



PROFESSION BRIEF - EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY

1. What this job actually is

- An Exercise Physiologist (EP) designs and delivers clinical exercise programs for people with chronic disease, injury, or disability.
- Day-to-day work includes assessing movement, reviewing medical history, prescribing tailored exercise, monitoring progress, writing reports, and liaising with GPs and allied health professionals.
- It is structured, evidence-based healthcare. It is not personal training.

2. Where this role typically works

- Private allied health clinics
- Multidisciplinary medical centres
- Hospitals and community health services
- Occupational rehabilitation providers
- Aged care and disability services
- Sporting organisations
- Corporate health programs
- Self-employment in private practice

3. How people usually get into this role

- Complete a Bachelor of Clinical Exercise Physiology (or equivalent) accredited by Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA).
- Undertake 500+ hours of supervised clinical placements.
- Gain accreditation as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP).
- Early roles often include rehabilitation assistant, exercise assistant, or allied health support worker.

Entry into this profession requires accredited study and supervised clinical placement, as employers and registration bodies expect demonstrated competency in managing clinical populations.

4. Alternate or less-traditional pathways

- Career changers from personal training, sport science, physiotherapy support, or nursing often return to university to complete the accredited degree.
- Strength and conditioning coaches may transition by undertaking further study.
- Some move laterally from EP into occupational rehab consulting, case management, or health program coordination.
- Business or fitness industry experience can support eventual private practice ownership.

5. Qualifications and training

Required (Australia):

- ESSA-accredited Bachelor or Masters in Clinical Exercise Physiology
- ESSA Accreditation as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP)
- First Aid and CPR

Preferred / Often Required by Employers:

- Medicare provider number eligibility
- Experience with chronic disease management
- NDIS and DVA knowledge

Experience does not substitute for the accredited qualification in Australia.

6. Skills that matter in practice

Technical:

- Clinical assessment and exercise prescription
- Understanding of pathology and chronic disease
- Documentation and report writing

Transferable:

- Clear communication with diverse clients
- Professional boundaries
- Time management across back-to-back appointments

Often underestimated:

- Motivating clients who do not enjoy exercise
- Managing complex psychosocial factors
- Administrative workload and compliance requirements

7. Interests and traits that fit well

- Interest in health science and human movement
- Comfortable working one-on-one for most of the day
- Patient, calm, and structured
- Able to explain medical concepts in simple language

People may struggle if they prefer fast-paced environments, dislike documentation, or expect elite sport to dominate their workload.

8. “This job is for you if...”

- You want to work in allied health, not general fitness
- You are comfortable working with people managing chronic illness
- You value evidence-based practice over trends
- You can handle repetitive documentation and reporting
- You are realistic about income growth in early career stages

This role may NOT suit you if:

- You are primarily interested in working with elite athletes
- You prefer high-energy, fast-paced environments over structured clinical work
- You dislike documentation and compliance requirements
- You are not comfortable working with chronic illness or long-term client progress

9. Things people are often surprised by

- Much of the work is with chronic disease, not athletes
- Income in early years can be moderate compared to study length
- Significant paperwork is required for Medicare, NDIS, and insurers
- Building a full client load can take time

10. Labour market reality

- Demand for Exercise Physiologists is growing, particularly in chronic disease management, rehabilitation, and ageing populations
- Most roles are in private practice and community health, with fewer hospital-based positions
- Entry-level roles can be competitive, often requiring experience through placements or assistant roles
- Income and job stability vary depending on:
 - referral pathways (GP, Medicare, NDIS)
 - ability to build and retain a client base
- Opportunities are expanding into areas such as oncology, mental health, and preventative health programs

11. Useful next steps for exploration

- Speak to an Accredited Exercise Physiologist in private practice and hospital settings
- Request to observe a chronic disease management session
- Review ESSA accreditation requirements and university placement hours
- Compare the EP pathway with physiotherapy and sport science
- Explore casual work as an allied health assistant to test the environment

This brief is based on:

- practitioner insights from exercise physiology professionals
- general labour market trends in allied health in Australia
- publicly available information on ESSA accreditation and clinical training requirements

Information is current as of April 2026 and reflects industry insights and available data at that time.

This brief is designed to support career exploration. Experiences in exercise physiology vary depending on clinical setting, funding models, and individual career pathways.

More career exploration resources at [curatedcareers.com.au](https://www.curatedcareers.com.au)