

## Process and Qualities for Becoming an IMS Teacher Trainee

From time to time, senior teachers from IMS conduct training programs that prepare groups of selected insight meditation practitioners to become authorized retreat teachers in our Theravada (insight) Buddhist tradition.

These programs are initially approved by IMS's Guiding Teachers, who, as members of IMS's board, are responsible for who teaches and what is taught at our two facilities, the Retreat Center and the Forest Refuge. The full Board of Directors gives final approval for specific training programs funded by IMS.

Admission to a teacher training program is by invitation only. The process involves several steps:

- A group of senior IMS teachers asks other insight meditation teachers to nominate students whose meditation practice, daily lives and teaching potential show a marked degree of dedication, integrity and depth of insight.
- Nominations are reviewed by the group.
- Invitations to submit an application for teacher training are subsequently extended to a number of candidates.
- Applications are reviewed by the group.
- The trainees who are selected commence a rigorous, multi-year training program.
- Trainees are mentored by established teachers throughout the program's duration.

In addition to formal training programs, a senior IMS teacher may mentor an individual student, similar to an apprenticeship. Under this model, the student is guided and trained by the teacher in a sustained, ongoing way, with the teacher committed to the student's development toward possibly becoming a retreat teacher.

A wide range of criteria is considered in assessing a candidate's suitability for retreat teaching at IMS. They must exemplify the qualities of wisdom, compassion and ethical conduct in their engagement with life. They should convey a general maturity in working with different life issues, and have demonstrated cultural competency, with an understanding of race, racism and white privilege in the US, and an awareness of the practice issues that can arise from this history. Their meditation practice must show a depth of insight and concentration, as well as a breadth of experience over years with various teachers, both in retreat and in daily life.

Generally, trainees, whether part of a teacher training program or someone being individually mentored, have spent months in long retreats. They have a strong commitment to their own personal growth in the Dharma as well as to the Theravada Buddhist path. Good communication skills, as well as a high level of contentment and happiness are essential for anyone training to guide others out of suffering.