

Is 200 hours really enough?

200 hours of training. Just on yoga? That's a lot of time isn't it? It really seems like a big investment when you are signing up for the course, right? Until you get the reading list and see the programme and then you realise actually there is a lot to learn and possibly not enough time to fit it all in. But in an era where you can train quickly online can 250 hours really be necessary? The analogy I use that the first 200 hours are there to help you pass your driving test and the real learning about teaching yoga happens after, just like driving.

I have often wondered why 200 hours is the magic number. What is it about 200 hours that seems the minimum standard? Why not 100 or 300 or even 180 or 250? I have recently spoken to 2 accredited training international training bodies that are thinking of increasing the minimum to 250 hours for all new trainees. So, could 200 hours become 250 as standard and how will that affect students and trainers?

To all the amazing yoga teachers that are reading this don't panic. You are already qualified, and you will not need to make up the additional hours. But I am very interested in how this may have changed your willingness to follow your passion. Would you have been able to devote another 50 hours at the beginning of your career to get your new lifestyle kick started? Or would this have been a huge barrier to you wanting to take the course in the first place?

Just like taking up yoga, taking up yoga as a career is on the increase. I have stopped being surprised each year when another sizeable group of people sign up to our Yoga Alliance Professionals 200-hour course at our large training studios near Birmingham. Honestly when I ran our first 200 hours in 2015 I thought we would run it every 2 years or so. Yet to meet demand we have run the course every 9 months since and this year is no exception.

It is true teaching yoga provides both a great lifestyle & a way to make a huge contribution to the wellbeing of our community. For me when students leave our 200 hours they feel equipped to start teaching. In many respects they leave as very competent drivers with many more road trips to look forward to. I love seeing their careers take shape and seeing their confidence grow over time. I honestly think if you asked any of them if they would have wanted another 50 hours at the beginning they would say no.

However, because I am in the extremely fortunate position of meeting many yoga teachers who have trained with a wide variety of providers their first 200-hour course has simply not been enough. I have lost count of the number of teachers who ask us for lesson plans to enable them to teach classes in our studios. Even teachers who make the effort to get in touch after training elsewhere often want support in working with a diverse range of clients. When you drill down many of the newly qualified yoga teachers we meet do not feel confident with modifications. Some are completely thrown by new people to yoga arriving in class even when it is designed for beginners. Some cannot project their voice.

So, another 50 hours? I guess like so many decisions in life, it depends. It depends on where those hours are being placed and what their focus is. Costs of courses will certainly rise, possibly by up to 20% if the course is being extended by another 20%. That may actually be a hugely limiting factor for some.

Additionally, it may not be possible to train in short periods of time intensively any more. The standard 3 weeks intensive will become 4 weeks and that may well prevent many from attending.

We are offering options now on our overseas training in Salento, Italy where you can train for 3 weeks intensively or 2 weeks in Italy and 5 catch up days over weekends in the UK. Many clients do not have lifestyles that allow 4 weeks abroad.

Another interesting point is that we are seeing increasing numbers of requests from people who have trained elsewhere but actually want to do a second 200-hour course with us. The focus may be different, or they may feel they need another environment to become confident. In fact, some of our amazing teacher trainers have done multiple 200-hour courses in a variety of disciplines. Possibly 250 hours for more training in a different aspect may just be too much. I think these guys may then just bag 50 hours of that specialist training as a 5 day add on rather than exploring in depth.

For me the first 200 hours wasn't enough and no training course in any part of our amazing practice has ever fulfilled me for long. I always want to know more. I always love relighting my flame with the varied teachers in our lineage. However, 200 hours was enough to get me going on the right path and I feel confident that the teachers who have trained on our 200-hour course feel the same. Another 50 hours? I relish writing the course, but I am not sure the industry is ready for it. I'd love to hear your thoughts – I think this is going to be an interesting debate . . . and drive safely out there!

*Michelle is a Senior Yoga Teacher with Yoga Alliance Professionals, the Director of the Sandstone Teacher Training Academy and the Founder of Sandstone Yoga & Pilates, a studio franchise model accredited with the British Franchise Association. [SandstoneYoga.co.uk](http://SandstoneYoga.co.uk)*

*Sandstone Yoga & Pilates runs Yoga Alliance Professionals 200-hour teacher training near Birmingham. In 2018 they are offering 3-week 200-hour intensive in Italy in September 2018 or a 2 week intensive followed by 5 additional days in Birmingham over weekends.*