

SETTING THE STANDARDS  
FOR THE EUROPEAN  
HEALTH AND FITNESS SECTOR

# **'Online provision of fitness services' Lifelong Learning Qualification**



Education and Culture DG

**Lifelong Learning Programme**

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## I. Executive Summary

Technology has been reported as one of the main drivers of the fitness industry in the last few years (1, 2) and supports the implementation of training programmes at every stage. Exact screening of the fitness client, at a level previously reserved only for specialist medical laboratories (like body composition analysis or cardiopulmonary capacity assessments), is now widely available. Training effects can be constantly monitored with the use of wearable technology; specialised applications provide quick feedback on the implementation of the prescribed exercise programme and support the maintenance of client motivation. But more recently, there has also been a rapid growth in the options, prevalence and opportunities for online provision of fitness services for clients.

Thanks to online tools, it is easier to reach a specific target group with information on fitness services and acquire new customers, e.g. via social media. What's more, it is possible to conduct comprehensive training and coaching programmes without direct contact with the client. One of the main advantages of this solution is the increased availability of fitness services, especially for people for whom the traditional forms of delivery, due to the distance from fitness facilities or time constraints, is very limited. This development is supported by good quality scientific data that an online exercise programme can be as effective as a traditionally supervised one, even when working with special populations (3).

Discussions on the benefits and risks of online training began in the first decade of the XXI century (4-7). However, huge breakthrough in this regard occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of fitness clubs and the compulsory limitation of direct social contact resulted in many people experiencing online home fitness for the first time. Consequently, during lockdown, many exercise professionals and gyms, out of necessity, began to provide their services exclusively online.

Online training will not appeal to every instructor or trainer. Although there are many different forms, in which online training can be delivered, so that every fitness professional can find a way to integrate online services into their work. Nowadays, many fitness professionals have transitioned their offerings to an online environment and are hungry for further knowledge and skills in this area. Whether as part of a fitness clubs' or individual PT's offering, online personal training is a fantastic tool to reach and help more people than can be done in person. Clubs can reach beyond their walls to members and potential future members, and fitness professionals can offer more support, better coaching, and an improved client experience when they add a digital element to their services. However, successful online fitness training and coaching requires appropriate skills.

At the same time, it is recognised that there are some risks associated with the delivery and operation of fitness and physical activity training in the online space. They may be associated with a potential higher risk of injury for fitness participants who exercise unsupervised and in unsuitable rooms. Another problem may be claims of clients against exercise professionals for the negative consequences of poorly adapted training programmes. It is therefore important to properly prepare instructors and trainers for such situations (8).

The following 'Online provision of fitness services' qualification is a response to this relatively new approach to fitness offerings, in order to keep pace with the development of technology and related changes. It includes the professional competences necessary for exercise professionals to be able to carry out their professional tasks in a safe and effective manner, using online tools. We consider "online fitness services" as something much

broader than just conducting live exercise sessions via online tools. It includes all the aspects and stages of guiding and coaching clients to positive lifestyle change and to integrate exercise and other healthy habits into their everyday life routines. This qualification is purpose and outcome driven and is aligned with the health and fitness industry's main goal to get: **'More People, More Active, More Often'**.

DRAFT

## II. Technical Expert Group Members & External Consultation Experts

A relevant group of technical experts from across Europe and representing the different stakeholders of our sector, took part in the development of 'Online provision of fitness services' lifelong learning (LLL) qualification. This document was fully adopted within the process of external consultation and afterwards approved by the EuropeActive Professional Standards Committee (PSC).

### Technical Expert Group:

- Prof. Anna Szumilewicz, PhD, PSC Deputy Director – Standards, EuropeActive, Brussels, Belgium; GPUES - Gdansk University of Physical Education and Sport, Poland (TEG Leader)
- Julian Berriman, PSC Director, EuropeActive, Belgium
- Michael Harrison, PSC Deputy Director - Accreditation, EuropeActive, Belgium; Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland
- Atle Arntzen, Personal Trainer Manager, Norway
- Anna Bogdanova, Personal Trainer, PSC Deputy Director - EREPS, EuropeActive, Denmark
- Colin Haffen, Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity, SportPark Loughborough University, United Kingdom
- David Kingsbury, Personal Trainer, United Kingdom
- Prof. Simona Pajaujiene, PhD, Lithuanian Association of Health and Fitness Clubs (LSKA), Lithuanian Sports University, Lithuania
- Ben Pratt, Nordic Fitness Education, Iceland
- Prof. Rita Santos Rocha, PhD, ESDRM-IPS - Sport Sciences School of Rio Maior - Polytechnic Institute of Santarém, Rio Maior, Portugal
- Dipanda Silva, Personal Training Director in VivaGym, FitnessHut, Portugal

**External consultation experts – to be listed when the consultation process is completed:**

### III. Description of the qualification

#### Type of qualification

Lifelong Learning (LLL) Qualification

#### Name of the qualification

**Online provision of fitness services**

#### EQF level

To be assigned after external consultation process.

#### Job Purpose

To deliver online fitness services, within the scope of practice as a certified exercise professional at a particular EQF level, and to promote these services using online marketing.

#### Short description of learning outcomes

A holder of the LLL qualification 'Online provision of fitness services' is ready to safely and effectively deliver fitness services, exclusively on-line or to significantly support them with online tools, within his/her scope of practice as a certified exercise professional at a particular EQF level. This fitness professional<sup>1</sup> understands the potential of online services and is able to use it in own business in the fitness sector. The professional is also aware of the risks associated with online provision of fitness services and is able to counteract them. This fitness professional supports own professional tasks with the use of various online tools, including specialised platforms and applications (e.g. Trainerize, My PT Hub, PT distinction, Virtuagym, Total Coaching). The professional has a theoretical basis for using online marketing to promote own services, including with the use of social media.

#### Specific Prerequisites

To validate the 'Online provision of fitness services' LLL Qualification you must be registered in EREPS or certified by another recognised institution as an exercise professional at any EQF level. The knowledge and skills to remotely perform professional tasks should be used only within the scope of practice, determined by the current qualification of an exercise professional. In order to provide online fitness services for a specific group of clients (especially for children and youth or for clients at risk), you must

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<sup>1</sup> Fitness professional is a person holding valid qualification confirming the scope of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy, appropriate for a particular EQF level and necessary to fulfill particular occupational tasks in the fitness sector, approved by a recognised certifying organization.

have separate competences in this field, confirmed by EuropeActive or another recognised institution.

## Target groups

Potentially interested in gaining this qualification are exercise professionals at all EQF levels (in particular fitness and group fitness instructors and personal trainers), who are working or are planning to work both exclusively on-line or to significantly support their services, provided in a traditional way, with online tools.

## Learning Outcomes Units

The 'Online provision of fitness services' LLL Qualification include the following units of learning outcomes:

1. Organisational, legal and ethical issues related to using the LLL qualification 'Online provision of fitness services';
2. Fundamental rules and tools in the online provision of fitness services;
3. Limitations and safety considerations related to the online provision of fitness services;
4. Online marketing.

## Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes units cover following learning outcomes:

### **1. Organisational, legal and ethical issues related to using the LLL qualification 'Online provision of fitness services'**

The learner:

- 1.1. Defines what the online provision of fitness services is;
- 1.2. Describes modes of online provision of fitness services (e.g. live session – streaming of the training session, conducting an individualised online training session, sending video or links to prerecorded training sessions, consultation sessions, online reminders and communication to maintain client exercise adherence, thematic webinars, online complex interaction with the client for his/her lifestyle change);
- 1.3. Describes the potential of online fitness services to promote healthy lifestyle among current and future clients;
- 1.4. Explains why it is important to hold a particular exercise professional qualification in order to be able to use this LLL qualification effectively and safely, particularly when working with a specific population;
- 1.5. Describes the range of responsibility and ethical issues related to online provision of fitness services, to include special populations (e.g. children and youth);
- 1.6. Describes the rules regarding treating the individual's information and records related to clients' use of fitness services and training progression according to the General Data Protection Regulation.

## **2. Fundamental rules and tools in the online provision of fitness services**

The learner:

- 2.1. Describes equipment (hardware), online platforms and applications (software) and Internet data transfer requirements to deliver various modes of online fitness services;
- 2.2. Describes the digital tools useful for his/her professional task within the scope of practice as an exercise professional;
- 2.3. Describes the principles of building rapport to meet client expectations when having only online contact with them (e.g. during the first meeting or follow-up consultations within the training programme);
- 2.4. Describes the differences between traditional and online building rapport;
- 2.5. Uses digital tools or online tools for clients' fitness and health status screening (e.g. online questionnaires like PAR-Q+, IPAQ, self-performed fitness tests or remotely supervises clients in performing fitness screening tests);
- 2.6. Uses a specific online platform or other digital tools to design individualised training programmes for clients and track their progress and achievements (e.g. Trainerize, My PT Hub, PT distinction, Virtuagym, Total Coaching);
- 2.7. Describes how to structure and optimise the new online client onboarding process
- 2.8. Conducts live training sessions and prepares pre-recorded training sessions using generally available online platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Zoom, Google Meet, Youtube, Vimeo, etc.), in accordance with the appropriate methodology and meeting the relevant technical standards (including good lighting, appropriate environment and background, good sound quality);
- 2.9. Describes online exercise coaching tools to obtain accurate client feedback and optimise client performance and exercise technique (e.g. video technique analysis tools like Coaches Eye, Hudl Technique, Dartfish);
- 2.10. Describes online tools to provide clients with necessary information related to online fitness services (e.g. related to safety considerations, healthy lifestyle), sending links to videos or online articles, conducting webinars, referring to events, using chat or messaging services);
- 2.11. Describes online communication tools (e.g. video or audio calls, emails, messaging services, autoresponders, online check-ins, booking confirmation, social media community groups etc.).

## **3. Limitations and safety considerations related to the online provision of fitness services**

The learner:

- 3.1. Describes risks for clients, particularly in special populations, related to the online provision of fitness services (e.g. related to incorrect exercise technique or intensity, inappropriate exercise environment);

- 3.2. Explains the guidelines on how to ensure and monitor safety and effectiveness of fitness services delivered online (e.g. how the client should arrange a safe space to exercise at home, how to educate clients to correctly perform exercises and self-monitor their well-being);
- 3.3. Describes how to overcome the limitations of being not physically present with the client, utilises effective communication (e.g. adjusting teaching methods);
- 3.4. Communicates with the clients and instructs them in a way that makes it easier for them to learn exercises on their own;
- 3.5. Explains the importance of holding valid insurance appropriate for the scope of practice as an exercise professional and describes the rules of how to comply with insurance parameters, when providing clients with online fitness services;
- 3.6. Describes exemplary disclaimer forms which should be obtained from clients prior to the provision of online fitness services and explains their importance and the rules for using them;
- 3.7. Describes the risks for exercise professionals related to working online and explains how to manage time in this mode of work (e.g. explains the importance of separating private and professional life, setting time limits for responding to emails and messages, planning breaks in order to avoid burn out, automation of repeating tasks).

#### **4. Online marketing**

The learner:

- 4.1. Defines the term online marketing and describes its advantages as compared to traditional marketing;
- 4.2. Describes popular options for online advertising (e.g. text, display, banner, native, in-app, video, email, ads, affiliate links) and explains which of them are the most appropriate for the promotion of his/her fitness services;
- 4.3. Describes the necessary equipment to market an online business in the fitness sector (e.g. a laptop, mobile phone with a camera, a webcam, a microphone, lighting);
- 4.4. Describes basic principles of online brand presence (e.g. how to create a clear description of the fitness services, define a clear and detailed product offering, how to match the business marketing with the correct online channels, prepare consistent content for all chosen online channels, how to create an effective strategy for consistent branding or co-branding of his/her fitness services);
- 4.5. Analyses online market (using e.g. SWOT/PEST analysis), differentiates the target market and determines the specific online business niche;
- 4.6. Creates online products to meet the needs of a specific niche, to clearly provide unique selling points (USP's) and develops a suitable pricing strategy;
- 4.7. Develops short and long-term marketing strategies to reach the target niche (e.g. paid online marketing options, free online marketing, low budget online

- marketing options; customer and client referral, gathering testimonials and social proof, local versus global marketing methods);
- 4.8. Describes the steps how to sell online services and close the sale;
  - 4.9. Lists secure online trading services to accept bookings, receive digital payments for services provided;
  - 4.10. Describes the fundamental guidelines for managing an active professional website;
  - 4.11. Describes principles of good online customer service.

#### **IV. Recommended methods of learning outcomes assessment**

To obtain this qualification, the learner must confirm the achievement of all learning outcomes defined in this document.

<b>Learning outcomes unites</b>	<b>Recommended method of learning outcomes assessment</b>
Organisational, legal and ethical issues related to using the LLL qualification 'Online provision of fitness services'	theoretical
Fundamental rules and tools in the online provision of fitness services	theoretical and practical applied theory (case studies)
Limitations and safety consideration related to the online provision of fitness services	theoretical
Online marketing	theoretical and practical applied theory (case studies)

Verification of learning outcomes will be carried out in direct contact with the assessor or online.

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