

Role and Process for Becoming an IMS Guiding Teacher

History

For three decades, the IMS Board and Guiding Teachers operated independently. The board focused on financial oversight and long-range planning, while the Guiding Teachers focused on programming and the spiritual direction of IMS.

Then, in 2006, it was recognized that having the Guiding Teachers join the board would enhance communication and bring the teachers' perspective to the decisions and governance of the organization. Currently, eight Guiding Teachers serve on the IMS Board and its various committees.

The Guiding Teacher Committee (GTC)

The Guiding Teacher Committee functions as the program committee of the board. Founding teachers Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg, along with Christina Feldman, serve as permanent committee members. Other Guiding Teachers, who have taught at least 10 years at IMS, are appointed to serve four-year terms, which can be renewed with the consensus of the committee. Associate Guiding Teachers, who have taught fewer than 10 years at IMS, are initially appointed for a one-year term, which can be extended after mutual review and the consensus of the GTC.

The GTC Role

The Guiding Teachers:

- Determine who teaches at IMS and what is taught
- Develop IMS's program offerings and schedule
- Establish teaching standards and provide oversight of the ethical conduct of teachers
- Hire and supervise the Resident Teachers for the Staff Sangha Program and Teachers-in- Residence at the Forest Refuge
- Support teacher training
- Appoint and, if necessary, remove Guiding Teachers
- Participate in visioning and planning for IMS's future.

Becoming a Guiding Teacher

When selecting someone for a Guiding Teacher role, the GTC values an individual teacher's depth of practice and teaching experience, work experience with diversity, maturity and depth of life experiences, and capacity for organizational leadership. The following aspects are also considered:

- Is the teacher respected within the IMS community and the wider teaching community for both their teaching and their character? Does their conduct align with the Dharma?
- Are they committed to both IMS's mission and the Theravada tradition, and to the Buddha's vision of liberation and wisdom?
- Do they have an understanding of the history of race, racism and white privilege in the US, and the ability to teach the Dharma to a diverse and multicultural sangha?
- Are they aligned with the core vision and values of our teaching, including practice, ethics, Pali texts and are experienced in retreat teaching?
- Can they work effectively within a team of diverse teachers?
- The GTC supports flexibility in teaching style and methods, but requires a candidate to have an ongoing mentoring relationship with a recognized senior teacher in the Theravada tradition.