

# Code of Ethical Conduct

January 2011

## BACKGROUND

As a Charitable body The Register of Exercise Professionals ("REPs" or "the Register") seeks to both advance public education and health within the Sports and Recreation Industry. As part of its objectives REPs aims to ensure that exercise professionals who are registered on the Register maintained by REPs should both establish and maintain proper standards of ethical and professional conduct in providing their practice in fitness instruction.

In these circumstances persons who are registered with REPs will, as a part of their membership of the Register, be expected to adhere to these standards of ethical and professional conduct and will at all times adhere to its provisions.

Physical activity and exercise can contribute positively to the development of individuals. It is a vehicle for physical, mental, personal, social and emotional development. Such development is enhanced if the individual is guided by an informed, thinking, aspiring and enlightened exercise professional operating within an accepted ethical framework as a professional.

The role of an exercise professional is to:

- Identify and meet the needs of individuals
- Improve performance or fitness through programmes of safe, effective and enjoyable exercise
- Create an environment in which individuals are motivated to maintain participation and improve performance or fitness
- Conform to ethical standards in a number of areas – humanity, relationships, co-operation, integrity, advertising, confidentiality and personal standards

This **Code of Ethical Conduct** (the Code) defines what good practice is for professionals in the fitness industry by reflecting on the core values of rights, relationships, responsibilities, standards and safety. The term 'professional' is used in a qualitative context in this Code and does not necessarily imply a paid position or person. The Code applies to both employed and self employed professionals but where professionals are employed the Register accepts that employed exercise professionals will be subject to the codes of practice and employment rules of their employers and will, in determining compliance with this Code of Ethical Conduct, have careful regard to any such employment rules and in particular whether or not, in the case of any complaint being made the professional concerned has or will be subject to any internal investigation by his or her employers. Exercise professionals on REPs accept their responsibility to people who participate in exercise; to other exercise professionals and colleagues; to their respective fitness associations, professional bodies and institutes; to their employer; and to society. When practising members **must** also hold adequate liability insurance.

There are five principles to the code

## PRINCIPLE 1: RIGHTS

*'Exercise professionals should deal openly and in a transparent manner with their clients. They should at all times adopt the highest degree of professionalism in dealing with their clients' needs.'*

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to maintain a standard of professional conduct appropriate to their dealings with all client groups and to responsibly demonstrate:

- Respect for individual difference and diversity.
- Good practice in challenging discrimination and unfairness.
- Discretion in dealing with confidential client disclosure.

As part of these principles members registered with REPs should seek to ensure that the contractual arrangements they have with their client are clear, transparent and unambiguous. Although REPs cannot and will not seek to adjudicate or deal with private contractual disputes (which should be dealt with by members and their clients) REPs will nevertheless seek to ensure that Exercise Professionals do maintain a proper regard to dealing with and addressing concerns raised by their clients. If a dispute shall arise between a member of the public and member registered with REPs the member of the public shall in the first instance seek to resolve that dispute with the REPs member. Only if that matter cannot be resolved or the dispute reveals a lack of proper professional conduct would REPs seek to intervene to correct any lack of professionalism shown. REPs itself has no jurisdiction to actually resolve such a dispute.

## PRINCIPLE 2: RELATIONSHIPS

*'Exercise professionals will seek to nurture healthy relationships with their customers and other health professionals'*

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to develop and maintain a relationship with customers based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect and to responsibly demonstrate:

- Awareness of the requirement to place the customer's needs as a priority and promote their welfare and best interests first when planning an appropriate training programme.
- Clarity in all forms of communication with customers, professional colleagues and medical practitioners, ensuring honesty, accuracy and cooperation when seeking agreements and avoiding misrepresentation or any conflict of interest arising

between customers' and own professional obligations.

- Integrity as an exercise professional and recognition of the position of trust dictated by that role, ensuring avoidance of inappropriate behaviour in customer relationships. Any consensual relationship between persons of full age would not, however, be considered inappropriate.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

***'Exercise professionals will demonstrate and promote a responsible lifestyle and conduct'***

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to conduct proper personal behaviour at all times and to responsibly demonstrate:

- The high standards of professional conduct appropriate to their dealings with all their client groups and which reflect the particular image and expectations relevant to the role of the exercise professional working in the fitness industry.
- An understanding of their legal responsibilities and accountability when dealing with the public and awareness of the need for honesty and accuracy in substantiating their claims of authenticity when promoting their services in the public domain.
- An absolute duty of care to be aware of their working environment and to be able to deal with all reasonably foreseeable accidents and emergencies – and to protect themselves, their colleagues and clients.

### **PRINCIPLE 4: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

***'Exercise professionals will seek to adopt the highest level of professional standards in their work and the development of their career'***

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to commit to the attainment of appropriate qualifications and ongoing training to responsibly demonstrate:

- Engagement in actively seeking to update knowledge and improve their professional skills in order to maintain a quality standard of service, reflecting on their own practice, identifying development needs and undertaking relevant development activities.
- Willingness to accept responsibility and be accountable for professional decisions or actions, welcome evaluation of their work and recognise the need when appropriate to refer to another professional specialist.
- A personal responsibility to maintain their own effectiveness and confine themselves to practice those activities for which their training and competence is recognised by the Register.

### **PRINCIPLE 5: SAFE WORKING PRACTICE**

***'Exercise professionals will systematically prepare for all activities ensuring the safety of their clients is of paramount consideration'***

Compliance with this principle requires exercise professionals to maintain a safe exercise environment for all clients and at all times and to responsibly demonstrate:

- A responsible attitude to the care and safety of client participants within the training environment and in planned activities ensuring that both are appropriate to the needs of the clients.
- An appropriate ratio of instructors to clients within any group sessions to ensure that at all times the safety of all clients is paramount.
- All clients have been systematically prepared for the activity in terms of safety including the safe use of equipment.

### **DISCIPLINARY MEASURES**

In the event that either The Fitness to Practice Committee (or an Appeal to the Trustees of REPs) shall find that a person registered shall be guilty of a breach of The Code, The Fitness to Practice Committee or, as the case may be, The Trustees of REPS may take Disciplinary action.

***Any alleged professional mis-conduct or avoidance of compliance with the terms of membership of the Register will be referred to the Fitness to Practice Committee which will consider any need for sanctions against an individual instructor, coach, trainer or teacher. The appropriate authority(ies) will deal with any criminal allegations. In terms of any disciplinary action taken REPs may after due inquiry:-***

- a. Suspend or terminate the membership of any member;
- b. Reprimand or issue a formal warning; or
- c. Take such other action as REPs consider an appropriate and proportionate to the issues raised.

In the event that any party to an alleged mis-conduct is dissatisfied with a decision of The Fitness to Practice Committee he or she may lodge an appeal in writing against this decision to the Trustees of REPs. Any such appeal must be lodged within 21 days of a decision of The Fitness to Practice Committee. In the event of any appeal, the Trustees of REPs shall acknowledge that appeal as soon as practicable and, in any event, a final decision will be reached at their next quarterly meeting. An appeal to the Trustees of REPS will be acknowledged within 28 days of its receipt.

To download versions of this Code of Ethical Conduct and details of our liability insurance information please go to:

[www.exerciseregister.org](http://www.exerciseregister.org)



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