



WORKING GROUP PAPER

# Teacher Trainer Qualifications

APRIL 2019

#YAstandards

In 1999, in its role as a voluntary, member-based organization serving yoga schools and teachers, **Yoga Alliance (YA)** sought to ensure and preserve the quality of yoga education and practice by establishing and disseminating standards for the education of yoga teachers and by maintaining a registry of teachers who met these standards. In 2018, **YA** launched a review of its standards, calling it the **Standards Review Project (SRP)**.

One result of the **SRP** is this collection of eight collaborative, condensed, and edited working group papers to which key yoga stakeholders for **YA** and for the yoga community at large contributed. These papers represent the recommendations by each working group of the best practices for the standard, or key inquiry area, in question. There is one working paper for each; what follows is the working group paper on the notion of **Teacher Trainer Qualifications** in yoga.

## TEACHER TRAINER QUALIFICATIONS UPFRONT

The field of yoga teacher education is vast and complex, and Yoga Alliance (YA) chose Teacher Trainer Qualifications to help define, honor, and embrace a system of teaching that historically has passed from teacher to student. Yoga Teacher Training (YTT) is rooted in a wide array of disciplines, including but not limited to:

- Historic pedagogy in teaching yoga
- Western anatomy and physiology
- Yoga philosophy, lifestyle, and ethics
- Online learning methodology, a relatively recent discipline also examined in the [Online Learning Working Group Paper](#)

Training yoga practitioners to become yoga teachers includes not only a mastery of syllabus design and lesson planning expertise but also experience and understanding in facilitating learning among diverse groups of individuals with different learning styles and levels of experience. The success of a Registered Yoga School (RYS) and its YTT program in producing yoga teachers who are able to teach quality-based and safe yoga is derived from how the program is led, administered, and taught. The ability of the trainers of an RYS YTT program, designated by YA as Lead Trainers<sup>1</sup> (LTs) or Speciality Trainers (STs), to lead and/or teach YTT programs, is dependent on where these LTs and STs have studied, with whom, and for how long.

YA posed the following questions to the Teacher Trainer Qualifications Working Group (TTQWG):

- ***Is the current YA requirement of being an E-RYT 200 enough to lead a YTT? If not, what definable requirement is enough?***

<sup>1</sup>The notion of Lead Trainer(s) and Specialty Trainer(s) come from YA's section of its website on [Standards Guidelines \(all RYS\)](#).

- *Would LTs need a specific level of education beyond the scope of an RYT 500? If so, could that education include mentorship and coursework (and further, in what areas of mentorship and coursework)?*
- *Should the number of required prerequisite teaching hours for LTs increase?*
- *Should there be separate requirements for areas such as anatomy, philosophy, and ethics?*
- *Should ongoing professional learning for LTs be required?*
- *Who should deliver a course for preparing teachers, or Registered Yoga Teachers (RYTs), to become teachers of teachers, or LTs?*
- *Should there be a limit to the number of STs within an RYS?*

The **TTQWG** recommended overhauling the existing qualification standards for RYS YTTs that produce RYTs both at the 200 (or “foundational”) and 300 and 500 (or “professional”) levels. The group explored all current RYS curricular areas to determine the necessary new competencies required for both LTs and STs. The group recommended updated, upgraded mechanisms for ensuring that these competencies could be achieved and assessed. **The group recommended a new level of expertise called Experienced Lead Trainer (ELT).**

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The TTQWG began its discussions by acknowledging the vast and complex field of expertise required to become an LT. These areas include, but are not limited to:

- Yoga technology
- Anatomy
- Philosophy
- Lifestyle and ethics
- Pedagogy, which the group described as good practices, in teaching what is defined as yoga

The group discussed how each of these areas contribute to the development of the skill set of an LT or an ST, saying yoga pedagogy is particularly connected to syllabus design and lesson planning. The group explored the necessity for an awareness of, and skills in, the facilitation of diverse groups with various learning styles and levels of experience.

## BACKGROUND AND REFLECTION

Currently, all LTs for any RYS program must be registered with YA at the E-RYT 200, RYT 500 or E-RYT 500 level. A Lead Trainer is defined as one of the following:

- 1) An E-RYT 200 is an RYT 200 who has been teaching yoga for at least two years since completion of an RYS 200 and has taught at least 1,000 hours of yoga classes since that time. The person must have accumulated the 1,000 of yoga teaching experience after having met RYT 200 requirements.
- 2) An RYT 500 has at least 2,000 hours of classes and four years of teaching experience since completing an RYS 200 or RYT 500 with at least 500 of these hours having been accumulated after completion of the RYS 500.

The required contact hours and other qualifications differ based on LT designation and the type of RYS program.

RYS PROGRAM TYPE	LEAD TRAINER REQUIREMENTS
200	65 contact hours per LT 200 No more than two LT 200s
300	135 contact hours per LT 300 No more than five LT 300s E-RYT 500 credential mandated
500	200 contact hours per LT 500 No more than five LT 500s E-RYT 500 credential mandated

At times, an RYS might employ Other Faculty (OF) to teach certain speciality areas. If not registered with YA, OFs must have:

- A relevant degree, credential, or other substantial education in the subject they will teach
- A minimum of 500 hours of teaching experience, or two years of relevant experience, in the subject they will teach

Training yoga practitioners to become yoga teachers includes not only mastery of syllabus design and lesson planning expertise; it requires experience and understanding in facilitating learning among diverse groups of individuals with different learning styles and levels of experience.

## SOLUTION

The **TTQWG proposed a complete overhaul of nearly every aspect of LT requirements for an RYS**, including fundamental shifts for LTs such as new definitions, qualifications, specialized education, and competencies. The group addressed the fulfillment and evaluation of qualifications, including how to handle current LTs, and what to do about non-YA YTTs and their Teacher Trainers.

### NEW TRAINER DEFINITIONS AND DESIGNATIONS

The **TTQWG agreed that an LT 200 should have the highest YA credential** for the role: E-RYT 500. A credential of this kind ensures that the LT has accrued appropriate and integral knowledge, skills, and experience of yoga through RYS credentialing on all levels of the Core Curriculum and has furthermore put this knowledge to practical use in the field via teaching over a minimum of five years.

The TTQWG therefore recommended new definitions for LTs who oversee and lead RYSs and/or who co-deliver trainings with STs—the Lead Teacher Trainer (LTT) at the 200, 300, and 500 levels as well as the Experienced Lead Trainer (ELT) at the same leveled RYSs and/or who co-deliver trainings with STs—the Lead Teacher Trainer (LTT) at the 200, 300, and 500 levels as well as the Experienced Lead Trainer (ELT) at the same levels.

#### LTT 200

- E-RYT 500
- Five years of experience as an RYT
- Minimum of 100 contact hours
- New competencies as defined later in this working group paper

#### LTT 300 & 500

- E-RYT 500
- Eight years of experience as an RYT
- Prior LT for a minimum of three RYS 200s over the course of three years
- Minimum of 150 contact hours
- New competencies as defined later in this working group paper

#### Co-Trainer

- E-RYT 200
- Minimum of forty and maximum of 80 contact hours
- New competencies as defined later in the “Specialized Education and Competencies for New LT Roles” Section

#### Specialty Trainer

- RYT 200
- Specialist in area of RYS 200 curriculum not required to be taught by an LT
- Minimum of 3 and maximum of 39 contact hours
- Maximum of four STs alongside the LT for cohesion

#### ELT 200

- E-RYT 500 and LT 200
- LT for a prior seven RYS 200s over the course of seven years
- Qualified to teach “Becoming a Trainer” course
- Qualified to lead “Becoming a Trainer” mentorship/apprenticeship programs<sup>2</sup>

#### ELT 300

- E-RYT 500 and LT 300
- LT for a prior ten RYSs, of which five must be RYS 300s
- Qualified to teach “Becoming an LTT 300” course
- Qualified to lead “Becoming an LTT 300” mentorship/apprenticeship programs<sup>3</sup>

A “lead” (Teacher) Trainer should have the highest YA credential for the role.

<sup>2</sup> Please see suggested overview of this course set forth by the TTQWG, in the Specialized Education and Competencies section of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## QUALIFICATIONS FOR NEW LEAD TRAINER ROLES

In addition to the new LT definitions and designations, the TTQWG proposed new competencies for these LT roles, including but not limited to facilitation experience and mentorship:

### Facilitation Experience

- Any aspiring LT must have between 60 and 100 hours of experience teaching yoga workshops and courses in other levels of yoga practice in order to demonstrate mastery of knowledge outside of regular yoga class teaching

### Mentorship

- Any aspiring LT must apprentice and/or assist in a minimum of two RYSs as a prerequisite
- Any aspiring LT should pursue mentorship and/or specialized education to establish pedagogical competencies. Elements include RYS preparatory sessions and apprenticing and assisting RYSs

The group also posed these other considerations about **apprenticeship and/or mentorship programs**:

- These programs should be led by LTT 200/300/500s
- Virtual mentorship options could be developed for people who cannot apprentice for an entire RYS live (please see the [Online Learning](#) Working Group Paper for more information on this topic)
- Apprenticeship is distinct from assisting or teaching in an RYS program

## SPECIALIZED EDUCATION AND COMPETENCIES FOR NEW LEAD TRAINER ROLES

### Overview

The TTQWG distinguished between the skills required for teaching others to teach yoga versus teaching people for their own practice, saying that the former requires skill in group facilitation and in delivering large amounts of material over various formats at different times. RYS graduates will teach others, which exponentially increases the requirement to teach safely, competently, and with skill. The group questioned if LTs might require further education and/or special competencies to design, establish, and later evaluate the outcomes and impact of their teaching.

The **TTQWG identified baseline prerequisites for all LTs and STs** and considered how such competencies might be taught, learned, and assessed. The group proposed two courses: “Becoming an LT 200” 20-hour course and “Becoming an LT 300” five-hour course. With regard to pedagogy, to include Online Learning, the group recommended that YA:

- Create the standards for an LT course to include pedagogy, mentorship, and assessment, from which it can then credential future LTs as LTT 200, LTT 300, LTT 500, ELT 200, and ELT 300.
- Support the created standards, above listed in New Trainer Definitions and Designations, via a detailed curriculum for the “Becoming a…” LT courses
- Host conferences as a venue for continuing education

Any aspiring “lead” (Teacher) Trainer (must) apprentice and/or assist in a minimum of one to two RYSs as a prerequisite.

Though not under the purview of this Working Group, the TTQWG also widely agreed that YA should offer a course for all current and future RYT, LTs, and STs for commitment to such practices as those outlined in the Integrity, Scope of Practice and Code of Conduct Working Group Papers and through YA's anti-harassment grievance process and sexual misconduct policy.

### **Content Expertise**

The TTQWG said that content expertise of any LT includes teaching methodology competency beyond that of an RYT 500; this is because an LT must have knowledge of, and experience with, adaptive yoga practices that include the ability to understand which practices are relevant at what time and in which circumstances they are taught.

The TTQWG recommended that LTs have content expertise, including specialized knowledge of and experience in:

- 1) Yoga philosophy and history
- 2) Meditation
- 3) Pranayama (breath control)
- 4) Yoga anatomy, defined by the group as “subtle body anatomy,” though able to be delivered by an ST
- 5) Anatomy and physiology relating to yoga, though able to be delivered by an ST
- 6) Asana

### **Group/Class Management**

The **TTQWG recommended that an LT must be competent in managing groups and group dynamics**, specifically being able to:

- 1) Employ safe and inclusive pedagogy
- 2) Handle disruptive students
- 3) Recognize if individual students need support to graduate
- 4) Handle breakdowns, breakthroughs, and mental health issues
- 5) Create learning agreements and establish classroom norms (phone usage, recording, photography, conscious communication guidelines, etc.)
- 6) Create *sangha* (community) for trainees after graduation

### **Curriculum Design**

The TTQWG recommended that LTs possess skill in designing curriculum to including designing and designating electives hours, such as being able to:

- 1) Understand how to prepare students before they begin the RYS (through pre-reads and other preparatory assignments)
- 2) Design an integrated timetable that is optimal for both learning and retention
- 3) Understand how to help trainees develop the skills required for being good teachers
- 4) Understand how to incorporate informal assessment and make curricular modifications for various learning styles



## OTHER POSSIBLE REQUIRED COMPETENCIES FOR NEW LEAD TRAINER ROLES

The TTQWG identified other competencies such as: instructional techniques and lesson planning, assessment strategies, and school management.

### Instructional Techniques and Lesson Planning

- Understand how training is different from teaching
- Have knowledge and skill in planning and delivering lessons and units that are dialogic as opposed to didactic
- Have knowledge and skill in various learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, etc.)
- Have knowledge of instructional strategies in adult education, including the use of technology
- Understand the importance of using inclusive language in the YTT classroom
- Understand how to adapt certain aspects of the lessons or YTT classroom for those with disabilities (visual, auditory, learning or physical)

For more information on many of these topics, please see the [Online Learning](#) and [Inclusion](#) Working Group Papers.

### Assessment Strategies

- Understand the role of assessment in instruction
- Have knowledge of different methods of assessment including their benefits and shortcomings
- Understand remediation if a student does not pass an assessment
- Have skill in using grading rubrics and assessment methods as objectively as possible to avoid subjective bias when assessing RYT candidates

### School Management

- Be able to manage a teaching team
- Understand the RYS's legal issues on policies such as a refund policy, liability, and grievance policy
- Have a strategy to increase diversity in the YTTs

### Ethics & Lifestyle

The TTQWG suggested that LTs abide by a certain ethical lifestyle as it pertained to being yoga teacher trainers, such as:

- 1) Understanding the relationship of influence between teacher and student and how to ethically conduct oneself in such a role
- 2) Understanding how to be inclusive, skillful, and culturally competent
- 3) Committing to a yogic lifestyle and embodying the values being taught, including committing to one's own personal practice and practice with a senior teacher(s)
- 4) Understanding and abiding by the YA grievance process and sexual misconduct policy
- 5) Understanding the role of karma yoga, or selfless actions in yoga, within teaching/training

## FULFILLMENT AND EVALUATION OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE NEW LEAD TRAINER ROLES

### Current LTs

The **TTQWG recommended that current RYS LTs be assessed** by:

- Taking the “Becoming an LT 200” course
- Sending in video samples of their LT teaching as well as submitting written statements on how they take into account diverse learning styles and interactive teaching methodologies

The **TTQWG recommended that YA approve a mandatory ethical commitment course through the SRP to be taken by all current and future RYS LTs and possibly also by STs.**

For any non-current LT or ST wishing to register to be an LT during the new standards implementation process, the TTQWG suggested grandfathering these teachers into the new designations if they do not meet the increased baseline qualifications of E-RYT 500. The TTQWG suggested providing two years for current RYS LTs to meet these new standards. The group also wanted YA to offer these new courses online for wide accessibility, in workshop format at YA events and conferences, and via notable members of the YA teaching community.

### New LTs

The **TTQWG recommended that new RYS LTs be assessed to demonstrate how they meet the new proposed LT qualifications** by:

- 1) Taking YA’s Ethics Course and the “Becoming an LT 200” course, or
- 2) Providing a certificate from a private educational organization, or
- 3) Proving a degree in Education, or
- 4) Showcasing significant professional experience as a corporate trainer, facilitator, or coach, and/or
- 5) Taking an assessment to prove the above
- 6) Proving 100 hours of led-workshops and/or a predetermined number of YTT apprenticeship hours

### New Specialty Trainers

For any new ST with a focus on yoga philosophy and history, the TTQWG recommended the person have:

- An RYT 500 credential that included a total of at least 50 hours in yoga philosophy, or
- An RYT 200 credential and specialized yoga philosophy course, or
- Extensive experience, degree, and/or certificate

For any new ST with a focus on anatomy, the TTQWG recommended the person have:

- An RYT 200 credential and specialized continuing education yoga and anatomy course, or
- An RYT 200 credential and professional degree such as physiotherapist, massage therapist, movement specialist with significant knowledge/skill in anatomy, or
- Another professional degree with significant knowledge/skill in anatomy and experience in its application to yoga

### LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION & BACKGROUND CHECK FOR LEAD TRAINERS

The TTQWG suggested that current and prospective LTs submit letters of recommendations to describe their knowledge, skills, and experience. Using such a master-teacher-endorsed review structure would more quickly raise ethical concerns around the potential LT and would also illustrate the LT’s active study or participation in another RYS or yoga school.

The TTQWG discussed the relevance of background checks and did not arrive at a conclusion.

### CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENT FOR LEAD TRAINERS

The **TTQWG recommended CE hours for LTs** beyond those required for an RYT, suggesting that mentorship should qualify as a CE. The group agree that **15 to 20 hours of relevant CE every two years** would be appropriate.

The **TTQWG recommended YA expand its CE avenues and approved curricula to include other fields of study that complement yoga teaching and training**, such as science and psychology.

### OTHER POSSIBLE CHANGES TO TEACHER TRAINER STANDARDS

The TTQWG pointed to other possible changes to LT standards, including consideration for LTs who speak English as a Second Language and trainings in languages other than English.

## ADVISORY GROUP

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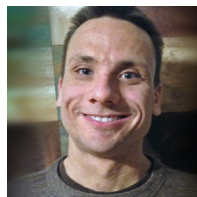
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### YOGA ALLIANCE & THE YOGA ALLIANCE FOUNDATION

Founded in 1999, Yoga Alliance is a member-based, non-profit organization that serves yoga schools and teachers across the globe, providing a world-recognized, best-in-class credential and unifying its members around a shared ethical commitment. In addition, YA delivers a strong value proposition to its members through community-building initiatives, educational resources, advocacy efforts, and social impact programs. Its sister organization, the Yoga Alliance Foundation, supports leveraged impact and direct service programs that expand the reach of and participation in yoga.