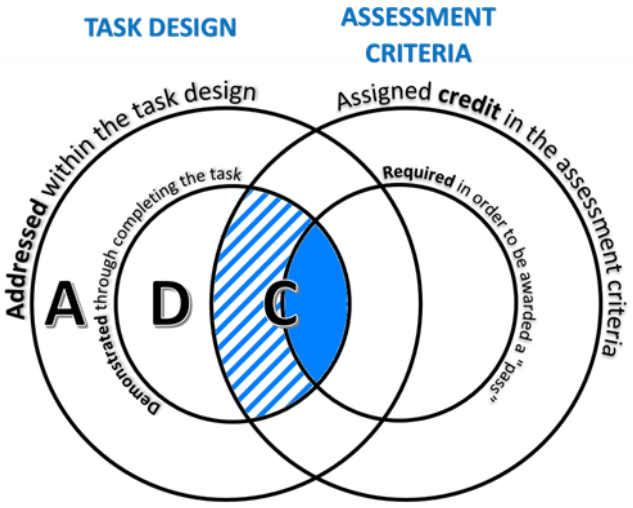
Assessing the assessments: Evidencing and benchmarking student learning outcomes in Chemistry

Lead Institution: The University of Sydney. **Partner Institutions:** The University of Adelaide, Curtin University, Deakin University, Macquarie University, Queensland University of Technology, University of Wollongong

Project Aim: To develop a tool that enables academic staff to evaluate the capacity of a task to demonstrate students' achievement of threshold learning outcomes. This is critical within the current Higher Education Standards Framework. Development of the tool was carried out in multiple stages, over the duration of the project. The tool itself, available on the project website, forms an important output and the way the tool operates is summarised in the figure below. It requires decisions on whether a learning outcome is addressed (A), demonstrated (D), or given credit for (C) in a specific assessment task. If that credit is required to pass the assessment task, then attainment of the particular threshold learning outcome is demonstrated immediately. Without this, a portfolio of tasks may be required to demonstrate a particular outcome. Importantly, the design of the tool allows it to be widely applicable for any desired learning outcome in any context.



Project outcomes: Widespread awareness of, and deeper thinking in relation to, the purpose of assessment, extending beyond the project team into the chemistry academic community in Australia. The outcome of expanded appreciation of the importance and complexity of assessment was achieved in parallel and intertwined with the process of developing and refining the evaluation tool, through professional development workshops, and dissemination of project findings at conferences. The significance of chemistry academics taking ownership of a new approach to embedding assessment cannot be emphasised too strongly.

Beyond this project, ongoing professional development will be required to sustain this outcome. The Chemistry Discipline Network gives a platform to continue this work. In support of this, a set of exemplar assessment tasks and an online version of the workshop, together with a range of other resources, are available on the project's website at http://chemnet.edu.au/assessment.

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