

Yoga Scotland Teacher Recognition by Sarah Gray

The Beginning - My journey to teacher recognition by Yoga Scotland began in January 2008. I had been awaiting word of the new scheme following heartening discussions with Fiona McOwan, so I was pleased when I received the Yoga Scotland magazine and heard of its launch. With the support of my husband and family, I decided to apply.

Application Process - It took some time to gather together details of my qualifications, coursework and other requirements for the robust application process. I enjoyed documenting a 14 day diary of my yoga practice as part of my submission. Luckily I can laugh at how my daily practice has evolved since the birth of my son, now two years old. In fact, there's a lot to learn from observing his playful and carefree downward facing dog pose! It was certainly interesting to step back and reflect on how my yoga practice has woven into my day and is appreciated at a deeper level.

The Interview - I was delighted that my submission met the criteria and I was called for interview in Polmont in March. What a day of snow. I'm still not sure how we made it to the right place. My husband and I tend to get lost when we venture outside Grampian and, on this occasion, we could n't see the road at times! It was at Polmont that I first met Jean Stewart and other members of the Recognition Group – they were welcoming and, notably, respectful towards me and my journey to teach yoga. I appreciated this greatly. The interview questions covered a range of yoga related areas. This included ascertaining my knowledge and approach to teaching asana, pranayama and philosophy. We also discussed my motivation for seeking recognition by Yoga Scotland, as well as my teacher training and sources of inspiration.

Assessment - Following my interview, my teaching was formally assessed in April. As I now teach yoga for pregnancy, a friend very kindly let me "borrow" one of her general classes. There was a significant amount of preparation involved and, to be honest, I was nervous on the day. I find situations like these can bring an interesting mix of different emotions to the surface. It was nonetheless a rewarding experience and I am grateful to everyone involved – especially the willing and generous students. After teaching for several years, I personally viewed the opportunity to receive feedback on my work as a blessing – time for self reflection. A different perspective so often creates the possibility for a shift in awareness.

Next Steps – Following my assessment, I was invited to attend two philosophy lectures in Edinburgh (October and November) in order to complete the scheme. I was received very warmly by all the 2nd year students/tutors and I thoroughly enjoyed both lectures. Margo Romberg's down to earth approach and relevant delivery of, often complex, philosophical concepts was spot on. The homework stirred up memories of my earlier studies with Ian Scorgie and Swami Kailasananda. The homework, which involved comparison between the Gita and Yoga Sutras, was more than just words written on paper. Though it may sound a bit "corny", it genuinely fed back into my daily life. Study of Karma Yoga and Dharma is just the ticket for trying to ride the emotional rollercoaster of toddler tantrums! The homework became a form meditation in itself...it certainly required my full and undivided attention. I have to admit there were some challenging times when my husband was working abroad. I had to muster up all of my mental energy (as well as wrestle with the part of me that wanted to go to bed) after my son had gone to sleep in order to sit and work at the computer.

Recognition – I passed both sets of homework and was advised that I would receive formal recognition and full teaching membership of Yoga Scotland. It is hard to describe in words how I felt in that moment, but underneath all the layers of emotion (including skipping around the living room!) I think it comes close to Santosha...a real sense of inner contentment. I am so grateful to so many people that it would be "Oscar-like" to mention them all! But to all my teachers, past and present namely, Ian Scorgie, Swami Kailasananda et al, Ilse Elders and Judy Cameron....thank you for your inspiration, clarity and honesty. As well as many other invaluable gifts, you have given me the opportunity to find my own strengths and weaknesses in order to grow as a teacher. I know that my new relationship with Yoga Scotland and opportunities for on-going development will support me further along my yoga path...wherever that may lead.