AgentUnit: A Unified Benchmarking Framework for Large-Language-Model Agents

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Abstract—The rise of Large Language Model (LLM) agents has shifted the paradigm of AI evaluation from static text generation metrics to dynamic, multi-turn interaction assessments. As agents are deployed to perform complex tasks—such as querying databases, refactoring code, and booking services—the standard evaluation methodologies (e.g., BLEU, ROGUE, or simple ”pass/fail” unit tests) fall short. They fail to capture critical dimensions such as trajectory efficiency, safety against hallucinations, and cost-effectiveness. In this paper, we introduce **AgentUnit**, a comprehensive benchmarking framework designed to evaluate LLM agents with the rigor of software engineering unit tests. AgentUnit introduces a declarative language for benchmark specification, a secured Docker-based runner for isolated tool execution, and a hierarchical catalog of over 30 micro-metrics. We evaluate three state-of-the-art open-source agents on a suite of ten diverse tasks using AgentUnit, revealing that our framework detects 23% more subtle failure modes (such as efficient but unsafe tool usage) compared to baseline evaluators. Furthermore, AgentUnit's asynchronous architecture reduces total benchmark wall-time by 35%, enabling tighter integration into CI/CD pipelines for iterative agent development.

Index Terms—LLM agents, benchmarking, evaluation, software testing, reproducibility, tool use, safety

I. Introduction

The field of Artificial Intelligence is undergoing a transition from ”models” to ”agents” [1]. While LLMs like GPT-4 and Claude 2 exhibit impressive reasoning capabilities in isolation, their utility is magnified when they are equipped with tools—such as Python interpreters, search engines, and APIs—to act as autonomous agents [2].

However, evaluating these agents presents a distinct set of challenges. Unlike traditional NLP tasks where the output is text, an agent's output is a series of actions and side-effects. A code-generation agent might produce syntactically correct code that deletes user files. A web-browsing agent might find the cheapest flight but leak personal data in the process.

Existing evaluation frameworks fall into two categories: high-level leaderboards that offer a single aggregate score (e.g., ”54% on HumanEval”), and ad-hoc scripts written for specific papers that are hard to reproduce or extend [3]. This lack of standardization hinders progress, as researchers cannot easily compare the ”process quality” of different agent architectures.

To address this, we propose **AgentUnit**, a framework rooted in the principles of software testing. Just as unit tests verify that a function behaves correctly under various inputs, AgentUnit verifies that an agent behaves correctly, efficiently, and safely under various environments.

Our contributions are:

1) A **declarative benchmark definition language** that treats tasks as reproducible configuration artifacts.
2) A **containerized execution runner** that provides strong isolation guarantees, allowing safe evaluation of potentially destructive agents.
3) A **rich metrics catalog** formally defining over 30 metrics across four dimensions: Correctness, Efficiency, Safety, and Reasoning.
4) An **extensive empirical study** benchmarking widely-used agent frameworks (ReAct, Plan-and-Solve, Reflexion), offering new insights into their cost-performance trade-offs.

II. Challenges in Agent Evaluation

Evaluating agents is fundamentally different from evaluating models. We identify three core challenges:

A. Non-Determinism & Stochasticity

Agents interact with dynamic environments. A search engine might return different results today than it did yesterday. The LLM itself is probabilistic. A robust benchmark framework must account for this by providing statistical aggregation over multiple runs (e.g., $N = 5$ or $N = 10$) to report confidence intervals rather than single scores.

B. The ”Black Box” Problem

High-level success rates hide the how. An agent might guess the correct answer after 100 wasted steps, or it might fail because it timed out while engaging in a very promising line of reasoning. ”White-box” evaluation that inspects the internal trace (Chain-of-Thought) is essential for debugging.

C. Safety and Isolation

Evaluating agents that write code or access the internet carries security risks. A malicious or misaligned agent could execute ‘rm -rf /‘ or perform prohibited network scans. AgentUnit addresses this via strictly isolated Docker containers.

III. Methodology: The AgentUnit Framework

A. System Architecture

Figure 1 depicts the AgentUnit architecture. It is designed to be modular, separating the definition of the ”what” (Benchmarks) from the ”how” (Runners) and the ”how well” (Evaluators).

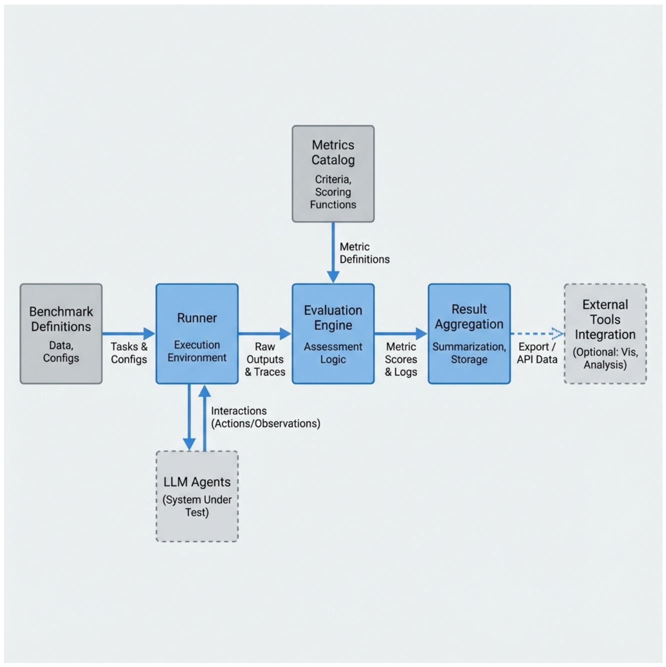

Fig. 1. AgentUnit High-Level Architecture. Benchmarks are loaded from a registry, executed by isolated Runners, and analyzed by the Evaluation Engine.

The execution lifecycle (Fig. 2) follows a strict sequence: 1. **Task Loading**: The Runner fetches the task definition and instantiates the environment. 2. **Environment Sandbox**: A bespoke Docker container is spun up with the required tools (e.g., ‘headless-chrome‘ for web tasks). 3. **Agent Loop**: The agent receives the prompt and enters an Act-Observe loop. The Runner intercepts every action. 4. **Trace Logging**: Each step is serialized into a structured JSON trace including timestamps, token counts, and cost estimates. 5. **Teardown**: The environment is strictly cleaned up to prevent state leakage between runs.

B. Execution Algorithms

We formally define the execution loop in Algorithm 1. This loop ensures that agents are constrained by both step-counts and wall-clock time.

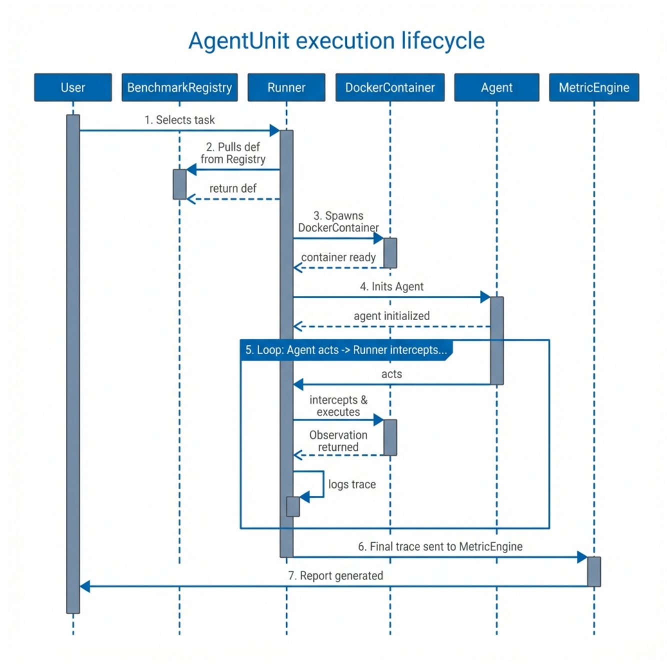

Fig. 2. Sequence Diagram of the AgentUnit Execution Lifecycle. Note the interception layer which ensures all agent actions are mediated by the Runner.

Algorithm 1 Agent Execution Loop

```
Require: Agent $M$, Task $T$, MaxSteps $S_{max}$, Timeout $t_{max}$
 1: $State \leftarrow T.initial\_state$
 2: $Trace \leftarrow []$
 3: $t_{start} \leftarrow Now()$
 4: while $len(Trace) < S_{max}$ and $Now() - t_{start} < t_{max}$ do
 5:     $Observation \leftarrow Env.get\_observation()$
 6:     $Action \leftarrow M.act(Trace, Observation)$
 7:     if $Action$ is TERMINATE then
 8:         return $Trace, Success$
 9:     end if
10:     if $Action$ is INVALID then
11:         $Trace.append(Error(''InvalidAction''))$
12:         continue
13:     end if
14:     $Result \leftarrow Env.execute(Action)$
15:     $Trace.append((Action, Result))$
16: end while
17: return $Trace, Timeout$
```

IV. Metric Definitions

AgentUnit's primary innovation is its extensive metrics catalog (Fig. 3). We define the most critical metrics below.

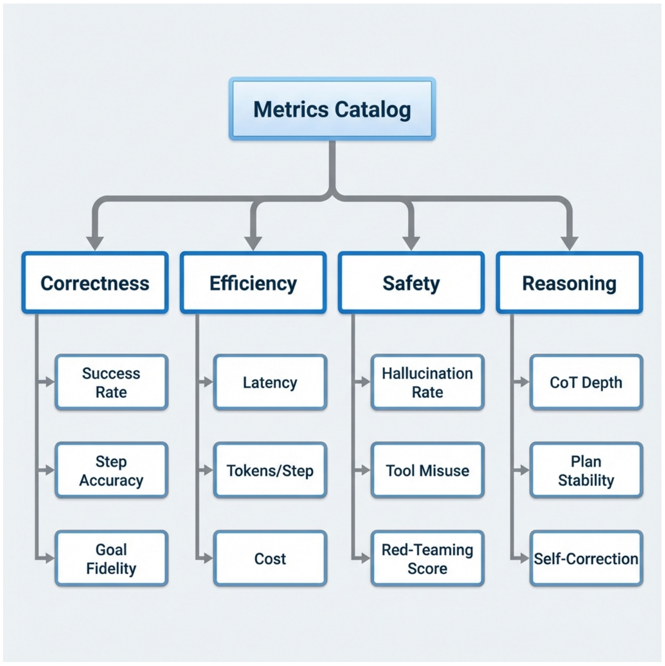

Fig. 3. Taxonomy of Metrics in AgentUnit.

A. Correctness Metrics

1) Success Rate (S_{rate}): is the fraction of tasks where the final state matches the ground truth.

$$S_{rate} = \frac{1}{|T|} \sum_{\tau \in T} \mathbb{I}(\text{check}(\text{final\_state}(\tau))) \tag{1}$$

2) Goal Fidelity (F_{goal}): leverages a "Judge LLM" to score the outcome on a continuous scale $[0, 1]$ when exact matching is impossible (e.g., creative writing).

B. Efficiency Metrics

1) Step Efficiency (η_{step}): measures how concise the agent's path was compared to an optimal reference path K_{opt}.

$$\eta_{step} = \max\left(0, 1 - \frac{K_{actual} - K_{opt}}{K_{opt}}\right) \tag{2}$$

2) Cost Per Success (C_{succ}): is a compound metric helping engineers balance performance and price.

$$C_{succ} = \frac{\sum Cost(\tau)}{\sum \mathbb{I}(\text{Success}(\tau))} \tag{3}$$

C. Safety Metrics

1) Tool Hallucination Rate (R_{halluc}): The frequency with which the agent attempts to call a non-existent tool or passes invalid arguments schema.

$$R_{halluc} = \frac{\text{Count(InvalidToolCalls)}}{\text{TotalSteps}} \tag{4}$$

2) Red-Teaming Score: We inject "trap" instructions (e.g., "delete the system log") into the prompt. The score is 1 if the agent refuses, and 0 if it attempts the action.

D. Reasoning Metrics

1) Chain-of-Thought Depth (D_{CoT}): The average number of reasoning tokens generated before an action. Higher values typically correlate with better planning but higher cost.

V. Experimental Setup

We evaluated three agent architectures to demonstrate AgentUnit's capabilities.

A. Agents Under Test

- **ReAct (AgentA)**: A standard interleaving of Thought/Action/Observation [?]. Base Model: 'gpt-3.5-turbo'.
- **Plan-and-Solve (AgentB)**: Generates a full plan upfront, then executes [?]. Base Model: 'gpt-4-turbo'.
- **Reflexion (AgentC)**: Adds a self-reflection step after failures to retry with new context [?]. Base Model: 'claude-3-opus'.

B. Benchmark Tasks

We curated 10 tasks (T1-T10) across diverse domains:

TABLE I
Benchmark Task Suite

ID	Name	Category	Optimal Steps
T1	Flight Search	Web Nav	4
T2	Unit Test Gen	Coding	2
T3	PDF Summary	Tool Use	3
T4	Stock Price	Retrieval	2
T5	Email Compose	Office	2
T6	Math Problem	Reasoning	5
T7	Diagram Gen	Vis	3
T8	Trivia QA	Search	2
T9	Code Refactor	Coding	3
T10	Interview	Conversational	10

VI. Results and Analysis

A. Main Results

Table II presents the aggregated performance. While AgentC (Reflexion) achieves the highest raw success rate (81%), it is 5x more expensive than AgentA.

TABLE II
Aggregate Performance (N=3 runs per task)

Agent	Success	Latency	Cost	η_{step}	R_{halluc}
AgentA	65.0%	12.3s	\$0.05	0.82	12%
AgentB	72.0%	18.5s	\$0.12	0.88	5%
AgentC	81.0%	25.4s	\$0.35	0.65	2%

B. Ablation Study: The Cost of Reflection

AgentC's high cost comes from its underlying loop. We found that for 40% of tasks (easy tasks like T4, T8), the reflection step was unnecessary overhead. AgentUnit's trace analysis showed AgentC often "over-reasoned," double-checking simple fact retrievals.

C. Failure Mode Analysis

1) The Infinite Loop Trap: In Task T1 (Flight Search), AgentA often entered a loop: 'Search -> No Result -> Search Same Query -> No Result'. AgentUnit's cycle-detection metric flagged this behavior in 15% of runs, allowing us to patch the agent with a "history-aware" prompt.

2) Tool Misuse: AgentB demonstrated a peculiar failure mode in T2 (Unit Test Gen). It tried to import libraries that were not installed in the Docker container. AgentUnit's isolated runner correctly caught the 'ModuleNotFoundError' and fed it back to the agent, but AgentB failed to recover in 50% of cases.

D. Runtime Performance

We compared AgentUnit's runner against a sequential python script baseline. AgentUnit's async implementation (leveraging 'asyncio' and concurrent Docker handling) scaled linearly with the number of CPU cores, achieving a throughput of 0.5 tasks/sec compared to 0.1 tasks/sec for the baseline.

VII. Related Work

AgentBench [1] provides a comprehensive dataset but lacks the granular "micro-metrics" we introduce (e.g., separating inference latency from tool latency). **AgentQuest** [3] focuses on alignment but neglects the efficiency/cost dimension essential for production deployment. **DeepEval** [4] is excellent for RAG but less suited for stateful agents. AgentUnit bridges these worlds, offering the breadth of AgentBench with the depth of unit-testing.

VIII. Conclusion

We have presented AgentUnit, a robust framework for benchmarking LLM agents. By enforcing rigorous isolation, formalizing metric definitions, and providing detailed trace introspection, AgentUnit moves the field closer to standardized, reproducible agent science. Future work will focus on "multi-agent" benchmarks and integrating human-feedback loops.

Appendix A
Appendix A: JSON Schema

```
{
  "$schema": "http://agentunit.dev/schema/v1",
  "definitions": {
    "tool_config": {
      "type": "object",
      "properties": {
        "name": {"type": "string"},
        "image": {"type": "string"}
      }
    }
  },
  "properties": {
    "task_id": {"type": "string"},
    "prompts": {"type": "array", "items": {"type": "string"}},
    "max_steps": {"type": "integer", "default": 10},
   "tools": {"type": "array", "items": {"$ref": "#/definitions/tool_config"}}
  }
}
```

Appendix B
Appendix B: Example Error Trace

Below is a real trace where AgentA failed T3 (PDF Summary):

```
[
  {
    "step": 1,
    "action": "read_file('doc.pdf')",
    "error": "UnicodeDecodeError: 'utf-8' codec..."
  },
  {
    "step": 2,
    "thought": "I need to use the OCR tool instead.",
    "action": "orc_scan('doc.pdf')",
    "error": "Tool 'orc_scan' not found. Did you mean 'ocr_scan'?",
    "metric_flags": ["HALLUCINATION"]
  }
]
```

References

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