

American Council on Exercise

Review Dates: August 1999

Effective Dates: See specific examinations.

Organization Description: The American Council on Exercise, located in San Diego, California, is a nonprofit organization committed to promoting active, healthy lifestyles and their positive effect on the mind, body, and spirit. The American Council on Exercise accomplishes its mission by setting certification and education standards for fitness professionals and through ongoing public education. Since 1986, the American Council on Exercise has certified more than 76,000 health and fitness professionals in over 66 countries. Certification exams are standardized, broad-based tests of the knowledge and application of safe and effective exercise instruction principles. The American Council on Exercise certification exams are offered four times a year at approximately twenty-five domestic sites and five international sites and at selected industry trade shows.

The American Council on Exercise offers four certification programs:

- Group Fitness Instructor Certification
- Personal Trainer Certification
- Lifestyle and Weight Management Consultant Certification
- Clinical Exercise Specialist Certification

Examinees may prepare for the American Council on Exercise certification through formal university courses, exam preparation courses, practical training, self-study, and correspondence courses. The American Council on Exercise strongly recommends that examinees obtain hands-on experience in their respective field before undertaking an examination.

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Source of Official Student Records: American Council on Exercise, 5820 Oberlin Drive, Suite 102, San Diego, CA 92121-3787, (800) 825-3636, (858) 535-8227, www.acefitness.org or College Credit Recommendation Service, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle NW, Washington, DC 20036-1193, credit@ace.nche.edu.

How Examination Results Are Reported:

Examinees applying for college credit are required to achieve a passing score on the respective American Council on Exercise certification exam. The passing point employed in each of the four examinations is a criterion-referenced approach called the Angoff Modified Technique. It relies on the pooled judgment of content experts.

Examinees who fail may retake the exam. All examinees receive a report with their total score and a breakdown of performance by domain.

Test Description: The American Council on Exercise certifications are written exams and consist of 175 multiple-choice questions. Listed below are the topical areas for each certification exam program.

Group Fitness Instructor Exam

Effective Dates: January 1999–Present

Credit Recommendations: In the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree category, two semester hours in Physical Fitness, Physical Activity, Physical Education, Kinesiology, or Exercise Science (8/99).

The exam was developed from a 1999 role delineation study that defined the knowledge and skills required to perform the job of a Group Fitness Instructor at a minimally competent level. The three-and-a-half hour written exam consists of 175 multiple-choice questions. Examinees must be at least 18 years old and hold current CPR certification.

Skills Measured: (Approximate Percentage of Examination by Content Area):

24% Exercise Science—Basic physiology; basic anatomy, basic kinesiology; correct training techniques; basic fitness test terminology and procedures; physiological and anatomical considerations for special populations; basic psychological issues affecting exercise adherence; basic nutrition and weight management

29% Exercise Programming—Components of a class; incorporation of safe and effective movements; design of different types of group exercise classes; modifications or adaptations; music selection; selection, modification, adaptation for special populations; equipment related to class design; establishment of a safe exercise environment; choreographic techniques

33% Instructional Techniques—Techniques for monitoring exercise intensity; teaching strategies to modify incorrect movements; modification of group and individual performance; correct cueing; use of music and sound equipment; teaching methods; injury prevention; emergency procedures: first aid, CPR, emergency plans; principles of fitness testing

14% Professional Responsibility—current legal principles and issues; the American Council on Exercise Code of Ethics; accepted business standards and practices; emergency procedures: first aid, CPR, evacuation plans; insurance needs related to group exercise instruction; professional growth

Personal Trainer Certification Exam

Effective Dates: January 1994–Present

Credit Recommendations: In the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree category, two semester hours in Exercise Leadership, Fitness Assessment, or Exercise Programming (8/99).

The exam was developed from a 1994 role delineation study that defined the knowledge and skills required to perform the job of a Personal Trainer at a minimally competent level. The three-and-a-half hour written exam consists of 175 multiple-choice questions. Examinees must be at least 18 years old and hold current CPR certification.

24% Client Assessment—Establish rapport to collect accurate, comprehensive information; obtain health/medical and lifestyle information to aid in client evaluation, program design, and referral; identify client expectations and preferences; perform fitness evaluations and periodic re-evaluations

22% Program Design—Establish measurable short- and long-term goals; integrate goals, assessment data, and principles of exercise science to design program

37% Program Implementation—Teach safe and effective exercise technique; monitor, record, and evaluate progress to make appropriate program modifications; facilitate adherence to exercise; maintain a supportive relationship to facilitate goal achievement; consult with medical/health professionals, as necessary

17% Professional Responsibility—Adhere to the American Council on Exercise Code of Ethics, laws, regulations, and procedures within recognized scope of practice; use informed consents and waivers appropriately; develop and follow safety and emergency procedures; ensure competence through ongoing education; obtain adequate insurance; evaluate safety of equipment, facilities, and locations; ensure client confidentiality

Lifestyle and Weight Management Consultant Certification Exam

Effective Dates: January 1995–Present

Credit Recommendations: In the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree category, two semester hours in Nutrition and Weight Control (8/99).

The exam was developed from a 1995 role delineation study that defined the knowledge and skills required to perform the job of a Lifestyle and Weight management Consultant at a minimally competent level. The three-and-a-half hour written exam consists of 175 multiple-choice questions. Examinees must be at least 18 years old and hold current CPR certification.

Skills Measured (Approximate Percentage of Examination by Content Area):

28% Client Assessment—Interview and communication methods; client screening for program development and referral; determination of client profile; recognition of conditions and/or behaviors that necessitate referral

22% Development of Client Plan—Utilization of assessment data; long- and short-term goal establishment; creation of client plan

32% Implementation and Facilitation of Client Plan—Establishing a constructive professional relationship; client instruction utilizing a variety of techniques and materials; client monitoring

18% Professional Responsibility—Communication of the scope and limitations of the professional relationship; applicable laws, regulations, and scope of practice; documentation of client-related data, communications, and progress; assurance

of continuing competence and professional growth; initiation of emergency procedures; adherence to the American Council on Exercise Code of Ethics; insurance needs of the weight management consultant

Clinical Exercise Specialist Certification Exam

Effective Dates: January 1999–Present

Credit Recommendation: In the upper division baccalaureate degree category, four semester hours in Exercise Testing and Prescription or Exercise for Special Populations (8/99).

The exam was developed from a 1999 role delineation study that defined the knowledge and skills required to perform the job of a Clinical Exercise Specialist at a minimally competent level. The four-hour exam consists of 175 multiple-choice questions. Twenty-five percent of the exam consists of video-based testing. The remaining portion consists of written multiple-choice questions.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Current CPR certification (through the date of the exam).
2. Three-hundred hours of work experience designing and implementing exercise programs for apparently healthy individuals and/or high-risk individuals, to be documented by a qualified professional (e.g., allied health professional, fitness director, club manager, professor, etc.)
3. (a) Bachelor of science/bachelor of arts degree in physical education (courses in: exercise physiology, programming, leadership), exercise science, kinesiology, exercise physiology, adapted physical education, athletic training or physical therapy, or (b) current certification as:
 - An American Council on Exercise-certified Personal Trainer
 - An ACSM Exercise Test TechnologistSM
 - An ACSM Exercise SpecialistSM
 - An ACSM Health/Fitness Director[®]
 - An ACSM Program DirectorSM
 - A NSCA-Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist

Examinees not meeting requirements 3(a) or 3(b) may petition to take the exam by demonstrating equivalent education and experience.

Skills Measured (Approximate Percentage of Examination by Content Area):

35% Screening and Assessment—Obtain health/medical information; obtain lifestyle information; identify the client's readiness, expectations, and personal preferences; perform baseline and follow-up evaluations of physical activity levels and physical limitations; maintain detailed records of all screening and assessment data

20% Program Design—Establish realistic, measurable short- and long-term goals; apply the principles of exercise science in designing and modifying an individualized program

45% Program Implementation and Management—Orient the client to an individualized program; enhance compliance using appropriate motivation and adherence strategies; modify the program and/or session as indicated using health, clinical, and performance measures; attend to the client's changing needs by referring to, or consulting with, other health care providers; instruct the client in correct technique and self-monitoring skills by evaluating the client's objective and subjective responses to the program to achieve program objectives safely and effectively; document program activity and the client's health status and response to the program using accepted record-keeping systems to maintain appropriate records and communicate with other members of the treatment team