

Information Sheet for Group Exercise Instructors, Gym Instructors and Personal Trainers

The History of REPs

Back in 1999/2000, after substantial consultation with the fitness industry, the industry association, Fitness New Zealand, identified that not having any industry agreed standards for qualifications of those involved in exercise delivery was the industry's major issue. The small percentage of "untrained" individuals give a bad name to the vast majority, that are true fitness professionals. Based on this, and over two years of research and consultation with the industry, the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) was launched in September 2003.

REPs is well supported by the fitness industry, with over 90% of all facilities indicating their support for the concept. In addition most of New Zealand's fitness/exercise education providers are fully supportive of the system. Various government agencies have also been consulted including ACC, OSH as well as the full spectrum of medical professional bodies.

What a registration system is about

A registration system is an industry owned system, that sets out minimum standards for people working in certain areas. Specifically, in the fitness industry, for those involved in exercise delivery or demonstration. So this means group exercise staff (including speciality classes like pilates and spin), gym instructors and personal trainers all register with REPs. Staff not involved in exercise delivery or demonstration at all, such as dedicated sales or reception staff, are not required to register. Individuals that meet these standards pay an annual fee to be registered, which is proof that they reach the industry agreed minimum standards. To remain registered, an individual undertakes ongoing education that meets REPs standards.

What does this mean for those working in the industry ?

Firstly, it means that for most exercise professionals, you will now register each year with REPs. If you are based at a Registered Exercise Facility registration is compulsory.

For the majority of individuals, it does not mean that you have to obtain any new qualifications. The registration system includes various mechanisms to *recognise your existing qualifications and experience*. Individuals that have little or no formal qualifications can apply to have an approved REPs Registered Education Provider to verify that they have the required skills. Only those that are unable to show that they have the required skills will not be able register until they complete further training.

Existing qualifications will be matched to the levels of the registration system. If you choose to undertake further studies, REPs can provide you with a list of courses which enable you to register at higher levels.

It's like the difference between a nursing degree, and being a registered nurse. First you get your degree, and then you register with the Nursing Council. Simply having a degree in nursing is not sufficient to practice nursing in New Zealand.

In effect registering with the fitness industry registration system is your industry "stamp of approval". With this you can differentiate yourself from unregistered individuals (for example those that think "working out for a few years" is enough to be a Personal Trainer).

The Structure of REPs

REPs is a charitable company owned by FitnessNZ (the industry association) and Sfrito (the government recognised standard setter). Both these organisations are non profit. All funds paid to REPs will only be used for running and promoting the system.

REPs is totally independent off all education/training providers and exercise facilities. All training providers and exercise facilities have equal input into REPs through the various feedback processes we have in place. To ensure REPs remains totally independent, REPs will never undertake training of any kind, nor will it ever operate any exercise facilities.

REPs FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How to Register

Q: How do I register ?

A: To register an individual simply provides evidence that they meet the criteria (for qualifications and or experience as needed) and pay the appropriate annual fee. There are four basic "pathways" to registration

- (1) **Via Registered Courses** - this is a very simple process, as all registered courses have been pre-checked by REPs, so all you need to verify is that you have completed the course. A full list of registered courses will be on the REPs web site in Early 2004.
- (2) **Via non Registered Courses** - here you also need to have your qualifications reviewed to ensure the qualifications you have completed meet the standards
- (3) **Practical Assessment** - this pathway is a good option if you don't have any (or many) qualifications, but have a lot of built up knowledge and competency over the years. This can be done by Sfrito, or a Registered Education Provider.
- (4) **Provisional** - this is the pathway that will be used initially for all staff/contractors at Registered Exercise Facilities. Individuals working at a Registered Exercise Facility will be granted provisional registration until 31 December 2004, by which time we will have established which of pathway (1) to (3) is most appropriate for them. This will enable all staff at Registered Exercise facilities to continue working.

If an individual is NOT qualified but believes that they still meet the standards required for registration, then they can apply to be assessed by a REPs Registered Education Provider who can ascertain if they meet the standards. The individual would pay for any such assessment.

To ensure all registered professionals remain current, individuals will need to show that they are doing this when they re-register each year. There will be many ways of achieving this - courses, subscriptions to magazines, working in a fitness centre, national conferences etc.

Q: What does the process of registration involve ?

(1) **Obtain copies of the following:** (i) A REPs individual registration form (ii) The help sheet for registrations (iii) The info sheet for the level of registration you are applying for. All can be downloaded from the REPs web site

(2) Complete the Registration form

Important: if you are based at a Registered Exercise facility choose **Pathway TWO - Provisional Registration**

In all cases, attach all needed documentation to your application form (copies of certificates etc)

(3) **Send your form and payment to REPs.** If you are at a registered facility give your completed forms and payment to your employer (they will send it in one batch to REPs).

(4) **REPs will send you a letter** confirming we have received your application within 7 days of receiving it.

If we need any further info from you we will ask for it. Because you are at a registered facility, you will be granted AUTOMATIC provisional registration as long as your application to be registered is received by 31 December 2003.

General Questions

Q: What are the fees ?

A: All fees are listed on the relevant application form. So for registered facilities, download the application to become a registered facility (fees here range from \$195 to \$495 per year plus GST, depending on the facility size). For individuals fees, download the application for individuals registration (fees here range from \$45 to \$295 plus GST, depending on the level of registration, and whether the individual is based at a registered facility).

Q: Are the registration fees annual fees ?

A: Yes

Q: What are all the fees for ?

A: REPs is a charitable company, with the sole purpose of running and marketing the registration system. The various fees REPs charges are in direct proportion to the costs to administer them. All the income REPs receives is used to operate and promote the system.

Q: Is there more than one level of registration ?

Clearly there are different roles and jobs within the fitness industry that require different knowledge and competencies (e.g. a group exercise instructor needs to know different things to say a personal trainer). With that in mind there are different levels of registration requiring different qualifications/experience - from a "Floor Walker", "Group Exercise Instructor", "Gym Instructor", "Personal Trainer", right through to "Exercise Specialists" dealing with rehabilitative work. NB: The names used here are for demonstration purposes only and may differ from those actually used in the registration system.

Sfrito Related Questions

Q: I have a Sfrito qualification – Do I still have to Register with REPs ?

A: Yes. By having the full national certificate you will be able to use pathway one (automatic registration through a registered qualification), but you still need to register.

Q: How is Sfrito involved in REPs ?

A: Sfrito is a part owner of REPs, and also has a representative on the board of REPs. Sfrito also partly funded the development of REPs. Sfrito receives no money from REPs. Sfrito also sets and administers various qualifications such as the National Certificate in Fitness (which is a qualification recognised by REPs). Many education providers use Sfrito qualifications, or part of Sfrito's qualifications, in their courses.

Q: I am a Sfrito assessor – what difference does this make ?

A: Firstly, being an active Sfrito assessor means that you receive credit towards the ongoing education requirements of REPs (i.e. we recognise the value this adds to your own development). Secondly as an assessor you can assess others against Sfrito unit standards, once a person has completed sufficient units they are awarded the National Certificate, which means they can then register in their own right. It is our intention to make it compulsory to be registered with REPs before becoming a Sfrito assessor (discussions with Sfrito are being held on this).

Questions From Exercise Professionals

Q: Is registration compulsory ?

A: Registration is not compulsory, although it is compulsory for all Registered Exercise Facilities to only employ registered staff.

Q: I work for a registered facility and also do work outside of this in my own capacity, do I still get to register at the reduced rate through my exercise facility ?

A: Yes, you pay the discounted rate. This registration covers you for your activities at the facility, and outside it.

Q: I don't have any formal qualifications, but I do know what I am doing – where do I fit in ?

A: We recognise that the industry is presently made up of individuals with a mix of qualifications and hands on experience and skills learnt on the job. REPS has a registration pathway that allows for individuals with little or no qualifications to be assessed and confirmed as competent. This can either be through a Sfrito assessor, or through a registered education provider. If you apply for registration under this pathway we will provide you with a list of such organisations.

Q: I am both a Personal Trainer and a Group Exercise instructor, do I have to pay two registration fees ?

A: No. If you are applying for two levels of registration, you simply pay the registration for the higher level.

Q: I am based at a Registered Exercise Facility – what does this mean ?

A: This means the facility agrees only to employ Registered Exercise Professionals to give out any exercise advice or provide exercise demonstration. It also means you receive a substantial discount on your annual registration fee.

Q: I am already registered with NetfitPro (Network), do I need to register with REPs ?

A: Yes. Registering with NetFitPro (Network) is a process that ensures you meet NetFitPro's standards for qualifications, and ongoing education. Registering with REPs means you meet the industry recognised standards. NetFitPro have indicated that they intend to have their courses registered with REPs, like many other education providers. In addition, doing things such as the NetFitPro national conference will enable you to gain credit towards the REPs ongoing education process.

Q: I work at a registered exercise facility, can I get provisionally registered at the advanced level ?

A: No. Provisional registration is in place to recognise the fact that many individuals may well meet the standards, through a mixture of qualifications and experience, but industry is presently made up of individuals with a mix of qualifications and hands on experience and skills learnt on the job. We have a registration pathway that allows for individuals with little or no qualifications to be assessed and confirmed as competent. This can either be through a Sfrito assessor, or through a registered education provider. If you apply for registration under this pathway we will provide you with a list of such organisations.

Q: Is the insurance cover included in the PT registration fee or is it extra ?

A: It's included. All registrations of PT or higher insurance is included except for "PT Employee" which specifically excludes insurance cover, as employees are covered by the workplace insurance. All other levels can purchase insurance for an addition \$150+ GST per year, so for example if you are a group exercise instructor operating independently in a hall, you will be covered.

Q: Are photocopies of documents acceptable ?

A: Yes, good clean copies are fine. Please have the original available on request. A random selection of documents will be subject to audit verification.

Q: I have a qualification from ABC Institution, does that enable me to register ?

A: Qualifications from a REPs Registered Education provider will enable you to register through pathway one (this is a very simple process). A list of Registered Education Providers will be listed on the REPs web site. Qualifications from non REPs Registered Education Providers can still enable you to register, but through a different process (pathway three on the application form) – you will need to provide REPs with detailed descriptors of the courses/modules you have completed and these will be reviewed against the REPs standards - this will take time to verify - in the mean time provisional registration allows the individuals to continue to work in the industry. As no one requires registration at the advanced level to continue to work, and advanced levels require a higher degree of knowledge, we will be confirming the criteria for this in 2004.

Q: What happens if I move from one level to another part way through the year ?

A: You simply re-apply for registration at the new level (no payment required unless the two levels have different fee levels, in which case you just pay the difference).

Q: Is my registration internationally portable ?

A: Yes. A national registration system for exercise professionals is already in place in both England and Australia. By mid 2004, REPs will have portability agreements in place with both Fitness Australia and The Register of Exercise Professions in the UK so that registration in NZ means you can go to these countries and register there with no further “proof” required. At present a New Zealander going to Australia would often be asked to undergo further training, regardless of their qualifications, this would not be required if you have already registered with REPS in New Zealand.

Q: Here’s my CV – can you tell me if I meet the standards ?

A: There is normally far more to this question than may appear. For this reason in all cases we ask that you apply for registration and we will then tell you where you fit in and what you may need to do to gain registration (if anything). If you want to know what level you should register for, you can download the help sheets for registration, they outline the basic requirements for each level, and will give you a good idea of where you are likely to fit in. If you work at a Registered Exercise Facility we will be scheduling one on one visits to your facility in November / December 2003. During these visits we will be able to personally answer any questions related to your specific circumstances.

Q: What’s the story with giving nutritional advice ?

A: For full details of this, download the main REPs consultation document (the 40 page one) and read the section on nutrition. In summary, giving generic nutritional advice (i.e. advice that applies to everyone) is allowed, but personalised advice, such as diets or personalised statements like “because of this you should ...” need to be signed off by a registered nutritionist.

Q2: What about body building or pre-competition diets – can I give them out ?

A: The same applies. As long as you can get a registered nutritionist to sign them off as OK, then yes.

Q: What about ongoing education – do I have to go to Auckland to get it ?

A: No. One of the benefits of having an organisation like REPs is that it can use the “strength in numbers” to help facilitate training in regional centres. For example, in Dunedin there may be 50 or so REPs Registered exercise professionals. We will pass this info on to Registered Education Providers in the region and encourage them to run ongoing education courses locally. Where necessary we will assist pro-active education providers from out of town to visit smaller cities/towns also. Some education providers may even choose to deliver their ongoing education through a registered exercise facility (i.e. a fitness centre) – so it could be very cost effective for both the education provider, the workplace and the exercise professional.

Q: I am registered at two levels (PT and Group Exercise). Do I have to do twice as much ongoing education?

A: No. You do need to make sure at least 50% of your ongoing education is for each type. e.g. if you need to do five Recognition of Competency (ROCs) this year, then you need to do at least 2.5 on PT topics and at least 2.5 on Group Exercise Topics.