

A black and white photograph of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a black polo shirt with the ACSM logo. He is standing in a gym with a track and bleachers in the background. The text is overlaid on the image.

# AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SPORTS MEDICINE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE  
ACSM PERSONAL TRAINER CERTIFICATION

*Francis B. Neric, MS, MBA | ACSM National Director of Certification*

# Certification Milestones



1

Why



2

What



3

How



4

Where



5

Who

# What ACSM Professionals Are Saying



**YADHIRA MALDONADO**  
ACSM-CPT

"I live to learn and to teach ... I show others that you can experience the same struggles as everyone else, and (to) make time to be emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy."



**STAN WARD**  
ACSM-EP

"I ultimately (wanted to be) a resource for (clients) to identify the areas in their lives that would allow for maximal quality of life (and) we are able to get out in front of trends that could potentially lead to disease"



**ROBERT BERRY**  
ACSM-CEP, RCEP

"... helping people with chronic disease learn about their disease and management strategies. Clinical exercise physiologists have the opportunity to interact with patients on a level that most physicians can only dream of."



# ACSM Certifications



## GROUP EXERCISE INSTRUCTOR

HS Diploma  
CPR + AED

- Healthy, cleared to exercise
- Small + large groups



## PERSONAL TRAINER

HS Diploma  
CPR + AED

- Healthy, cleared to exercise
- 1:1 training



## EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGIST

Bachelors in Ex Sci  
CPR + AED

- Healthy
- Health challenges
- Personalized training



## CLINICAL EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGIST

BS (ExSci) + 1200 hrs  
MS (ExPhys) + 600 hrs

Basic lifesaving

- Unstable disease
- Clinical exercise
- Medical fitness



# Scope of ACSM Certs

## EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE



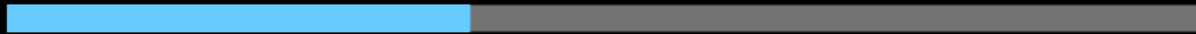
MS: ACSM-CEP



BS: ACSM-EP



HS/AA: ACSM-CPT



HS/AA: ACSM-GEI



LOW

MED

HIGH

CLIENT RISK

# 13% GROWTH

## *FITNESS TRAINERS AND INSTRUCTORS*

Median pay: \$39,820 per year (\$19.15 per hour)

Outlook: Faster than average job growth

Number of jobs: 356,900



# 10% GROWTH

## *CLINICAL EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGISTS*

Median pay: \$49,270 per year (\$23.69 per hour)

Outlook: Faster than average job growth

Number of jobs: 15,800





# One Size Does **NOT** Fit All

## Build Your Personal Certification Exam Prep Plan

At ACSM, we recognize you are busy, unique and have your own preferences for studying. That's why we provide study options in multiple formats so you can choose the approach that works best for you.

### ACSM Study Tips



#### Study Timeline

Create a timeline that works for you. ACSM recommends that you allow for three to six months to study for an exam.



#### Exam Content Outlines

Your blueprint for the exam. ACSM has an outline for each of our certifications. Choose the one that's right for you.



#### Textbooks

Traditional study materials support any exam prep plan. ACSM publishes multiple textbooks that are available for most of our exams.



#### Facebook Study Groups

Join one of our Facebook Study Groups and interact with a community of peers who are either preparing for the exam or have already passed and can provide you with helpful tips.



#### Workshops

If you are a hands-on learner, ACSM offers exam preparation workshops for the following exams: Certified Personal Trainer, Certified Exercise Physiologist and Group Exercise Instructor.



#### Practice Questions

ACSM's prepU offers a customized approach to studying. The online program identifies proficiency gaps and adapts questions to ensure you are focusing on the right content.



AMERICAN COLLEGE  
of SPORTS MEDICINE  
LEADING THE WAY

**acsm**  
CERTIFICATION

# Exam Preparation Preferences



## *SELF*

Strong background or experience

- Textbook(s)
- Practice questions
- FB study group



## *ONLINE GROUP*

Limited background or experience

- Textbook(s)
- Practice questions
- FB study group
- Webinars



## *LIVE GROUP*

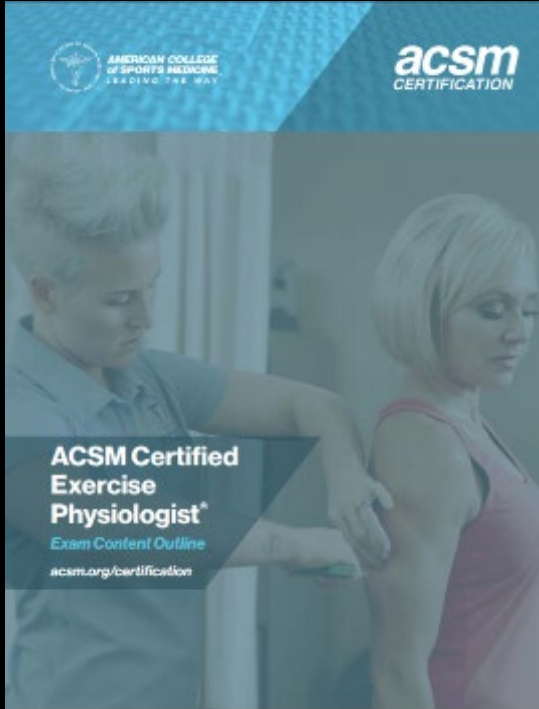
Limited background or experience

- Textbook(s)
- Practice questions
- FB study group
- Webinars
- Two-day workshop

# Exam Perparation

Timeline





### ACSM CERTIFIED CLINICAL EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGIST® JOB TASK ANALYSIS

The job task analysis (JTA) is intended to serve as a blueprint of the job of an ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Physiologist® (ACSM-CEP®). The examination is intended to assess the practice-related knowledge of professionals seeking certification as an ACSM-CEP® based on the content of this document. When preparing for the examination, it is important to remember that all examination questions are based on this outline.

**Job Definition**  
The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Physiologist® (ACSM-CEP®) is an allied health professional with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in exercise science or equivalent and 1,200 hours of clinical hands-on experience or a master's degree in clinical exercise physiology and 600 hours of hands-on clinical experience. ACSM-CEP® utilize prescribed exercise, basic health behavior interventions and provide physical activity for individuals with chronic diseases or conditions, examples include, but are not limited to, individuals with cardiovascular, pulmonary, metabolic, orthopedic, muscular/skeletal, neuromuscular, neoplastic, immunologic and hematologic diseases. The ACSM-CEP® provides primary and secondary prevention strategies designed to improve, maintain or alter/advance declines in fitness and health in populations ranging from children to older adults.

The ACSM-CEP® provides exercise screening, exercise and fitness testing, exercise prescription, exercise and physical activity counseling, exercise supervision, exercise and health education/promotion, and measurement and evaluation of exercise and physical activity-related outcome measures. The ACSM-CEP® works individually or as part of an interdisciplinary team in clinical, community or public health settings. ACSM-CEP® may receive referrals from a referring practitioner to implement exercise protocols. The practice and supervision of the ACSM-CEP® is guided by published professional guidelines and standards and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

**Performance Domains and Associated Job Tasks**  
This JTA describes the professional duties and responsibilities expected of a practicing ACSM-CEP®. The JTA is divided into domains and associated tasks performed on the job. The percentages listed below indicate the portion of questions representing each domain on the 125-question ACSM-CEP® examination. The performance domains are:

Performance Domain (2022)	Domain Weighting (%)
Patient Assessment	23%
Exercise Testing	19%
Exercise Prescription	24%
Exercise Training and Leadership	20%
Education and Behavior Change	12%
Legal and Professional Responsibilities	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Before an item can be used on an exam, it is subjected to Exam Development Committee (EDC) review and pre-testing. Pre-testing allows the EDC to gather statistical information about new items for evaluation purposes without affecting candidate scores. Statistical information gathered from pre-test items is analyzed to determine if the items function properly and are ready for use as scored items. Pre-test items are randomly placed throughout the exam and will appear the same as scored items. Candidates should treat every item as if it will be scored.

**Cognitive Level**  
The job of a clinical exercise physiologist can range between simple and complicated tasks. Much in the same way, the ACSM-CEP® items are written at different levels of cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity is a way of describing the extent to which a candidate should know or be able to do something. A low level of cognitive

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Job role  
Content weighting

processing is simple recall of information whereas a higher level of cognitive processing includes analysis, evaluation and judgments. ACSM uses three levels of cognitive challenge: recall, application and synthesis.

**Recall** = remember basic facts, information or steps in a process.

Example:  
Which exercise testing protocol is preferable for a deconditioned patient with chronic disease?

A. Naughton  
B. Astrand-Ryhming  
C. Bruce  
D. Bruce

**Application** = comprehend and implement processes, interpret simple results or summarize information.

Example:  
A 55-year-old man with a height of 68 inches (180 cm) undergoes exercise testing. He achieves a peak oxygen consumption of 3.7 L/min and 5.2 METs. Which of the following best describes the client?

A. underweight  
B. normal weight  
C. overweight  
D. obese

**Synthesis** = differentiate, relate parts of a system, make judgments on new information based on given criteria, critique a process or product and make recommendations.

Example:  
Phase II cardiac rehab patient with history of MI/PCI experiences chest discomfort and shortness of breath during exercise. The single lead ECG is indeterminate for ST changes. Vitals are as follows:

- SaO<sub>2</sub> = 88%
- Heart rate = 112 bpm
- Blood pressure = 142/98 mm Hg
- Symptoms do not improve with seated rest and sublingual nitroglycerin.

What step is the most appropriate to perform next?

A. Check blood glucose.  
B. Obtain a 12-lead ECG.  
C. Give supplemental oxygen.  
D. Have patient perform Valsalva maneuver.

**Exercise Item**  
Result: A  
Application: C  
Synthesis: B

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Cognitive complexity

### ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Physiologist® (ACSM-CEP®) Content Outline (2018)

Chronic disease includes, but are not limited to, cardiovascular, pulmonary, metabolic, orthopedic/musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, neoplastic, immunologic and hematologic disorders.

Domain/Task	Cognitive Level
<b>A. Assess a patient's Assessment</b>	
A. Assess a patient's medical record for information related to their visit. Application	
1) Knowledge of:	
a) the procedure to obtain patient's medical history through available documentation.	
b) the necessary medical records needed to properly assess a patient, given their diagnosis and/or reason for referral.	
c) the procedure to obtain physician referral and medical records required for program participation.	
d) information and documentation required for program participation.	
e) the epidemiology, pathophysiology, progression, risk factors, key clinical findings and treatments of chronic diseases.	
f) the techniques (e.g., lab results, diagnostic tests) used to diagnose chronic diseases, their indications, limitations, risks, normal and abnormal results.	
g) medical charting, terminology and common acronyms.	
2) Skill In:	
a) interpreting information from medical records in patient care and/or exercise prescription.	
b) assessing various vital signs.	
c) assessing physician referral and/or medical records to determine program participation status.	
<b>B. Interview patient regarding medical history for their visit and reasonable medications.</b> Application	
1) Knowledge of:	
a) indications of support through health counseling techniques (e.g., the patient-centered approach), and nonjudgmental positive regard in creation of collaborative partnerships.	
b) use of open-ended, probing, active listening and attention to nonverbal behavior, interest and empathy.	
c) information and documentation required for program participation.	
d) the procedure to obtain informed consent from patient to meet legal requirements.	
e) commonly used medications in patients with chronic diseases, their mechanisms of action, and side effects.	
f) medical charting, terminology and common acronyms.	
2) Skill In:	
a) administering informed consent.	
b) interviewing patient for medical history pertinent to the reason for their visit and recording medications.	
c) active listening and usage of health counseling techniques.	
d) data collection during baseline intake assessment.	
e) proficiency in medical charting.	

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Critical job tasks

**Table 1. 2017 ACSM-CPT Performance Domains.**

Performance Domains (2017)	
Domain I: Initial Client Consultation and Assessment	25%
Domain II: Exercise Programming and Implementation	45%
Domain III: Exercise Leadership & Client Education	20%
Domain IV: Legal & Professional Responsibilities	10%

**Table 2. Job tasks and related knowledge and skill statements.**

Task Name	Cognitive Level
<b>I. Initial Client Consultation and Assessment</b>	
<b>A.</b> Provide documents and clear instructions to the client in preparation for the initial interview.  1) <i>Knowledge of:</i> a) the components of and preparation for the initial client consultation. b) the necessary paperwork to be completed by the client prior to the initial client interview.  2) <i>Skill in:</i> a) effective communication. b) utilizing multimedia resources (e.g., email, phone, text messaging).	Recall
<b>B.</b> Interview the client to gather and provide pertinent information prior to fitness testing and program design.  1) <i>Knowledge of:</i> a) the components and limitations of a health/medical history, preparticipation screening, informed consent, trainer-client contract, and organizational policies and procedures. b) the use of medical clearance for exercise testing and program participation. c) health behavior modification theories and strategies. d) orientation procedures, including equipment utilization and facility layout.  2) <i>Skill in:</i> a) obtaining a health/medical history, medical clearance, and informed consent.	Application
<b>C.</b> Review and analyze client data to identify risk, formulate a plan of action, and conduct physical assessments.  1) <i>Knowledge of:</i> a) risk factors for cardiovascular disease. b) signs and symptoms of chronic cardiovascular, metabolic, and/or pulmonary disease. c) the process for determining the need for medical clearance prior to participation in fitness testing and exercise programs. d) relative and absolute contraindications to exercise testing.  2) <i>Skill in:</i> a) identifying modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular disease and teaching clients about risk reduction. b) determining appropriate fitness assessments based on the initial client consultation. c) following protocols during fitness assessment administration.	Synthesis

# WHERE TO TAKE ACSM EXAMS



## PEARSON PROFESSIONAL CENTERS

- Wholly owned test centers
- Global network: 320



## PEARSON AUTHORIZED TEST CENTERS

- Training centers and businesses
- Academic institutions
- U.S. Military installations
- Government agencies
- Global network 5,600



## ONVUE

- Available July 1, 2020
- Personal device
- 24 hrs x 7 days/week



# CONTINUING EDUCATION

*Distinguishing professional certification from educational certificates.*

Demonstrates specified levels of knowledge, skills, or ability not only at the time of initial certification but **throughout a professional career**

**Why ACSM?**

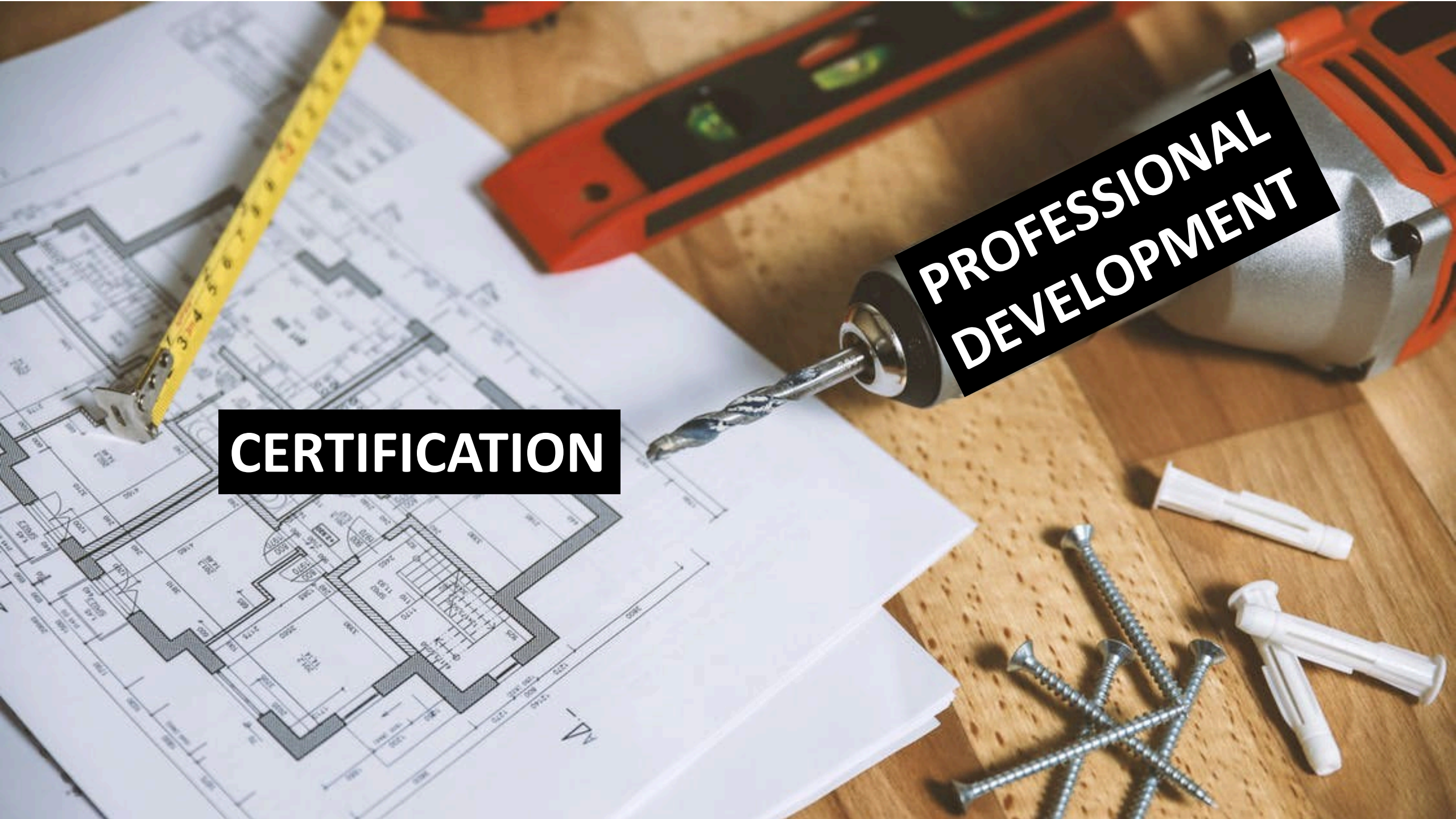


“

Flexibility is the key to  
stability.

---

JOHN WOODEN



**CERTIFICATION**

**PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**



MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

*Pursue it!*  
MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY  
Arlington, Virginia

- School of Arts & Sciences
- English & Humanities (M.A.)
- Interior Design (M.A.)
- School of Business
- Business Administration
- Global Security (M.S.)
- Health Care Management
- Human Resources (M.A.)
- Information Systems (M.S.)

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF RECREATION, HEALTH AND TOURISM  
Fitness, Promotion Programs

NAME TAG

NAME TAG

MICHELLE

MICHELLE

AMY

ALEXEI

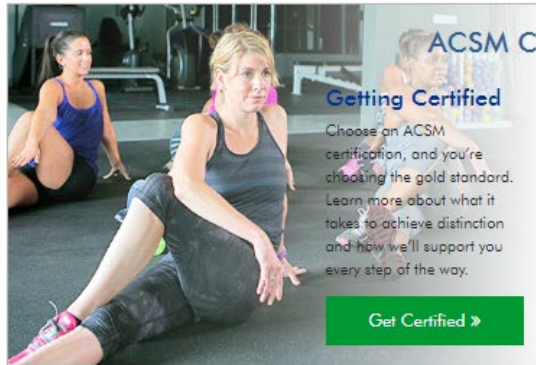
BRYANNA

NAME TAG

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## Get & Stay Certified

Our standards are high. So are yours. And that's why you're here. As the industry leader, ACSM will help you inspire people to live their best life.



### ACSM Certification

#### Getting Certified

Choose an ACSM certification, and you're choosing the gold standard. Learn more about what it takes to achieve distinction and how we'll support you every step of the way.

[Get Certified >](#)

#### Staying Certified

Thank you for using your ACSM certification to serve clients well. Maintaining your certification is a smart move, and we make it easy while keeping our standards high.

[Stay Certified >](#)

### Sign Up for a FREE Certification Resource Guide

Learn about the different ACSM Certifications and discover which one is right for you!

Email:

[Submit](#)

### Development & Career Opportunities

**EQUINOX****EXOS.**

### News

Update: ACSM Certification Exams at Pearson VUE Testing Centers

May 12, 2020

ACSM Announces Initial Plans for 2020 Annual Meeting Content

May 1, 2020

COVID-19 Financial Relief

Mar 31, 2020

ACSM Certification Benefits: CREP

Mar 16, 2020

[See All News Items >](#)

### Blog

ACSM Fit Science In The News

Jun 03, 2020

ACSM's Foundations of Strength Training and Conditioning - New Page

May 30, 2020

The Science of Sitting Less | Free Webinar

May 29, 2020

[See All Blog Posts >](#)



In This Section:

- > Get Certified
- > Stay Certified
- > Why ACSM Certification
- > Policies & Procedures
- Find a Pro
- Find a Job
- Military Assistance
- Cert Pro Award

## ACSM Specialty Certifications

ACSM Specialty Certifications credential those who already have a NCAA accredited certification to work with special needs clients. Specialty certification ranges from the ability to work with clients of different fitness levels, to work with individuals affected by cancer and those with disabilities, and to promote physical activity in public health at national, state and local levels.

### ACSM Exercise is Medicine Credential®

The ACSM Exercise is Medicine Credential (EIM) provides exercise professionals with the opportunity to work closely with the medical community. EIM provides additional benefits to the certified professional, including a respected credential to work with individuals who are healthy, those with health-related conditions who have been cleared by a physician for exercise (level 1 or 2), and for patients who require clinical support and monitoring (level 3).

### ACSM/ACS Certified Cancer Exercise TrainerSM

ACSM has collaborated with the American Cancer Society (ACS) to develop a specialty certification allowing fitness professionals to work with clients who have been cleared by their physician for independent exercise and physical activity. Pursue the ACSM/ACS Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer (CET) credential and use your knowledge to develop exercise programs for clients making lifestyle changes caused by cancer and related treatments.

### ACSM/NCHPAD Certified Inclusive Fitness Trainer

In collaboration with the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD), ACSM has developed a specialty certification for fitness professionals to empower those who are challenged by physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities. ACSM/NCHPAD Certified Inclusive Fitness Trainers (CIFT) give clients the knowledge and support to lead a healthy and comfortable lifestyle.

### ACSM/NPAS Certified Physical Activity in Public Health Specialist

ACSM, in collaboration with the National Physical Activity Society (NPAS), has developed a certification for professionals who want to promote physical activity with focus on the public health setting. The ACSM/NPAS Physical Activity in Public Health Specialist (PAHSS) develops key partnerships to establish legislation, policies and programs that promote physical activity for people all over the country.



### About EXOS

EXOS has been leading the way in workplace wellness for over two decades, creating evidence-based employee wellness programs for global companies across a number of industries. EXOS' health solutions come to life through a combination of wellness services, technology, fitness facilities, and performance staff, and are always within reach — online, via mobile apps, and through in-person coaching. EXOS has over 150 corporate clients and 400 locations in 30 countries.

### EXOS Education

Take your career and your clients' performance to the next level with EXOS' online education and training. Gain knowledge in your area of expertise, and stay up to date on the latest performance research, all while earning ACSM continuing education credits.



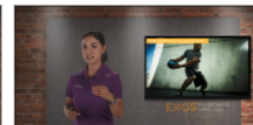
#### EXOS Presents: Multidirectional Speed

This course focuses on the non-reactive properties of multidirectional speed. Emphasis is placed on focused movement strategies for developing the shuffle and offering instruction, error identification and correction, and cueing.



#### EXOS Presents: Movement Preparation

This course redefines the term warm-up and focuses on dynamic stretching methods and movement strategies for hip activation. Specific emphasis is placed on instruction, error identification and correction, and cueing.



#### EXOS Presents: Medicine Ball

Learn how medicine balls may be used to enhance performance and decrease the risk of injury. Also receive instruction on movement strategies such as stance, movement direction, error identification and correction, and cueing.



#### EXOS Presents: Integrating Nutrition into Training

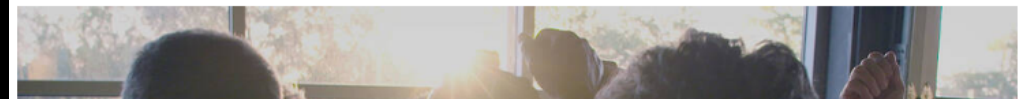
Learn about the EXOS performance nutrition principles you can use to systematically help your clients upgrade nutritional behaviors that will play a significant role in maximizing energy, improving recovery, and creating a new nutrition "normal".



### EXOS Careers

Since its founding in 1999, EXOS has become a leader in proactive health and performance, trusted by elite athletes, the military, community organizations, and innovative companies worldwide. EXOS offers a comprehensive benefits plan that reflects our culture of leading a healthy, well-balanced life. With tools to care for your health, plan for your future, and enhance your skill set, you can build a one-of-a-kind career with EXOS.

Careers at EXOS >





# CONTACT

## *MAILING ADDRESS*

401 W Michigan St Indianapolis, IN 46202

## *LINKEDIN TWITTER*

@fneric

## *EMAIL*

fneric@acsm.org