

Learning hours recommendation for EA Standards or Qualifications

There are different ranges of learning hours in educational programmes that lead to the same/similar qualifications in the fitness market. As a leading standards-setting body, EuropeActive (EA) has initiated a process to set minimum requirements for learning hours for its accredited training providers. We strongly emphasise that we do not depart from the modern learning concept, where the most important consideration is the learning output (learning outcomes), not the education process itself. Our aim is to make the accreditation process for training providers more transparent and the educational and vocational programmes more comparable. Using ECVET¹ and ECTS² in EA Standards, we also want to facilitate the transferability of qualifications or individual learning units between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE) systems.

To the above ends, EuropeActive have applied the concepts of Guided Learning Hours (GLH), Self-Learning Hours (SLH) and Total Qualification Time (TQT). Values for GLH, SLH and TQT are calculated by considering the different activities that learners would typically complete to achieve all learning outcomes defined for a particular standard/qualification.

Guided Learning Hours (GLH)

A measure of the time spent being taught or instructed live by a course supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of training.

Examples of activities which can contribute to Guided Learning Hours include:

- Classroom-based learning supervised by a tutor
- Work-based learning supervised by a tutor
- Live webinar or telephone tutorial with a tutor in real time
- E-learning supervised by a tutor in real time
- All forms of assessment which take place under the supervision of a supervisor (excluding final verification of qualifications by a person not included in the training process).

Self-Learning Hours (SLH)

The estimated number of hours a learner will reasonably be likely to spend in self-preparation/study or self-assessment, as directed by (but not supervised by) a course tutor or other course representative.

Examples of activities which can contribute to Self-Learning Hours include:

- Independent and unsupervised research/learning
- Unsupervised compilation of a portfolio of work experience
- Unsupervised e-learning
- Unsupervised e-assessment
- Unsupervised coursework
- Watching a pre-recorded podcast or webinar
- Unsupervised work-based learning

¹ ECVET – European Credit System for Vocational and Education Training

² ECTS – European Credit Transfer System (HE)

Total Qualification Time (TQT)

A measure of a qualification size and made up of the number of Guided Learning Hours and estimated Self-Learning Hours.

Table. 1 Recommended Minimum Guided Learning Hours, Total Time, number of ECVET and ECTS for Fitness Instructor or Group Fitness Instructor Standards/Qualifications						
No.	Core learning outcomes areas (learning units) ¹	Assessment methods	Guided Learning hours ²	Estimated Total Time (per unit) ²	ECVET ³	ECTS ⁴
1.	Human Movement	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
2.	Exercise Physiology	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
3.	Health and Safety	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
4.	Lifestyle Management & Communication	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
5.	Fitness Instructor or Group Fitness Practical Skills	Theoretical and practical evaluations	16-20	50-60	2	2
TOTAL			48-60	150-180	6	6
Minimum Total Qualification Time			150-180 spread over a minimum of 3 months⁵			
<p>¹ The following learning units are in line with the structure of EA's Fitness Instructor or Group Fitness Instructor standards or qualifications.</p> <p>²Time of 45-60 min;</p> <p>³1 ECVET is approx. 8-10 Guided Learning Hours + 15-20 Self Learning Hours (25-30 learning hours in total);</p> <p>⁴1 ECTS = 25-30 learning hours;</p> <p>⁵ To ensure the effectiveness of the education process, we recommend minimum 3 months of learning to obtain the Fitness Instructor or Group Fitness Instructor qualification. This period also seems rational due to the time needed to accumulate knowledge and, practical and motor skills.</p>						

Table 2. Recommended Minimum Guided Learning Hours, Total Time, number of ECVET and ECTS for Personal Trainer Standard/Qualification

No.	Core learning outcomes areas (learning units) ¹	Assessment methods	Guided Learning hours ²	Estimated Total Time (per unit) ²	ECVET ³	ECTS ⁴
1.	Role of the PT	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
2.	Functional anatomy	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
3.	Physiology	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
4.	Nutrition	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
5.	Psychosocial aspects of health & fitness	Theoretical and practical evaluations	16-20	50-60	2	2
6.	Health & fitness assessment: collecting and analysing information	Theoretical and practical evaluations	16-20	50-60	2	2
7.	Training adaptation & exercise planning & programming	Theoretical and practical evaluations	16-20	50-60	2	2
8.	Business and marketing skills for personal trainers	Theoretical evaluation	8-10	25-30	1	1
TOTAL			88-110	275-330	11	11
Minimum Total Qualification Time			275-330 spread over a minimum of 4-6 months⁵			
<p>¹ The following learning units are in line with the structure of EA's PT standard. ²Time of 45-60 min; ³1 ECVET is approx. 8-10 Guided Learning Hours + 15-20 Self Learning Hours (25-30 learning hours in total). ⁴1 ECTS = 25-30 learning hours; ⁵ To ensure the effectiveness of the education process, we recommend minimum 4-6 months of learning to obtain the PT qualification. This period also seems rational due to the time needed to accumulate knowledge and, practical and motor skills.</p>						

The learning units presented in the Table 1 and 2 are in line with the structure of EA’s Fitness Instructor or Group Fitness Instructor or Personal Trainer standards. However, vocational courses do not have to be consistent with this structure. Training providers can divide or combine the content of the standard into any thematic units or change the proportion of Guided and Self Learning Hours. Nevertheless, the minimum Guided Learning Hours requirement should be met, and the educational process should enable achievement and verification of all learning outcomes indicated in the standards.

We assume that the EQF Level 4 Personal Trainer will have acquired all knowledge and skills required to work as Fitness Instructor as identified in the appropriate EuropeActive EQF Level 3 Standards. Therefore, when summarising the time and effort devoted to the education of a personal trainer, one should consider his or her achievements from the previous level of education.

We often observe that training providers combine fitness instructor and personal trainer courses. As this option avoids repetition of some content in the educational process, in our recommendation for combined courses we have reduced the minimum number of guided learning hours (Table 3 and Table 4). However, the condensed form of the course will most likely require more independent work from the learner, in particular in achieving practical skills. Both learning paths should lead to the same set of learning outcomes and the same number of ECVET or ECTS credits.

Type of learning hours and educational credits	Fitness instructor and personal trainer vocational courses are taken separately	One vocational course combines education and training for fitness instructor and personal trainer qualifications
Guided Learning Hours	136-170	112-140
Assumed Self-Learning Hours	289-340	313-370
Total Qualification Time	425-510	
The number of ECVET	17	
The number of ECTS	17	

Training providers should note that the required Guided Learning Hours above are the minimums we would accept in the accreditation process. In addition, we will carefully analyse the strategy for assessing the achievement of individual learning outcomes. We recommend exceeding these minimums if training providers recognise that more hours are needed for learners to achieve all learning outcomes indicated for a given qualification or standards. In special cases, it is possible to apply for the accreditation of vocational courses that do not meet the criterion of minimum guided learning hours. In such cases, it will then be necessary to provide both a detailed assessment strategy and evidence that all learning outcomes have been achieved by each learner.

Table 4. Recommended Minimum Guided Learning Hours, Total Time, number of ECVET and ECTS for combined Fitness Instructor and Personal Trainer vocational course

No.	Core learning outcomes areas (learning units) ¹	Assessment methods	Guided Learning hours ²	Estimated Total Time (per unit) ²	ECVET ³	ECTS ⁴
1.	Role of the PT	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
2.	<i>Human Movement</i> Functional anatomy	Theoretical and practical evaluations	4-5 8-10	25-30 25-30	2	2
3.	<i>Exercise Physiology</i> Physiology	Theoretical and practical evaluations	4-5 8-10	25-30 25-30	2	2
4.	Nutrition	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	25-30	1	1
5.	<i>Lifestyle Management & Communication</i> Psychosocial aspects of health & fitness	Theoretical and practical evaluations	4-5 16-20	25-30 50-60	3	3
6.	<i>Health and Safety</i> Health & fitness assessment: collecting and analysing information	Theoretical and practical evaluations	4-5 16-20	25-30 50-60	3	3
7.	<i>Fitness Instructor or Group Fitness Practical Skills</i>	Theoretical and practical evaluations	8-10	50-60	2	2
8.	Training adaptation & exercise planning & programming	Theoretical and practical evaluations	16-20	50-60	2	2
9.	Business and marketing skills for personal trainers	Theoretical evaluation	8-10	25-30	1	1
TOTAL			112-140	425-510	17	17
Minimum Total Qualification Time			425-510 spread over a minimum of 4-6 months⁵			
<p>¹ The following learning units are in line with the structure of EA's <i>Fitness Instructor</i> and <i>Personal Trainer</i> standard.</p> <p>² Time of 45-60 min;</p> <p>³ 1 ECVET is approx. 8-10 Guided Learning Hours + 15-20 Self Learning Hours (25-30 learning hours in total).</p> <p>⁴ 1 ECTS = 25-30 learning hours;</p> <p>⁵ To ensure the effectiveness of the education process, we recommend minimum 4-6 months of learning to obtain the PT qualification. This period also seems rational due to the time needed to accumulate knowledge and practical and motor skills.⁵</p>						

Minimum guided learning hours and credits points have to this point only been proposed for EuropeActive' Fitness and Group Fitness Instructor and Personal Trainer standards but will, in due course be applied to all EuropeActive educational standards and qualifications, including Lifelong Learning Qualifications. The assumption that 1 ECVET is approx. 8-10 Guided Learning Hours + 15-20 Self-learning Hours (25-30 learning hours) is based on expert group analysis. It is possible for the learner to accumulate partial credits, e.g. 0.5 or 0.3 ECVET, depending on his or hers individual learning pathway.