Challenges with Establishing Prerequisites for Tree Felling Units

17 Dec 2023

Introduction

This document discusses the challenges in setting prerequisite units for the tree felling units. While stakeholders offered feedback on this topic, it was not part of the project scope. As such, the topic is noted in the Issues Register for consultations and potential action in any future review of these units.

Stakeholder Perspectives

The implementation of prerequisite units has been identified as a key concern of stakeholders from the beginning of this project, although prerequisites were outside of the project scope. The Technical Committee and stakeholders have recommended prerequisites to the tree felling units so that individuals commence their training with preliminary skills in chainsaw operations, thus fostering a safe training and assessment environment.

Stakeholder Preferences

There has been no unified agreement on what the prerequisites should be for any of the units. For the basic unit, stakeholders could not come to a consensus between the units *AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws*, *FWPCOT2273 Trim and cut felled trees*, or *FWPHAR2209 Trim and cut harvested trees.* This is because different units are used in training for different environments.

Similarly, there was no unified agreement on what prerequisites the intermediate and advanced units might have. Some stakeholders support a structured prerequisite progression from basic to intermediate and intermediate to advanced level. Others suggest offering a range of prerequisite options similar to the basic unit. Neither of these options would meet the requirements of prerequisites.

Challenges in Aligning with Standards for Training Packages

**Prerequisite Progression Issue:** Mandating the basic or intermediate unit as a prerequisite for subsequent unit conflicts with the Training Package Organising Framework’s guidelines. These standards restrict the use of prerequisites that dictate the order or sequence of delivery. Feedback from the current project indicates that the tree felling units can be taught independently as they contain all required skills, including safety skills. The difference in level reflects the application of skills in contexts of differing complexity. As the tree felling units do not contain or define specific skills required in one unit that do not exist in the subsequent level/unit, having them as prerequisites for each other would be perceived as imposing an order of learning.

Additionally, it is important to note that implementing a prerequisite progression contradicts the objectives of the current project to address the tree availability challenge. Such a prerequisite structure could inadvertently lead to increased tree usage, which is contrary to the intended scope.

**Choice of Prerequisites Issue:** Prerequisites are instituted when they contain skills and knowledge that are essential or integral to the skills of the unit to which they are prerequisites. They are not intended as a means to accumulate experience or practice.

For example, the units *FWPCOT2273 Trim and cut felled trees* and *FWPHAR2209 Trim and cut harvested trees* show substantial overlap with the content of the tree felling unit(s). The primary difference lies in the specific cutting techniques used in these two distinct chainsaw applications. The techniques learned in the trim and cut units are not inherently essential for teaching the techniques specific to tree felling. Similar to the unit progression from basic to intermediate and from intermediate to advanced, if FWPCOT2273 and FWPHAR2209 were established as prerequisites for the tree felling unit(s), their sole role would be to facilitate experience in using a chainsaw, rather than to impart specific skills and knowledge essential for tree felling. This approach would contravene the intended purpose of prerequisites.

The unit *AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws* contains skills and knowledge that are not present in the tree felling unit(s) yet essential for their delivery. This includes fundamental principles such as understanding chainsaw components and functions, managing fuel mixes, and applying low-risk work practices, including rapid disengagement and dealing with foreign matter. While some stakeholders supported this unit as a prerequisite for the basic tree felling unit, choosing it could restrict access to the basic unit for learners who have already completed *FWPCOT2273* and *FWPHAR2209* and possess experience with chainsaws. While some stakeholders suggested that learners could choose from a list of prerequisite options for each unit, this is not possible and would defeat the purpose of a prerequisite as learners would be coming into the unit with different training.

Recommendation for Future Review of Unit Structure and Content

It has been noted that there is significant stakeholder support for prerequisites to the tree felling units based on safety considerations. The issue has been identified as a priority for future investigation and it has been noted in the Issues Register that the issue of prerequisites should be consulted on and addressed as part of a future full review of the units.