

Europe Active/EREPS Registration Requirements Profile

EQF Level 6 Graduate Exercise Professional
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I - Executive Summary

This document contains the essential requirements that a bachelor graduate exercise professional must provide to be able to be registered to the European Register for Exercise Professionals (EREPS). The requirements are based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) level 6, which indicates the first level of higher education. Thus, the course providers are universities and colleges. This is the core reason, why the Professional Standards Committee decided to develop this requirement profile instead of the usual way of standards development like for the already established levels 2-5 (see chapter 1).

The competencies, skills and underpinning knowledge behind the requirements that are delivered by universities and colleges are mandatory for exercise professionals working as Graduate Exercise Professionals in the European health and fitness industry. They are aligned with the industry main goal to get: **'More People, More Active, More Often'**.

This booklet containing the EuropeActive Requirements Profile for EQF level 6 applicants is organized in the following chapters, trying to offer to the reader a comprehensive approach to the requested attributes.

Finally, it is to be noted that a qualified group of technical experts across Europe representing the academic side of our sector volunteered to assist with the development of this EuropeActive Requirements Profile, and that relevant experts around the world have been involved on the external consultation process.

II - Technical Expert Group Members & External Consultation Experts

This document is an updated version of the Requirements Profile of the Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist published in 2016. The revision of the main assumptions of this document was done by fitness sector stakeholders during the 3rd Sector Skills Alliance Meeting and during the International Standards Meeting in Copenhagen in 2019, as a part of the session on "Beyond Level 4 – Pathways for the Aspiring Fitness Professional". The revision process was led by Julian Berriman, Director of the Professional Standards Committee. This document was updated in May 2023.

TEG Members for the Requirements Profile of the Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist (EQF level 6), published in 2016:

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Julian Berriman, EuropeActive Director Professional Standards Committee

III - Introductory Statement about the Necessity to Develop a Requirements Profile rather than Standards for EQF Level 6

Many European universities and all the other suppliers of higher education outside the continent offer excellent programmes in the fields of exercise sciences, kinesiology, health and fitness, sport sciences, etc.

The European health and fitness market provides amazing job opportunities for graduates coming from those educational backgrounds. In practice, there are not enough graduates working in the fitness industry. This, by turn, produces a lack of knowledge and expertise to deliver meaningful outcomes on the European Public Health agenda. Previously, graduates could not be registered onto the European Register of Exercise Professionals (EREPS), as the current framework of occupations was limited to the vocational levels from 2 up to 5. The system of registration is based on the development of standards for the different levels. Training providers can submit their courses for accreditation. After the successful completion of the accreditation process, graduates of these vocational courses are automatically registered onto EREPS. Thus, the next logical step would be to

develop standards for the first level of higher education, the level 6. A problematic issue, is the relevant higher education institutions, must apply for accreditation like the vocational training providers. Due to their recognition and standing within the educational landscape a very unrealistic scenario because there seems to be no necessity for these institutions to do that. This in turn, results in a serious disadvantage for their graduates in the labour market: no visibility on EREPS. Hence, the Professional Standards Committee of Europe Active decided to apply an alternative for the academic levels of the EQF that differs from the implemented approach for vocational standards to improve the recognition and visibility of the aforementioned graduates. It is called the "requirements profile".

The "requirements profile" is based on the idea that professionals with a bachelor/undergraduate degree in sport sciences, kinesiology, exercise sciences, etc., can be registered onto EREPS if they fulfil the requirements that have been developed by a Technical Expert Group, in first place, and by a group of external consultants, which consists of professors, senior lecturers, lecturers and researchers representing those fields, as mentioned previously.

The Professional Standards Committee believes that, on the one hand, this recognition process based on the requirements profile is simple, practical and will give great visibility to the graduate exercise professionals in the European labour market. On the other hand, this process will allow the recognition of graduates, independently of their country, higher education institution or programme designation.

IV - The Essential Registration Requirements for Graduates Holding a First Academic Degree (EQF Level 6)

Introductory information

What does level 6 mean at EQF?

Level of the EQF	Knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.	Skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)	Competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

The learning outcomes relevant to Level 6 are:	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles.	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study.	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts. -Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups.
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Source: <https://europa.eu/europass/en/description-eight-eqf-levels>

What does level 6 mean at Fitness QF?

EQF level	Occupation	Target audience
Level 6	Graduate Exercise Professional	General and specialist populations (special phases of life) (1)

(1) The following special phases of the life cycle were taken into consideration: pre-adolescents and adolescents, healthy pregnant and postpartum women, and older adults.

Occupational Title

Graduate Exercise Professional

Job Purpose

A Graduate Exercise Professional has the responsibility of designing, implementing, conducting/instructing, evaluating and supervising exercise/physical activity programmes for the general population and for specialist populations (special phases of life); of supervising and guiding other fitness professionals; of implementing exercise promotion activities in the club or in the community; and of participating in the managing activities of the club, including quality assurance.

Occupational Description

A Graduate Exercise Professional has a role, which includes, designing, implementing, conducting/instructing, evaluating and supervising exercise/physical activity programmes for the general population and for specialist

populations (special phases of life), by collecting and analysing client information to ensure the effectiveness and safety of personal and group exercise programmes. The Graduate Exercise Professional also supervises other fitness professionals and participates in the implementation of exercise/physical activity promotion activities and programmes, as well as in the managing activities of the club, to assure and provide quality of service to members or customers.

Occupational Knowledge and Competencies

1 - Evidence-based, inter-professional practice the Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

The Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Permanently reflect his/her practice against the current research status in health, exercise and fitness;
- b) Understand the necessity and advantage of inter-professional networks amongst exercise and health professionals and the benefits for his/her own practice;
- c) Apply knowledge and understanding of how to cooperate in those networks for the benefit of clients;
- d) Apply knowledge and practice within an ethics and professional code of conduct;
- e) Understand and explain his/her scope of practice.

2 - Anatomy, physiology and biomechanics

The Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Apply knowledge about anatomy, physiology and biomechanics in programme practice for the health-related physical fitness components, like cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition;
- b) Apply knowledge about anatomy, physiology and biomechanics in programme practice for the skill-related physical fitness components, like agility, coordination, balance, power, reaction time and speed;
- c) Understand the physiological responses and adaptations of the musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrine and immune systems to exercise and training and how such knowledge underpins effective programming practice for the improvement or maintenance of exercise capacity, motor skills and general well-being.

3 - Communication, motivation and adherence to physical activity

The Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Understand and critically reflect the theories and principles of motivation and adherence in order to engage clients adopting an active lifestyle;
- b) Apply and reflect psychological principles to correctly interpret the behaviour of exercise clients;
- c) Apply and reflect psycho-social aspects of health and fitness, namely, the transtheoretical model, the behaviour change model, and group cohesion;

- d) Analyse the attendance and adherence of clients, their barriers, needs and results in order to identify potential dropouts and increase retention;
- e) Demonstrate appropriate communication and instruction skills.

4 - Exercise testing and prescription

The Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Apply contemporary guidelines for safe practice to health screening, pre-exercise, resting, and exercise testing for the general population and specialist populations (special phases of life);
- b) Conduct the appropriate testing procedures for all components of fitness and use the results for customized exercise prescription accordingly to client characteristics;
- c) Analyse the dynamic posture of the client in order to customize the exercise prescription;
- d) Prescribe safe and appropriate exercise programmes according to the guidelines for the general population, specialist populations (special phases of life), and also regarding sport experience (recreational, competitive or elite).
- e) Apply knowledge of exercise prescription including the different types of exercises, physical games and programme designs;
- f) Develop and implement periodised training programmes;
- g) Develop and implement programmes for different sports taking into account the physiological and biomechanical demands, as well as the specific motor skills needed;

5 - Exercise for specialist populations (special phases of life)

The Graduate exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Understand the benefits and risks of physical activity, participation, and exercise testing;
- b) Apply pre-participation health screening and pre-exercise assessment, and analyse risk factors for different specialist populations (special phases of life);
- c) Understand how the structure and function of the body systems are affected by growth, gender and ageing;
- d) Apply knowledge of signs and symptoms increasing the risk of complications during exercise participation and testing;
- e) Select appropriate fitness tests or modifies standard protocols to accommodate monitoring of specialist populations (special phases of life);
- f) Have basic knowledge about the effects of most commonly prescribed medications and dietary supplements on exercise response and adaptation.

6 - Physical activity and health promotion

The Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Understand the role of sports, exercise and physical activity participation in the prevention of diseases and injuries and in the promotion of health (2);
- b) Apply knowledge of the scientific foundations for health and fitness;
- c) Apply the appropriate questionnaires and/or protocols to detect possible health risks for the client before starting the programme or activity;

- d) Provide general dietary recommendations and strategies to clients for weight loss, muscle gain and general mental and physical health, promoting a healthy lifestyle;
- e) Develop strategies and concepts for exercise promotion activities in order to respond to current health trends. Therefore, the Graduate Exercise Professional should demonstrate the ability to cooperate with other professions, e.g., physical therapists, general practitioners, nutritionists, psychologists, etc.;
- f) Know the current guidelines and recommendations for physical activity for the general population, and populations in special stages of life.

7 - Research-based programme development and evaluation

The Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Understand and interpret the current status of research in exercise sciences;
- b) Develop new and improve existing exercise programmes;
- c) Underpin the potential health and fitness benefits of the interventions and programmes and examine the needs of the target groups;
- d) Focus on the effectiveness and evaluation of sports, exercise and health programmes and interventions;
- e) Develop research projects on the prevention of health problems through sports and exercise;
- f) Select, apply and analyse the appropriate and validated instruments useful to develop the professional intervention (e.g.: questionnaires of self-perception of health, quality of life, motivation, physical activity level, intensity and activity monitors, check list for supervision of other professional, etc.);
- g) Conduct internal and external market research surveys in order to further customer retention, and satisfaction as well as attracting potential customers.

8 - Management activities

The Graduate Exercise Professional should be able to:

- a) Perform basic management competency to plan, design and evaluate exercise and fitness programmes;
- b) Apply knowledge of economic, legal and social basics in health, fitness and exercise in order to support the strategic plan of the organisation;
- c) Understand the concepts of service quality and implement and analyse service quality models applied to health and fitness facilities;
- d) Implement new activities according to new society related needs.

(2) It is very important to note that we are referring to the "broad concept of health", i.e., physical, physiological, social, psychological, and emotional components of health.

V – Recommended methods of learning outcomes assessment

To register as a Graduate Exercise Professional the learner must achieve all learning outcomes defined in this document. Below are examples of assessment methods for individual learning outcomes. The universities and the other training providers do not have to limit themselves to these methods. However, their selection must be logical, e.g., the skills to implement exercise programmes to clinical populations cannot be confirmed through a theoretical test only.

The recommended assessment methods:

1. To assess the learner's knowledge – various forms of theoretical tests, including descriptive tasks and multiple-choice questions.
2. To assess the learner's skills to plan an exercise programme and adapt exercises to clients - written practical task consisting of the independent preparation and implementation of an exercise programme/session with proposed modifications for the situations specified in the case description of the client (case study).
3. To assess learner's ability to implement an exercise programme, communicate with clients and provide information on physical activity and healthy lifestyle, focused on their needs and resources – observation in simulated conditions: observation in simulated conditions can take place live or be documented through video material.

Unit Learning outcome	Learning outcomes	Recommended method of learning outcomes assessment
1	All learning outcomes	Theoretical test with descriptive tasks
2	All learning outcomes	Practical tasks and theoretical test
3	a)	Theoretical test with descriptive tasks
3	b) to f)	Practical tasks and theoretical test
4	All learning outcomes	Practical tasks and theoretical test
5	a) c) and f)	Theoretical test with descriptive tasks
5	b) d) and e)	Practical tasks and theoretical test
6	a) and f)	Theoretical test with descriptive tasks
6	b) to e)	Practical tasks and theoretical test
7	c) and d)	Theoretical test with descriptive tasks
7	a) b) e) f) and g)	Practical tasks and theoretical test
8	All learning outcomes	Practical tasks and theoretical test

VI - Graduate Exercise Professional – EQF Level 6 - Requirements Profile

The requirements profile for the registration of the Graduate Exercise Professional has three components, as follows.

Qualification Requirement

The Graduate Exercise Professional registered at EREPS, holds an undergraduate degree with, at least, the amount of credits listed below, for each of the contents considered as essential and specific to fulfil the occupational roles described for this professional. Note that the undergraduate degree may be specifically in Exercise Sciences, but also in Sport Sciences, Physical Education, or have other title, which might not reflect those contents. In addition, all registered professionals need to abide the EREPS “Code of Ethical Practice”.

Experience Requirement

A Graduate Exercise Professional is expected to work in the health and fitness industry as professional having basic management responsibility and research knowledge with considerable experience (minimum 500 hours) as a personal trainer or exercise specialist. It must have been accomplished in a health and fitness setting or equivalent after graduation. Note that a verified statement from the employer or any other person in charge is compulsory. In addition to the skills, competencies, and knowledge of Group Fitness Instructor (EQF L3) or Personal Trainer (EQF L4), the Graduate Exercise Professional is endorsed to perform the activities detailed as follows:

- Plan and conduct healthy lifestyle programmes for the general population and specialist populations (special phases of life);
- Prescribe personalised physical activity and exercise programmes or, if necessary, refer to specific health services for the general population and specialist populations (special phases of life);
- Perform fundamental movement and skill screening and sports specific exercise prescription;
- Perform advanced fitness testing plus pre-exercise and basic health screening;
- Provide general nutritional advice to support exercise and fitness goals, and if necessary, refer the client to a nutritionist;
- Provide general stress management advice to support exercise and fitness goals, and if necessary, refer the client to a psychologist;
- Provide general healthy lifestyle advice to support exercise and fitness goals, and if necessary, refer the client to a medical doctor or a physiotherapist; Develop and improve programmes based on the current state of research;
- Conduct basic research tasks like, e.g., evaluations, surveys, reviews, etc.;
- Provide support for management activities.

Graduate Exercise Professionals are not endorsed to:

- Prescribe rehabilitation programmes;
- Provide exercise testing on populations with clinical conditions;
- Prescribe any kind of medication or supplements;
- Prescribe nutritional programmes;
- Diagnose any psychological disorders or mental health conditions;
- Provide any kind of psychological counselling;
- Diagnose diseases, disabilities or other clinical conditions.

Degree Content Requirements

Most bachelor programmes in Europe comprise a total of 180 ECTS (although some countries have 240 ECTS).

For this purpose, specific exercise sciences content must comprise of at least 90 credit points based on European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) total within a degree coming from each of the following academic areas:

- Musculoskeletal Anatomy (minimum 4 credits)
- Human Physiology (minimum 3 credits)
- Exercise Physiology (minimum 3 credits)
- Fundamental Biomechanics / Motor Control (minimum 2 credits)
- Applied Biomechanics (minimum 2 credits)
- Nutrition (minimum 2 credits)
- Exercise Testing and Prescription for the General Population (minimum 4 credits)
- Exercise Testing and Prescription for the Specialist Populations (Special Phases of Life) (minimum 4 credits)
- Fitness and Sports Conditioning (minimum 20 credits)
- Sport/Exercise Psychology (minimum 4 credits)
- Sport/Exercise Pedagogy (minimum 4 credits)
- Physical Activity and Health Promotion (minimum 4 credits)
- Exercise Science Research Methods and Analysis (minimum 4 credits)
- Optional contents with high relevance in a fitness or exercise setting (e.g., Management, Marketing/Sales, Leadership, Communication, Presentation, Fitness Practicum, etc.) (minimum 30 credits)

It should be noted that these contents may be embedded in a variety of papers, modules or courses within a degree rather than as specifically nominated topics. On the other hand, the 90 ECTS required for the indicated academic areas may not have to be completed within the same academic programmes. It means that a student can attend specific courses in other programs/universities, in the case the degree does not fulfil the requirements (e.g., a Physical Education programme may not cover the contents about nutrition, thus the student may obtain those credits by attending classes in an exercise science program/single course at another university, in other period of time). A valid document stating the attendance of these courses and the achievement of all occupational knowledge and competencies specified for the Graduate Exercise Professional is obligatory to register at EREPS. Each person applying for EREPS registration at this level will be

contacted by an 'assistant' in order to check the required documents, if needed. This may involve direct contact with the employer(s) or the academic staff of the person applying for registration.



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