NCFE Active IQ Level 4 Certificate in Strength and Conditioning
QN: 603/1161/7



Qualification Specification

Version 2.0 November 2026

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Qualification summary

Qualification title	**NCFE Active IQ Level 4 Certificate in Strength and Conditioning**
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	603/1161/7
Guided learning hours (GLH)	152
Total qualification time (TQT)	278
Minimum age	16
Qualification purpose	This qualification is designed to provide learners with the knowledge and skills to be able to plan, prepare, deliver and review strength and conditioning programmes that will help athletes to achieve their performance goals.
Grading	Achieved/not yet achieved
Assessment method	Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence
Work/industry placement experience	Work/industry placement experience is not required.
UCAS	Please refer to the UCAS website for further details of points allocation and the most up-to-date information.
Performance points	Please check the performance points data produced by the Department for Education (DfE) and available online.
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 603/1161/7.
Funding	This qualification may be eligible for funding. For further guidance on funding, please contact your local funding provider.

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Section 1: introduction

Centres must ensure they are using the most recent version of the Qualification Specification on the website.

Aims and objectives

This qualification aims to:

- focus on the study of strength and conditioning
- offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a key core of knowledge
- provide opportunities to acquire a number of practical and technical skills.

Support Handbook

This Qualification Specification must be used alongside the mandatory Support Handbook, which can be found on the NCFE website. This contains additional supporting information to help with planning, delivery and assessment.

This Qualification Specification contains all the qualification-specific information you will need that is not covered in the Support Handbook.

Guidance for entry

This qualification is designed for individuals working as personal trainers, sports coaches and strength and conditioning coaches.

Registration is at the discretion of the centre in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the NCFE Portal.

Learners wanting to undertake this qualification will need to hold a level 3 personal training qualification, a level 3 coaching qualification (or equivalent) or a level 3 strength and conditioning qualification (or equivalent). Learners may also hold relevant higher education or further education qualifications that are equivalent to or higher than those listed above (such as physiotherapy, sports therapy).

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all learners are capable of achieving the learning outcomes (LOs) and complying with the relevant literacy, numeracy, and health and safety requirements.

Learners registered on this qualification should not undertake another qualification at the same level, or with the same/a similar title, as duplication of learning may affect funding eligibility.

Achieving this qualification

To be awarded this qualification, learners are required to successfully achieve **two units** from the mandatory units.

Please refer to the list of units in appendix A for further information.

To achieve this qualification, learners must successfully demonstrate their achievement of all LOs of the units as detailed in this Qualification Specification. A partial certificate may be requested for learners who do not achieve the full qualification but have achieved at least one whole unit; partial achievement certificate fees can be found in the Fees and Pricing document on the website.

Progression

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to the following:

- further education:
  - NCFE Active IQ Level 4 Certificate in Sports Massage Therapy.

Resource requirements

There are no mandatory resource requirements for this qualification, but centres must ensure learners have access to suitable resources to enable them to cover all the appropriate LOs.

Realistic work environment (RWE) requirement/recommendation

The assessment of competence-based criteria should ideally be conducted within the workplace. However, in instances where this is not feasible, learners can be assessed in a realistic work environment (RWE) designed to replicate real work settings.

It is essential for organisations utilising an RWE to ensure it accurately reflects current and authentic work environments. By doing so, employers can be confident that competence demonstrated by a learner in an RWE will be translated into successful performance in employment.

In establishing an RWE, the following factors should be considered.

The work situation being represented is relevant to the competence requirements being assessed:

- the work situation should closely resemble the relevant setting
- equipment and resources that replicate the work situation must be current and available for use to ensure that assessment requirements can be met
- time constraints, resource access and information availability should mirror real conditions.

The learner's work activities reflect those found in the work environment being represented, for example:

- interaction with colleagues and others should reflect expected communication approaches
- tasks performed must be completed to an acceptable timescale
- learners must be able to achieve a realistic volume of work as would be expected in the work situation being represented
- learners operate professionally with clear understanding of their work activities and responsibilities
- feedback from colleagues and others (for example customers, service users) is maintained and acted upon
- account must be taken of any legislation, regulations or standard procedures that would be followed in the workplace.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment is the process of measuring a learner's skill, knowledge and understanding against the standards set in a qualification.

This qualification is internally assessed and externally quality assured.

The assessment consists of **one** component:

- an internally assessed portfolio of evidence, which is assessed by centre staff and externally quality assured by NCFE (internal quality assurance must still be completed by the centre as usual).

Learners must be successful in this component to gain the Level 4 Certificate in Strength and Conditioning.

Learners who are not successful can resubmit work within the registration period; however, a charge may apply in cases where additional external quality assurance visits are required.

Unless otherwise stated in this specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English.

Internal assessment

Each learner must create a portfolio of evidence generated from appropriate assessment tasks to demonstrate achievement of all the LOs associated with each unit. On completion of each unit, learners must declare that the work produced is their own and the assessor must countersign this.

If a centre needs to create their own internal assessment tasks, there are four essential elements in the production of successful centre-based assessment tasks; these are:

- ensuring the assessment tasks are meaningful with clear, assessable outcomes
- appropriate coverage of the content, LOs or assessment criteria (AC)
- having a valid and engaging context or scenario
- including sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers.

Section 2: unit content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the structure and content of this qualification including grading, level, credit and guided learning hours (GLH).

The types of evidence listed are for guidance purposes only. Within learners' portfolios, other types of evidence are acceptable if all learning outcomes (LOs) are covered, and if the evidence generated can be internally and externally quality assured. For approval of methods of internal assessment other than portfolio building, please contact your external quality assurer (EQA).

Unit 01 Performance analysis of the activity and athlete (K/615/5266)

Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed and externally quality assured.			
Mandatory	**Achieved/not yet achieved**	**Level 4**	**60 GLH**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
1. Understand the role of a strength and conditioning coach as part of an athlete's support team	1.1 Define the scope of practice for a strength and conditioning coach
	1.2 Identify different types of athletes
	1.3 Define the types of support different athletes may require from a strength and conditioning coach
	1.4 Describe a range of other professionals a strength and conditioning coach may need to work with as part of an athlete's support team
	1.5 Evaluate the role of a strength and conditioning coach as part of an athlete's support team
2. Understand the demands of performance activities and how they can affect an athlete's performance	2.1 Analyse the **demands** of a range of performance activities
	2.2 Evaluate how performance demands can affect an athlete's performance
	2.3 Evaluate how a strength and conditioning coach can affect an athlete's performance by considering a range of performance demands
	2.4 Describe needs analysis methods that effectively identify the demands of **performance activities**
3. Know how to source current, credible, relevant information to inform strength and conditioning coaching practice	3.1 Differentiate between credible and non-credible sources of information
	3.2 Evaluate a range of sources that can be used to keep up to date with current scientific strength and conditioning research
4. Understand methods that can be used to assess an athlete's performance capabilities	4.1 Describe the protocols of **assessments** to measure an athlete's performance capabilities
	4.2 Evaluate the purpose, risks and benefits of assessments to measure an athlete's performance capabilities
5. Be able to perform appropriate assessment of performance activities and athletes	5.1 Perform appropriate needs analyses to evaluate the general demands of performance activities on an athlete
	5.2 Perform appropriate needs analyses to evaluate the specific demands on an athlete
	5.3 Justify needs analysis method selection using credible and current information sources
	5.4 Select appropriate assessments to measure an athlete's performance capabilities
	5.5 Justify assessment selections using credible and current information sources
	5.6 Explain the performance-related purpose, risks and benefits of the planned assessments
	5.7 Agree assessment methods with the athlete and relevant members of the support team and obtain appropriate informed consent
	5.8 Perform assessments, following protocol accurately to ensure validity, reliability and accuracy of results
	5.9 Record all information collected in a manner that adheres to legal and professional requirements

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
6. Be able to accurately analyse and evaluate assessment results to create relevant performance goals	6.1 Analyse the data collected during the assessments to accurately identify the current performance capabilities of the athlete
	6.2 Evaluate the performance demands and athlete performance capabilities to highlight key areas for athlete development
	6.3 Develop and agree short-, medium- and long-term performance goals that are informed by performance demands, current capabilities and needs with the athlete and support team
	6.4 Develop and agree a strategy to evaluate and review change in performance capabilities at appropriate points in the athlete's programme

Range
2. Understand the demands of performance activities and how they can affect an athlete's performance
2.1 Demands, for example: • physiological • biomechanical • motor control • sports-specific movement patterns/speeds • socio-psychological • injury and illness epidemiology • performance/competition parameters • national and international rules, regulations and legislation. **2.4 Performance activities,** to include: • general demands of a performance activity • specific demands placed on an individual athlete.
4. Understand methods that can be used to assess an athlete's performance capabilities
4.1 Assessments, for example: • health and lifestyle screening • functional movement screening • physiological fitness and performance tests.

Unit 02 Plan, deliver and evaluate periodised performance-related strength and conditioning programmes (M/615/5267)

Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed and externally quality assured.			
Mandatory	**Achieved/not yet achieved**	**Level 4**	**92 GLH**

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	**Assessment criteria (AC)** The learner can:
1. Be able to design a long-term, periodised plan to improve the performance capabilities of an athlete	1.1 Design a periodised, progressive plan that effectively facilitates the achievement of an athlete's long-term performance goals
	1.2 Design a periodised, progressive plan that effectively facilitates the achievement of an athlete's medium-term performance goals
	1.3 Design a periodised, progressive plan that effectively facilitates the achievement of an athlete's short-term performance goals
	1.4 Justify how each phase of the periodised programme will facilitate the achievement of an athlete's short-, medium- and long-term performance goals using credible and current information sources
	1.5 Design session plans that minimise the risk of injury, whilst optimising progression towards the achievement of an athlete's performance goals
	1.6 Justify how the planned sessions contribute to the achievement of an athlete's performance goals using credible and current information sources
	1.7 Explain how to incorporate all members of the athlete's support team within the plans to promote optimisation of the athlete's performance
	1.8 Agree plans with the athlete and relevant members of the support team and obtain appropriate informed consent
2. Be able to prepare for strength and conditioning sessions	2.1 Prepare the environment in a manner that adheres to legal and organisational health and safety procedures
	2.2 Assess the athlete's physical and psychological readiness to participate in the planned session
	2.3 Facilitate the completion of a safe, effective and specific warm-up that fully prepares the athlete for the planned session
3. Be able to deliver effective strength and conditioning sessions that optimise athletic performance	3.1 Explain each activity using clear instructions, rules and techniques to optimise performance
	3.2 Use appropriate verbal, visual and kinaesthetic cues to optimise performance whilst ensuring safe and effective technique and movement quality
	3.3 Observe and monitor performance, intensity and feedback
	3.4 Analyse observations and athlete's performance to implement activity modifications that respond to athlete's status
	3.5 Record key performance data and session modifications in a manner that adheres to legal and professional requirements
4. Be able to effectively end a strength and conditioning session	4.1 Facilitate the completion of a safe, effective and specific cool-down that aids the recovery of the athlete following the planned session
5. Be able to evaluate the session and performance implications to modify future plans in response to the athlete's status and performance	5.1 Use a range of **methods** to collect relevant information to inform session evaluation
	5.2 Analyse the relevant information and provide a clear evaluation of the session and its effect on the achievement of performance goals
	5.3 Explain the analysis and evaluation findings in a manner that is clear and understandable for the athlete and support team

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
	5.4 Identify future modifications that are based on analysis and evaluation findings
	5.5 Agree and record key evaluation, analysis and modification information in a manner that adheres to legal and professional requirements

Range
5. Be able to evaluate the session and performance implications to modify future plans in response to the athlete's status and performance
5.1 Methods, to include: • performance data • athlete and support team feedback • self-reflection.

NCFE assessment strategy

The key requirements of the assessment strategies or principles that relate to units in this qualification are summarised below.

The centre must ensure that individuals undertaking assessor or quality assurer roles within the centre conform to the assessment requirements for the unit they are assessing or quality assuring.

Knowledge LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make assessment decisions
- internal quality assurers (IQAs) will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions.

Competence/skills LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally competent and qualified to make assessment decisions
- IQAs will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions.

The centre with whom the learners are registered will be responsible for making all assessment decisions. Assessors must be **contracted** to work directly with the centre, contributing to all aspects of standardisation. The centre must ensure a process of training is followed, including during induction and quality assurance activities. Occupationally competent and qualified assessors from the centre must use direct observation to assess practical skills-based outcomes.

Section 3: support

Support materials

The following support materials are available to assist with the delivery of this qualification and are available on the NCFE website:

- learning resources
- Qualification Factsheet.

Other support materials

The resources and materials used in the delivery of this qualification must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials.

Products to support the delivery of this qualification may be available. For more information about these resources and how to access them, please visit the NCFE website.

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Version 2.0 November 2026
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Appendix A: units

To simplify cross-referencing assessments and quality assurance, we have used a sequential numbering system in this document for each unit.

Mandatory units

Unit number	Regulated unit number	Unit title	Level	GLH
Unit 01	K/615/5266	Performance analysis of the activity and athlete	4	60
Unit 02	M/615/5267	Plan, deliver and evaluate periodised performance-related strength and conditioning programmes	4	92

Change history record

Version	Publication date	Description of change
AIQ007100	January 2026	Document published
AIQ007209	May 2026	Updates made to assessment method; the mandatory units are assessed by an internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence. No other updates made. Unit 01 AC 1.2 'Differentiate between different types of athletes' has been updated to 'Identify different types of athletes'.
v2.0	November 2026	Qualification title changed and template updated to new version.