



# National Unit Specification

## General information

**Unit title:** Group Exercise Training (SCQF level 6)

**Unit code:** J9GW 46

**Superclass:** MA

**Publication date:** November 2025

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

## Unit purpose

This unit gives an opportunity for learners to gain an understanding of the physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training and plan, lead and evaluate a group exercise training session.

Learners will experience participating in and leading others in group exercise training in a realistic, supportive environment. It will allow learners to develop their personal leadership qualities, knowledge, and skills in the delivery of group exercise training sessions to develop cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength and flexibility.

The unit is a part of the National Progression Award (NPA) in Exercise and Fitness Leadership SCQF level 6. Learners could progress from this NPA award to:

- National Certificate (NC) in Sport and Physical Activity at level 6

- Higher National Certificate (HNC) Fitness, Health and Exercise or HNC Physical Activity and Health at SCQF level 7
- Higher National Certificate Sports Coaching and Development at SCQF level 7
- Higher National Certificate Soft Tissue Therapy at SCQF level 7

Further knowledge, skills, experience or qualifications may be required prior to entry to Higher National (HN) qualifications.

## **Outcomes**

On successful completion of the unit the learner will be able to:

1. Describe the short- and long-term physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training.
2. Participate in a range of group exercise training sessions and plan one group exercise training session for healthy clients.
3. Lead a group exercise training session for healthy clients.
4. Evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session.

## **Credit points and level**

1 National Unit credit at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 6: (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6).

## **Recommended entry to the unit**

Entry for this unit would be at the discretion of the centre however learners would benefit from having some experience participating in and leading in physical education, physical activity, sport, and/or exercise and fitness training sessions and have communication skills equivalent to at least SCQF level 5.

Learners may also have experience in leading others during sports coaching.

This unit is suitable for those who have no previous qualifications or experience.

## **Core Skills**

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes for this unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this unit.

## **Context for delivery**

If this unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website: [Internal Assessment Support Materials](http://www.sqa.org.uk/internal-assessment-support-materials) (www.sqa.org.uk/internal-assessment-support-materials).

## **Equality and inclusion**

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website:

[SQA Assessment Arrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessment-arrangements) (www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

# National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

**Unit title:** Group Exercise Training (SCQF level 6)

Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

## Outcome 1

Describe the short- and long-term physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training.

### Performance criteria

- (a) Describe short-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the cardiorespiratory system.
- (b) Describe long-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the cardiorespiratory system.
- (c) Describe short-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the musculoskeletal system.
- (d) Describe long-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the musculoskeletal system.
- (e) Describe the physiological effects of group exercise training on the nervous system.
- (f) Describe the psychological benefits of group exercise training.

## **Outcome 2**

Participate in a range of group exercise training sessions and plan one group exercise training session for healthy clients.

### **Performance criteria**

- (a) Participate in a range of group exercise training sessions.
- (b) Carry out a health and safety risk assessment for the planned group exercise training session.
- (c) Plan an exercise to music warm-up for a group exercise training session.
- (d) Organise the technology required to play the music for the group exercise to music warm-up.
- (e) Plan a group exercise training session.
- (f) Plan a cool-down for a group exercise training session.

## **Outcome 3**

Lead a group exercise training session for healthy clients.

### **Performance criteria**

- (a) Set up the planned group exercise training session safely and apply appropriate health and safety protocols.
- (b) Explain the purpose of the session to clients.
- (c) Lead the planned exercise to music warm-up for the group exercise training session.
- (d) Lead the planned group exercise training session.
- (e) Lead the planned cool-down for the group exercise training session.

## **Outcome 4**

Evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session.

### **Performance criteria**

- (a) Evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session.
- (b) Evaluate participant's feedback on the group exercise training session delivered.
- (c) Prioritise development needs for the effective delivery of future sessions for the specific type of training.

### **Evidence requirements for this unit**

Evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all outcomes and performance criteria.

### **Outcome 1: Describe short- and long-term physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training.**

Outcome 1 must be a closed-book assessment completed within 1 hour, in one sitting under controlled, supervised conditions.

Learners must describe:

- a minimum of two short-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the cardiorespiratory system
- a minimum of two long-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the cardiorespiratory system
- a minimum of two short-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the musculoskeletal system
- a minimum of two long-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the musculoskeletal system
- a minimum of one physiological effect of group exercise training on the nervous system
- a minimum of two psychological benefits of group exercise training

**Outcome 2: Participate in a range of group exercise training sessions and plan one group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

The evidence for performance criterion (a) should be gathered under supervised conditions and performance criteria (b), (c), (d) (e) and (f) under open-book assessment conditions.

(a) Learners must participate in a minimum of three group exercise training sessions covering the following components of fitness at least once:

- cardiovascular endurance
- muscular endurance
- muscular strength
- flexibility

Each session must also include planned warm-up to music and a cool-down.

Learners must keep a record of the sessions they have completed. This record must include what exercises they completed, sets/repetitions, rest time taken, overall session time and equipment used.

For performance criteria (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f), learners must plan for a group with a minimum of four clients.

(b) Learners must complete a health and safety risk assessment for the planned warm-up, group exercise training session and cool-down. The health and safety risk assessment must include pre-screening for clients of their previous injuries and/or illnesses and goals using a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q). Learners must also ensure that their clients have the appropriate attire for the session. Learners must also carry out a visual inspection of the area and equipment to be used.

(c) Learners must plan an appropriate exercise to music warm-up for their clients. This must last for a minimum of 3 minutes. It must be a pre choreographed exercise to music warm-up.

This routine must include movements to warm-up all areas of the body that link to the training session. The structured warm-up must include a pulse raising activity and a minimum of two dynamic stretches. This must be recorded on a session plan.

- (d) Learners must organise the technology required to play the music for the warm-up. Learners must choose a piece of music that is appropriate for the type of training and coordinates with any change in exercise intensity.
- (e) Learners must plan one structured group exercise training session for a minimum of two components of fitness selected based on their clients' goals.

The session plan must include:

- what type of group exercise training session they will deliver
  - the two specific components of fitness being developed
  - the duration which must be a minimum of 15 minutes
  - a minimum of six stations with instruction cards
  - the timings, sets/reps required
  - the number of clients
  - the order of exercises within the group exercise training session
  - what equipment will be required
  - appropriate exercises for the participating client group
  - adaptations and progressions for each exercise
- (f) Learners must plan an appropriate cool-down activity for the clients relating to the muscle groups that were used throughout the session for a minimum of 3 minutes. This must gradually decrease the pulse rate which must be followed with a minimum of two static stretches. This must be recorded on a session plan.

### **Outcome 3: Lead a group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

Outcome 3 must be assessed using an assessor checklist under supervised conditions.

- (a) Learners must set up equipment safely, including visual inspection of all equipment, for the warm-up, training session and cool-down and apply appropriate health and safety protocols when leading the group exercise training session.

- (b) Learners must explain the purpose of the planned group exercise training session to clients, including an accurate demonstration of the exercises used at each station, as well as any planned adaptations and progressions.
- (c) Learners must lead the relevant exercise to music warm-up for a minimum of 3 minutes that prepares the clients for the training session. The chosen exercises must be choreographed and demonstrated in time to appropriate music which coordinates with the change in exercise intensity. Learners must start off with low intensity movements to gradually increase heart rate. The warm-up must then further increase in intensity and include a minimum of two dynamic stretches to ensure the whole body is warm and prepared for the session.
- (d) Learners must lead the group exercise training session for a minimum of 15 minutes and include a minimum of six stations.
- Throughout the session learners must continually monitor their clients' performance and motivate, provide accurate feedback to correct poor form, along with adaptations and progressions when required.
- (e) Learners must lead their clients through an appropriate cool-down that lasts for a minimum of 3 minutes. This cool-down must be a general pulse lowering activity which includes a minimum of two static stretches. Key areas of the body that were used during the training session must be cooled down specifically.

**Outcome 4: Evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session.**

The evidence for this outcome should be gathered under open-book assessment conditions.

- (a) Learners must evaluate the planning and delivery of the warmup, group exercise training session and cool-down they led.

The evaluation must identify:

- a minimum of one strength and one development need in relation to the planning of the session and one explanation of how this affected the outcome of their session.

- a minimum of one strength and one development need in relation to the delivery of the session and one explanation of how this affected the outcome of their session.
- (b) Learners must gather feedback from their clients to evaluate the effectiveness of the set-up and delivery of the session delivered.
- (c) Learners must record a minimum of two development needs to prioritise for the effective delivery of future sessions.

### **Holistic assessment**

There may be opportunities to cross assess outcome 2 performance criterion (b) with the J9GX 46 Resistance Training unit outcome 2 performance criterion (b) and the J9GV 46 Cardiovascular (CV) unit outcome 2 performance criterion (c).



## National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Group Exercise Training (SCQF level 6)

Unit support notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### Guidance on the content and context for this unit

The purpose of this unit is to enable learners to develop skills in being able to lead others in group exercise training sessions in a realistic, supported environment. It will give learners some fundamental knowledge and practical skills required within careers in the fitness, health and exercise industry.

Unit delivery should be in a practical environment as much as possible. Centres will form their own judgement as to the delivery schedule. It is recommended that centres decide what best suits the needs of the learner and their own and local facilities. Some aspects of the unit may require delivery to take place in a 'classroom' environment while others will require learners to be working out with that environment (that is, games hall, gym, fitness studio) while receiving teacher/lecturer support.

Centres are encouraged to create links with local gyms to allow learners the opportunity to experience a realistic health and fitness industry environment.

**Outcome 1: Describe the short- and long-term physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training.**

(a) When describing the short-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the cardiorespiratory system learners could include:

- increased blood pressure
- increased stroke volume
- increased tidal volume
- increased breathing rate

This list is not exhaustive.

(b) When describing the long-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the cardiorespiratory system learners could include:

- increased/improved efficiency of the heart and lungs
- reduced/lower resting heart rate
- increased/improved strength of the respiratory muscles
- increased number of alveoli within lung tissue

This list is not exhaustive.

(c) When describing the short-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the musculoskeletal system learners could include:

- increased level of blood pushed to the active muscles
- increased elasticity of the muscle fibres
- increased temperature of the muscle
- increased range of movement at the joint

This list is not exhaustive.

(d) When describing the long-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the musculoskeletal system learners could include:

- improved efficiency of muscle contraction/co-ordination
- improved joint mobility
- increased bone density

- increased tendon/ligament strength

This list is not exhaustive.

(e) When describing the physiological effects of group exercise training on the nervous system learners could include:

- improved reaction time
- improved coordination
- synapses which connect neurons work more effectively
- greater number of neurotransmitters

This list is not exhaustive.

(f) When describing the psychological benefits of group exercise training learners could include:

- reduction in anxiety and stress
- improved decision making
- improved concentration
- improved sense of wellbeing

This list is not exhaustive.

## **Outcome 2: Participate in a range of group exercise training sessions and plan one group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

Through participation learners will develop an understanding of how to develop cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility using a variety of equipment and methods. This may be through a session focused on one or more than one component of fitness. Learners will experience the safe practical organisation and delivery of different types of group exercise training sessions and how to perform a variety of exercises safely. This knowledge can then be applied to planning of a group exercise training session of their choice and support their ability to lead a group exercise training session in outcome 3.

Teachers/lecturers should demonstrate a range of appropriate technology to play the music for the warm-ups. This may include speakers, music storage devices, cables/Bluetooth connection considerations. It may also be useful for

teachers/lecturers to encourage learners to make use of technology to ensure accurate timings of the stations within their sessions, for example using an interval timing app.

It may be appropriate to set up a variety of health and safety scenarios so that learners experience for themselves the required health and safety protocols for a safe working environment.

### **Outcome 3: Lead a group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

It is anticipated that learners will devise a session of an appropriate duration for the type of training and components of fitness which have been identified to be improved. The environment and equipment should be appropriate for the chosen type of training.

### **Outcome 4: Evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session.**

Learners could complete a written/oral self-reflection task about the planning and delivery of the resistance training session and how it affected the outcome of the session. Learners could judge the effectiveness of the session, through observing clients' effort/application, work rate and body language along with feedback from clients. Learners could use this information to evaluate their planning and delivery to prioritise areas for development.

The accuracy of the learner's self-reflection/evaluation should be confirmed by the teacher/assessor.

Gaining feedback from a range of sources (peers, participant, teacher, lecturer, assessor and coaches) would be beneficial to build a more rounded evaluation.

## **Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit**

Each outcome should build the knowledge, understanding and confidence of learners, therefore it will work well to deliver this unit in sequential order, however, it is at the centres discretion which order they deliver these outcomes. An element of

flexibility and creativity with the planning and delivery may allow for a better learning experience. Some examples below:

**Outcome 1: Describe the short- and long-term physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training.**

Experiential learning activities can consolidate the knowledge related to the short- and long-term physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training.

Alternatively, this could be taught in a classroom environment with the use of PowerPoint presentations and additional resources. To support learning, learners may be directed to online resources.

Group tasks could be set up to discuss the physiological effects of group exercise training immediately after participating in a training session. This could cover what the learner experiences in relation to heart rate and breathing while the training is being carried out. This could also cover the changes to mood state, alertness or concentration on the completion of training sessions and satisfy outcome 2 performance criterion (a) as well as the knowledge required for performance criteria within outcome 1.

**Outcome 2: Participate in a range of group exercise training sessions and plan one group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

Learners should be exposed to a range of teacher/lecturer led group exercise to music warm-ups, cool-downs and a range of specific, CV, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility training sessions (for example 'as many reps/rounds as possible' (AMRAP), 'every minute on the minute' (EMOM), 'high intensity interval training' (HIIT) and circuit training. This experience will enable learners to apply knowledge and skills, and plan a group exercise training session for their clients' incorporating information from the PAR-Q (for example client goals, medical information).

When delivering group exercise training sessions teachers/lecturers should exemplify the importance of ongoing communication and motivation where appropriate to enable the learner to understand the benefits of supporting their clients during session delivery.

The warm-up does not have to be a traditional aerobics style exercise to music warm-up and could include a series of warm-up movements such as lunge jumps, burpees, for example, however it must be pre-choreographed. Learners should select appropriate music for the warm-up which matches/aligns with the change in exercise intensity.

Teacher/lecturers could demonstrate group exercise training sessions which may include the following:

- cardiovascular exercises
- bodyweight exercises
- small equipment (for example use of mats for core/abdominal exercise)
- functional exercises
- flexibility and range of motion exercises
- number and experience of clients
- use of different environments (indoor/outdoor)
- learner designed circuit cards for each exercise station including the key muscles being used with short instructions covering how to complete the exercises

### **Outcome 3: Lead a group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

Teachers/lecturers could set up groups of learners to be 'healthy clients' for each other. This would help to develop their practical delivery, improving confidence and training specific knowledge by being a participant in the practical sessions. Sessions could be split into warm-up, main session and cool-down where a group of learners would plan together a coherent session and agree to deliver a part of the session and then to feedback and evaluate the delivery of the session together.

### **Outcome 4: Evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session.**

Teachers/lecturers should encourage learners to effectively evaluate their participation in the range of resistance training sessions completed in outcome 2. This would enable learners to embed good practice within their own delivery of their planned resistance training session.

This could also involve encouraging feedback from learners on the teacher/lecturer led sessions.

## **Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit**

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Assessors must follow SQA guidelines in relation to internal verification and external verification in order to ensure that all evidence is collected, moderated, and quality assured in a valid, accurate, and secure manner so that it maintains the integrity of SQA expectations.

Evidence for outcome 1 to outcome 4 may be obtained utilising formative and summative assessment methods or as part of a holistic assessment approach as determined by assessors.

### **Outcome 1: Describe the short- and long-term physiological and psychological responses to group exercise training.**

The one hour closed-book assessment could be short answer questions set by the teacher/lecturer which could be responded to in either a written or oral format. Oral recordings could be captured via video or voice recording apps which should be supported by an assessor checklist.

### **Outcome 2: Participate in a range of group exercise training sessions and plan one group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

As stated in the evidence requirements a session plan template must be used for performance criteria (c), (e) and (f), evidence for performance criterion (d) could also be captured on the session plan.

Learners could be assessed by the use of a logbook (performance criterion (a)) and risk assessment template (performance criterion (b)) which could be written or digital.

### **Outcome 3: Lead a group exercise training session for healthy clients.**

Through the use of an assessor observation checklist the teacher/lecturer should provide qualitative comments about the learner's delivery.

Learners may be assessed leading their exercise to music warm-up and then lead the group exercise training session and cool-down at a later date or these could be assessed together.

### **Outcome 4: Evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session.**

This outcome could be assessed via a variety of different approaches including:

- Professional discussion
- Portfolio

For remediation of assessment, please refer to the group award specification.

### **Authentication of evidence**

All written work should contain a declaration of validity that the content is the learners own work unless cited otherwise. Submissions should be signed off and dated by the learner. Digital submissions should be encouraged through centres' learning management system (LMS) platforms using anti plagiarism software.

### **Opportunities for e-assessment**

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the evidence requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to

support SQA's qualifications is available at [SQA e-Assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/Guide%20to%20best%20practice.pdf).  
([www.sqa.org.uk/Guide to best practice.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/Guide%20to%20best%20practice.pdf)).

## **Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills**

Core Skills can be developed throughout this unit. Communication skills (Oral and Written) will be developed through planning sessions and explaining the purpose of the stations within the group exercise training session.

Numeracy skills will be required to ensure the session is planned appropriately within the required timeframe.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be utilised through the use of apps or in the production of resources for station cards. Working with Others can be developed in this unit when participating in sessions and also through delivery of the planned training session. This unit requires critical thinking when planning and organising the warm-up, group exercise training session and cool-down where problem solving may be required. The reviewing and evaluation of the delivery of the session also requires Problem Solving.

From a broader perspective a learner may develop a sense of enterprise, employability, sustainable development, and citizenship as they engage with the unit. For example, working towards becoming a fitness instructor and starting their own business, developing meta skills useful for employability, learning how to ensure sustainability is linked with such careers, and becoming a good citizen who values and supports the health and wellbeing of clients.

## History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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Unit template: February 2025

# General information for learners

**Unit title:** Group Exercise Training (SCQF level 6)

This information will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This unit is designed to be delivered as a standalone unit or in conjunction with the following units to make up the SCQF level 6 National Progression Award in Exercise and Fitness Leadership:

- J9GV 46 Cardiovascular Training
- J9GX 46 Resistance Training

You will benefit from undertaking this unit if you already have an interest in exercise and fitness and are keen to increase your understanding of group exercise training. You do not need any previous qualifications or experience to study this unit.

You will learn about the short- and long-term physiological effects of group exercise training on the cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal systems. The physiological effects on the nervous system and the psychological benefits of group exercise training will also be covered. This will be assessed by a written or oral closed-book assessment.

You will participate in a range of teacher/lecturer led group exercise training sessions and experience delivery of safe and effective exercise to music warm-ups, cool-downs and a range of specific components of fitness-based sessions. By keeping a record of the content and organisation of these sessions, you will develop an understanding of how to apply this knowledge when planning a session for you to deliver to clients. This will include the required organisation of the technology required to play music for the warm-up. This outcome will be assessed using a session plan template.

Prior to delivering your session you will carry health and safety risk assessment, including pre-screening for clients' previous injuries or illnesses, their goals and checks to ensure proper attire is being worn for the session. You will also conduct a visual inspection of the area and equipment to be used.

You will experience leading others in group exercise training activities in a supportive environment which is realistic to the fitness industry. This will allow you to develop your personal leadership qualities and to develop your knowledge and skills in the delivery of planned group exercise training sessions to develop different components of fitness. You will be able to explain the purpose of the training session to clients including demonstrations of exercises to be used, then lead the session as planned and evaluate client performance during the session. You will motivate clients, with ongoing communication where appropriate and practicable so that clients can successfully complete the session at an appropriate level. This will be assessed using an assessor checklist.

This unit will provide opportunities for you to evaluate the planning and delivery of the group exercise training session you delivered. You will identify areas of strength and areas of development using self-reflection and client feedback to prioritise your development needs.

There are opportunities to develop Core Skills throughout this unit. You will develop Communication skills when planning and delivering your session. You will develop Numeracy skills when organising timings for sessions and ICT skills when utilising technology to play music for the warm-up and to time parts of the session. Working with Others will also be developed through participation in group exercise training sessions. Problem Solving will be developed when considering adaptations to the session being delivered.

Completion of this unit may allow progression in further education.