

The Blonde Guide to Level 3 Mat Pilates

There has been much confusion in the last few years since Pilates classes have exploded into the Health & Fitness Industry. This method is still relatively new despite the fact that Joseph Pilates first devised his method of exercise originally, called "Contrology", in the 1920s,

Various training providers have put forward their version of a course, while the Pilates Purists have argued that Pilates has no place in the fitness arena and should be learned by apprenticeship over a two year period. Either way, because of its effectiveness and popularity it would seem it is here to stay for the foreseeable future.

SkillsActive who own and run the Register of Exercise Professionals responded with the resolution that there should be a nationally recognised qualification which would establish for once and for all what a qualified Pilates Instructor should know and be capable of instructing. A panel of experts was formed with representatives drawn from various leading training organisations joining forces temporarily to help shape the future of Mat Pilates within the Health & Fitness Industry.

Across the UK and across all occupations similar panels of experts set out what they believe to be the National Occupational Standards, otherwise known as the NOS. All National /Scottish Vocational Qualifications are based on such standards which are relevant to specific industries and their occupations.

We are proud to announce that as of September 2008 The EnergyWise Academy is in a position to offer their very own Level 3 Mat Pilates Qualification as recognised by REPS and set to the National Occupational Standards. It has been a long and labourious process to map our existing course The Realistic Pilates Basic Instructor Course to these standards and along the way we have worked our way through the jargon and developed an understanding of the need for the Register of Exercise Professionals.

National Occupational Standards are made up of Units which vary according to the relevant qualification.

Each **Unit** comprises of **Knowledge Requirements** – this means "What you must know" and **Elements** – "What you must do" and "What you must cover"

The requirement for labelling a Level 3 Qualification Course – "Level 3" guarantees the student candidate that the training provider has had to map the contents of its Student Training Manual to the National Occupational Standard and it has to map 100%.

This means that EVERY course that has Level 3 status MUST:

Cover all the required aspects with NO exceptions AND subsequently coach candidates on how to:

Provide evidence that the candidate:

- Knows what they must know

Provide evidence that the candidate has:

- Done what they must do

Provide evidence that the candidate has:

- Covered what they must cover

In accordance with the National Occupational Standard as set by the panel of experts within the same industry.

The evidence that each candidate must provide in order to gain an endorsed qualification can be in a variety of forms including the following:

- Written paper
- Practical Examination
- Case Study
- Workplace Assessment
- Role Play

Gaining a Level 3 qualification shows commitment, professionalism and a willingness to progress and is a demonstration that the instructor who has attained this level has proved they have reached the recognised National Occupational Standard.

Before the introduction of Level 3 Mat Pilates there was no industry standard and as a result there are a great number of qualified Pilates instructors teaching safe effective Mat Pilates classes yet without the status of Level 3. However in an effort to establish the benchmark with which to measure a Pilates Instructors level of knowledge and expertise there is a drive to encourage these instructors to be the best they can be and gain the nationally recognised standard.

Your clients deserve the best service and as a professional instructor with integrity there is an obligation to meet the national standard in order to be taken seriously by both your employers and peers alike. Personal satisfaction that you are a leader in your field will also be a factor.

About the REPs

The Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) is a system of self-regulation for all instructors, coaches, trainers and teachers involved in the exercise and fitness industry. The REPs creates a framework within which individual instructors can achieve the highest standards of professionalism, linked to best practice in the exercise and fitness industry. Registration is achieved and maintained through the gaining of qualifications and training which are nationally recognised and which are linked to the National Occupational Standards for exercise and fitness.

The REPs exists because it is the only way to independently demonstrate that fitness professionals are competent and qualified to do their job. The Register is a central feature of the professionalism of the industry that is essential to giving customers, users, the public and partners in the medical professions, the necessary level of confidence in the quality of services provided by fitness professionals.

Registration signifies that an exercise and fitness professional has met certain standards of good practice. The REPs encourages a properly qualified base of exercise professionals who:

- Have gained recognised and approved qualifications.
- Can demonstrate competence in their working environment.
- Are committed to Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- Have appropriate public liability insurance for the level at which they are working
- Demonstrate commitment to the industry Code of Ethical Practice

The REPs Mission Statement is:

"To ensure that all exercise professionals are suitably knowledgeable and qualified to help safeguard and to promote the health and interests of the people who use their services."

Gaining and maintaining respect in the fitness industry is reliant on acquiring recognised accredited qualifications as a starting point. Upon gaining accredited qualifications in their required field the instructor can apply to become registered on The Exercise of Exercise Professionals at the level which reflects their competency. Thereafter, the professional instructor will endeavour to accrue 16 CPDs - Continuing Professional Development points across any one calendar year. CPDs are normally directly related to the amount of hours spent attending further training and should also relate to the original qualification held. Adding further qualifications to their portfolio will enable the instructor to register at a higher level on the REPs.

The REPS exists to enable prospective employers to be able check the level of qualification and therefore competency the applicant in question has attained, before offering them employment. Also in theory if every instructor and every employer relied on this method there would be consistency and quality control throughout the industry. Training providers are also vetted alongside those who deliver CPD short courses in an effort to protect instructors and to maintain quality control of CPD courses offering CPD points to instructors.

Professional instructors are also required to have Public Liability/Professional Indemnity Insurance which should, strictly speaking only allow them cover to instruct a subject in which they hold the relevant qualification. For this reason alone it is imperative that instructors develop their training to match the subject that they teach on a daily basis.

Members of the public are also encouraged to check whether their instructor or prospective instructor is in fact qualified in the subject they claim to be qualified in, before attending that class.

In the past and certainly before the introduction of the REPs, it was possible for any person to claim to be a fitness instructor although it is doubtful they were ever able to have bought insurance accordingly. The general public has a right to be protected from unscrupulous characters who pose as fitness professionals.

Definition of Levels

Level 1

Level 1 is designed to provide an introduction to the health and fitness industry and applied basic exercise and fitness knowledge. The type of job they could lead to is an assistant fitness instructor. They are equivalent to Key Stage 4, Standard Grade/GCSE grades D-G or S/ NVQ 1. This level can be viewed as an apprenticeship, as the Level 1 instructor is not qualified to work in an unsupervised capacity.

Level 2

Level 2 is often referred to as 'entry level'. Certain Level 2 qualifications (e.g. Certificate in Fitness Instructing) provide entry onto the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) at Level 2 and can lead to jobs as Gym Instructors or Aerobics teachers. Once qualified, many Level 2 qualifications offer routes into teaching different disciplines such as studio cycling, step and circuits. These are equivalent to GCSE grades A-C or S/NVQ 2.

Level 3

Level 3 is intended to provide an advanced level of exercise and fitness knowledge, these qualifications provide the basis for careers in Personal Training or Advanced Fitness Instructing, both of which ensure entry to REPs at Level 3. They also allow instructors to specialise in working with GP referred clients, older adults or ante and postnatal women. They are equivalent to A levels or S/NVQ 3.

The Level 3 Mat Pilates qualification comprises of five units A318, D437, C313, D438 and D439 plus specific underpinning core knowledge. If you are not familiar with qualifications which are made up of units, they are very logically organised and in some cases one unit may be included in an entirely separate qualification.

The good news is that if you have successfully gained a unit and are planning to study another qualification the system of APA- Accredited Prior Achievement might enable you to carry the unit over to the next qualification. There is a time limit within which this is possible and it is may be possible to carry forward any unit which you have acquired in the last three years.

As an example an instructor keen to achieve Level 3 in Mat Pilates, the qualification comprises of:

- **Unit A318** which covers how to "Manage, evaluate and improve your own performance in providing physical activity"
- **Unit D437** which covers how to "Collect and Analyse Information to Plan a Progressive Physical Activity Programme"
- **Unit C313** which covers how to "Provide motivation and support to clients during a progressive physical activity programme"
- **Unit D438** which covers how to "Plan, review and adapt a progressive physical activity programme(Mat Pilates)"
- **Unit D439** which covers how to "Plan and instruct specific physical activities(Mat Pilates)"

PLUS Core Level 3 Instructing Physical Activity & Exercise Knowledge Requirements (Mat Pilates)

As a Level 2 Exercise to Music Instructor or Gym Instructor you may well have known, covered and done some aspects of these Units. It is safe to say that as a qualified Pilates Instructor you will have covered many of these aspects in particular Units D438 & D439 and there is bound to be an overlap. The difference is whether or not you can provide evidence that you "Know what you must know" that you have "Done what you must do" and provided evidence that you have "Covered what you must cover" In accordance with the National Occupational Standards as set by the panel of experts within the Health & Fitness industry.

Without passing all of the above Units you will not be able to join the Register of Exercise Professionals, the REPs, as a Pilates Instructor. You can join the REPS as a Level 2 ETM Instructor or Gym Instructor however you are **NOT** able to describe your self as a qualified Pilates Instructor unless you have gained the Level 3 Mat Pilates qualification.

Existing Pilates qualifications which up until Autumn 2005 were labelled Level 2, are no longer sufficient evidence of a competent safe instructor.

Once Level 3 status has been gained any CPD Continuing Professional Development will add to your existing qualification and will be achieved by way of "post graduate" modules i.e. Courses with a duration of 32 guided study hours plus an assessment. CPD courses may include Pre-Post Natal, Seniors, Special Populations, Core Stability etc

CPD courses however are NOT qualifications and the word Certification which is often used to describe such courses can be quite misleading. CPDs are exactly what they say they are, namely CONTINUING Professional Development. Acquiring a CPD certificate in a subject that you have no previous qualification in does not enable you, as a professional instructor to teach that subject. More importantly teaching a subject for which you have no endorsed qualification will have serious ramifications if any of your clients were to injure themselves in your class and subsequently claim on your insurance. It is worth checking your individual situation with your insurance broker?

The most obvious example is where an instructor with an ETM qualification and a few years experience is looking for a short cut to becoming a Pilates Instructor. Attending a CPD course in Core Stability albeit with a "Certification" does not enable that instructor to teach a class named Pilates. To do so, is deceiving both the public and the instructor themselves and is unfair to the all the conscientious instructors who HAVE taken the time energy and not inconsiderable amount of money to reach the nationally recognised standards. It does bear repeating that to use a CPD course as a fast track to teach a subject you are not qualified to teach is in fact morally wrong.

As mentioned above, these measures have been introduced to protect the clients, the employers all instructors and the industry as a whole. Pilates as a method of exercise has been recognised as an extremely positive and effective way of addressing core stability and improving the endurance of the core muscles. Pilates is becoming more popular both to teach and participate in and GPs, Physiotherapists and Osteopaths are recommending that their patients take up this type of exercise as a complement to therapy, in place of prescribing pain killers for back pain.

It is therefore vitally important that the general public have faith in their instructor and are now able to check if a potential instructor has reached the nationally recognised standard that is Level 3.

As a relatively new qualification Level 3 Mat Pilates has not been widely available and the mounting pressure within the industry to gain this standard of qualification has been surrounded by confusion and misunderstanding. Recently an announcement was made by the FIA - The Fitness Industry Association that as from the end of 2009, **all instructors teaching in an FIA member club, must have current membership of the UK Register of Exercise Professionals**. Given that the only level of Pilates instructor on the REPS is Level 3 coupled with the fact that the FIA act on behalf of the major fitness club operators (including many local authorities) this ruling will have a significant impact on the UK fitness industry as a whole.

There are currently only a few training providers who have mapped their original course to the National Occupational Standards, including Body Control Pilates, CYQ, The EnergyWise Academy and Pilates International. There are also a number of training providers who have the ability to deliver the Level 3 Mat Pilates on behalf of CYQ for example Modern Pilates and Pilates Training Solutions.

From a Scottish point of view, until now, becoming a Pilates Instructor has inevitably meant a journey south of the border or relying on one of the larger organisations bringing their training courses to Scotland....frequently cancelling them again due to lack of numbers?

We are aware that there has been a serious lack of training courses in Scotland for instructors wishing to add Pilates to their list of qualifications and in response to this we have devised a series of tailored training courses to enable existing Pilates instructors to leverage themselves onto the REPS as Level 3 Mat Pilates Instructors.

We are also planning a range of endorsed CPD Workshops and Courses that will ensure all conscientious instructors are able to maintain their status on the REPS in a cost effective manner.

Fiona Brown

www.energywiseacademy.co.uk