

# EuropeActive/EREPS Registration Requirements Profile EQF Level 6 Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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## I. Executive Summary

This document contains the essential requirements that a bachelor graduate fitness 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 Standards Council 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 **Advanced Health & Exercise Specialists** in the European health and fitness industry. They are aligned with the industry main goal to get: **'More People, More Active, More Often'**.

The booklet containing the new EUROPE ACTIVE Requirements Profile for EQF level 6 applicants is organized in the following two chapters, trying to offer to the reader a comprehensive approach to the requested attributes:

- Chapter 1: Introductory statement about the necessity to develop a requirements profile rather than standards for EQF level 6.
- Chapter 2: The essential registration requirements for graduates holding a first academic degree (EQF level 6).

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 EUROPE ACTIVE 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

### **TEG Members for the Requirements Profile of the Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist (EQF level 6):**

- Prof. Rita Santos-Rocha, PhD, ESDRM, Sport Sciences School of Rio Maior - Polytechnic Institute of Santarém, Portugal (TEG Leader);
- Prof. Dr. Thomas Rieger, BiTS University, Germany (TEG Leader);
- Prof. Alfonso Jimenez, PhD, UEM, European University of Madrid, Spain;
- Anna Szumilewicz, PhD, AWFIS, Gdansk University of Physical Education and Sport, Poland.

**Experts who participated on the external consultation process:**

- Prof. Susana Franco, PhD, ESDRM, Sport Sciences School of Rio Maior - Polytechnic Institute of Santarém, Portugal;
- Prof. Kari Bø, PhD, NIH, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo, Norway;
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- Prof. Antonino Bianco, PhD, UNIPA, University of Palermo, Italy;
- Maria-Raquel Silva, PhD, UFP, Faculty of Health Sciences, University Fernando Pessoa, Oporto, Portugal;
- Prof. Maria João Almeida, PhD, UC, University of Coimbra, Portugal;
- Prof. Ruben Barakat, PhD, UPM, Technical University of Madrid, Spain;
- Prof. Dorina Ioana Ciobanu, PT, PhD, University of Oradea, Faculty of Geography, Tourism and Sport, Department of Physical Education, Sport and Physical Therapy, Romania;
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- Maria Machado, MSc, FMH-UL, Faculty of Human Kinetics, University of Lisbon, Portugal;
- Helô Isa André, MSc, LABIMH-UNI-RIO, Laboratory of Biosciences of Human Movement – Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Professor Dr Thomas Rieger  
Chairman  
EUROPE ACTIVE Standards Council

### **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 at the fitness industry. This, by turn, produces a lack of knowledge and expertise to deliver meaningful outcomes on the European Public Health agenda. Until now, the 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 apply their courses for accreditation. After the successful completion, 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, as the relevant higher education institutions, have to 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 Standards Council 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 aforementioned graduates. It is called the "requirements profile".

It 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 Standards Council 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 fitness 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.

Brussels, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2015  
EUROPE ACTIVE Standards Council

## 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	<b>Knowledge</b> is described as theoretical and/or factual.	<b>Skills</b> 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).	<b>Competence</b> is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.
The learning outcomes relevant to <b>Level 6</b> 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.

#### What does level 6 mean at Fitness QF?

EQF Level	Occupation	Target Audience
Level 6	Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist	General and special populations

### Occupational Title

Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist.

### Job Purpose

An Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist has the responsibility of designing, implementing, conducting/instructing, evaluating and supervising exercise/physical activity programmes for the general population and for special populations, at low to medium risk levels<sup>1</sup>; 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.

<sup>1</sup> Low to medium risk is defined according to the guidelines for each of the diseases or disabilities of the clinical conditions (non-communicable diseases) referred in this document.

## Occupational Description

An Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist has a role, which includes, designing, implementing, conducting/instructing, evaluating and supervising exercise/physical activity programmes for the general population and for special populations, including special phases of life and clinical populations of low to medium risk levels, by collecting and analysing client information to ensure the effectiveness and safety of personal and group exercise programmes. The Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist 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, in order to assure and provide the quality of the service to members or customers.

## Occupational Knowledge and Competencies

### *1 - Evidence-based, inter-professional practice*

The Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist 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 Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist should be able to:

- a) Apply knowledge about anatomy, physiology and biomechanics in programme practice for the health-related physical fitness components: 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: agility, coordination, balance, power, reaction time and speed;
- c) Understand the physiological responses and adaptations of the musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiovascular, respiratory and endocrine systems to exercise and training and how such knowledge underpins effective programming practice for: body composition, resistance training, cardiovascular training and flexibility.

### *3 - Communication, motivation and adherence to physical activity*

The Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist 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 Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist should be able to:

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

## 5 - Exercise for special populations: clinical conditions<sup>2</sup> and special phases of life<sup>3</sup>

The Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist should be able to:

- a) Understand benefits and risks of physical activity, participation and exercise testing as well as the basic knowledge about the pathophysiology of different disorders, disabilities and diseases (and respective medication);
- b) Apply pre participation health screening and analyse risk factors for different non-communicable diseases and disabilities or refer to an exercise specialist (e.g., Active Ageing Trainer EQF-level 4; (Pre)Diabetes Exercise Specialist EQF-level 5, etc.);
- c) Understand how the structure and function of the body systems are affected by growth, gender and ageing;
- d) Apply knowledge of disease-specific 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 special populations;
- 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 Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist 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<sup>4</sup>;
- 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 health, promoting an healthy lifestyle;
- e) Develop strategies and concepts for exercise promotion activities in order to respond to current health trends. Therefore, the Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist should demonstrate the ability to cooperate with other professions, e.g., physical therapists, general practitioners, nutritionists, psychologists, etc.;

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<sup>2</sup> The following non-communicable diseases/disabilities were taken into consideration: diabetes, types I and II, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity, respiratory disease, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis and cancer.

<sup>3</sup> The following phases of the life cycle were taken into consideration: pre adolescents and adolescents, healthy pregnant women and older adults.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

### *7 - Research-based programme development and evaluation*

The Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist 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 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 reduction 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.: questionnaire of motivation, Par-Q & You, 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.

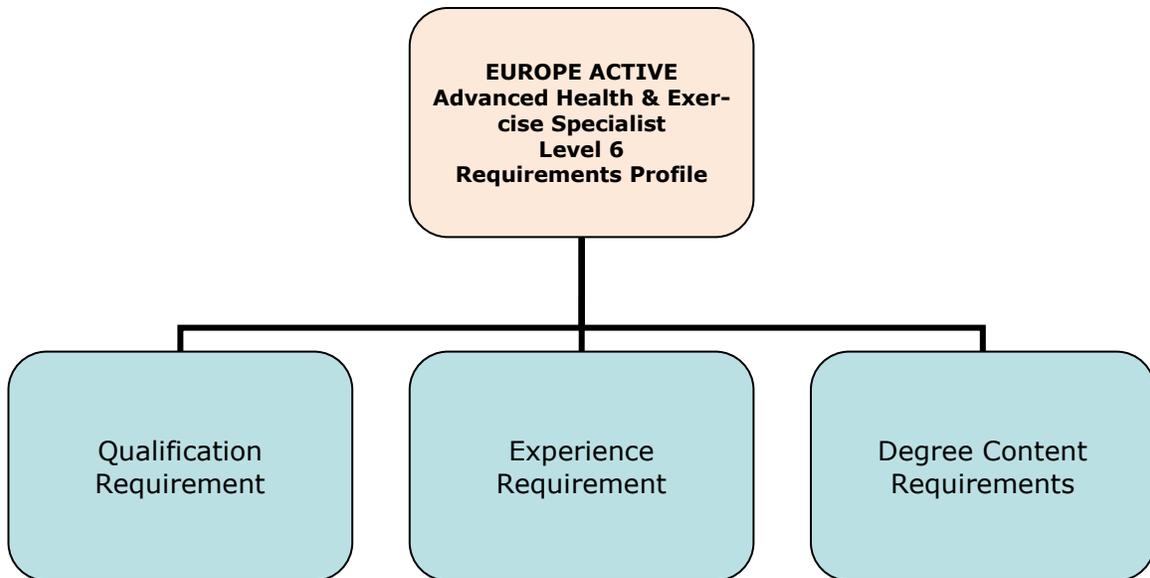
### *8 - Management activities*

The Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist 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.

## V - Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist – EQF Level 6 - Requirements Profile

The requirements profile for the registration of the Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist has three components, as follows.



### Qualification Requirement

The Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist 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

An Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist is expected to work in the health and fitness industry as professional having basic management responsibility and research knowledge with considerable experience (minimum 300 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 Personal Trainer (EQF L4) or Exercise Specialist (EQF L5) levels, the Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist is endorsed to perform the activities detailed as follows:

- Plan and conduct healthy lifestyle programmes for the general population and special populations;
- Prescribe personalised physical activity programmes or, if necessary, refer to specific health services for the general population and special populations;
- Perform fundamental movement and skill screening and sports specific exercise prescription;
- Perform advanced fitness testing plus basic health screening;
- Provide general nutritional advice to support exercise and fitness goals, and if necessary, refer the client to a nutritionist;
- 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.

Advanced Health & Exercise Specialists are **not** endorsed to:

- Prescribe rehabilitation programmes;
- Provide exercise testing on high risk populations;
- 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 Special Populations (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 programs. It means that a student can attend specific courses in other programs/universities, in the case his/her degree does not fulfil the requirements (e.g., a Physical Education program 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 Advanced Health & Exercise Specialists 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.

## **VI - Europe Active L6 Standards & Competencies Framework**

This document describes the EUROPEACTIVE Competence Framework and contains the essential Competences, associated to Skills and Knowledge written as Learning Outcomes, based on occupational purposes, required to work as an Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist in the European Health and Fitness Industry at the EQF-Fitness Level 6, which is the first academic level. These Competence Framework, the Standards and the Education associated are purpose and outcome driven, aligned with the industry main goal to get 'more people, more active, more often'.

The occupational roles are broken down in to competencies, skills and knowledge. This document should be read in conjunction with the **EQF-level 6 Requirement Profile**. By referring to the module handbooks of the relevant study programmes, the following Standards Framework mainly contains the basic skills, knowledge, and competencies.

EQF-level 6	Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist		
EQF Categories »	Competence	Skills	Knowledge
<b>8 Occupational Roles</b>	Advanced Health & Exercise Specialist are expected to:		
Evidence-based, inter-personal practice	Assume responsibility for building interdisciplinary relationships and the evidence-based work habits of others	Be able to utilise knowledge to permanently reflect and adapt working procedures as well as monitor interdisciplinary networks	Have knowledge and understanding of the current research status in exercise and fitness and the importance of inter-professional networks
Applying knowledge about anatomy, physiology and biomechanics	Assume responsibility for the correct use and transfer of anatomical, physiological and biomechanical knowledge	Be able to utilise anatomical, physiological and biomechanical knowledge to serve clients needs properly	Have knowledge and understanding of health-related and skill-related fitness components and their influence on body systems
Motivation and adherence to physical activity	Be able to observe and assess client supervision with regard to motivation and adherence	Be able to work effectively to foster clients exercise behaviour and to stimulate retention	Have a critical insight into psychological theories and principles of motivation and adherence
Exercise testing and prescription	Independently and responsibly manage the system for exercise prescription and testing	Be able to use knowledge to develop effective, safe and client-oriented exercise programmes	Having knowledge and understanding of exercise modality options, programme designs, training techniques, and specific requirements for prescription in different activities as well as relevant fitness assessments
Exercise for special populations	Be able to independently interpret data about special populations and implement actions	Be able to draw on knowledge of the relevant field to identify and define obvious problems and challenges for an exercise setting	Having knowledge and understanding of a range of specifics and characteristics of special populations relevant to exercise and physical activity
Physical activity and health promotion	Take responsibility for effective and health-related client service, and demonstrate commitment	Be able to advise clients in exercise and nutrition effectively due to individual characteristics	Having knowledge and understanding of relevant strategies and concepts of physical activity and appropriate nutrition for the promotion of health
Research-based programme development and evaluation	Be able to address relevant issues as well as lead others in this regard	Be able to develop research-based exercise programmes and to accomplish assessments	Having knowledge and contextualised understanding of evidence-based programme development and evaluation in fitness and exercise
Management activities	Be able to oversee management processes and to intervene appropriately	Be able to plan, organise, lead, recruit and evaluate	Be familiar with basic management techniques in an exercise setting