Press Release

Contacts:

Catherine S. Marquette, Vice President of Marketing & Communications, cmarquette@yogaalliance.org
Dani Mackey, Dani Mackey Communications, media@yogaalliance.org, 703-283-9698

Yoga Alliance Invites New Ethical Commitment and Strengthened Era of Accountability as Initial Changes of its Standards Review Take Effect

Association Shares Updated Code of Conduct, Scope of Practice, and Position on Equity Alongside Strengthened Application and Review Process; Other Changes to be Introduced June 2020

Arlington, VA (February 27, 2020) – At the start of its Standards Review in 2018, Yoga Alliance commissioned a global survey of the yoga community, learning that 83 percent of the more than 12,000 respondents believed that updated standards were necessary in light of the modern day evolution of yoga and how it is taught and practiced today. Thankful that the vast majority of yoga schools and teachers were also seeking transformation, the association forged ahead with its 18-month, community-led Standards Review Project (SRP), resulting in a membership-wide ethical commitment, up-leveled standards behind the foundational-level Registered Yoga School (RYS) 200 credential for yoga teacher training programs, and a strengthened application and review process, all taking effect today. These new elements help ensure that Yoga Alliance’s credentials support and foster the high quality, safe, accessible, and equitable teaching of yoga.

“Over the course of the SRP and in the months following, we heard from our membership and the broader yoga community a call to action for us to more fully step into the role of a professional association. We humbly responded, and today marks the first step in our showing up differently for our members and the community,” said Yoga Alliance President & CEO Shannon Roche. “These initial changes taking effect today will greatly enhance the shared accountability across this voluntary membership and throughout our profession, strengthening our capacity to uphold the integrity of our credentials. But this is just a first step. We promise to continuously grow and evolve our efforts through ongoing work with the community that we proudly serve.”

Yoga Alliance Board Chair, Kerry Maiorca, echoed this sentiment, stating, “Yoga Alliance is committed to continuous improvement and community collaboration with an emphasis on how best to support the future of the yoga teaching profession.”
In June 2019, Yoga Alliance announced the changes that are taking effect today in order to allow ample time for awareness and preparation amongst Yoga Alliance’s over 100,000-member community. Yoga Alliance has developed many resources to guide members and aspiring members through this change management process and has been preparing the community with regular updates, tools, and Member Support team assistance, as needed.

A Collective Ethical Commitment:

All members—whether an RYS or a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT), whether new or renewing—will be asked to abide by all Yoga Alliance policies in addition to an Ethical Commitment created to unify membership around shared principles, to foster safe and respectful guidelines for the profession of yoga teaching, and to ensure that Yoga Alliance members maintain a high level of teaching ability and accountability. This new Ethical Commitment is comprised of three parts.

- **An updated Code of Conduct**, cited as “very important” by 91% of SRP survey respondents and based upon core values intrinsic to the practice of yoga. The Code sets out acceptable, recommended, required, and prohibited professional and ethical behaviors by which all Yoga Alliance members agree to conduct themselves within RYS and RYT training programs, classes, and other offerings. For example, the Code references behaviors such as active inclusion, respect for student-teacher relationships, consent-based touch, and honesty in communications, amongst others.

- **A new Scope of Practice**, cited as “somewhat to very important” by 86% of SRP survey respondents. The Scope provides a clear, responsible, and non-lineage-specific description of yoga teaching, practice standards, and professional responsibilities and limitations for all Yoga Alliance members. For example, the Scope references adjusting postures only with explicit and informed consent as well as advising and teaching within the permitted scope of their credentials, experience, or abilities, amongst others.

- **The responsibility to equity in yoga**, echoed throughout all of the SRP working groups. This responsibility asks members to commit to an awareness of the inequities within yoga and to understand how imbalances can result in exclusion and underrepresentation. The goal of this responsibility is for a deepened recognition of the many instances of inequity and to support the membership and broader yoga community to build and contribute to yoga spaces that unite. Yoga Alliance released a statement on its position on equity in yoga [here](http://www.yogaalliance.org).
Up-Leveled Standards Underlying the RYS 200 Credential:

All new yoga teacher training programs applying for their foundational-level RYS 200 credential will now apply under the enhanced standards, announced in June 2019. All current RYS 200 credential holders will up-level to these new standards between now and February 26, 2022. In addition to the agreement to the Ethical Commitment, the main enhancements to this foundational-level credential include:

- **An emphasis on learning objectives, which will be transparently tied to RYS 200 instructional hours.** All of the minimally required 200 hours must now be classroom hours directly in support of a core curriculum that supports authenticity of lineage, style, or methodology.

- **A heightened emphasis on the demonstrated knowledge, skills, and experience of RYS graduates.** All RYSs must now assess trainees’ knowledge, skills, and experience against the 12 overarching competencies within the core curriculum prior to certifying trainees. This will support public safety, help manage the practicing public’s expectations, and strengthen the community’s ability to self-regulate.

- **An increased prioritization of the breadth and depth of the knowledge, skills, and experience of those leading trainings.** By February 2022, all Lead Trainers must hold the E-RYT 500 credential, up from E-RYT 200 or E-RYT 500 currently. Based on feedback from members, beginning in August 2020, there will be an added provision for “Intermediary Status” whereby E-RYT 200 Lead Trainers who will have led RYS programs for three or more years at the time of application can apply and qualify to continue to use their existing E-RYT 200 credentials in concert with their significant Lead Trainer experience. This allows them to remain as Lead Teachers without the need to upgrade to an E-RYT 500 credential, allowing for existing, highly qualified Lead Trainers to continue their work with minimal disruption. More information will be announced on this program later this summer.

- **Further, at least 150 hours of the 200 hours curriculum must be taught by up to five qualified Lead Trainers, more than doubling the current requirement of 65 hours. Collectively, this answers the call from the yoga community to ensure that experienced yoga teachers are training the next generation of yoga teachers, which promotes consistency, quality, and safety in training, teaching, and delivering yoga throughout our communities.**
Strengthened Application and Review Process:

To promote greater rigor and integrity in the application for Yoga Alliance credentials as desired by a majority of SRP survey respondents, Yoga Alliance strengthened its application requirements for all new RYS credentials, providing for greater shared accountability to meet or exceed its standards. Current RYS programs will renew under the new application when they up-level to the enhanced standards underlying their respective RYS credentials. Yoga Alliance was purposeful in its intention to move at a measured pace with as little disruption as possible to the livelihoods of its members schools and teachers.

The enhanced application will allow for a deeper understanding of an applicant’s yoga teacher training program, including schedule, curriculum, assessment methods, and training manual(s) and other materials. A key addition to the application is the requirement for all new RYS programs to have their own policies, such as a Code of Conduct, Grievance Policy (including anti-harassment language), an Anti-Retaliation Policy, and a Refund Policy.

Yoga Alliance also will implement an academic-style peer review panel for those applications in need of additional consideration to ensure a fair, consistent, and thorough process. In addition, all RYSs will be asked to re-credential every three years to ensure they still meet or exceed these up-leveled standards.

Yoga Alliance has compiled a list of resources to assist applying schools and current RYS programs (which will be subject to these enhanced application requirements when they up-level to the new standards) as they transition to the strengthened application and review process. Tools to assist applicants include a Daily Scheduler to help ensure training programs meet the minimum necessary time requirements and a Budget Calculator to provide guidance for handling a variety of school budgeting and management needs. A variety of templated policies—including those listed above—are also provided as guides.

Further updates to the standards underlying Yoga Alliance’s credentials to be announced later this year include enhancements to the professional-level RYS 300 and RYS 500 credentials, the further evolution of Lead Trainer pathways, and a review of its specialty credentials.

“We can’t thank enough those who participated through the Standards Review Project and since, for helping to build and shape our awareness of many important issues in yoga. The perspectives and knowledge these leaders generously shared serve as the foundation of the enhancements taking effect today, including the ethical commitment,” added Maiorca. “We look forward to convening community-wide conversations surrounding our field’s challenges, such as equity in yoga and power and empowerment, so that our practice can continue to evolve alongside the cultures in which it is found.”

Both the [Yoga Alliance website](https://yogaalliance.org) and the [Yoga Alliance Standards Review Project website](https://standardsreview.yogaalliance.org) include robust detail on these changes.
About the Standards Review Project

In 1999, in its role as a voluntary, member-based organization serving yoga schools and teachers, Yoga Alliance sought to ensure and preserve the quality of yoga education and practice by establishing and disseminating standards for the training of yoga teachers and by maintaining a registry of teachers who met these standards.

A rapid increase in the number of people practicing yoga over the last decade led to a proportionate rise in the number of yoga teacher training schools and graduating yoga teachers, which created the need to evaluate the organization’s yoga teaching standards.

In 2017, Yoga Alliance launched a review of its standards, calling it the Standards Review Project (SRP). The SRP brought together Yoga Alliance members and non-members, yoga teachers and practitioners, thought and field leaders, wisdom holders, and not-for-profit and for-profit business leaders from around the world in a comprehensive and inclusive process. This undertaking included thousands of voices inside and outside of yoga who offered their viewpoints through a 12,000 respondent survey, a listening tour, a series of virtual town halls, working group sessions, and other feedback channels.

About Yoga Alliance and 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 world-recognized, best-in-class credentials and unifying its members around a shared ethical commitment. Yoga Alliance’s goal is to support and foster the high quality, safe, accessible, and equitable teaching of yoga. In addition, Yoga Alliance delivers a strong value proposition to its members through community-building initiatives, educational resources, advocacy efforts, and social impact programs.

Its partner organization, the Yoga Alliance Foundation, leverages yoga for social impact and fosters an expansive, accessible, and equitable yoga community. It does this through broadening access to yoga’s healing potential, fostering greater equity and more diverse representation within the yoga community, and expanding educational, service, and economic opportunities for yoga teachers.

Yoga Alliance understands that in many locations around the world, the marketplace has designated its credential as a de facto requirement for employment, serving as an indicator of high quality teaching and safe instruction. Yoga Alliance does not take this lightly and rather embraces this responsibility and the associated accountability that comes with it, pledging to uphold it now and into the future.