NFPT-CPT Examination Specifications

Certified Personal Trainer Certification Program — Test Content Outline

Program	National Federation of Professional Trainers (NFPT) Certified Personal Trainer (NFPT-CPT)
Governing Body	NFPT Certification Council
Status	Certification Council Adopted, October 9, 2026
Source Documents	2024 CPT Job Analysis Report (Prometric, April 2024), including Appendix H, Test Specifications; NFPT Certification Candidate Handbook (2026)

Purpose and Intended Use

The NFPT-CPT examination is the assessment component of the NFPT Certified Personal Trainer certification program. It determines whether a candidate has the entry-level knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to design and implement safe and effective exercise programs for apparently healthy individuals in one-on-one or small group settings. The exam supports a pass/fail certification decision. It is designed to distinguish competent from non-competent performance, not to rank candidates.

This document defines what the exam measures (content domains, weights, and knowledge, skill, and ability [KSA] statements) and how it is structured and scored.

Basis for the Specifications

The specifications are derived from the 2024 NFPT-CPT Job Analysis Study, conducted by Prometric and reported in April 2024.

Task Force. A ten-member Task Force of practicing personal trainers met on November 1–3, 6, 2023 to develop the survey content, which was refined after review and a pilot test (24 invited, 11 completed) in December 2023.

Survey. The survey was open from January 30 to March 17, 2024. Of 1,304 participants who engaged with the survey, 794 submitted usable responses (at least 55% complete). Respondents rated the importance and frequency of 74 KSA statements across five domains. All 74 met the study's importance criterion (mean rating of 2.50 or above).

Test Specifications Committee. A nine-member committee met in April, 2024. It reviewed the survey results, confirmed all 74 KSA statements for inclusion, and established the content weights below. Content weights were set after the committee reviewed the survey respondents' recommended weights alongside its own estimates (2024 Job Analysis Report, pp. 14–16).

Examination Structure

Item format	Multiple choice, single best answer
Exam length	120 items: 100 scored items and 20 unscored pretest items. Candidates are not told which items are scored.
Time limit	2 hours (unless accommodations are approved in advance)
Conditions	Closed book, proctored
Delivery modes	Computer-based testing at an authorized Prometric test center; Live Remote Proctoring; paper-and-pencil (limited circumstances, pre-approved by NFPT)
Exam forms	Two forms are active at any time; a new form is released every 12 to 18 months
Passing standard	Scaled score of 750 out of 1000, criterion-referenced

Content Domains and Weights

Content Domain	Weight	Scored items (of 100)	KSA statements
Principles of Human Anatomy	20%	20	13
Principles of Human Physiology	20%	20	22
Fitness Components	23%	23	23
Training Program Development, Implementation, and Modification	32%	32	13
Professionalism and Communication Skills	5%	5	3
Total	**100%**	**100**	**74**

Scored items per domain apply each weight to the 100 scored items.

Detailed Content Outline

The outline below lists all 74 KSA statements verified by the 2024 job analysis. Examples in parentheses illustrate the scope of a statement; they are not exhaustive lists.

I. Principles of Human Anatomy (20%)

A. Identify components of the human body's major systems
   i. Muscular system
   ii. Skeletal system
   iii. Nervous system
   iv. Respiratory system
   v. Circulatory system
   vi. Endocrine system
   vii. Digestive system
   viii. Immune system

B. Identify types of joints (e.g., ball and socket, hinge)

C. Identify muscle types (i.e., cardiac, skeletal, smooth)

D. Identify skeletal muscle structure and components (e.g., motor unit, myofibril, sarcomere)

E. Identify planes of motion (i.e., frontal, sagittal, transverse) and relative anatomical positions (e.g., anterior, distal, lateral, medial)

II. Principles of Human Physiology (20%)

A. Recognize the function of body systems and how they interact
   i. Muscular system
   ii. Skeletal system
   iii. Nervous system
   iv. Respiratory system
   v. Circulatory system
   vi. Endocrine system
   vii. Digestive system
   viii. Immune system

B. Explain musculoskeletal biomechanics
   i. Planes of motion
   ii. Joint movements
   iii. Muscle movement and interactions (e.g., agonists, antagonists, synergists)

C. Differentiate between types and attributes of muscle fiber (i.e., Type I, Type IIa, Type IIb)

D. Differentiate between types and functions of muscle contractions (e.g., concentric, eccentric, isometric)

E. Identify neuromuscular recruitment patterns (e.g., contractile speed recruitment, depleting energy, immediate recruitment)

F. Identify proprioceptors and their functions (e.g., muscle spindle, stretch reflex)

G. Describe the metabolic processes of the body
   i. Nutritional factors (e.g., deficiencies, macronutrients, micronutrients)
   ii. Energy systems (e.g., aerobic, anaerobic, adenosine triphosphate (ATP), lactic acid, metabolic oxidation)
   iii. Metabolic functions and their limitations (e.g., gluconeogenesis, protein synthesis/catabolism)
   iv. Additional factors that affect metabolic processes (e.g., age, gender, specific limitations/restrictions, sleep, somatotypes, stress)

III. Fitness Components (23%)

A. Identify components of general fitness
   i. Cardiorespiratory conditioning
   ii. Muscular endurance
   iii. Muscular strength
   iv. Flexibility
   v. Body composition

B. Apply basic training principles (e.g., Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type (FITT) principle, overload, progressive adaptations) to fitness components

C. Identify primary physiological training mechanisms
   i. Anaerobic (i.e., strength, power, hypertrophy)
   ii. Aerobic (e.g., cardiorespiratory conditioning and maintenance, endurance)

D. Identify training modalities, principles, and techniques for specific outcomes

i. Ballistic Training
ii. Cardiorespiratory Conditioning
iii. Cardiorespiratory Maintenance
iv. Circuit Training
v. Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type (FITT) Principle
vi. Functional Training
vii. High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
viii. Overload Training Principle
ix. Periodization
x. Plyometrics
xi. Resistance Training
xii. Specificity (Specific Adaptations to Imposed Demands [SAID])

IV. Training Program Development, Implementation, and Modification (32%)

Training Program Development

A. Conduct client consultation and assessment
   i. Conduct screening (e.g., identify risk factors, identify programming considerations and goals) and collect appropriate documentation (e.g., informed consent, liability waiver, Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire [PAR-Q])
   ii. Conduct fitness assessments (e.g., performance and non-performance variables, contraindications, limitations and restrictions, special considerations/populations)

B. Analyze data from consultation and assessment to identify goals specific to client (e.g., general fitness, strength/hypertrophy, weight-loss)

C. Develop a safe and effective client training program based upon identified goals
   i. Behavior and lifestyle change (e.g., dietary change, smoking cessation)
   ii. Application of modalities, principles, techniques, and variables (e.g., Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type (FITT), intensity, repetition ranges, recovery, duration, flexibility)

Training Program Implementation

D. Implement training program (e.g., introduce training tools, equipment, exercises, form, modalities)

E. Monitor workout performance (e.g., heart rate, rest periods, rating of perceived exertion [RPE])

Training Program Evaluation

F. Evaluate client progress, program effectiveness, and strategies for improvement
   i. Non-performance variables (e.g., resting heart rate, heart rate, body composition) and behavioral changes
   ii. Performance variables against goals (e.g., cardiorespiratory condition, flexibility, muscle endurance, muscle strength)
   iii. Behavior change (e.g., sleep, stress, compliance, eating habits)

V. Professionalism and Communication Skills (5%)

A. Apply strategies for effective communication (e.g., conflict resolution, demonstration, feedback, problem solving, verbal and non-verbal communication)

B. Recognize scope of practice (e.g., conduct and ethics, confidentiality and privacy, professional boundaries)

C. Identify injury prevention and management techniques (e.g., emergency medical plan, exercise cessation, protection, rest, ice, compression, and elevation [PRICE], proper warm-up and cool-down)

Scoring and Passing Standard

Candidates are scored against a fixed, criterion-referenced passing standard. A scaled score of 750 is required to pass. The passing standard was set through a modified Angoff standard-setting study, in which a panel of subject matter experts, facilitated by Prometric's psychometric staff, judged how a minimally competent candidate would perform on each item. The Certification Council approves the passing standard. Each new exam form is statistically equated to that standard, so the same passing standard applies to every candidate whichever form they take. Exams are not graded on a curve.

Candidates who pass receive a certificate. Numeric scores are not provided to passing candidates. Candidates who do not pass receive a score report broken down by content domain to guide further study.

Maintenance of the Specifications

The Certification Council adopts these specifications and any revisions. The exam is reviewed annually, a new exam form is released every 12 to 18 months, and each form is built to the domain weights in the Content Domains and Weights section. The next job analysis is scheduled for 2031, or earlier if industry changes warrant an update, and these specifications will be updated following each job analysis.