BFS Competency Standards

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Document	BFS Competency Standards (family 1369, personnel)
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Owner	BFS Standards Council
Review	At least every 3 years, or sooner if the evidence or the requirements change
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> BFS operates its personnel certification schemes in alignment with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17024:2026. BFS does not currently hold accreditation to ISO/IEC 17024. Formerly accredited by NABET (QCI), No. PCB007, for certification of persons under ISO/IEC 17024:2012 (2018 to 2021).

1. Introduction

These standards define what a competent fitness professional knows and can do in each role, how that competence is assessed, and how it is kept current. Each standard is a certification scheme in the sense used by ISO/IEC 17024: it states the scope, the job and task description, the required competence, eligibility, the code of conduct, assessment methods and criteria, surveillance, recertification, and suspension and withdrawal rules.

2. Professional levels

Level	Purpose	Standards
Level 1	Entry to practice: safe, effective sessions for apparently healthy adults, with referral when needed	S101 Fitness Trainer; S102 Yoga Trainer
Level 2	Performance coaching: periodisation, load management, athlete monitoring	S104 Strength and Conditioning Coach
Level 3	Specialist practice: biomechanical analysis, graded loading, return-to-lift with the health team, mentoring	S103 Biomechanics and Movement Specialist

3. How the schemes meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17024

Requirement area	BFS arrangement
Legal responsibility and impartiality	BFS is responsible for every certification decision. An Impartiality Committee reviews risks to impartiality at least once a year. Everyone involved signs a conflict-of-interest declaration.
Separation of training and certification	BFS does not train the candidates it certifies. Approved providers may train candidates but do not mark BFS examinations or take certification decisions.
Scheme ownership	The Standards Council owns each scheme, keeps it under review at least every 5 years, and includes practitioners, employers, educators and a public-interest member.
Certification scheme content	Each scheme sets out scope, job and task description, required competence, eligibility, code of conduct, assessment methods and criteria, surveillance, recertification, and suspension and withdrawal rules.
Job and task analysis	Task lists are drafted by subject-matter experts and validated through a survey of practising professionals before the first examination. Results set the examination weightings.
Examination quality	Blueprints follow the unit weightings. Items are written and reviewed by trained experts; pass marks are set with a documented standard-setting method (modified Angoff); item statistics and examiner consistency are reviewed after every window.
Fairness and accommodations	Reasonable adjustments are available on request with evidence. Examinations are offered under the same conditions to every candidate.
Examination security	Item banks are access-controlled; candidates sign a confidentiality agreement; identity is checked at every assessment.
Certification decision	Taken by a certifier who was not involved in the candidate's training or assessment. The decision is never outsourced.
Certificates and register	Certificates show the holder, scheme, BFS ID, award date and expiry date. A public register lets anyone check a certificate.
Surveillance and recertification	Annual CPD declaration and code-of-conduct attestation; recertification every 3 years on CPD, logged practice, current CPR/AED and a clean conduct record, or by reassessment.

Suspension and withdrawal	For lapsed requirements, misuse of the certificate or proven misconduct, after the person has had a chance to respond.
Appeals and complaints	Published procedures, handled by people independent of the original decision (see below).
Use of artificial intelligence	AI tools never make or recommend a certification decision. Any AI-assisted drafting of items or materials is reviewed and approved by a human expert. Candidates may not use AI tools during an examination unless the scheme states otherwise.
Records and confidentiality	Application, assessment and decision records are kept for at least one full certification cycle after expiry and are disclosed only with consent or where the law requires.
Management system	Internal audit and a management review at least once a year, with corrective action records.

4. Code of conduct

1. Put the safety and wellbeing of clients first.
2. Work within the scope of your certification and refer when a client's needs go beyond it.
3. Get informed consent, including consent for any touch.
4. Keep client information confidential and secure.
5. Treat every client fairly and with respect, and make reasonable adjustments.
6. Never supply, recommend or advise on prohibited substances or methods.
7. Be honest in marketing, results and qualifications; use BFS certificates and marks only as permitted.
8. Keep your CPD, first-aid certification and records up to date.
9. Report serious safety incidents and co-operate with BFS reviews.

5. Appeals and complaints

Complaints about BFS, a certified person or an approved provider can be made by anyone by email to info@bureauoffitness.org. BFS acknowledges a complaint and replies with an outcome or a progress update within 10 working days. Anyone named in the complaint takes no part in handling it.

Appeals against a certification, CPD-audit or provider decision must be lodged within 30 days of the decision, with the reasons. An Appeals Panel of people who had no part in the original decision reviews the appeal and gives a written decision, normally within 30 working days.

Making a complaint or appeal never leads to unfair treatment of the person who raised it. All complaints and appeals, and the actions taken, are recorded and reviewed at management review.

6. S101 Fitness Trainer (Level 1)

Scope

Plans, delivers and reviews safe, effective exercise sessions for apparently healthy adults, one-to-one and in small groups, in gym, studio, outdoor and online settings. Screens clients before exercise and refers anyone outside this scope to a suitable health professional.

Outside the scope: Diagnosing, treating or rehabilitating injury or disease; prescribing diets, supplements or medication; working with clients who have unresolved red flags without written clearance.

Job and task description

1. Carry out pre-exercise screening, informed consent and risk stratification
2. Assess baseline fitness, posture and movement quality using simple, reliable tests
3. Set goals with the client and design a progressive programme
4. Instruct, demonstrate, cue and correct exercise technique
5. Supervise sessions safely: set-up, spotting, load selection, environment checks
6. Monitor responses and adapt, regress or progress the programme
7. Recognise emergencies and red flags, give first response and refer
8. Keep accurate records, protect client data and work within the code of conduct

Draft task list; validated with practising professionals before the first examination.

Competency units

Unit	Weight	Knowledge	Skills
1. Applied anatomy and physiology	12%	• Skeletal, muscular, cardiovascular, respiratory and nervous systems as they relate to exercise • Joint actions, planes and axes of movement • Energy systems and acute responses to exercise • Long-term adaptations to resistance, cardiovascular and flexibility training	• Name the main movers and stabilisers in a given exercise • Explain an exercise choice using anatomy and physiology in plain language • Manage breathing and bracing for safe loading
2. Safety and risk management	15%	• Pre-exercise screening tools (for example PAR-	• Screen a client and decide go, modify

		Q+) and when medical clearance is needed • Red flags and signs to stop exercise • Emergency action plans, CPR/AED and incident reporting • Safe facility, equipment and environment checks	or refer • Spot common free-weight lifts safely • Run an emergency drill and complete an incident record
3. Client assessment	12%	• Validity and reliability of field fitness tests • Static and dynamic posture and movement observation • Body measurements and their limits • Recording and interpreting baseline results	• Select and run appropriate tests for a client • Observe a squat, hinge, push and pull and note faults • Explain results to a client without over-claiming
4. Exercise technique and coaching	18%	• Technique standards for squat, hinge/deadlift, lunge, horizontal and vertical push and pull, carry and trunk exercises • Regressions and progressions for each pattern • Verbal, visual and tactile cueing (with consent) • Warm-up, cool-down and mobility methods	• Demonstrate each fundamental pattern to standard • Detect and correct faults such as knee valgus, lumbar flexion under load or poor bar path • Coach a small group while keeping everyone safe

5. Programme design and progression	15%	• Principles of overload, progression, specificity, variation, individuality and recovery • Choosing sets, reps, load, rest and frequency • Planning across 4 to 12 weeks • Physical activity guidelines for adults	• Write a 12-week programme for a defined client and justify each phase • Adjust a programme when progress stalls or symptoms appear
6. Applied biomechanics and movement quality	10%	• Force, torque, levers and moment arms in common exercises • Stability, base of support and centre of mass • How load position changes joint demands	• Use simple mechanics to modify an exercise for a client • Explain why a regression reduces joint load
7. Communication and behaviour change	8%	• Motivation and behaviour-change models • Goal setting and adherence strategies • Inclusive and accessible communication	• Run a client consultation with active listening • Agree realistic goals and an adherence plan
8. Professional practice, ethics and scope	10%	• Scope of practice and referral routes • Consent, confidentiality and data protection • Anti-doping principles and the duty not to supply or advise on prohibited substances • Insurance, record keeping and professional boundaries	• Decide correctly in scope-of-practice scenarios • Write a referral note • Keep session records that meet the code of conduct

Eligibility

- Age 18 or over
- Secondary education or equivalent
- Current CPR/AED certificate from a recognised first-aid provider (issued within the last 24 months)
- Training route: completion of a BFS-approved S101 programme of at least 120 guided learning hours, including 20 logged supervised practical sessions; or
- Experience route: at least 2 years of documented work as a fitness trainer plus a portfolio mapped to the S101 units

Assessment

Component	Weight	What it covers
Written examination	40%	Multiple-choice and scenario questions built from the unit weightings above
Practical assessment	40%	Observed session with a real or role-play client: screening, technique coaching, cueing, spotting, safety and records, marked to a standard rubric
Case task	20%	A 12-week programme for a defined case, with screening decision, progressions and safety gates

Every component must be passed. Pass marks are set with a documented standard-setting method (modified Angoff) before each new examination form is used. Reasonable adjustments are available on request.

Certification, surveillance and recertification

Decision by a BFS certifier who took no part in the candidate's training or assessment. Certificate shows holder, S101, BFS ID, award date and expiry date. Term 3 years. Annual CPD of 20 points and code-of-conduct attestation. Recertification: 60 CPD points over the cycle, 180 hours of logged practice, current CPR/AED and a clean conduct record; or pass the current examination again.

Suspension and withdrawal

For unmet CPD or recertification requirements, misuse of the certificate or mark, or proven misconduct, after the person has had a chance to respond. Decisions can be appealed within 30 days.

7. S102 Yoga Trainer (Level 1)

Scope

Plans and teaches safe, adapted yoga-based movement, breathing and relaxation sessions for apparently healthy adults, in groups and one-to-one, in person or online. Screens participants, adapts practice and refers when needed.

Outside the scope: Yoga therapy for diagnosed conditions; medical, psychological or dietary treatment; claims that a practice cures disease.

Job and task description

1. Screen participants and identify contraindications
2. Plan sequences for the group's level and goals
3. Demonstrate, cue and adapt postures with props and options
4. Teach breathing and relaxation practices safely
5. Observe the room and keep the space safe
6. Review sessions and keep records within the code of conduct

Draft task list; validated with practising professionals before the first examination.

Competency units

Unit	Weight	Knowledge	Skills
1. Applied anatomy for yoga and joint safety	15%	• Joint structure and ranges of motion in common postures • Spine, hip, knee, shoulder and wrist loading • Flexibility, mobility and hypermobility	• Identify joint-safety windows in a posture • Offer safer options for vulnerable joints
2. Screening, contraindications and safety	15%	• Pre-participation screening and when to seek clearance • Contraindications for inversions, deep flexion, breath retention and heat • Pregnancy and other special circumstances: when to refer	• Screen a new participant • Adapt or remove practices for a given contraindication

		• Emergency procedures	
3. Posture technique, alignment and cueing	20%	• Standing, seated, prone, supine, balance and inverted posture families • Alignment principles and individual variation • Use of props and modifications	• Demonstrate postures to standard • Give clear verbal cues and safe, consent-based hands-on or no-touch adjustments
4. Breathing and relaxation practices	10%	• Physiology of breathing • Safe use of breathing techniques and when to avoid breath retention • Relaxation and guided rest methods	• Teach a simple breathing practice with options • Lead a relaxation segment safely
5. Sequencing and class design	15%	• Warm-up, peak and cool-down structure • Progressive courses over several weeks • Mixed-ability planning	• Write a 60-minute class plan and a 6-week course outline
6. Teaching methods and communication	15%	• Learning styles and inclusive language • Group management and observation • Online teaching safety	• Teach a mixed-ability group and adjust in real time

7. Professional practice, ethics and scope	10%	• Scope of practice and referral • Consent for touch, confidentiality and safeguarding • Honest marketing and no health claims	• Decide correctly in scope and consent scenarios

Eligibility

- Age 18 or over
- Secondary education or equivalent
- Current CPR/AED certificate (issued within the last 24 months)
- Training route: completion of a BFS-approved S102 programme of at least 150 guided learning hours, including 30 hours of observed teaching practice; or
- Experience route: at least 2 years of documented yoga teaching plus a portfolio mapped to the S102 units

Assessment

Component	Weight	What it covers
Written examination	40%	Multiple-choice and scenario questions
Practical teaching assessment	40%	Teach an observed class segment, including adaptations and a breathing or relaxation practice
Class and course plan	20%	A 60-minute class plan and 6-week course outline with screening and safety notes

Every component must be passed. Pass marks are set with a documented standard-setting method (modified Angoff) before each new examination form is used. Reasonable adjustments are available on request.

Certification, surveillance and recertification

Decision by a BFS certifier who took no part in the candidate's training or assessment. Certificate shows holder, S102, BFS ID, award date and expiry date. Term 3 years. Annual CPD of 20 points and code-of-conduct attestation. Recertification: 60 CPD points over the cycle, 180 hours of logged practice, current CPR/AED and a clean conduct record; or pass the current examination again.

Suspension and withdrawal

For unmet CPD or recertification requirements, misuse of the certificate or mark, or proven misconduct, after the person has had a chance to respond. Decisions can be appealed within 30 days.

8. S104 Strength and Conditioning Coach (Level 2)

Scope

Designs and delivers strength, power, speed and conditioning programmes for athletes and trained individuals. Manages training load, monitors readiness and works with medical and coaching staff.

Outside the scope: Medical diagnosis or rehabilitation; prescribing supplements or any prohibited substance; coaching competitive Olympic weightlifting technique beyond the lift derivatives covered here (refer to a specialist weightlifting coach).

Job and task description

1. Carry out a needs analysis of the sport and athlete
2. Select and run valid, reliable performance tests
3. Plan periodised training across a season
4. Coach strength, power and lift-derivative technique
5. Programme speed, agility and conditioning
6. Monitor training load and readiness and adjust
7. Reduce injury risk and support return to training with the medical team
8. Lead sessions, keep records and work with other staff

Draft task list; validated with practising professionals before the first examination.

Competency units

Unit	Weight	Knowledge	Skills
1. Needs analysis and performance testing	14%	• Movement, physiological and injury profile of a sport • Test selection, validity, reliability and standardisation • Interpreting and reporting test data	• Run a test battery to protocol • Turn test results into training priorities
2. Periodisation and programme design	18%	• Linear, block and undulating models • Planning around competition calendars • Concurrent training and interference	• Write an annual plan and a 4-week block for a named athlete profile

3. Strength, power and lift-derivative coaching	18%	• Technique of squat, hinge, press and pull variations • Phases of the clean, jerk and snatch and their derivatives (hang pulls, push press, front squat) • Plyometric progressions and landing mechanics	• Coach lift derivatives safely with regressions • Know when to refer to a weightlifting specialist
4. Speed, agility and conditioning	12%	• Acceleration, maximal speed and change-of-direction mechanics • Energy-system conditioning methods	• Plan and coach a speed and agility session
5. Load management and athlete monitoring	14%	• External and internal load measures (for example session RPE) • Readiness and wellness monitoring and their limits • Fatigue, recovery and tapering	• Set up a simple monitoring system and act on the data
6. Injury-risk reduction and return to training	10%	• Common injury mechanisms in sport • Working within a medical team's clearance and criteria	• Build a return-to-training progression from medical criteria
7. Recovery, nutrition within scope and anti-doping	6%	• Sleep, recovery and general nutrition guidance within scope • Anti-doping rules, strict liability and supplement risk	• Give general recovery advice and refer nutrition questions to a qualified professional
8. Professional practice and	8%	• Ethics, safeguarding and duty of care with	• Lead a group session and communicate a

leadership		athletes • Working with coaches, medical staff and parents	plan to staff

Eligibility

- BFS S101 certification, or an equivalent Level 1 fitness qualification
- At least 12 months of documented coaching practice after Level 1, including work with athletes or trained clients
- Current CPR/AED certificate (issued within the last 24 months)
- Completion of a BFS-approved S104 programme of at least 100 guided learning hours, or a portfolio mapped to the S104 units

Assessment

Component	Weight	What it covers
Written examination	40%	Scenario-based questions on testing, periodisation, load and safety
Practical coaching assessment	40%	Coach a strength or lift-derivative session and a speed or conditioning drill
Case task	20%	Needs analysis, test battery and annual plan for a defined athlete

Every component must be passed. Pass marks are set with a documented standard-setting method (modified Angoff) before each new examination form is used. Reasonable adjustments are available on request.

Certification, surveillance and recertification

Decision by a BFS certifier who took no part in the candidate's training or assessment. Certificate shows holder, S104, BFS ID, award date and expiry date. Term 3 years. Annual CPD of 24 points and code-of-conduct attestation. Recertification: 72 CPD points over the cycle, 180 hours of logged practice, current CPR/AED and a clean conduct record; or pass the current examination again.

Suspension and withdrawal

For unmet CPD or recertification requirements, misuse of the certificate or mark, or proven misconduct, after the person has had a chance to respond. Decisions can be appealed within 30 days.

9. S103 Biomechanics and Movement Specialist (Level 3)

Scope

Analyses human movement using biomechanical principles, identifies technique faults and loading risks, and designs evidence-informed exercise modifications and graded loading progressions, including return-to-lift progressions after clearance from a health professional. Mentors other fitness professionals.

Outside the scope: Diagnosing injury or pathology; starting a return-to-lift progression without clearance from the treating health professional; using any analysis method beyond its proven reliability.

Job and task description

1. Observe and record movement with reliable methods
2. Describe movement using kinematic and kinetic concepts
3. Classify technique errors and judge their loading consequences
4. Design modifications, cue strategies and constraint-based drills
5. Plan graded loading and return-to-lift progressions with the health team
6. Appraise evidence and document decisions
7. Mentor and assess other fitness professionals

Draft task list; validated with practising professionals before the first examination.

Competency units

Unit	Weight	Knowledge	Skills
1. Mechanics of human movement	18%	• Kinematics and kinetics, ground reaction force, impulse and momentum • Joint moments, levers and muscle mechanics • Stability, balance and load sharing across joints	• Explain a lift's demands using force and moment concepts
2. Movement analysis methods	18%	• 2D video analysis set-up and its errors • Observation reliability and inter-rater agreement	• Record and analyse a lift on video to a standard protocol • Rate movements consistently with

		• Error taxonomy: critical, secondary and style errors • Strengths and limits of wearables and apps	another assessor
3. Screening and interpretation	12%	• Movement screens and what the evidence says about predicting injury • Avoiding over-interpretation	• Interpret a screen in context and explain its limits to a client
4. Exercise modification and loading strategies	18%	• Cue stacks, external and internal focus • Constraint-led drills • Movement safety windows and graded exposure	• Design a modification and cue plan for a technique fault • Write a graded loading progression
5. Return-to-lift progressions with the health team	12%	• Clearance criteria and shared decision-making • Communication with physiotherapists and doctors	• Write a return-to-lift plan that follows the treating professional's criteria
6. Evidence appraisal and documentation	10%	• Study designs and levels of evidence • Reading and critiquing biomechanics research	• Write a short evidence summary that supports a practice decision
7. Professional practice, mentoring and referral	12%	• Scope, referral and inter-professional working • Mentoring and assessing other trainers fairly	• Give structured feedback to a trainee • Make and document a referral

Eligibility

- BFS S101 or S104 certification (or an equivalent qualification) plus at least 2 years of documented practice; or
- A degree in sport and exercise science, kinesiology, physiotherapy or a related field plus at least 1 year of documented practice
- Current CPR/AED certificate (issued within the last 24 months)
- Completion of a BFS-approved S103 programme of at least 120 guided learning hours, or a portfolio mapped to the S103 units

Assessment

Component	Weight	What it covers
Written examination	35%	Applied mechanics, analysis methods and evidence questions
Practical movement-analysis assessment	40%	Analyse recorded and live lifts, classify errors and coach modifications
Case portfolio and oral defence	25%	A return-to-lift or technique case with analysis, plan and evidence summary, defended in a short oral exam

Every component must be passed. Pass marks are set with a documented standard-setting method (modified Angoff) before each new examination form is used. Reasonable adjustments are available on request.

Certification, surveillance and recertification

Decision by a BFS certifier who took no part in the candidate's training or assessment. Certificate shows holder, S103, BFS ID, award date and expiry date. Term 3 years. Annual CPD of 24 points and code-of-conduct attestation. Recertification: 72 CPD points over the cycle, 180 hours of logged practice, current CPR/AED and a clean conduct record; or pass the current examination again.

Suspension and withdrawal

For unmet CPD or recertification requirements, misuse of the certificate or mark, or proven misconduct, after the person has had a chance to respond. Decisions can be appealed within 30 days.